

**Interview eTwinning Portal April
Theme: Special needs education**

1. How does the European dimension change your school life?

The 'Schule an der Malchower Aue' provided its computer lab for the first eTwinning teacher training in April 2005. Teachers experienced themselves in the role of learners. They learned how to login into a learning platform, how to download something and realised the benefits of a learning platform. After overcoming technical problems at our school and the fear of the use of new technologies teachers permanently changed their roles of being teacher and learner in an enormous speed.

In the curriculum for special needs education with the focus on 'learning' it is explicitly mentioned that pupils increasingly have to learn how to use different media, independently find and collect information from them and to sort and work with them adequately. Teachers doubted how this could work out with pupils that can hardly read and write. But it worked – as our participation in Spring Day 2006 proved.

Newly trained for eTwinning, we were looking forward to our first eTwinning school partnership. Most appreciated was the aspect that the qualification went along with real experience, in which all participants could immediately try out their new skills. Recognising deficits in the concrete work they could at the same time ask for support.

The step into eTwinning was the decisive 'domino' that triggered participation in other projects. Since September 2005 we are a project school in 'Freie Lernorte – Raum für mehr' (Free learning environments – space for more) which is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education. We have been a pilot school in the 'eEducation Masterplan' of the Land of Berlin since December 2005.

The European Dimension meant that media became important in our school, and this was fast-paced and a daily challenge for us. For our school they are also an opportunity to reduce violent behaviour and to accept arrangements for learning which are much more appropriate for the skills and competence of our pupils.

We especially benefit from the participation in „eTwinning-workshops“ in other European countries and the „face to face“ contact to teachers from other countries. The workshop that recently took place in Montecatini gave us access to the learning software of '2simple', which we would never have got to know about without eTwinning and which is especially used by our pupils.

Educators of other primary schools in the region of Lichtenberg participate in our experiences with media and since September 2005 they come to computer training at our school twice a week. In this way the European dimension also changes school life at other schools, though they do not immediately begin an eTwinning partnership.

2. In which way do pupils and teachers at your school benefit from eTwinning?

The participation in 'eTwinning' led to

- faster acquisition of ICT competence among teachers
- international exchange, which more often brought higher benefits than national exchange
- personal contact with teachers in other countries
- training of ICT competence among educators
- more intensive use of IT technology in lessons and the open all-day school activities,

- more rooms being connected to the internet,
- computer 'islands' in all rooms

The participation in 'etwinning' made it possible that also pupils with special needs in education

- have the chance to gain experience in the use of new technologies
- showed unexpected qualities in the use of new technologies and became experts for other pupils; so that they gained more self-confidence and are even able to maintain PCs in the open all-day school activities independently.
- experience the European dimension virtually,
- first worked on virtual learning platforms and then tried out in real practice to get their 'taste of Europe',
- can upload and download something
- suddenly realised the value of foreign languages
- can learn on virtual platforms
- can travel to other countries and get a better understanding of the word 'foreigner'
- can behave quite normally when travelling to other countries,

And – by the way: when our pupils were asked to read or write something they mostly didn't want it - eTwinning helped to change this attitude and more than one pupil forget his negative approach.

I.Adling,
Headmistress