

KET – Kids Experience Technology

January 15-February 23, 2014 / Ars Electronica Center Linz

(Linz, January 14, 2014) KET – *Kinder erleben Technik* is making its fourth annual appearance at the Ars Electronica Center. The very successful traveling exhibition runs from January 15 to February 23. In anticipation of the 2014 premiere, Linz Deputy Mayor Bernhard Baier noted that “in only 30 days last year, a total of 1,493 girls and boys explored these fascinating exhibits.” Baier, who also serves as commissioner of cultural affairs and recently took over as chairman of the AEC’s Board of Directors, added: “Youngsters should be introduced to science and technology at an early age. This is the way to break down the barriers that frequently arise. It’s a well-known fact that there’s strong ongoing demand for employees with training and skills in these areas. In 2009, the German Academy of Science and Engineering and the Association of German Engineers conducted a major study that involved approximately 13,000 pupils and students as well as engineers and scientists.

This ‘barometer of up-and-coming young talent’ identified three factors that are particularly conducive to someone developing a strong interest in technology, and to a higher probability of them studying related subjects on the college level and pursuing a career in this field:

- Children should encounter technology at an early age and get acquainted with it in a playful way.
- Key formative experiences in which technology comes to be perceived as interesting and challenging often constitute the driving force behind opting for a corresponding career path if parents and teachers nurture young people efforts to go deeper into these subjects.
- Ongoing and didactically well-conceived technical training in schools is also important.

The ‘Kids Experience Technology’ initiative makes a substantial contribution to this.”

The exhibition’s aim is to enable 4-8-year-olds to have lots of fun getting hands-on experience with scientific phenomena and their technological applications. Its 12 experimentation stations focus on energy, magnetism, lathing & virtual modeling, construction & deconstruction, designing electronic devices, and codes & programming. Administrators of nursery schools, kindergartens and elementary schools (grades 1 & 2) can

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make reservations by calling 0732.7272.51 or sending an e-mail to center@aec.at. KET – *Kinder erleben Technik* is produced jointly by OTELO and Ars Electronica. Since 2012, KET's run at the Ars Electronica Center has been supported by the City of Linz's Department of Children and Youth Services.

Three Interactive Stations by Ars Electronica

Ars Electronica has contributed three stations to this year's array: Codes & Programming, Digital Modeling, and the u19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD-Mobile. Codes & Programming lets youngsters take a playful approach to learning coding and programming, and makes them aware of the virtually infinite design possibilities in this area. „Digital Modeling is a cool new enhancement of KET's Lathing Candles station—here, kids use a pen display and highly intuitive Rotation Modeler software to create digital models. Then, it's on to a laser cutter to produce stickers that participants get to take home with them. The u19 – CREATE YOUR WORLD-Mobile is a drivable presentation platform elaborating on the activities Ars Electronica offers to young people. It features two apps designed to encourage kids to get creative and develop ideas of their own.

Linz's Commissioner of Youth & Family Services Stefan Giegler: Fostering Early Education for the Scientists of Tomorrow

Human curiosity is the foundation of science. That also goes for observing, testing, doing research, imitating and trying out new things. All of these are activities for which kids need no training at all—their very nature makes them scientists. Without the least bit of coercion, they can spend hours at a time getting acquainted with nature's laws. Displaying endurance in reconnoitering their surroundings and a spirit of inventiveness just seem to come naturally to them. Kids' curiosity about their world emerges at an early stage of development and intuitively endows them with a natural understanding of all areas of science. So, we're delighted that more than 1,200 nursery school and kindergarten pupils have been signed up for this year's Kids Experience Technology event held at the Ars Electronica Center under the auspices of the City of Linz's Department of Children and Youth Services.

Science as Part of Everyday Life in Kindergarten

For the City of Linz, it's important to nurture, and support kids' motivation to learn. That's why the learning process at the city's own child care facilities is designed to provide children with a setting that lets them give free rein to their natural urge to discover. The focus is on getting kids to utilize their immediate surroundings as a space in which to gain up-close-and-personal experience with science. It's vital to ensure that science and technology are right there where kids play every day. This also entails enabling youngsters to experience and comprehend scientific phenomena by means of simple experiments suitable for their particular age group. Doing research in this way—in which everyday life is the point of departure—is reflected by the choice of materials. All everyday objects are welcome; all it takes is acknowledging them as “research equipment.”

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Fostering Independent Discovery

The long-term objective of Linz's municipal kindergartens is to provide youngsters with optimal preparation to meet the emotional, linguistic and cognitive demands of elementary school, and thus to ensure equal educational opportunity for all. Points of utmost importance on the pedagogical agenda—gender-sensitive and intercultural education, computer-supported learning, and the use of Montessori methods—constitute the basis of the municipal kindergartens' didactic concept. In it, tremendous importance is accorded to forms of play that do justice to each child's individual level of development. These situations call for teaching personnel who give kids time and space for diverse exploratory experiences and who are available on the spot to answer their questions.

Modern Offerings for Modern Kids

Nowadays, more than 70% of all municipal kindergartens function according to the learning workshop principle. In this progressive concept, the original form of a kindergarten as a setting for child-centered work has been modified into an open house. Here, children no longer spend the whole day divided up in rigidly organized groups; instead, they can partake of the offerings that appeal to them.

Another important area of emphasis is delivering comprehensive support to all kids who need language instruction. Thus, during the three years they spend in kindergarten, every child can receive a total of 540 hours of instruction in German. It has been scientifically proven that this form of nurturing promotes children's development and better equips them for their subsequent path through the educational system.

The Gender Aspect

Encounters with science and technology are essential for both girls and boys, and constitute a key prerequisite for equality of opportunity in their future educational and occupational careers. Accordingly, gender-sensitive educational practices with respect to small children are emphasized in all municipal facilities.

City Councilman Stefan Giegler: "Diverse educational offerings tailored to yield pleasant, child-friendly learning experiences commencing even before the pupil enters elementary school and then provided on an ongoing basis increase our children's chances of success!"

Kindergartens in particular build a solid foundation for our children's further development. But the offerings that the City of Linz makes available to youngsters go far beyond that. More than 100 recreational facilities provide low-pressure, fun settings that invite kids to discover and experience physical, scientific laws. The extensive Active Days activities offered during school breaks—with courses in areas ranging from sport to technology and science—are wonderful opportunities for participating youngsters to enjoy new experiences.

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There are lots of other offerings targeting kids and their families, and they're provided by both municipal and private facilities. They make Linz an ideal breeding ground for successful students. For instance, the educational enrichment and remedial tutoring programs offered at municipal facilities. Thus, providing children with outstanding educational opportunities has extremely high priority in Linz. After all, the kids of today will soon be the driving force behind our city's future development.

KET – *Kinder erleben Technik* (in German): <http://www.otelo.or.at/ket/>

Photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/arselectronicacenter/sets/72157629115120811/with/6909675375/>

City of Linz: <http://www.linz.at/english/>

Ars Electronica Center Linz: <http://www.aec.at/news/en/>

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