

***Everybody is different –  
in a different way***

**Insights into the work of  
Sophie Scholl School in  
Gießen, Germany**



**Wiltrud Thies, Odense 2012**

# Sophie-Scholl-School Gießen, Germany

- ... a prominent example for successful inclusive education in Germany.
- National Jakob-Muth-Price for developing inclusive settings in 2009.
- Covering primary and secondary education SSS gives rise to inclusive settings from grade 1 to 10.
- At the moment 370 students, about 100 of them with so called „special needs“ (all kinds).
- There are up to 22 students in age-mixed classes. Teachers and other staff work in teams.



# Guiding Principles



- Every person is different - in a different way.  
Noone is like his/her neighbor!
- In Sophie-Scholl-School we all meet and act with respect and appreciation.
- We learn together and from each other.

# Every person is different - in a different way...

- ...with or without special needs
- with or without a migrant background
- ...from different family-origins and -sizes
- ... with different colours of skin or hair
- ... of different age
- ...girls and boys...
- ...



# We meet and act with respect and appreciation...



# We learn together and from each other.



~~"This can't work!"~~ **"How does it work?"**



1. **Which ideas, structure and organization can support the development of inclusive education at school?**
2. **How can we manage a high quality instruction in heterogeneous groups?**
3. **Can teachers learn to think inclusive?**
4. **How is work organized in multi-professional teams?**



# 1. Ideas and organization to support the development of inclusive education

## ■ **Conceptual framework:**

- **Inclusive education:** noone left behind!
- **Age mixed groups:** didactic example of diversity
- **All-day school** for all students: participation for all!

## ■ **Learning / Teaching:**

- **Individual training in heterogeneous groups**
- Differentiation, social skills and independent learning methods are essential

## ■ **School organisation:**

- Aged mixed classes; children change class after each two years; opportunity to meet new teachers; reunite with children who are already known
- Rituals and agreements for all





# ... to support the development of inclusive education...



## ■ **Classroom organisation:**

- Get together and talk in the classroom-group several times a day.
- Individual training in the same learning-frame: „Wochenplan“ (weekly or daily schedule)
- Learning different things on the same subject
- Social skills

## ■ **Culture of respect and appreciation:**

- School is not only a place to learn but also to cultivate inclusive attitudes.
- School and parents are partners in education and communicate.
- Pupils learn that adults in school cooperate with respect and appreciation.
- Adults are models for thinking and acting inclusive.

## 2. High quality instruction in heterogeneous groups



- **Successful teaching** is the key for raising achievement for all pupils.
- We use **diverse teaching methods** - they need to be different - as the pupils are all different!
- We do **teacher training** (before and on the job) with the aim of **high quality instruction**
  - Remember, rethink and get to know old and new methods...
  - Try and reflect - with all team members!
  - Develop a classroom management and classroom skills as a culture of increasingly independent and responsible learning for all students.
- **Teacher training in diagnostics** is necessary, so that teachers may find out easily in which way *any* student – not only those with handicap! - need and get support in class.

### 3. How teachers can learn to think inclusive

- **A culture of respect and appreciation** – not only for students but for staff as well...
- **Time for talking** and **time for learning**
- **Discussion and personal reflection** about one's image of man as well as about the guiding principles of inclusive education
- **Perfectly fitted offers for teacher training** (internal and external). **Questions are valuable**, not stupid!
- **Learning by doing – but with reflection!**
- As much freedom of choice concerning the **team-membership**. If interpersonal problems remain in effect, change of teams must be possible.
- **Clear structure and timetable** of all meetings, much time for reflection and planning in different groups of staff.





## 4.1 How Teamwork is organized: School- and Class-Teams

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- **The school-team:** Teachers (primary ed., secondary ed., special needs...), principal, educators, disability support workers, personal assistants, a carpenter, a biologist, a native speaker, secretaries, facility managers, house and kitchen administrators...
- **The class-teams:** Teachers, educator, 1 young person in his/her voluntary social year. If necessary children with severe handicaps are accompanied by personal assistants.
- Every member of the class-team is **responsible for *all* children.**
- **Teachers** may split the professional responsibility connected with different school subjects, but *not* regarding groups of children in class (e.g. age, disability, high functioners...)
- **Educators** work as supporting team members during some lessons. In the afternoon educators are responsible for the group.
- **Personal assistance:** ...if necessary. ... Can be given by one person for several children. Aim: to make the assistance redundant and to help students to become as independent as possible.

## 4.2 Communication and cooperation in multi-professional teams



- **Teacher-cooperation** in behalf of preparing lessons and teaching performance
  - several self organized opportunities per week (fixed dates, but also in breaks or spare time during the day)
- **Team-meeting:** once a week, jour fixe
  - Last-week's-discussion: Highlights, problems, questions...
  - Class-organisation for the next week
  - Planning lessons and distribution of tasks for the next week
  - Case discussions
  - Questions, needs and emergencies
  - Questions and needs that need to be discussed with the principle, the school-team, or in technical conferences
- **Morning chat:** 15 Minutes before lessons start...
  - Everyone knows what to do und how to act...
  - How do you feel today? Can I help?

# The end: Developing inclusive schools...

- ... is a challenge, but not an excessive demand
- ... is exhausting, but not too much
- ... is satisfying and gratifying human rights as well as expanding our professional self-image



Thank you for listening!

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