



E-Newsletter

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Message from the Principal

How good is your school?

Dear Readers,

Simple question, complicated answer: How good is a school? How can you tell the quality level of the school? Is that even possible? The short answer is: yes, it is possible. Doing so is a complicated procedure. The views of the German school authorities, which will very soon be coming to inspect our school, on this topic will be presented in my article featured in this second newsletter. It will show you the ways that they employ for finding out about school quality.

Hendrik Schuhmacher poses the same question, but from the viewpoint of students. Students will be systematically surveyed on the topic of teaching as of this year. Please read on to find out what we hope to discover and achieve from these

surveys, as well as why teachers do not need to be concerned about any negative implications from student feedback.

The quality of a school is also measured in how up-to-date the methods it employs are, as well as the degree to which the students' world has a role in the improvement of teaching efficacy. A large part of this world is now virtual and online. The implications of what this means were explored by parent representative Peter Hufschmid-Hirschbühl.

A good school also has an infrastructure that is up-to-date. In our school board there is a committee just for this. The work that is being done there can be uncovered in the article by Ingo Ströhler, who shares the news from the executive committee of the SEA in this newsletter. Welcome to the editorial team!

The quality of a school, and here all studies come to the same conclusion, depends on interpersonal

relationships. Simply put: teachers, students, parents, and other staff must have a good connection to each other, show respect and interest towards each other, and need to be engaged together for the good of the school. Towards this end, the SMV plays an important role. You can find out what the SMV is and what it does in the article from Kevin Staub, grade 12, who is the new editorial connection for the students in this newsletter. To him we wish a warm "yindee" as well.

On the part of all the stakeholders in our school, I wish you an exciting and multifaceted read.

Dominique Tellenbach
Schulleiter





School Management

External Evaluations - a look at the school from outside

For most companies and businesses, external evaluations have long been commonplace: professionals, who are not a part of the organization, take a systematic look at the processes, work, and results of companies and judge these from the perspective of an outside observer. Known as "auditing", "ISO certification", or "best practice", companies use these external evaluations in the hopes of gaining new perspectives and useful input into their functioning. They also do this to show their clients, competitors, employees and other stakeholders which standards they have reached.

For a long time, schools have acted with some difficulty towards these inputs from the outside. A school's product is not measurable in the same sense as the output of a factory

– thankfully! As the trend of external school evaluations started to appear in the 1990s, there was disagreement and questioning of its validity. It took time, experience, and lots of work for school administrators to be able to recognize the fruitful benefits that such inspections offer to a school.

As a German School Abroad, we work within the framework of the Central Office for Schools Abroad in Bonn (ZfA). Together with the other 140 German Schools Abroad, this office has established a set of measurable criteria for school development and evaluation. These criteria set clear goals for school development that schools must meet. These goals are set within a time span of six years and are assessed in the form of external school evaluations. The

next evaluation for RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok will take place from 24th to 26th November 2014. This evaluation will take the form of a "BLI-Bilanzbesuch". In German, BLI stands for "B u n d - L ä n d e r - I n s p e k t i o n". The "Bilanz" refers to the fact that this visit is coming in the middle of a six-year cycle. This means it has been three years since the last large inspection the school received, and the next one will take place in three more years.

to check our progress. However, the preparations for this visit start long before they arrive - in large part through the work of the Quality Management Steering Group, led by Remo Nyffenegger, which is the main body responsible for the process of this BLI visit. An essential part of the preparation involves the organization of relevant documents produced by the school to be presented in a structured, systematic way. These documents lay the groundwork for the preparation of this inspection visit of our school in Bangkok. When presented to the inspectors, these documents will give a palpable picture of our school, its environment, its successes, and its areas of development. Major parts of these documents include our marketing concept (recently a concept specifically tailored to the school has been developed), a methodology curriculum (that shows which learning methods our students develop at which times and in which ways), a concept about how students can navigate using media in their learning, procedures for differentiation, and procedures for educating students with special needs. To this end, various tools are used. Regular, systematized feedback, for example from students directly to teachers (as Hendrik Schuhmacher wrote about in his article), the implementation of iPads at the Primary level, our distance learning tool Moodle, or the development of new teaching methods within the framework of cooperative learning.

On the one hand, this process is a way to show that we work in an organized and structured way according to given criteria and guidelines. The actual visit of the inspectors then serves as a reality check. Lessons will be visited and judged. Structured interviews with parents, students, teachers, and school board members



or the revenue of a business. We work with humans, and their performance we can only partially influence

How is the quality of a school measured in such an evaluation? Two inspectors from Germany will come for three days to our school, where they will look over the various criteria in detail



will take place and will be documented with a variety of instruments. The



interviews will be held on an individual basis, allowing respondents to answer openly and anonymously. The collective data from the interviews is compared to the observations from the document analysis. Collectively, all of these observations and data are then judged against the guidelines set forth by the ZfA in Germany. At the end of the process, we have a clear picture, based on data, that shows us how well our school functions from an outside perspective. This gives us a clear picture of where we work well and where we can still continue to improve. If we pass the inspection, we are allowed to keep our label as an excellent German school abroad - a label that speaks to our expectations and of which we are really proud.

In conclusion we can say that this inspection does involve a lot of

preparation, however it is also extremely worthwhile. Fresh ideas from experienced professionals, and all of this for free - who wouldn't want such a visit from an inspector? Despite some nervousness about the inspection, there is also a sense of excitement about it as it affords us so much insight.

On the note of our special situation as a school that is accredited not only by one, but two countries, let me remark that, of course, Switzerland also evaluates its schools abroad. Our inspectors from our patron Canton of Lucerne will arrive in



Exzellente
Deutsche
Auslandsschule

February, at which point we will provide more information about that visit.

In detail: the five development goals for our school

1. Securing and deepening the character of the school as a Swiss German international school through school structure development. Expanding the school's offerings with a focus on clients who are interested in the German-speaking world's educational ideals. To accomplish this, existing structures should be maintained as well as new connections be made.
2. Optimization of the marketing potential of the school.
3. Development of a feedback culture to improve transparency, cooperation, and teaching quality.
4. Development of language awareness in German and bilingual instruction.
5. Developing self-organized and individualized learning, especially in order to be able to continue studying during crisis situations through a web-based learning platform.



School Board

Infrastructure committee

Maintaining and improving the infrastructure of our school



Dear Readers,

Most likely you may only know a little bit about the tasks and activities of the school board, especially the infrastructure committee. For this reason we want to give a report to inform you about our engagement towards improving school infrastructure. If you weren't aware as much about our activities so far, then that is actually a sign for us that our work is going very smoothly. A certain degree of invisibility is a gauge of the quality of our work, as infrastructure work is often connected with noise, dirt, and other negative associations.

The infrastructure committee (INFRA) is part of the school board (SEA EC) and is made up of the members Chat Seinige and Ingo Ströhler. INFRA works closely with the school management team.

The school management team informs us about needed work on construction, open spaces, installations, and tools and machines, while our working group then assesses the necessity, costs, and plans which we then relay to the SEA EC for final approval. When an infrastructure related task has been approved by the board, then we can begin the phase of planning for the needed works.

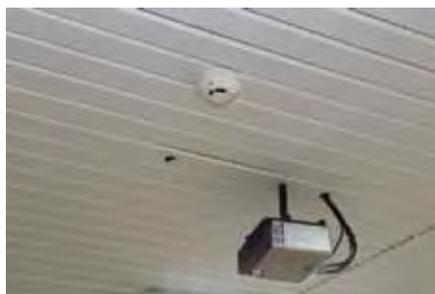
From that point in time on, the school management team is heavily

involved in planning and executing the works as well as in the assignment of the different tasks. With our superintendent Khun Sununt and our Head of Administration Khun Uraiwan we have a team that works very well (and also somewhat invisibly, which is a good thing in this context) towards the planning, execution, and supervision of all construction work. The INFRA then has the role of being called into responsibility when professional expertise is needed.

The main types of constructions that we are responsible for are short-term immediate repairs, midterm construction work, and long-term new or renovating construction works. Here is a list of works that we have achieved in the last school year 2013/2014.



Floor damage: damage to the tiles in the lobby on 6th February 2014.



Fire alarm: installation of a fire alarm and general alarm system over the summer holidays (July 2014).



Need for space: four new rooms were created in the school building during the summer holidays (July 2014). This involved breaking down and building new walls, setting doors, installation of electricity and sinks, renewing the tiles, and adding new air conditioning units.

... And this is what the results look like:



Stabilizing the sports hall: the concrete supports for the sports hall were reinforced in the summer holidays (July 2014).



School Board

Infrastructure committee

For the current and future school years we have construction concepts in work. Should the number of students continue to increase, which we are expecting, then new construction work in the midterm will be necessary. Of course we will do this in an environmentally friendly way using a European example of Eco-friendly construction, local architecture, and quality for the benefit of our students.

For all of these reasons, we feel it is important that we continue to truly engage ourselves ... And yes, we can achieve this!



Who is familiar with "Y-Titty"?

What to our children do online?

Do we as parents know what interests them, and even more importantly, what influences them and what can harm them? The European Union has been doing research about this for a few years already. With "EU kids online" they have succeeded in getting a running overview that is also important for students and parents to understand.

Do you know "Y-Titty"? This question - even when posed only to the parents from our school - yields the predicted response: no one knows them, and everyone looks a little astounded. The existence of this comic group made up of several young Germans is totally lost on most of us adults - like so much that goes on in the World Wide Web every day.

Here are the facts: Y-Titty are absolute comedic hits among youths in Germany and the German speaking part of Switzerland. They exist as an Internet phenomenon, mostly based on YouTube. Their channel has an amazing 3 million subscribers, an absolute record. Users download thousands of their videos every day - without the knowledge of the older generation that seems not interested.

The latest from Great Britain

Ofcom, the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries of the United Kingdom, published a yearly report in 2014. The results of the research are quite surprising and

have validity outside of Great Britain as well. Ofcom's report shows that the generation that is now between 12 and 15 years old has grown up alongside the Internet. The ways in which they communicate are fundamentally different from previous generations, even from the current 16 to 24-year-olds.

Young Britons between 12 and 15 years of age use telephones for communication less and less frequently. Only 3% of the time they spend communicating actually occurs over a telephone. 94% of their communication is text based, specifically instant messaging activities and social network usage.

Ofcom also conducted a special test of technological understanding among various generations for communication purposes. Amazingly, six-year-olds scored better results than 45-year-olds.

Amongst the adult population of Great Britain, 16 to 24 year-olds spent the most time on media and communications. Due in large part to multitasking, they amounted a whopping 14 hours of media usage per day.

All generations in British society were noted as having increased usage of communication technologies. According to Ofcom, the average Brit spends about eight hours and 40 minutes per day engaged in media-based activities. This is more than the average sleep a person in Great Britain gets, which is about eight hours and 20 minutes per night!

New Media Concept at Our School

We are currently launching a new and comprehensive media concept at our school. It includes not only content about how to study using from media sources, but also says something about learning about the media themselves. The school is taking on the task of teaching young people about ways to use media - and how it can be incorporated into school work wherever possible. A plan for the secondary level has already been developed, now it is being expanded and brought into a finalized form.

Hendrik Schuhmacher, a faculty member at our school as well as main author of the paper, explains why the school wanted to develop this new concept: "The digitalization of our daily life has far-reaching implications for the lives and learning of our students. These changes in the media and technology landscape should be used as a chance for us to incorporate them into the learning process of the students. Our students are usually skilled and motivated to use these new media resources. Throughout this process, we want to guide students as well as also keep them informed about the boundaries and dangers of the media world."

Principal Dominique Tellenbach says that the new media concept will be finalized before the BLI inspection visit at the end of November.



Parents

Dangers Online

EU Kids Online

For several years now the EU has been studying the Internet use of children. Via the transnational program "EU Kids Online", children and youths in 33 European countries have been researched. The headquarters of the program are at the London School of Economics. However, each country that participates has its own national branch office.

In Germany, the national program "EU kids online Germany" is orchestrated via the Hans-Bredow institute for media research at the university of Hamburg. Uwe Hasebrink, leader of the German branch of the project, gives information on the most important German study points in an interview: parents in Germany - to a greater degree than parents in other countries - overestimate the risk of the Internet for their children. However, risk is a part of growing up, and this is true for the Internet as well. One should encourage young people to use the Internet because of the great opportunities it offers. At the same time, it is important to make it clear to young people what strategies they can use to help protect themselves from unwanted information online.

In Switzerland, "EU kids online" is found within the framework of a national program for development of media competencies for young people. In comparison to other European countries, Swiss young people use the Internet a little bit less. Nonetheless, they were very likely to use the Internet on wireless capable devices, which was often a challenge for their parents to learn. Swiss youths would like to keep their parents out of their Internet activities, although parents would like to know more about exactly this.

Risks and Dangers

"EU Kids Online" ran a transnational survey where they questioned over 25,000 nine- to 16-year-old students. Of that total, almost half replied that they had encountered at least one online risk, most commonly believed to be instigated by other children of their age.

From the results of the survey the researchers categorized two types of risks.

Almost two-thirds of young people named content risks as their main concern. In the foreground were pornographic and violent depictions. Many young people also named connection and contact risks on a high level of Internet dangers. In addition, risks of virus and other damaging software were also reported.

From Our School Library

A critical documentary about the Internet

British author Beeban Kidron, in cooperation with the British Film Institute, has made a praised documentary about the Internet, named "In Real Life".

From the cover insert:

"Beguiling and glittering on the outside, the Internet can be alienating an addictive. Quietly building its case, Real Life asks if we can afford to standby while our children, trapped in their 24-7 connectivity, are being outsourced to the net."

We can make copies for interested parents of this worthwhile work (duration: 87 minutes / English).

These can be lent from the school library as a DVD. The DVDs will contain the film as a file which can be played on a computer. The software to play the film will also be on the DVDs.



(Source: „EU Kids Online“)

Age and gender played a big role in how young people perceived online threats. For example, nine-year-olds have more difficulty verbally expressing the things that they feel threatened by. As the age of the respondents increased, their ability to reflect and express their concerns improved.



(Source: „EU Kids Online“)

The risks that the young people named are found all over the Internet. As to the question of where they come, the research showed that children and young people mostly found risks coming from video sites and general websites. A much smaller portion of risks was associated as coming from social networking websites.



Parents

Dangers Online

In the teenage age group, girls were more likely than boys to report dangers on the Internet, although they had less experience in social media (Facebook etc.) and contacts websites. Here, cyber bullying especially plays a role.

"I don't like when I get approached by some guy. They say things like 'Hi, can we meet sometime? You are so sweet.' I find this stressful and frightening. This is crazy, but it happened to a friend of mine. Some guy found her on "SchülerVZ" (Girl, 14, Germany).

Boys felt more concern over violent content:

"YouTube. Disturbing videos. Scary pictures" (Boy, 13, UK).

In regards to the judgment of pornographic material, there was no difference between boys and girls. Both genders found themselves equally disturbed by such material.

Strategies for Parents in Safe Internet Usage

From the parent survey conducted by "EU kids online", five strategies emerged for parents to use in order to control the Internet activities of their children. These included technical mediation, monitoring, restrictive mediation, active mediation of Internet safety, and active mediation of Internet use (Source: EU Kids Online).

Based on the research and results from the extensive EU Kids Online survey, the following recommendations were established:

- Concerns children might express about emotional abuse online should be taken seriously.

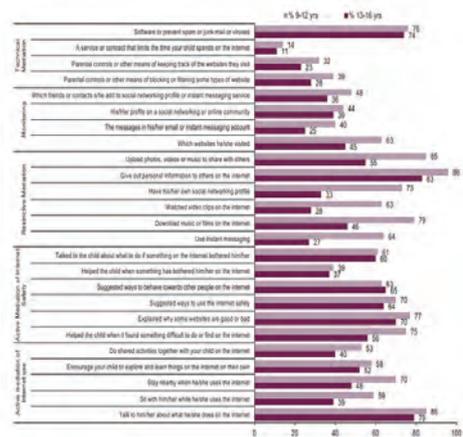
- Be aware of usage of filter controls. Much of the offensive material that can disturb children is made by users and not mass produced. This means that they were privately made and will not be caught by filter systems anyway. Filter systems can also sometimes block useful material to children. There is a risk that parental filter controls might block such useful material.
- Parents have to be aware and know how to speak openly with their children about online and off-line content. It is encouraged that parents spend some time online together with their children as a way to navigate Internet risks.
- Schools should develop coherent curricula that address media use.

ECPAT, an international organization that works to prevent the exploitation of young people, cited the following facts about Internet usage among young people in Thailand:

- The number one danger for Thai young people is chatting online
- 24% of young people with access to the Internet have met someone online whom they had never met before in real life
- 42% of online youth would like to meet somebody online that they have never met before
- 71% of young people online have already visited a sexually oriented site and 52% felt no shame about it
- 45% of young people that have been exploited online never told anybody about their experience

The Swiss project "Young people and media" has produced an informational pamphlet that can be downloaded from our website, also in Thai language (Newsletter section, Additional material).

By Peter H. Hufschmid-Hirschbühl



Internet and Youth in Thailand

In Thailand there has not been a comparable study to the one conducted by "EU kids online". Mobile phone provider dTac, a sister company of Telenor, is estimating that by the year 2017 between 10 and 15 million Thai children will be online.



Teachers

Student Feedback at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok

One of the main tasks for a teacher is to give feedback to students, but not just in the form of grades. More and more, the teachers are beginning to establish a whole culture of feedback.

Until now, teachers usually received feedback during appraisal talks or within the framework of the collegiate lesson visit system. In addition, the school is also frequently inspected, which leads to another source of feedback. Feedback is important as an agent of continuous learning and for the further development of teaching. The recognition of its importance is what has led to the development of a system of student feedback at our school. Specifically, the survey tool is valued as a way to get common criteria examined by all students across grade levels and in various areas in relation to the school. A survey taken by all students has the advantage that it is not affected by temporary conditions and allows for reflection on the school's functioning as a whole.

Student feedback might give cause for some skepticism, as people may interpret it as a way to critique teachers and their performance, in a way that students feel gives them the right to pinpoint personal issues they might have with teachers or grades they might have received in school. An example of student feedback being given in a negative, critical way, would be the Internet evaluation site "spickmich". This is a portal that

allows for teachers to be evaluated by students. This opportunity to judge teachers online, anonymously, lead some young people to rant online against teachers they did not like. Nonetheless, the comments made on this website show that students would like and do need a system to give feedback to their teachers and their teaching. The



results of the 360° survey from March 2013 held at our school also point to the reality that students would like to have more mutual communication with teachers about their learning.

There have already been for quite some time teachers at the school who allow for student feedback in the form of report cards to the teacher or conversations about reaching and learning topics. Some of these discussions will in the future take place based on a standardized survey form. From now on,

systematic student feedback will become a requirement for each teacher to use with their classes. This is because we believe education to be a two-way street, in which it is important for there to be communication between the students and the teachers. This two-way communication improves teaching when the dialogue in place is constructive.

Student feedback is being incorporated as part of the 360° culture of feedback at our school this year especially because of the upcoming BLI inspection in November 2014. All teachers are to implement this uniform survey of student feedback as an important part of pedagogical quality management. As part of the school's evaluation of the BLI inspection of 2011, one of the points for development for the school was increasing transparency, cooperation, and improvement of teaching quality through the development of a feedback culture. The systematic implementation of student feedback through the survey underscores the growth of communication between teachers and students towards these goals. Teachers gain the opportunity to have their teaching evaluated by an outside source, to recognize blind spots, and as suggestions for changes in the teaching and learning process. The concrete goal of student feedback is to help in the analysis and improvement of teaching. It should give insight into whether teaching is multifaceted, well organized, or effectively executed. In this way, teachers can



Teachers

Student Feedback at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok

get feedback from those who experience their work the most: our students.

The main point of these, however, is not to evaluate the teacher as a person but rather to give them a differentiated and in-depth feedback about their teaching. The results of this feedback are then shared with all involved people and analyzed as far as how that teacher can further improve his/her work. This allows teachers to confirm their own self-evaluations, and also shows them where they have reached their goals. As long as teachers can see student feedback as a tool for growth, they will also see areas where they can improve their teaching style.



IQS online, the web platform for quality management and self-evaluation, is used in many schools in the German-speaking realm and is a way to further develop teaching quality in an effective and cost-efficient way. This web platform is already used by teachers at our school. The online platform also offers various ways that student feedback can be implemented towards improving teaching.

Student feedback from now on will become a regular instrument towards improving teaching quality and to support what is already a high level of effectiveness at our school.

By Hendrik Schuhmacher

Simply the reality of asking and being taken seriously is an act that students value and honor. The fear of some teachers that student feedback would be used as a way to "throw them under the bus" is not grounded in reality.

To see how such feedback evaluation can take place, please see one example (from the teaching of German) in this link:
<http://www.iqsonline.net/download.cfm?id=5223&c=6400ae528>



SMV

Students' Council

One of the most important places where a person grows outside of their home is school.

However, school is not just a place to learn reading, writing, and math. Students should be able to take something deeper along with them in their journey of life. Along with learning how to respectfully work with others in social situations and as well as learn skills that develop a sense of independence,

students should learn to take responsibility. This is an especially important step in taking towards becoming an adult. As your age increases, so do your responsibilities. Towards this, each European school has a so called SMV. These are committees that represent the students, whose representatives are the classroom reps from

grades 5 to 12 as well as a liaison teacher. From this group there is then elected a student speaker, who is the representative of the student body along with their interests. Through this committee, students have a right to influence some school decision processes. In this way the SMV is an important liaison for the interest of the students in the school, and is a part of the school administration (even if only in a limited way).

In theory this is easy to understand, although in practice it is more complicated to truly grasp the areas that the SMV is responsible for. To explain exactly what the SMV at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok is responsible for, where its strengths and weaknesses are, and to give a glimpse into its functioning, we have prepared this article. We'll start with the structure of this year's SMV. Art teacher Mr. Alex Schillig, also the liaison teacher last year, is again fulfilling this role this year.



Under his coordination the monthly meetings are held, where student issues and interests are discussed. During the first meeting of the year, the student council positions are voted for. The positions are the treasurer, who is responsible for the funds of the student council, the member of the editorial board of the newsletter, and the secretary, who coordinates the topics of each meeting. The most

important and most responsibility-laden position is that of the student representative. In a similar function to the president, the student speaker is the representative of the students' needs. This is the person whose task would be to represent the students to the teachers' committee and parents' committee, as well as to clarify the goals of the student council as our set at the student council meetings. They run the student council meetings and also attend official meetings of the school. The student speaker

for this year (2014-2015) is Marvin Fischer from grade 11. The substitute is Amy Boondej, also from grade 11.

The Student Council is also responsible for several school events. Occasions such as the Aloha Splash, sports night, and Loy Krathong are the fruits of exact planning and hard work by the Student Council. This leads to my first critical point. As a member of the Student Council, I have an

insider's perspective and the opinion that the position of the classroom representatives does not enjoy the level of prestige it should have. Often students only volunteer for this position out of empathy for the teacher, themselves, or others because nobody wanted to fill this position as evidenced by the votes held in each class. The ambition to be a class representative is definitely restrained. Possible reasons for this



SMV

Students' Council

could be a lack of interest for the extra work, too little engagement on the side of the students, or the view that nothing will really change anyway. It must be recognized that such a position does involve some extra work. However, the amount required is manageable, and the monthly meetings should not serve as something that scares away potential candidates. Additionally, it is clear that the Student Council does not have an influence on every school decision. Certain things are prescribed the way they are, and cannot be changed. This also should not be an argument against joining the Student Council. Trying is better than studying, and it doesn't cost anything to ask. This should be the spirit that those who are interested in this position have; the will to work cooperatively in order to influence decisions. Although it is not possible to fulfill every wish of the students, it is possible to make compromise based on common interests.

Nonetheless it is important to look at the positive sides of Student Council. Even if it is difficult to start out as a classroom representative, these engaged students usually work effectively and with motivation. The

planning of events might be a lot of work, but it is often met with the satisfaction of teachers, parents, and students. Social projects such as the class "godchildren" or fundraisers exist due to the support of student council. In general, one can be proud that the Student Council at RIS Swiss Section - Deutschsprachige Schule Bangkok is a useful committee that takes on meaningful responsibilities.

By Kevin Staub