

***Klasse2000 – an elementary school program for health
promotion and the prevention
of substance abuse and violence***

by

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Klasse2000

Klasse2000 is a research-validated program for the promotion of health and the prevention of violence and substance abuse. It is designed for elementary school students from age 5 to 10. The program was developed in 1991 at the Institute for Preventive Pneumology in Nuremberg by an interdisciplinary team of physicians and educators. Since then, the program has been improved and updated continuously. Klasse2000 units start in the 1st grade and accompany the children for 4 years of their elementary school time. Klasse2000 is based on personal cooperation between teachers and external experts. These “health experts” give 2 or 3 interactive lessons per year and assist the teachers in carrying out the main part of the program.

Goals and topics

The Klasse2000 program consists of five major components. Research has shown that students who develop personal and social skills are far less likely to engage in a wide range of high-risk behavior, including substance abuse and externalizing and aggressive behavior, so the main issue is life skills training.

Klasse2000 promotes life skills and healthy behavior through activities designed to:

- Teach students how to identify everyday decisions and how they are influenced by others
- Enable students to analyze problem situations and consider the consequences of alternative solutions
- Encourage students to exercise critical and creative thinking, initiate and carry out conversations and communicate effectively
- Have students examine their self-image and its effects on behavior
- Enhance competences to reduce stress and anxiety and to cope with anger: students recognize that they have choices other than aggression when faced with tough situations.

The curriculum includes lessons about bodily functions and about a healthy and balanced diet. Regular exercises are included. In the 4th grade, specific elements for substance abuse prevention enable the children to recognize common misconceptions about tobacco and alcohol. They practice resistance skills for dealing with peers and media pressure in interactive lessons.

Klasse2000 for teachers and students

Curriculum sets include a teacher's manual and workbooks for students. The curriculum consists of an average of 15 lessons in every school year.

Teachers and children are supplied with materials, such as audio CDs, parachutes, stethoscopes, posters and slides. The identification figure is KLARO (see figure 1).



Figure 1: KLARO

In contrast to most other school-based programs, Klasse2000 is not disseminated by teacher trainings. It is based on personal cooperation between teachers and external experts. These come from health-related professions, and most of them are physicians, pedagogues or psychologists who work for the organization as volunteers or as paid personnel.

The health experts give 2 or 3 interactive lessons per year and assist the teachers in carrying out the Klasse2000 lessons. They accompany the children over 4 years and are continuous contact persons for the teachers during that time. This long-term cooperation and personal contact is intended to support fidelity of implementation.

Klasse2000 for parents and schools

Parents are informed through regular newsletters and an annual magazine called KLARoTEXT. Moreover, the health experts give thematic parent-teacher conferences. Klasse2000 supports headmasters in developing a “health promoting school”. They receive “Schule2020”, a tool to help schools develop a plan for integrating health topics in structures of daily life.

If they continuously implement the program, schools can apply for the Klasse2000 certificate.

Development

The program started in 1991 in Bavaria with 6,000 students. Since then it has been implemented continuously in Germany. In the current school year, more than 350,000 students participate (see figure 2).

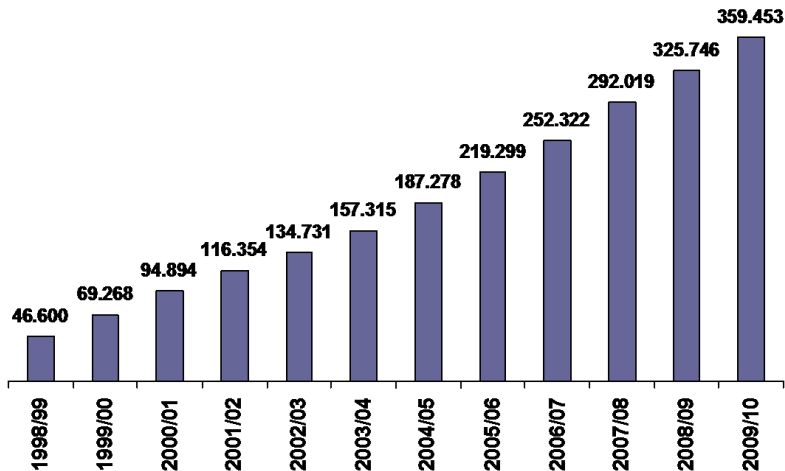


Figure 2: Number of participating students per year

Research-based practice

Klasse2000 is based on scientific theories and results. The program is continuously evaluated, often in cooperation with external research institutions. Every school year, pupils, parents, teachers and health experts answer questionnaires about their satisfaction with the program and program implementation. These studies confirm a high acceptance and fidelity of implementation (Storck, Duprée & Böleskei, 2007, 2008).

Based on regular process evaluations, the curriculum is continuously improved and updated.

The effectiveness of the program has been confirmed (Isensee & Hanewinkel 2009). An independent research institute (IFT-Nord) carried out a longitudinal study to examine the effects of Klasse2000 on students, class atmosphere and schools.

The results show positive effects of the Klasse2000 program on class atmosphere. This effect was found in the teacher's rating and in the rating of the students.

Klasse2000 students have greater knowledge about bodily functions and a higher self-efficacy in grade 3 and 4. They are more confident that they can influence their own health and are better informed about how to do so.

Moreover, the results confirm positive effects on tobacco and alcohol abuse onset. Figure 3 shows the incidences of alcohol and smoking onset in the 4th grade. Klasse2000 students show significantly lower rates for both tobacco and alcohol.

The percentage of students who had not yet been smoking or drinking alcohol in grade 3, but started in grade 4, was significantly lower in Klasse2000 classes than in the control group.

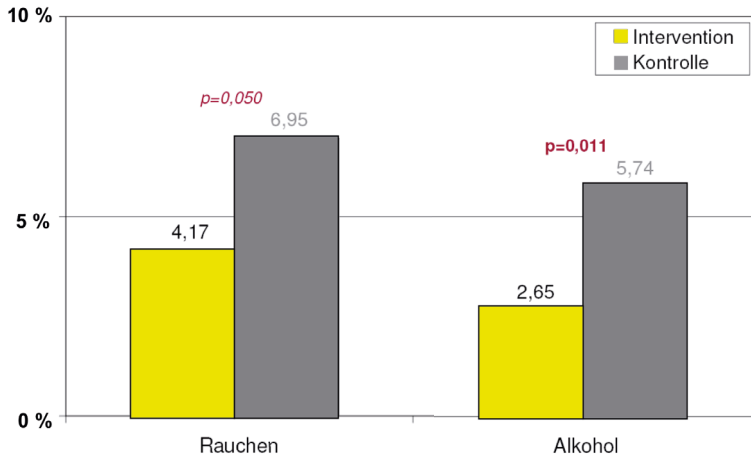


Figure 3: Incidences of smoking and alcohol drinking onset.

Sponsoring

Klasse2000 is financed by private donations. The basic principle is the sponsoring of single school classes. The program costs 220 € per year for one school class. Sponsors are for example parents, service clubs (esp. Lions Clubs), banks, physicians, pharmacies and health insurance companies. Klasse2000 is a non-profit organization with 29 employees and 1.300 volunteers. The organization received the DZI Seal-of-Approval by the German Central Institute for Social Issues (DZI) for carefully spending the money.

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