

The pedagogical philosophy of SCHKOLA

Schkola

Values

Guidelines

SCHKOLA

Learning from, and Living with, One Another	4
Body, Soul and Spirit	9
Thinking Globally (Cosmopolitan Learning), Learning Locally (Community and Language)	11
Life Experience and Practical Experience	13
The Learning Environment as a Third Teacher	16

The word *SCHKOLA* is a slavic word meaning *school*. Having carefully selected this word, the founders of the SCHKOLA schools expressed their desire to start a new type of school in the slavically influenced three-country border area between Poland, Germany (East Saxony) and the Czech Republic. Their aim was to create a new, different type of school, one closely connected with the regional economy and the local community - a school that simultaneously had a free and externally-oriented character.

From this original idea, a number of local institutions have since developed, grown, and put down roots. There are now four locations where we have representative schools – Lückendorf, Ostritz, Hartau, and Ebersbach-Neugersdorf. In addition, SCHKOLA’s training and meeting center resides at a school in Jonsdorf.

All SCHKOLA schools are intentionally situated in the vicinity of a national border. Very often, the nearest border crossing is simply a hop, skip and jump away. The possibility to cross over the border is viewed as both an opportunity and a responsibility, one which allows us to take part in the development of the local region. To that end, all of the SCHKOLA schools work closely with their partner schools across the borders, and thus jointly form the SCHKOLA school association.

SCHKOLA has become an educational home and place of learning for many pupils from all age groups, spanning from nursery school to the end of secondary school. Our schools offer our children the chance to gain intercultural competencies, and SCHKOLA schools are open to all, regardless of their national origin or religion.

Our motto, “Learning from, and living with, one another,” expresses our permanent goal of making the SCHKOLA schools places where everyone feels at home - places where children not only learn, but also simply live and thrive. We warmly welcome children with special needs to our schools. The active inclusion of these children, and what that entails for their peers, helps build the social skills which we believe are a foundation for learning. By fostering these social skills, we allow individual personalities to develop and unfold. Each person can then find their place in the social group and add their own accent. For we hold it to be true, that everyone has strengths to contribute! By fostering these strengths, new competencies develop, and a gradual sense of achievement comes about when pupils see the results of regular independent work.

Our pedagogical starting point is the idea that children have an innate desire to learn new things. The curriculum from Saxony contributes an important basis for our educational program. However, we always try to encourage a “learning for life” ethos, as opposed to simply learning the content of the curriculum. To this end, we recognize the important role of the learning companions - our preferred term for our teachers. They help each individual pupil strive towards the attainment of life management skills, skills which will be relevant in the local region, but also in the future when the pupils grow up.

An integral part of the SCHKOLA community is made up of the SCHKOLA parents. They are actively involved in many matters of the schools, and always ready to help and support when needed. Parents stay informed through parent-school associations particular to their own school. Close communication between the parents and the teachers also allows for an easy means for sharing successes, addressing concerns and solving problems.

SCHKOLA sees itself as a living space where not only hard work and learning takes place, but also relaxation and recreation, including the preparation and consumption of wholesome food. In SCHKOLA, we prepare this food ourselves with the help of the pupils.

One of our goals is to foster the development of our pupils in a manner that raises awareness of their local roots. In addition, we want to help them develop a healthy sense of self-confidence which enables them to tackle the tasks presented to them, regardless of place.

While reading the following document, it is important to keep in mind that our various schools serve children throughout childhood, from toddlers to teenagers. For that reason, the information presented here does not apply equally to each age group, and is thus differentiated according to their needs.

Learning from, and living with, one another

- SCHKOLA sees itself as a community where children, adolescents and adults live together and learn from one another.
- We learn holistically with our head, heart, and hands.¹
- The community in which we have developed and refined our SCHKOLA pedagogy began to come together in 1993.
- Children as young as one year old can join our SCHKOLA community, and they are accompanied by people from all generations, from school interns to grandmas and grandpas.

In order to serve the aforementioned age ranges, SCHKOLA is composed of different types of developmentally appropriate schools – a nursery school and kindergarten, primary schools, and middle/secondary schools. These schools offer after-school programs as well.

The atmosphere in SCHKOLA is characterized by a close collaboration between children, adults, and teachers. This interaction fosters relationships and allows us to address problems as they arise. Each school has a parent-school association in which the parents, grandparents, and friends of Schkola can work together as members of equal standing. This association thus represents the interests of the parents. We create an environment based on respect.

Each person is respected for his or her **individuality**. This requires that we trust each other and treat each other with respect. We address each other with the familiar German form for you, “du,” thus embedding in conversations a sense of **trust** and **respect**. Displayed **rules**² and communicated common **values**³ and rituals form the basis for such an environment of equality.

1. Schkola is open to everybody, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses.

Living and learning together in a SCHKOLA community naturally leads to the experience and appreciation of the differences resulting from the meeting of young and old, pupils with special needs and pupils without special needs, higher and lower achievers, and members with different nationalities – Czech, German, and Polish. Open and differentiated learning opportunities allow each child to learn according to their individual needs.⁴ We work closely with state institutions, such as the Education Department of Saxony, the Social Security Office, and the Youth Welfare Department. We also maintain a good relationship with a school for special needs - the Diakoniewerk Oberlausitz e.V.

2. We live, learn and work in mixed-aged groups.

The learning groups in SCHKOLA are intentionally composed of mixed-aged groups. The way in which the pupils are mixed varies according to the actual SCHKOLA school, and thus, it is accomplished in various ways. A mixed-aged learning group, “creates a **stable environment** for individual development, with the goal being that each child can reach its upper limit of

¹ The quotation, “head, heart and hands” can be traced to the pedagogy of Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746 – 1827).

² See the directory.

³ See the table of values.

⁴ Pupils learn at different tempos. For this reason, they receive individual timelines.

development. This limit can, in some cases, lay far beyond that of the established norms, while in other cases, it may lay well below the norms” (Christiani Ed., 2006, p. 55). Such groups require an internally differentiated way of working.⁵ Within a learning group, the pupils rotate through a number of cycles of first being “young,” then “in the middle,” and then “old.” They learn to accept more responsibility for themselves and for the group. They also both receive, and are asked to give, additional explanations of the learning material to and from their peers, and this leads to a consolidation of knowledge and ability. These mixed-aged groups allow for a fluid and optimal transition to the next learning phase, dependent upon the development of the child. Children who newly join a learning group are assigned a mentor – a pupil who cares for the new child and explains all of the learning materials and rituals of the group. This holds true for new colleagues as well.

15 to 18 years old					high school
12 to 15 years old				preparation years	
9/10 to 12 years old			middle school		
6 to 9/10 years old			grammar school		
3 to 6 years old		kindergarten			
1 to 3 years old	nursery school				

3. The implementation of the Schkola pedagogical philosophy is accomplished by our team of teachers, who bring a depth of knowledge and experience to the task.

The SCHKOLA philosophy is not carved in stone! It evolves, based on the individual children and their parents who make up the community, as well as on relevant social changes.

Each pedagogical team is composed of teachers, tutors, curative educators and caregivers, as well as occupational, art, and learning therapists. Each member of the team is referred to as a “learning companion” within the school, and their work is supported by a service team in each school.

Our coworkers take part in continuing education programs, and additional qualifications and studies are promoted.

In order to be able to offer a variety of opportunities for growth and development, we also work with external professionals from the fields of art, handicrafts, medicine, sports, economy, and science.

4. Developmental progress is individually assessed.

Together with the child and his or her parents, the learning companions in SCHKOLA have a conversation about an individual child’s progress at least once a year. All participants have the chance to reflect on the pupil’s development, the skills already attained, and the goals for future development.

For the children in the nursery school and kindergarten, the child’s portfolio serves as the basis for

⁵ Internal differentiation includes all organizational and methodological measures which the teacher can offer, in order to allow each pupil to fulfill their individual educational goals.

this conversation with the parents. For the pupils in the other schools, school reports serve as the basis for the discussion. These school reports are also used when planning a pupil's direction and possible career path, both within the school and beyond.⁶

The pupils receive school reports twice a year, at the end of each semester. Pupils from the secondary school, along with their parents, can access ongoing feedback on assignments, as well as their current achievement level, by consulting the www.schkola.de website. With regard to exams in the secondary school, traditional marks serve as feedback regarding a pupil's achievement.

5. The Saxony educational curriculum provides the basic content for the open concept program which exists in Schkola.

We promote independent learning, based on the Saxony curriculum, by using weekly plans from nursery school until middle school. In secondary school, we use specific subject plans and student seminars. In this way, we ensure the development of required skills (expertise, methodological skills, social skills, and self-competence). The curriculum and its goals are made clear for the pupils and their parents by setting learning objectives beginning in middle school.

Pupils are given time to independently pursue tasks connected to their interests (elective tasks, weekly plan work, study time). During these periods, pupils can freely choose what they want to work on, when and for how long they want to work, with whom they want to work⁷, where they want to work, and how they want to accomplish the task they set out for themselves. According to the given needs, tutoring and enrichment activities are also offered for all age groups, either individually or within small groups. Beginning in seventh grade, pupils receive assignments and evaluations according to their chosen school track and desired degree of difficulty (b=with extra support, g=basic level, m=middle level, e=advanced level - for those who plan to attend college or university). Pupils can vary the degree of difficulty for different subjects, which allows them to pursue and develop special strengths and abilities.

While utilizing the Saxony curriculum, SCHKOLA schools take an interdisciplinary approach, one which unites various aspects, topics, and subjects from the curriculum. The goal is to push against the tendency to compartmentalize the various school subjects and to promote contextualized connections between these subjects.

a) **Special focus - practical training, professional and study orientation:** There is a separate curriculum for the subject of practical training, which includes an exam requirement.

b) **Special focus – art and music, as well as history and geography for the class 10 graduation exams:** In SCHKOLA, all four of these subjects are taught and evaluated as **interdisciplinary subjects**. Thus, there is an interdisciplinary syllabus for art/music, as well as one for geography/history. Both interdisciplinary combinations are possible subjects for oral exams.

c) **Special focus – community and language:** In SCHKOLA, the curriculum for community and language guarantees the attainment of intercultural skills in the relevant foreign languages (Czech or Polish), and it addresses, not only foreign language instruction, but also culturally relevant aspects of history, geography, ethics, music, art, sports, and

⁶ This holds true for each child, and the results of the talk replace the individual educational plans for children with special needs.

⁷ The pupils can work alone, with partners, in groups, or with the whole class.

handicrafts. This subject is evaluated both with a written report and a grade on the final report card.

6. Various graduation degrees are possible

In SCHKOLA, the following graduation degrees are possible, based on the track pursued within the school and its related syllabus:

- Lower secondary school degree (vocational school level)
- Qualified secondary school degree (vocational school level)
- Middle secondary school degree
- High secondary school degree (college track)

7. Rituals and celebrations help form the framework for our school community.

“In a complex and hectic world like the one in which we live, children desperately need rituals in order to perceive and appreciate extraordinary events. Those rituals which help exercise certain behaviors which can strengthen society are always valuable” (Fritz Schubert, 2012, p. 230). Based on this idea, morning and end of day circles are essential for both pupils and learning companions, and they are organized according to the age and needs of the children.

During the course of the year, various celebrations and events are held in SCHKOLA, sometimes based on the age of the children:

Common events for all schools:

- Ice skating Mardi Gras festival
- Seasonal markets (Christmas and Easter)
- School open houses
- Overnight field trips
- New Year’s concert
- Spring festival
- Graduation celebrations
- Apple/harvest day, kite-flying festival

Nursery school and Kindergarten celebrations:

- Family Saturdays
- Grandma and Grandpa day
- Sledding Mardi Gras festival
- Christmas crafts day
- “Seniors singing”

Elementary school celebrations:

- First day of school festival
- End of year singing celebration
- Swimming camp

Middle school celebrations:

- Art-nature-crafts week
- Team-building course at the beginning of the school year

High school celebrations (all levels):

- Ski camp
- Dancing course
- Art week
- Rafting camp
- Biking camp
- Youth dedication ceremony

High school (college bound) celebrations:

- Graduation ceremony
- Graduation ball

For families and staff members:

- Spring and autumn cleaning
- Family weekend with neighboring Czech or Polish families
- Schkola dance
- Sport competitions
- Parent-teacher meetings

8. We accompany the children throughout the day, and we acknowledge their individuality.

Each child has their own learning rhythm and particular interests. In order to accommodate these interests, various activities are integrated into the daily schedule, and can be led by pupils, learning companions, or external professionals. These activities vary by school.

Here are some examples:

- Arts and crafts clubs (felted, handicrafts with natural materials, etc.)
- Massage
- Sports clubs
- Language courses
- Yoga courses
- Choir
- Dance courses
- Band

There are always places available for the children to relax and/or read.

Opening hours

Nursery school and Kindergarten
6:30 am until 5 pm

Schools
7 am until 4 pm

Body, Soul and Spirit

- We aim to give the children in SCHKOLA schools the opportunity to develop a healthy body, soul and spirit.
 - We pay attention to the importance of balance between tension and relaxation.
 - SCHKOLA places a value on environmental education.
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1. The individuality of the children and their learning companions is both accepted and valued.
2. We place great emphasis on the fostering of each child's individuality and supporting the recognition of this individuality by one's fellow classmates and learning companions. In order to make this possible, we strive to create the proper conditions to support individual skills and abilities as well as to address individual weaknesses. Starting from the basic idea that each child, and each learning companion, is different from one another, with a discrete array of abilities and challenges, our aim is to integrate each person into SCHKOLA in such a way so that their personality experiences a goodness-of-fit amongst the ideal learning and working conditions in school. Doing so generates an environment free of fear and stress, for any potential negative consequences resulting from excessive demands placed on the "Schkolaners" are thus avoided. SCHKOLA offers multiple possibilities for both the children and the staff to develop and grow.

We want to give our pupils, as well as their learning companions, the possibility to develop their creativity, as well as the space for developing and implementing new ideas. In order to help achieve this aim, all "Schkolaners" have the opportunity to both offer courses⁸, as well as take part in courses. Parent participation in this regard is strongly encouraged and welcomed.

3. The structure of the day takes into account various individual requirements.

We place great value on age-appropriate, individually tailored instruction. We accomplish this by teaching the subjects and themes from kindergarten through middle school in a holistic and interdisciplinary fashion, often making use of daily and weekly study plans in which pupils are given the opportunity to practice time management. Starting at the high school level, individual subject lessons and courses are offered, within the framework of a long-term study plan, so that pupils are able to delve more deeply into their individual fields of interest. During the additional self-study periods, pupils are allowed to freely choose where they want to work, and how they want to divide up their time. Because many study materials and learning games are spread out throughout the schools, the children are required to move around in order to make use of them. Additionally, we have school playgrounds designed to serve the physical needs of active children and adolescents, and all pupils are given the opportunity to spend time outside at least once a day. We try to avoid giving homework.⁹

4. The children are actively engaged with the idea of proper nutrition as a foundation for life.

⁸ Various offerings in music, creative pursuits, sports, and languages are possible.

⁹ Homework can be assigned according to individual needs.

Our school kitchens allow children the opportunity to participate in food preparation. This activity helps them create a conscious, positive relationship to food from an early age. We encourage the use of local, seasonal, and organic food items. These food items are then used as a “teaching aid,” for in our schools, pupils help with food preparation and serving. This is a fixed ritual within our daily and weekly planning. Also, many of our schools have gardens which pupils and staff tend to, and from which they harvest flowers, fruit, berries, and vegetables.

5. SCHKOLA is actively engaged with environmental conservation.

From an early age, our pupils are encouraged to take part in environmental conservation. In all of our facilities, we have bins prepared for the proper separation of recyclables and waste. Energy conservation is a part of everyday life. In a playful way, pupils learn why they shouldn’t let water run from the tap for too long, why electrical devices shouldn’t be constantly left in “standby” mode, and why paper shouldn’t be wasted. Our staff understands that they should act as role models in this process of conservation, and thus not make too many unnecessary photocopies, and when possible, only use ecologically safe products. In all of our facilities, we use sustainably produced electricity. In our school in Ostritz, the heating system is connected to the heating mains, and in Hartau, the school uses pellets to heat. The children collect old paper on a regular basis for recycling, and our schools have successfully taken part in a number of ecological projects and competitions. In general, environmental education and conservation is a permanent, important thread running through many of the projects we organize at our educational conference facility in Jonsdorf.

Thinking globally - cosmopolitan learning / Learning locally - community and language

- SCHKOLA requires all its pupils to meet with other children in the neighboring countries of Poland and the Czech Republic on a regular basis.
 - All pupils in SCHKOLA begin learning the neighboring foreign language at an early age.
 - SCHKOLA enables its pupils to develop a more global perspective on life.
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1. FAMILIAR FOREIGNERS: We MEET and we GET TO KNOW one another.

An important aspect of SCHKOLA is cosmopolitan education – learning about other cultures in the wider world – and this idea is encapsulated in our motto: Learning from, and living with, one another. All pupils, regardless of their origin and native language, are welcomed to study in our schools. SCHKOLA has an international, multi-cultural team of teachers and assistants. We cultivate a range of international contacts with other educational institutions, in order to make educational exchanges possible.

2. Beginning in nursery school and continuing through secondary school, each class or learning group has a partner class or group in a corresponding school in the neighboring foreign country, either Poland or the Czech Republic.

Meeting with the partner classes takes place on a regular basis. At times host, at times guest, the children become acquainted with the culture and traditions of the neighboring land. They develop curiosity for, and interest in, the special features of Polish and Czech culture, and they deepen their familiarity and knowledge of the “foreign” country through extended field trips to the neighboring land.

The neighboring foreign language is taught continuously, beginning in kindergarten and carrying on through secondary school. The majority of the language lessons are taught by native speakers.

SCHKOLA Hartau	Czech, beginning in class 1
SCHKOLA Ostritz	Polish, beginning in class 1
SCHKOLA Lückendorf	Czech, beginning with the 3-year olds (immersion method).
SCHKOLA Oberland	Czech, beginning in class 1; Polish, beginning in class 7

We work closely with the following schools, and together we form the tri-national SCHKOLA school organization:

- School: Studánka Jablonné v Podještědí, Czech Republic
- School: Lidická Hrádek nad Nisou, Czech Republic
- Elementary school: Pastelka, Rumburk, Czech Republic
- School: U Nemocnice, Rumburk, Czech Republic

- School: Publiczna Szkoła Podstawowa nr 5, Poland
- School: Zespół Szkoły Podstawowej i Gimnazjum, Działoszyn, Poland
- School: Maria-Skłodowska-Curie-Lyzeum, Bogatynia, Poland

Regular meetings between the team of teachers in the partner countries take place in order to coordinate joint projects and ensure the satisfaction of the requirements of each school's curriculum.

3. The theme of community and language manifests itself in SCHKOLA on many levels. The various activities take into account the local conditions and the age of the participants.

Media	Culture, Sport, and History	Society and the Local Community
Drama	Customs and celebrations throughout the year	Daily routines
Cinema	New Years concert	Student exchanges
Films	Mardi Gras on ice	Stays abroad
Books	Spring festival	Partnerships
Learning materials (magazines, flyers, brochures, maps, etc.)	Thematic weeks (swimming, skiing, art, music)	Meeting days with the neighboring schools
Modern technology	Competitions	Project days
	Sports festival	Field trips: The Jizerske Mountains, Berlin, Cottbus, Dresden, Prague, Liberec, Wrocław, Bogatynia, the Alps, the Giant Mountains, Hrádek nad Nisou, Rumburk, the Zittau Mountains, Saxon Switzerland

4. Community and language is a theme which involves the active participation of the families as well.

With the acceptance and support of the family, cultural boundaries can be overcome. SCHKOLA promotes this process by offering language courses, tandem courses, joint field trips, and joint sports competitions for extended family members.

5. SCHKOLA promotes global learning and expanding the pupils' horizons.

“Global learning is the educational answer to questions regarding international development in the future. It is a core component of a pedagogy for sustainable development.” (Boosen, p. 3) Schkola offers its pupils and their families various opportunities to compare and contrast various economic, social, and environmental trends at the international level. For example, SCHKOLA helps international causes through sponsorships and the raising of donations. One concrete example is its ongoing support of the Gaiatree School in Orissa, India.

We also support student exchanges and study trips, and our pupils have already visited or studied abroad in Sweden, Greece, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Poland, India, and Great Britain.

Life experience and practical experience

- In SCHKOLA, we learn with, “our heads, our hearts and our hands.”¹⁰
- SCHKOLA creates the conditions for understanding contemporary social developments, and at the same time, it sees itself as a part of these developments.
- SCHKOLA creates a space where pupils of all ages can gather practical experience.

1. SCHKOLA promotes the multi-sensory development of its pupils.

The holistic pedagogy of SCHKOLA for both our younger children and our teenage pupils is based upon a unified education of body, soul, and spirit. During the learning process, each child has the opportunity to discover how they learn best (what type of learner they are), and apply this knowledge to the tasks at hand.

The importance of practical, hands-on experience is a basic principle of the SCHKOLA educational philosophy, and it is a permanent element of our work with children of all ages.

In the nursery school, the children discover the world around them by playing and doing. We believe that the foundation for mentally “grasping” the world is first having the experience of physically “grasping” the world. In doing so, we hope to instill a life-long love of learning.

Thus, we begin training a child’s ability to perceive the world around them already at a young age. Through the elementary and middle school years, this ability is honed, and by high school, pupils are in the position to use their thus gathered sensory experiences in a conscious way, in order to attain relevant educational goals. A sound mind in a sound body provides the focal point for this process, and thus receives a strong emphasis in our educational program.

2. SCHKOLA organizes possibilities to gather life experience and practical experience at all age levels. By providing an assortment of courses, clubs and activities, all of our pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills in various directions.



¹⁰ This quotation comes from the famous educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827).

- Nursery school level: Self-perception
- Kindergarten level: Sensory training, garden work, children's workshop, etc.
- Elementary school level: Sensory training, garden work and landscaping, arts and crafts activities, home economics, kitchen work, SCHKOLA store, field trips in nature, etc.
- Middle school level: Sensory training, garden work and landscaping, arts and crafts activities, home economics, kitchen work, handicrafts, SCHKOLA shop, field trips in nature, multi-day field trips to our school in Jonsdorf (Art-nature-crafts course/GO course/team building course)
- Secondary school level: The pupils gather experiences in the practical phase of some subjects, as well as during internships in local businesses and educational institutions.
- College-bound secondary school level: SCHKOLA provides these pupils with the chance to practice in a science laboratory or something similar.

In addition, SCHKOLA schools are recognized vocational training centers for young adults who seek to receive professional training in the areas of kitchen work, office work, and educational work.

All children, from nursery school through secondary school, are given the opportunity by SCHKOLA to actively take part in lively social events, theater plays, practical placements, musical presentations, school decoration activities, etc. This fosters their sense of community, and reciprocally leaves a mark on each SCHKOLA school.

3. SCHKOLA incorporates practical experience not only through projects and by incorporating the many above named activities into the daily rhythm, but also with the help of external partners.

In SCHKOLA, practical activities have a place in the rhythms of living and learning together. On the one hand, these activities balance out mental, academic work; on the other hand, they aid creative development and the experience of an inner space from which one can freely express oneself. In order to facilitate this process, we find it very important to involve external partners and trainees. These partnerships can take place in many ways, and are based on the interests and wishes of all of our pupils, our parents and our teachers. We value the fact that most of our special clubs and activities are organized and led by external partners and organizations (e.g. the Hillersche Villa, the regional music school, the School of Rock, the local library and local colleges).

In order to increase the number of practical activities available to our pupils, SCHKOLA also makes use of regional celebrations and events, the chance to help local senior citizens, internal continuing education events (SCHKOLA educational conference), and parents or professionals who would like to volunteer their time, and who have something to offer.

Additionally, pupils organize, at least twice a year (Christmas and Easter), the SCHKOLA shop, where they sell products they produce themselves.

4. In SCHKOLA, practical training becomes a school subject (PU) at the secondary school level, and it entails student internships. .

The main goal of these internships is to expose the pupils to a variety of activity-based and results-oriented occupations, and for them to experience the results of their work.¹²

The “Practical Training” subject in SCHKOLA includes instruction in Information Technology and replaces the typical elective courses which are a part of the middle school curriculum. Once the pupils reach the high school level, they begin to train and prepare for possible future careers or further studies. Practical Training as a subject covers many possible fields of interest which the young people at the high school level can choose from:

- I Art and Handicrafts
- II Events and Intercultural Activities
- III Media and Communication
- IV Helping and Assisting
- V Buying and Selling
- VI Cooking and Baking

In the early phase of high school, the teenage pupils become acquainted with various career fields and they practise the elements of the project method according to the Kilpatrick system.¹³ They engage in limited and manageable project tasks.¹⁴ In the next phase, pupils begin to narrow and orient their focus towards certain professional fields, with the help of the local employment agency. They also begin to develop and plan a larger project as part of a project team. They discuss a certain problem or issue which they would like to address, search for ideas related to the issue, and plan a way to approach a solution. A fourteen-day student internship in the surrounding area is part of this phase. At the beginning of the last year of high school, pupils participate in a four-week internship which takes place at a local business of the pupil’s choice. This is followed by weekly visits to the same business for the rest of the semester. Pupils are able to continue their project work through Practical Training coursework at school.

In year ten, which is a graduation year for some of the pupils, the pupils present the results of their project work and internships, incorporating relevant documentation. Based upon the original statement of the problem or issue, the students engage in a “defense,” which counts as one of their graduation exams. In this way, the project has a social function, and is a critical component of a pupil’s evaluation.

For those pupils who spend their last years of secondary school in preparation for further study at the tertiary level, they take part in another, longer internship. This internship can last for three or more months. Ideally, the internship is located in a workplace that orients the pupil to fields of study available at the tertiary level. Study-abroad programs are also possible during this period, as a chance to experience other cultures and languages. Once the last years of secondary school begin, the college-bound pupils are required, within a given time-frame, to continue some form of contact with a business or social institution on a once-a-week basis. In this way, pupils understand the connection between their studies and the wider world. The goal is for them to appreciate their

¹² economy, science and technology, information technology, history, handwork, art, politics, environmental and moral education

¹³ In the course of a project, the pupils go through the following phases: Planning, Execution, Presentation, Reflection and Further Considerations

¹⁴ Including: home economics, pocket money, money, and money transfers

place within the wider social context – one which demands technical, social, and artistic abilities, as well as competencies in handicrafts and working with different types of media.

5. SCHKOLA is in the “Euroregion Neisse Nisa Nysa,” which is the region where the three countries of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic meet. The SCHKOLA schools are deeply connected to this region, and they promote this connection through field trips and longer overnight stays in the area.

Practical training is also embedded in the school programs which fall under the rubric of Community and Language, and in the practically-oriented topics of instruction outlined by the school curriculum for Saxony, Germany. SCHKOLA schools are active at the regional level, and each separate school has a particular emphasis related to the local environment. For example, Schkola Hartau focuses on *water* as a theme, and a Czech partner school (ZS U Nemocnice) focuses on *waste reduction*.

In addition to this, cross-border projects, including project weeks, for pupils from all age groups are regularly organized. Each project capitalizes on the resources available (personnel, material, and financial), and thus change continuously. In general, it is a chance for the German, Czech and/or Polish pupils to come together and work with themes related to art, the environment, music, etc.

The learning environment as a third teacher

- Each (class) room in a SCHKOLA school is, above all, a space for living.
 - The rooms in SCHKOLA are characterized by a very welcoming atmosphere.
 - All pupils and coworkers should feel at home and feel compelled to take responsibility for the rooms.
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1. The rooms in SCHKOLA schools have an inspiring atmosphere. Within the rooms, there are often different areas in which pupils can learn on an individual basis.

Some examples of these areas are reading tents, craft corners, or different themed shelves with self-guided learning materials for independent study. Each room has its own, unmistakable character, greatly influenced by the children and pupils who spend their time there.

Aside from group (class) rooms, there are also specialist areas such as the library, the chemistry and physics laboratories and the kitchen. Many of these learning spaces intentionally do not make use of a permanent seating arrangement to allow for a variety of student configurations.

By intentionally making use of the hallways, the amount of learning space available to the pupils is increased.

The overall structuring and division of the rooms is conducted in a clear and friendly way, promoting an atmosphere of well-being for both the pupils and the coworkers.

2. A SCHKOLA learning space includes all of the school grounds and the surrounding environment.

The informational signs in SCHKOLA school buildings are in three or four languages (German, Czech, Polish and English). This serves to reinforce some elements of the foreign languages, and also to help visitors orient themselves in the school - be they parents, grandparents or “foreign” visitors. SCHKOLA strives to make all facilities, both inside and outside the buildings, accessible to all people.¹⁵

3. Children, coworkers and guests should all feel well in a SCHKOLA school.

The rooms are configured in such a way, with the help of the pupils and coworkers, so that everyone who is active in a given space enjoys working there. The children, teenage pupils and coworkers all share responsibility for keeping the learning spaces clean and orderly, with the communal goal of providing a feeling of being “at home.” Carpets in many of the rooms add to a feeling of warmth and comfort.

By creating a welcoming environment in our (class) rooms, we strive to reduce or overcome any feelings of stress or fear. In this way, SCHKOLA schools are open places of learning.

4. Our learning spaces make dynamic learning possible.

Small, movable wood tables allow for many different social and learning arrangements, according to the needs of a given situation.

Aside from the tables, the carpet can also be used as a working space, thus providing for the relaxed opportunity to work on the floor.

The sports hall, the playground, the parking lot, and all of the surrounding nature in the Lusetian Mountains are also regarded as important parts of a SCHKOLA pupil’s learning space.

5. SCHKOLA offers pupils free space for free time.

Free space is conducive to free thinking. Learning requires the chance to try things out. For this reason, free time and free space are provided to the pupils, so that the pursuit of creative ideas is possible.

The age-mixed classrooms in the SCHKOLA kindergartens, grammar schools, middle schools and secondary school all help to promote curiosity in learning by surrounding pupils with a great variety of learners and learning materials.

Allowing the pupils to organize their time as they wish during school breaks gives them the chance to experiment with different ways of relaxing and regenerating. The possibility to withdraw to a safe space in the classroom or school helps to reduce tense or stressful moments, and is thus an indispensable element for peaceful relations with one another.

As the pupils get older and more responsible, the spaces which they can make use of for free time increase in size and span accordingly.

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Content: pedagogical coworkers of SCHKOLA

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¹⁵ for example: the elevators in SCHKOLA Oberland and SCHKOLA Hartau, gradually inclined surfaces, comfortable seating.

Table of values

Courtesy	Openness	Respect	Setting an example	Appreciation	Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Saying goodbye • Following rules for discussions • Respecting the work of others • Acknowledging feelings • Using strengths • Requesting • Thanking • Personal talks are better than emails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginative, original, inventive, full of fantasy • Intellectually curious, open to new ideas • Attentive to one's and another's emotions • Interested in aesthetic pursuits such as art, music and poetry • Prepared to question traditional values • Preference for variety instead of routine • Curious about exploring new activities, new food, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The foundation of our community • Respect and appreciation for others, with all their individual strengths, weaknesses and mistakes • Equivalent learning and living between people with or without special needs • Respect and appreciation for Schkola property and private possessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual respect between teachers and pupils (normal tone of voice, taking issues seriously...) • Appearance in public, representation of SCHKOLA to others • Considerate behaviour, interpersonal relationships (greetings, thank yous...) • Responsibility (keeping deadlines, punctuality, bringing all necessary materials...) • Professionalism (technical terms, form...) • Hygienic and health-promoting behaviour (washing hands, drinking enough...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Pleasure • Recognition • Friendliness • Interest • Attentiveness • Self-worth • Positive evaluation of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Sharing • Attendance • Cooperation • Co-determination • Inclusion <p>All events and decision-making processes relating to living together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting discussions • Listening to other's arguments • Considering/changing one's own position • Using discussion instead of power • Majority and minority resolutions

Participation (wird gerade neu erarbeitet)

Age level	Themes for participation: pupils	Themes for participation: Teachers	Organisation for co-determination
Nursery school level	Choosing food Various offers		
Kindergarten level	Choosing food Various offers		
Grammar school level	Discussion rules Rules during the breaks After school activities Sanctions in the case of breaking the rules		Learning Groups School council Student gatherings
Middle school level	Excursion and field trip destinations Purchases (e.g. for free-time activities)		
Preparation level	Budget: Internships and Practical Training		
High school level			

Guidelines

Encounters: learning and living in SCHKOLA

I. Das Zusammenleben in der SCHKOLA	21
II. Grundsätzliche Regelungen	21
II/I Recht auf Persönlichkeit und Vertrauen	21
II/II Nachhaltigkeit	21
II/III Ordnung und Sauberkeit	22
II/IV Umgang mit SCHKOLA- und Privateigentum.....	22
II/V Auftreten in der Öffentlichkeit	22
III. Mitgestaltungsgremien	22
IV. Konfliktregelung in der SCHKOLA: Konflikte Leben!	22

SCHKOLA is a place of reflection - of respect - of creativity - of joy - of play - and of learning.

Living together in SCHKOLA

The pedagogical philosophy of SCHKOLA lays the foundation for our work together. For people of all ages, SCHKOLA is a place for learning and living together. This “living together” is characterized by friendliness, thoughtfulness, helpfulness, and teamwork. Courtesy in the schools is an expression of the value we place on each other.

SCHKOLA finds itself in a geographical border region, which plays an important role in the intercultural aspects of SCHKOLA’s pedagogical philosophy. There is a constant flow of teachers and pupils to and from our neighboring partner schools over the border. We each speak our own language, carry our culture within us, live in a certain land - and yet, because of our goal of “learning from others,” we greatly value our partners over the border and the opportunity to engage in different roles – sometimes as guest, sometimes as host.

The children and the older pupils in SCHKOLA also learn that spirituality can enhance life, and it is “taught” in a holistic fashion. Inclusion is also “taught,” in the sense that the children experience, on a daily basis, other children with a variety of gifts and/or special needs, and they learn to respect their differences as well as discover what they share in common.

Basic Regulations

II/I Personal rights and trust

Everyone in SCHKOLA is respected and taken seriously as an individual. Mutual respect requires a trusting environment. Within the various learning groups, pupils and teachers get to know each other very well. Both teachers and pupils use the informal German form of “you” (Du) amongst each other, and this helps to create a non-hierarchical atmosphere. Any intentional violation of one’s emotional or physical well-being is not tolerated.

Communication and cooperation are the most important guarantors of social harmony. When interpersonal respect exists, it is evidence that a cooperative partnership exists between the children, pupils and their learning companions.

II/II Sustainability

The frugal use of resources, both for ecological as well as economic reasons, is very important to SCHKOLA. Pupils in the school learn to use resources sustainably. This includes the conscious use of electricity, light, water, heat, food, noise, and paper. For example, an effort is made to turn off all unneeded lights, and electrical appliances are turned off if not being used (for example, the computers).

Heating: Radiators are actively adjusted, and windows are not left open for too long during the heating season.

II/III Order and cleanliness

A well taken care of and warm, welcoming environment in our SCHKOLA schools is an important requirement for fostering a sense of well-being. Our goal is to avoid an excess of waste to begin with by using materials conservatively. Each person is responsible for disposing of rubbish in the proper way, which includes recycling.

The following basic idea holds sway: Each person has both the right to a clean environment, and the responsibility to help maintain a clean environment. Sensitive areas such as the bathrooms and the cloakrooms are of special concern and maintained by all.

II/IV SCHKOLA property and private possessions

All possessions, be they the property of SCHKOLA or personal possessions, are treated with care. If by chance something is damaged or dirtied, it is expected that the person responsible will make reparations not only by apologizing, but by cleaning and/or replacing the item if need be. Sometimes, for pedagogical reasons, special tasks involving damaged materials can be given to the pupils either during or after normal lesson periods.

II/V Presence in the public

SCHKOLA schools are free institutions which are viewed carefully by the wider public. Each pupil and coworker carries a responsibility for the reputation of SCHKOLA. The guiding ideas of SCHKOLA should not only be active within the schools, but also outside of the schools as well.

In the SCHKOLA schools, smoking, alcohol consumption, and drugs are not allowed. The adults in SCHKOLA are expected to lead and teach by example in this regard.

The school cooperative

Each SCHKOLA school has a parent-school association for representation of the parents, among other things. This association and its activities replace the traditional parent-teacher groups and school conferences which one finds at traditional state schools. The promotional association is active in all facets of school life – both within the school buildings and beyond. It is hoped that at least one parent from each family takes part in association activities. For common school projects and events, participation by the families is expected and counted on. The parent-school association organizes and administers many of these common projects and events.

In addition, parents are also represented on the school board, and on the school advisory council of SCHKOLA.

Conflict resolution in SCHKOLA: Living through conflict!

A part of the SCHKOLA pedagogical philosophy is the idea that it is important to see differences in opinion, problems, and conflicts in a positive manner. It is common for tension to arise at any school, and this tension can lead to conflict. We take conflicts seriously, and we work together towards a solution.

Certain rules must be followed in order to make conflict resolution possible. Patience, trust and tolerance provide the basis for these rules. The most important form of conflict resolution is the face-to-face discussion.

Conflicts (e.g. arguments, damaged property, injuries) are preferably solved directly between those involved. If necessary, the responsible teacher will get involved. If a solution still cannot be agreed upon, the team leader will then get involved, and then members of the parent-school association and/or members of the SCHKOLA management team. However, a discussion amongst the affected parties remains the first step. Any possible conflicts between a particular school and a particular family can be solved through discussions with the parents, or during parent-teacher meetings.

These guidelines have been discussed and agreed to by all coworkers, parents, children, and pupils. You would like to be a pupil at SCHKOLA. You would like to be a parent within the SCHKOLA school system.

With your signature, you hereby agree that the above guidelines are binding for both us, and for you and your life in SCHKOLA.

Date:

Pupil

Legal Guardian

SHORT FORM: GUIDELINES

1. I am courteous, fair, open, understanding, honest and warm to all people in SCHKOLA, and to all people in our partner schools in Poland and the Czech Republic.
2. My learning companions are my partners. We address each other with an informal “you.”
3. I respect everyone, and I do not hurt anyone emotionally or physically.
4. I solve arguments peacefully. To that end, I make use of face-to-face discussions.
5. I solve problems within my learning group. If I cannot solve a problem, I can discuss the problem with a team leader or the school headmaster.
6. I take care of school equipment and private possessions. If I cause any damage to those things, I will acknowledge it and seek to repair the damage.
7. I strive towards order and cleanliness (especially in the bathrooms and the cloakrooms).
8. I use energy and water resources responsibly, and I separate waste into the proper bins.
9. I will make an effort to follow these guidelines, even when I am not in school.