



SCHOOL CASE STUDY

Szkoła Podstawowa 9 Primary School

School name	Primary School No. 9 in Elbląg / Szkoła Podstawowa im. Józefa Piłsudskiego nr 9 w Elblągu
Contributor's name	Oktawia Gorzeńska
City and country	Elbląg / Poland
Website	http://sp9.elblag.pl/
Age of students	6-14
Number of staff	47
Area of focus	Students' initiative / learning space to support development of key competences

This school case study is part of Output 4 by the Novigado project "Guidelines in Learning Space Innovations", available at the [project website](#).



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The Novigado project is funded with support from the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 2: Strategic Partnerships). This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the EC cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Background, Context and Drivers to change

At the beginning, the teaching staff created a coherent vision of educational change. This was not easy due to the enormity of the needs, the lack of financial resources and the size of the school building itself. However, the new headmaster came and focused on Finnish education, the education built on values such as “attitude – freedom – trust” thus the main priorities of changes were for students: development of competences and engagement, and for teachers: autonomy.

It was not an easy change of school strategy, so at the beginning only few teachers were inspired by it. Soon the group of supporters grew up to 16 teachers who has been actively involved in changing the school space.

Flexible/innovative learning environment

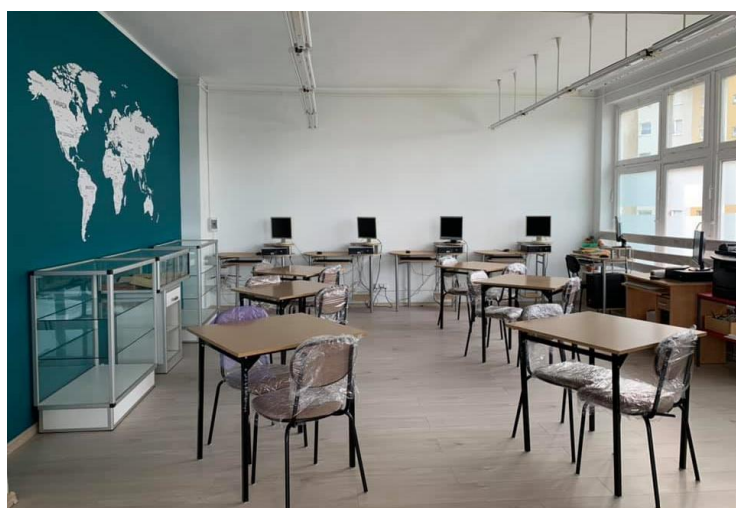
As a very first step, the aesthetics of the building connectors were changed, they were painted into cheerful colours such as: indigo, fuchsia, grey, yellow, and black. Then some drawings were painted on one side of the connector corridor and photographs with captions describing teachers’ interests and passions were hung on the opposite walls. To complete the new image of the connectors, seats made of pallets as well as comfortable sofas, tables and even deck chairs were situated there. These elements appeared on each floor of the segments. The school also managed to refresh the walls in the school corridors. They were painted in nice colours and some new ideas of decorations and displays were added such as interactive clock with different time zones and geographic features.



The Patron figure of the school, *Marshal Joseph Pilsudski*, was placed in the entrance of the school. Now everyone can read his biography and see the memorabilia related to him. Before the figure and memorabilia had been locked in the history classroom and had been only available for students who had had lessons there.

The lower level of the school with the youngest pupils was another important space which was changed. Only two classrooms were changed at the beginning – they were redecorated and painted into bright colours. Old furniture was moved so the classrooms are more spacious now. Pupils are allowed to draw on the walls. There are comfortable sofas and new desks. Unfortunately, the carpets had to be removed for the time of pandemic.

The classrooms for older students, including Polish and Maths classrooms have also been given a new look. They were painted into nice colours and unnecessary furniture was removed. The classrooms were furnished with modern multimedia equipment.



Two new educational spaces have been created: the “Workshop Studio” and the “Patch and Cloth Studio”. Both are very popular among students, teachers, parents and even other family members who enjoy sewing, knitting, embroidery, etc. In addition to modern tools, the workshop has acquired old tables from the 80’s which were hidden in the basement. Both spaces are inspired by craftsmanship which is an important tradition of Elbląg and used to be famous for its tailor shops. The city’s history is slowly being forgotten, and the profession of tailor is no longer a subject of study in any of secondary schools in Elbląg.

The staffroom was another place which was changed. It used to be furnished with huge amount of furniture and a huge conference table. It was redecorated with a small amount of money collected by a group of teachers. It was painted, most of furniture was removed and several zones were created, e.g., a work zone, a conversation zone and a rest zone.

The library’s space for reading was redecorated thanks to parents and students who organized weekly “Cookie Thursdays”. Another event organized in the library was a festival for the entire school community. Thanks to these activities, the school raised a significant amount of money which was used to redesign the reading room. Now it is a place of rest and relaxation.

You can [visit the school virtually here](#).

Student-centred pedagogy

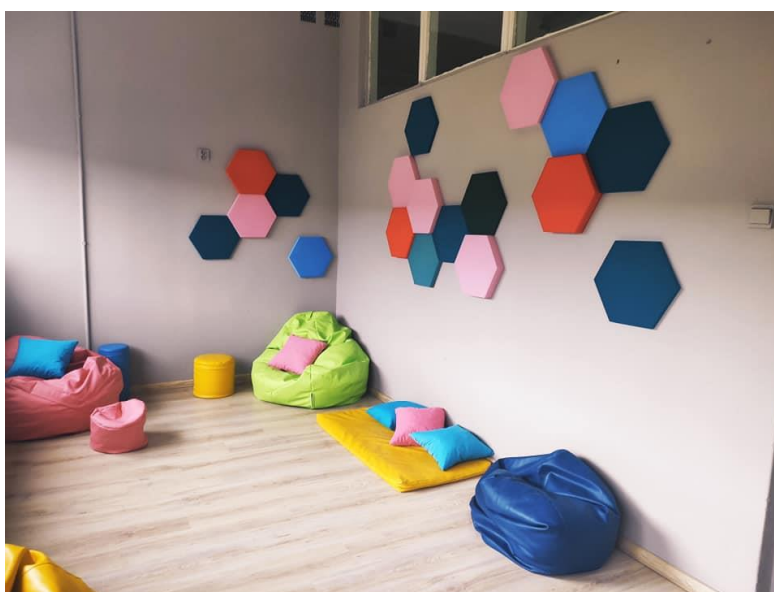
Changing the educational space is only the beginning of efforts to create a new quality of school functioning. Making changes can be a difficult, dynamic, multi-step process which is not always understood by everyone. Changing the educational space is the element that is easily noticed, the change becomes visible and ready to be used. The hardest part, however,

is changing the attitude towards new opportunities and this has happened at school – it is an ongoing process of changes.

Several classrooms and places have now not only new walls or floors but have also been equipped with modern multimedia equipment. Technology has now a slightly different function than before, so the equipment is used more purposefully or task-oriented rather than an extraordinary “super-tool”.

In one of the classrooms, typical desks will eventually be replaced by round ones which are very useful for team or group work. The school has learnt that less furniture means more space for action and movement.

The possibility of using sofas and tables enables the formation of social skills and improves communication. Users feel more relaxed in a space that at least partially resembles home.



Use of technology

Modern technology is already used in everyday life by our students and teachers. Sometimes it is necessary due to the nature of the subject e.g., information technology, where students learn various programs (Word, Paint), applications to use in specific situations (Kahoot, Genially, Zoom, Meet, Testportal). They learn how to make a presentation in Power Point, how to make calculations and data analysis in Excel, how to create web pages but they also do more complicated tasks such as coding. Children learn the functioning of algorithms, logical thinking, prediction and other important things. Lego Technics sets have helped students create robots, program the robots and achieve their goals. Technologies are also teaching aids that support the teaching and learning process. Access to the Internet, gives the opportunity to students to quickly find information and use it correctly in practice.

The multitude and variety of free applications which can be used in education provides opportunities for self-development (Insta.ling), students get rid of language barriers, gain self-confidence, and above all, learn that foreign languages are useful, and the skills acquired will enhance their CV in the future.

Recently technology made remote learning possible. It verified the practical skills of both teachers and students. During remote learning, the school used various digital platforms.

Thanks to the “School for Innovator Project” the school bought two Samsung Flips which provided new opportunities for teaching. They serve as a whiteboard, notepad, presenter, screen, and students can also paint pictures on them.

Impact

Benefits

- Increasing number of teachers-innovators
- Increasing engagement of students thanks to active working methods
- School started to be visible in the community and attracted big interest – there are a lot of teenagers applying to become students of this school.

Challenges

1. It was hard to convince the school community (teachers, students, administrative and support staff) that changes are necessary. There were teachers who had worked in the school for 20 to 30 years, so they got used to their space. At the very beginning, the school started changing the interior of classrooms taking into consideration the subject blocks. Due to the previous division of school into units there was duplication of classrooms in each segment. The changes forced for example tidying up lockers and cupboards. Some teachers were very emotional about the changes and needed support from the principal, school psychologist or pedagogue. After a few months it was visible that some of the teachers were ready for immediate change, and some were not. However, the teachers were willing to cooperate. Some teachers are still insecure but want to take part in changes.
2. “Others can and I can’t” – there were disagreements about identifying spaces which should be changed. It was also noticeable that the school was observed by other institutions, literally copying the school’s solutions. It showed that the changes in the school were really significant, and others liked it. Therefore, in the case of teachers who did not take part in the changes this situation awakened the will to act e.g., to obtain additional grants for the purchase of materials for renovation of their classrooms. Some new sponsors appeared who joined seeing the school’s active involvement. The school became an inspiration for other neighbouring schools to start changes too.
3. Financial problems – like every school we struggle with a constant financial shortfall. The school has many needs – from thermal upgrades to renovation of classrooms. That is why the school looks up for sponsorships, grants and projects. Despite limited funding, the school successfully transformed its educational space.
4. “Energy depletion” – the rearrangement of the space was made two years ago. As it happens in such actions, the longer they last the more “energy consuming” they are. In the beginning there was an explosion of energy, then exhaustion, reluctance, the next stage is to gather energy again and continue the started process of changes. There were difficult situations, but they are inevitable in such process. Now it will be easier because teachers are more aware of obstacles.



This work is licensed under a
[Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Images provided by Szkoła Podstawowa 9 Primary School

Email fcl@eun.org | Web <http://fcl.eun.org/novigado> | #Novigado



Co-funded by the
 Erasmus+ Programme
 of the European Union

The Novigado project is funded with support from the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 2: Strategic Partnerships). This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the EC cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.