

2015 Klaus J. Jacobs Best Practice Prize

Gesamtschule Unterstrass (Unterstrass Comprehensive School)

Principal: Dieter Rüttimann

Gesamtschule Unterstrass (Unterstrass Comprehensive School), Zurich, Switzerland

Human beings and values are at the heart of Unterstrass Comprehensive School. The private school, founded in 1981, has two to three classes at each grade level. The school's specialized range of subjects, committed teaching staff and innovative instructional methods help students develop both technical and emotional intelligence. An independent teacher-training institution (unterstrass.edu), which is part of the Zurich University of Teacher Education, emphasizes transparent structures, consistent learning groups, abundant contact to children and enthusiastic participation.

Principal Dieter Rüttimann

Dieter Rüttimann (born in Zurich in 1955) is the principal of Zurich's Gesamtschule Unterstrass (Unterstrass Comprehensive School), which he founded 34 years ago, and also teaches at the school. A couples therapist, he earned a degree in education. Since 1985, he has taught courses in language teaching, general teaching methods and communication at the Unterstrass teacher-training institution at Zurich University of Teacher Education. Since 2000, he has served as the director of the unterstrass.edu master's program on the management of diversity in education. Rüttimann has taught education and special education at the University of Zurich from 2001 till 2005, as well as a variety of subjects at the University of Hildesheim in Germany until now.

Rüttimann's approach

Dieter Rüttimann's approach is based on the principle of collaborative learning, drawing on elements of neuropsychology and cognitive psychology. It stresses ongoing training for teachers and places particular emphasis on reciprocal teaching, with older students teaching younger children. Consistent with this approach, Rüttimann describes Gesamtschule Unterstrass as a "school of development" and a "student's school". He sees the adolescent brain, which is in a highly sensitive phase of development, as an opportunity for social and emotional learning.

Publications by Dieter Rüttimann (selected examples)

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- Rüttimann, D. (2004). Eine Schule plant ihr Schuljahr. In C. Stern, J. Mahlmann & E.
- Rüttimann, D. (2007). Inklusion – eine Schule für alle. Bildung Thurgau. 2/2007, 22-25.
- Rüttimann, D. (2007). Die sieben Elemente einer Schule. Die neue Schulpraxis. 9/2007, 8-10.
- Rudolph, M. & Rüttimann, D. (2011). Inklusive Pädagogik und Kommunikation. Pädagogik: Theorie und Praxis. Liepaja: Universität.
- Koch, H., Rüttimann, D., Fiechter, M., Keller, M., Hefti, K., Hollenweger, J. (2014). Kompetenzorientiert unterrichten – Einblicke. A brochure published by the Department of Education of the Canton of Zurich.
- Rüttimann, D. (2015). Kompetenzorientiert unterrichten. Fokus Schule, 6/15.