



Sparkling Science >

Science linking with School
School linking with Science

Project Outlook, 28th November 2008

**Vienna, 1020 – Students investigate the
History and Presence of their School**

LEADING INSTITUTION

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SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION PARTNERS

Verein für Geschichte der Stadt Wien
Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv

PARTNERS FROM ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Bezirksmuseum Leopoldstadt
Schulbuch- und Schulschriftensammlung des BMUKK
Wienbibliothek im Rathaus

SCHOOLS INVOLVED

Lauder Chabad ORG und KMS, Vienna
Sigmund Freud Gymnasium, Vienna



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Austrian Federal Ministry of
Science and Research

Vienna, 1020 – Students investigate the History and Presence of their School

School has never been measured and evaluated from all sides as it is today. Starting with PISA up to national quality management programs, performance and the engagement of students are continuously examined. But if the opinion about and the notion of school itself is under discussion, the voice of the majority of the people involved – the students – is not taken into account. Even if they are addressed directly, they appear only as informants, not as interrogators. This is supposed to change with the project “Vienna, 1020 – Students investigate the History and Presence of their School”. Prof. Hopmann, the scientific supervisor of the project, stresses, “One of the goals of scientific research is to give students a strong voice in the discourse concerning school.”

The international research on the potential of students as researchers has almost left no marks in the Austrian educational science. This project is one of the first in Austria that addresses students as researchers of their own surrounding reality. In this process it is of major concern that students develop an understanding about problems and questions in social sciences and that they perceive their own surroundings as an object of research.

This project uses the methods of „student research“ and „peer evaluation“ – methods of social sciences that are almost unknown in Austria – and the methods of historic and comparative school research. Students (as well as the involved teachers) will become acquainted with appropriate methods and will learn how to use them.

Two schools of the second Viennese district are taking part in this project. Students of the Lauder Chabad School and the Sigmund Freud-Gymnasium are given the opportunity to become active as researchers in this project. They get in touch with researchers from the University of Vienna in a lively research-dialog as independent and responsible partners. In this project the views of the students will be included in two ways: on one hand students will be asked about their impressions and perceptions concerning their everyday life at school by other students, on the other hand they become active as researchers in a „peer on peer design“.




This design leads to much more valid results than with adult interviewers. Students also appreciate the idea and the possibility to become active in a research project. This is how a fifteen-year-old student of the Lauder Chabad School puts it, "Research and science are very interesting to me, because they can reveal new things and can change society."

In the first year of this two-year-based project, students explore the reality and history of their school in context with the history of their urban district. In doing so, a big emphasis is placed on the heterogeneous, social and cultural mixture of the schools as well as the second district, since both schools stand out due to their cultural diversity. The topic of migration is very much present at both schools. For example: about 50% of the students at the Sigmund Freud-Gymnasium have a migration background and almost 90% of the students of Lauder Chabad School do not speak German as a first language. In a second step the students will evaluate the practice of their partner schools according to a prearranged evaluation procedure using questions and shared research criteria. The collaboration may also lead to a lasting contact and cooperation between the schools, which allows exchange among the students and therefore may lead to an improved understanding of the various cultural backgrounds.

The students receive detailed preparation and support through the teachers and the researchers involved, in order to become widely independent in their research processes. Depending on the orientation of the project part the students work in, they will get an age-based training in research methods ("How do I develop a research question?", "Archive research", "How do I carry out an interview?", "How do I analyse my interviews?", "How do I analyse and interpret research data?" and many more). These intentions also fit into the approved curriculum of both schools.

This project also has the ambition to develop new methods and designs to activate student research and to design model settings for school- and educational research with the contribution of students. The experiences from this project will be scientifically accompanied and analysed by the department of Education and Human Development of the University of Vienna. First steps in this direction have already been made: Students of both schools participated in a baseline investigation and wrote essays about their experiences with school, the second district and science and research in general.





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