



**Federal President Frank Walter Steinmeier  
at the award ceremony for the Schools of Tomorrow /  
Unsere Schule ideas competition  
in Berlin  
on 14 June 2018**

The idea for Schools of Tomorrow wasn't born yesterday, or even the day before yesterday, but was developed by John Dewey 100 years ago. And since that is the case, in the next hour and a half or two hours I want to trace the development of schools over the past 100 years, with all the changes that have taken place.

Don't worry. That's exactly what I won't do, because I'm aware that one or two of you are a bit nervous and finally want to know who has won and who will receive an award today.

Of course, when I talk about the awards, the Olympic principle applies: being here today is already an achievement in itself. Everyone here is a winner. So I want to say to you now: if you are not one of the award-winners, don't be disappointed! The fact that you are here today is a mark of success, and you can be proud of yourselves.

There were some wonderfully creative ideas. There were also some ideas that sounded good but which are maybe not quite so easy to integrate into the daily routine of school life. I myself could often have done with the "Cheat Boutique" in the school basement - a great idea that would have helped me, too. I don't know what the teachers think of this idea, but we won't ask them about that today.

As you may know, under the German Basic Law you need to be at least 40 years old to be President of Germany, so my own school years were quite a while ago. I'm a good bit older than 40, but I can remember a lot about my school days, and that is why, when I saw your demands and ideas for the schools of tomorrow, I was particularly pleased by the fact that basically, they mirror many of the concerns from my own school days.

For example, that no mobbing should be tolerated in school playgrounds; that you shouldn't have to wait too long for the school

bus in the mornings or afternoons; that the teachers should take you seriously; that you have teachers you can trust.

That shows that there are many things that remain important for pupils from one generation to the next. Clean toilets are, of course, another vital issue. But of course there is another central concern that has emerged over the course of the years: modern school equipment that keeps up with the changes in the world, and our world is becoming more digital.

Pupils today want to be prepared for that world. Of course I would like to see all schools equipped with state-of-the-art technology. But at the end of the day, it isn't enough simply to give pupils access to a few tablets. It is equally crucial to ensure that pupils are prepared for a world that is changing at breakneck speed: that they know how to find their way in the world amid the latest forms of technological communication and social media; that they don't become addicted to social media; that there are still times over the course of the day when they are not just staring at their mobile phone; that they can form their own opinions; that pupils are taught how to preserve democracy and democratic conditions.

That is my most important message today, and since we are talking about Schools of Tomorrow, I am glad that we have experts here who are familiar with the schools of today. I am referring to the pupils. We need them when we are talking about the schools of tomorrow.

I believe one thing is clear: we need more investment in the schools of tomorrow. We need to invest in the latest equipment, we need to invest in teachers, we also need to invest in school social work. The resources we invest in schools are an investment that will enrich everyone's future.

I am therefore glad that this competition has taken place. I am delighted by the way it has been organised, by the way the many suggestions and ideas have been handled, by the creativity and dedication shown by those who have participated. At the start I said that I was looking forward to finding out who has won the competition. And I share this sense of anticipation with you all. And now I just want to know who the winners are. Thank you very much!