



Muenster, Germany

Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School

**Placing students at the core with
their strengths and talents**



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Supporting
Healthy Lives

FUNDAÇÃO
Lemann



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

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A background image showing a group of children on a red carpet. In the foreground, a child wearing a grey jacket and a light blue face mask is running towards the camera. To the right, another child's arm and hand are reaching out towards the running child. Other children are visible in the background, some also wearing masks. The scene appears to be an outdoor event.

Introduction

Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School is a secondary school in Muenster, in North Rine-Westphalia, Germany, and believes that individual students should be at the centre of the school's strengths and talents. The school enables their students to participate in every area so that they experience self-efficacy, a requirement for a healthy lifestyle.



Profile:



Country:

Germany



Region:

Muenster



School type:

Public school



Location area:

Town



Student population:

1001 to 1500



Prize Category:

Supporting Healthy Lives

“For us, it’s really important to look at the individual student. [They are at] the centre of a pedagogical concept we try whenever possible on the learning process of the individual student.”

**– Birgit Wenninghoff,
Headmistress, Mathilde
Anneke Comprehensive
School**



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

To develop self-efficacy in the hearts and minds of its students the school focuses on physical activity and sees it as a basic human right. The school takes a sustainability approach that considers the ecological, economic, and social aspects of a school environment, and puts a strong focus on enabling its students to plan and monitor their own learning independently.

Students take part in weekly assemblies, where they discuss important school issues and help make decisions regarding school policy. Students also have the autonomy to choose how they want to approach learning – for instance, which topics to discuss during classroom lessons and the level of the tasks. The teaching staff also

support students by individualising their learning and choosing content that directly pertains to their needs.

Catering to a diverse student population has forced the school to acknowledge that some of its students may not have the same opportunities as their peers. The faculty noticed that children and young people from more deprived backgrounds were often more reluctant to engage in physical activity and were more likely to lack certain social and motor skills. “We try not to be too competitive,” says Birgit Wenninghoff, the school’s Headmistress, before explaining that other schools in the area tended to focus heavily on academic performance and success.




Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School took a different approach by developing its educational model around the individual student. Being among the first to implement a physical activity and well-being educational model, it was hard, at first, to craft enough projects to reach the school's overall goal. "I think it's a challenge to be creative every day and to rethink your ideas and to see whether they really work for the kids we have," says Max Mustermann, a teacher at Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School. "I would also say it's a challenge to find the right project for the kids, for the individual kid, and to see what fits."

Some of the manifestations of disadvantaged development were difficulties with concentration, aggressive behaviour, obesity, and a low self-sense of self. In the school's eyes, all these factors

negatively influenced the students' overall development. This is why the school made it its core mission to "support each child in a healthy lifestyle and to develop resilience and empathy."

Because of its physical education-focused educational model, the COVID-19 pandemic created an especially difficult challenge.



The background of the page is a photograph of several young people, likely students, holding up large, flat, hand-shaped signs on wooden sticks. One sign on the left is red, and one on the right is blue. The students are smiling and appear to be in an outdoor setting, possibly a school courtyard. A semi-transparent white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing text.

“I think we’re special because we really look at the strength and talent of our school. We make mistakes, but mistakes are not our focus. It’s good that we make them because only then can we learn and become better.”

**- Birgit Wenninghoff, Headmistress,
Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive
School**



EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School was established in 2016, and “from the beginning it was essential for us to transform the team spirits,” says Wenninghoff, reflecting on the fact that the school had an ongoing influx of new staff and teachers. In order to operate in a way that best served the students, faculty members needed to feel comfortable in their work environment. To create a sense of unity, the school hold two ‘welcome days’ to encourage teamwork and rapport among the school’s teachers.

Based on current data on the benefits of children being consistently active in their everyday routine, the school believes that physical activity is a “key point” of development for children of all ages. In its eyes, a typical school framework should accommodate and implement measures that encourage more physical activity.

“Physical activity has to be seen not as an organised sport activity,” says Marie-Christine Ghanbari, a teacher from Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School, and went on to explain that students should come to understand that physical exercise can take place in many different forms. The school encourages students to exercise in fun and engaging ways, making them much more likely to adjust to the idea of being more active without having to engage in the sport directly.

The school firmly believes that “every child should have the right of equal opportunity in its life,” and this ideal is reflected in the range of welfare initiatives it has weaved into its educational model. It ensures at least four hours a week of PE lessons, and that students take physically active free play breaks throughout the school day.



In collaboration with the University of Muenster, the school developed the “Sportpaten” Project, a one-to-one mentoring programme in which the children are empowered to be physically active. What’s more, most of the lessons start with physical exercises – “Schule mit Schwung” (“School with vigour”). Another component of the school’s educational model is the notion that continuous engagement in physical activity leads to greater resilience. “When you start to be active, you get more resilient,” said Ghanbari. “It doesn’t matter how many times you fall, it’s important that students and children learn to stand up again and be active again, and can solve problems because our brains and bodies are related to each other.”

To promote healthy lifestyles and build resilience, the school has lessons on social and emotional health, a food programme that focuses on good nutrition, and counselling sessions for students experiencing poor mental health and stress. The school also combines physical education with other school objectives, such as social engagement with partner schools. For example, the school launched a ‘Peace Run’ for its sister school in Uganda. The school also has three school dogs that often draw students into other physical activities. These dogs also give the students the chance to raise puppies that will go on to be therapy dogs at the Ugandan school.


Some of the older students act as mentors and role models for the younger children. They organise activities for them, and students can even pitch projects and initiatives they believe will benefit themselves and their peers.

The school allows its students to monitor and plan their own learning independently. Together with parents and teachers, pupils design their own food plan every week and record their reflections about what they’ve learned about healthy eating and sustainability.



They use a learning journal to promote positive reinforcement, centred around their small achievements and which they build up over time. Often, students are asked to start with the phrase: “I am very proud of myself because of...”. This empowers them to find their own way in an increasingly complex world – this is the strong sense of responsibility the school tries to reinforce in its students, using child psychology to train their minds in addition to their physical and mental health.



The background image shows a classroom setting. In the foreground, a student's hand is visible, holding a blue pencil over a notebook. To the left, a student with blonde hair tied in a bun is partially visible. In the center, a student with dark hair is seen from behind, looking towards a window. A tablet computer is open on the desk, displaying a grid of small images. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

“It’s very important that children have physical activity breaks. We know this from the research: when they go out when they create something, they develop a positive and resilient self.”

**– Marie-Christine Ghanbari,
Teacher, Mathilde Anneke
Comprehensive School**



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

As a result of the programme and the push to encourage students to involve themselves in more physical activity, the school managed to stem the negative effects of being less active. Pupils became more involved in other initiatives within the holistic and healthy framework. One such project was in helping design the schoolyard, while the 'Canteen' encouraged year groups to come up with a sustainable food plan each week. Some students even created their own meals.

From the onset, the school has focused on instilling a sense of individual responsibility and has involved families and parents as important stakeholders in how the school went about devising its student support and welfare methods. "Lernzeiten" ("Study times"), another of the school's initiatives, was a key example of this, wherein students took control of their

own learning. To further increase the student's chances of success, the school helped students identify their best, individual comprehension and study methods.

The German, English, and Mathematics lessons follow a fixed timetable that allows students to take their own approach to how they apply themselves to those subjects. This supports a "rhythm of learning" that has instilled greater responsibility and discipline, fulfilling some of the key principles the school has tried to instil in its student body.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school created a task force of teachers to transfer the school's core curriculum to the digital sphere. The task force created a learning platform that could be accessed by both students and faculty and gave help to students who did not have access to the internet, tablets, or computers.





Key Steps



LERNZEITEN ("LEARNING TIMES")

Students work on specific subjects in designated subject rooms, where they are encouraged to plan lessons and explain to staff how their individual learning pace should be incorporated into the lesson plans. This strengthens motivation and challenges students to push themselves academically.



ENCOURAGING A GOOD CULTURE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The school took measures to develop a strong rapport with its wider community, opting for a model of classes that provided greater student support. Each class has 28 students and is supervised by 2 class teachers, each of whom provides tutoring and weekly coaching for their 14 students. The class teachers act as confidants for the students and are responsible for educational



issues and work closely with parents. They strengthen and coach the children's learning during learning counselling hours, and supervise the class council hours and the hours of social learning.



STRENGTHENING SELF-ESTEEM

The school takes measures to strengthen everyone's self-esteem and self-confidence, which it believes will help students develop their own identities. In grade 5, the focus is on encouraging students to develop better communication skills, while in grade 6, students work on understanding democratic structures in German society. Year 7 examines class dynamics and the question of what "cool" actually means.



ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES

From the very beginning, the school has woven the importance of sustainability directly into its teaching practices and learning. Students have always been enthusiastic about the idea of opening a sustainable, non-commercial shop, and developed this idea with the school's sustainability coordinator.



The project aims to teach and show the whole school community, especially the students, how to become more responsible consumers.



SCHOOL AS LIVING SPACE FOR FOOD

The canteen association of the Mathilde Anneke Comprehensive School offers a full, age-appropriate lunch for all students. The school attaches great importance to the fact that the students can enjoy lunch in a family and pleasant atmosphere. To do this, they eat in fixed table groups and organise themselves independently into table and canteen services, which take care of setting and clearing the tables.



P.E AND MOTOR TESTING

Since 2022, the school has carried out a project on motor development and physical fitness as part of a collaboration with the WWUMünster. The results of the motor tests have been used in different ways, such as influencing the content of physical education classes, the design of the playground, and the range of exercise, games, and sports the school offers.





PROJECTS FOR RESILIENCE AND HEALTH

One of the school's key philosophies is the focus on developing empathy, resilience, and global competence in the hearts and minds of its student body. To encourage these values, they launched three projects such as "Sportpate", "Mentor-Coach", and "Challenge Project".



Advice and Guidance

Work in teams as it would be difficult to devise and implement this kind of programme without a good team structure. It's important to work well and to take the time to prepare the projects and evaluate how effective they are within the school's educational model. Let students take an active role in shaping the direction of the programme, in part so they can experience having a voice and be heard and additionally so the school can better cater to their needs.

More information

 <https://www.anneke-gesamtschule.de/>

**Learn more about their work by
watching their event at 2022's T4 World
Education Week: [watch here](#)**

