



Geography - Changing Faces of the Earth

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In Austria there are currently some major reforms concerning high school education underway. At our school, the Bundesgymnasium and Bundesrealgymnasium Draschestraße, a school belonging to the Vienna Bilingual Schooling branch, we have developed a course system in which pupils can select courses and determine individually which areas of study they want to focus on.

Specially devised courses have been developed which fit within the framework of natural and applied sciences but go beyond the basic curriculum in geography. At the same time the structure of the basic courses, compulsory for all pupils, was altered in order to allow for topics that are currently in the news to be dealt with sufficiently.

In the basic courses of geography exogenic and endogenic forces are dealt with extensively. The main idea is to make children aware of the powers that make landscapes look the way they do now – and what their appearance may have been thousands or millions of years ago. A piece of rubble, a depression in the landscape or the way a tree may bend may serve as the key to what lies underneath earth's surface. These tell-tale signs are worth investigating, they can open up our eyes and change our perception of the world.

A great focus, in particular in the 7th grade, is placed on glaciers and karst, most notably in the Alps and the Mediterranean region, whereas the 6th grade emphasizes weathering, erosion and endogenic forces in the geography curriculum. The newly installed whiteboards at our school allow for excellent visualization of subject-related aspects concerning the aforementioned topics and issues.

In addition to the geography basic-course we have devised a special course entitled „Dante's Peak“ which deals specifically with the endogenic forces that help shape the appearance of the earth, in particular plate tectonics, vulcanism, earthquakes.