The Fido Concept

This paper describes a lab school for Munich: what we are planning, how far we have come and what is still open. As of October 2026.

You talked to us about Fido and wanted to know more. This paper sums up the concept in five pages. Each section ends with a pointer to the interactive article that answers the question in full; all the articles are at fidolearning.com.

What is this about?

We are building a school in Munich that we would gladly send our own children to. Fido has two parts: Fido Campus is the school, Fido Learning the approach and the learning platform behind it.

It started with an observation. Much of what learning research and reform schools have long known has not yet reached the ordinary classroom: that children learn better at their own pace, that knowledge only stays if it is revisited at spaced intervals (spaced repetition), and that children grow through real tasks. With AI, a single school can today build for itself what used to take publishers and software companies: its own material and its own software. We want our children to benefit from it, and not 15 years from now.

The key facts at a glance:

School	Fido Campus, a private primary school in Munich; a Gymnasium (academic secondary school) is to follow
Opening	2028, 2029 at the latest, with a first class of about 12 to 24 children
Curriculum	the Bavarian LehrplanPLUS, as a state-approved private school
Day	full day: practice in short blocks in the morning, screen-free workshops in the afternoon
Fees	scaled to family income, with free places and scholarships from the first year
Openness	the learning platform and the curriculum will be open source
Status	platform and first material in progress, a pilot since August 2026, application in preparation

Why a school of its own?

The school system is slow to learn. Textbooks are revised years apart. What a good teacher discovers in their classroom on a Tuesday mostly stays in that classroom. And every teacher puts together their material largely alone. Teachers are far too much on their own today; that is down to the structure, not the people.

So Fido Campus is to be a lab school, with its own learning material and its own learning platform. The goal is a closed loop: the school sees where children get stuck and can improve the material directly, within the same school year. The whole staff, and later several schools, works on a single set of material that keeps getting better. Whoever has a good idea improves the material for everyone.

We see no way to do this without a school of our own. We are glad to be guests at existing schools, and our first pilot runs at one. But only a school that holds its curriculum, its software and its school day in its own hands can trace an observation back to its cause and build the improvement in.

That a small team can build curriculum, material and platform as one piece is new. Ten years ago that would have been far too expensive for a single school. Today a small team can manage it, because AI helps with writing, checking and programming, under clear rules.

Read more: Article 7 · How We Build the School · Article 10 · A New School

What is the school for?

Our aim is to prepare children for a flourishing, self-determined life. That takes four capacities: Understanding (an inner picture of how the world works), Efficacy (the power to change something in it), Agency (setting and pursuing your own goals) and Purpose (what you put all of that towards).

As a school we separate two goals. The floor is binding for every child: reading, writing, arithmetic, thinking clearly, organizing yourself, working reliably with others, a broad general education. It covers the LehrplanPLUS and leads to the Abitur, the German university-entrance qualification. Everything above it we call the height. It is open at the top, and the child helps decide it. Whoever wants to learn calculus at ten learns calculus; whoever would rather build, perform or start

a small business gets time and support for that. When a child outgrows what we offer, we connect them onward, to experts, courses or universities.

Read more: Article 1 · What School Is For

How do children learn at Fido?

Different kinds of knowledge are learned differently. You learn the times tables differently from riding a bike, and both differently from honesty. That is why the day has three modes.

In mastery mode in the morning, each child practices the basics with adaptive learning software. They work in short, focused blocks, on tablets with an eye-friendly e-ink display. The software works with checked, human-written material and sets the tasks by where the child stands. What a child has to master is fixed; how long it takes stays open. When a whole class learns at the same pace, a child often waits for the others or practices what they already know. At Fido the child gets that time back.

They move on only once a topic is secure; that is mastery learning. After that the software brings the topic back, spread over weeks and months, so it is not forgotten; that is spaced repetition. We think both are very promising. Both are well researched, yet in Germany they are the core of the morning at hardly any school.

In guided mode, the workshops, an adult works with a small group on new concepts and experiments, on art and craft, on conversations about history and ethics and on projects of the children's own with a visible result. In free mode the child decides what to do, and the school provides space, material and time. All of it is embedded in the life of the school, in shared meals, in jobs around the house from the school shop to the garden and in visits from outside.

The two modes fill the afternoon, and at Fido the afternoon is not after-school care tacked onto the lessons but the second half of the school day. It runs until 4 p.m., stays screen-free, and the same adults accompany it as in the morning. A workshop is not a lecture in a smaller room; the instruction is short, the doing long. In the current draft each weekday has its own face: Mondays are for art and craft, Tuesdays for the forest day, Wednesdays for sport, Thursdays for cooking and gardening, Fridays for the school assembly. Free time carries the same weight in the timetable as the practice blocks, and the children are outdoors at least an hour a day, in any weather. There is no homework; the practice is done by noon.

At Fido the adults are guides. Because the software takes content, pace and practice off their hands, they have time for what only people can do: explaining, listening, encouraging. That makes them more important, as the people children attach to and look up to. Here we learn a lot from Montessori, from the prepared environment to mixed-age groups.

We do not give grades. Some schools that drop grades also give less feedback; we want the opposite. Each child sees every day what they can already do and what they are working on next, and parents see it in the learning journal and the development conversation.

We do not measure progress by a single test. Whether a child has reached a stage is shown by four independent signals, gathered over weeks: the learning software's data, the guide's judgment, a piece of work the child created, and, where one exists, a yardstick from outside, such as an external exam.

Read more: Article 4 · A Day at Fido · Article 6 · How We Recognise Progress

How is the curriculum built?

A timetable sorts the material by subject: German, maths, general studies, sport. We cut it along different seams. The first question we ask of any topic is not which subject it belongs to but what kind of knowledge it is. We distinguish seven kinds, from facts and procedures through concepts and case judgment to physical skills, independent action and attitudes. The kind of knowledge decides how a topic is learned and at what time of day: a child practices the times tables on the tablet and cycling on the practice ground, and learns honesty in the life of the school.

The second question is what a child does with the knowledge. By that the material falls into four areas. Understanding covers the disciplines that explain the world, from mathematics to history. Creating covers everything that ends in a piece of work or a performance. Applying is the toolkit for everyday life, from language and arithmetic to money and media. And Being is the care of body and mind, from swimming to learning itself. Below them lie 22 subject families, and a family bundles what is learned in the same way: reading, writing, spelling and speaking freely together form Language; swimming to be safe in the water belongs to Fitness and Movement, swimming against the clock to Sport.

Every subject leads through stages. A stage is a package of ability, not a school year. It is complete when everything in it is secure, after months for one child and after years for another. The whole curriculum exists as a knowledge network,

topic by topic with its prerequisites, and every topic names the part of the LehrplanPLUS it covers. So the Bavarian curriculum stays fully intact; our order is a second map over the same terrain, on which what is learned in the same way sits together. You can browse it today in the curriculum explorer (explore.fidolearning.com), including the stages that have no content yet.

Read more: Article 2 · Seven Kinds of Knowledge and the Curriculum Map

What is the biggest open question?

The biggest open question is motivation. Learning software helps a child who keeps going. How every child keeps going, on a tired Tuesday too and with a topic they dislike, is unsolved. That is where most of our work lies.

Our approach starts from the drives children bring anyway: curiosity, enthusiasm, wanting to be able to do something, wanting to decide for themselves, and the social drives of being known by a trusted person, belonging and being seen. The school creates conditions under which these drives kick in for schoolwork. They include the warmth of the adults, visible progress, real responsibility and a daily trade: whoever concentrates during practice earns free time. They also include Fido Bucks, small coins for completed daily goals that the children spend in the school shop. At the start, a lot hangs on outside incentives like these. Over the school years we scale them back step by step, so that the children work more and more from their own drive.

From the Alpha School in Texas we learned how much well-designed motivation matters. There are no rankings at Fido: each child learns at their own pace, and the pace stays private. Whether all of this holds up we will only know once we have tried it with children over months. That is what the pilots are for.

Read more: Article 3 · What Drives Children · Article 8 · Where the Ideas Come From

How do the children live together?

Whether school years go well depends at least as much on living together as on the curriculum. A single returned friendship protects a child from much of what can go wrong socially. Mixed-age home groups widen the circle in which a child finds friends, especially at a small school. Protection from bullying is built rather than hoped for: bullying lives off its audience, so we start with the bystanders. Conflicts are resolved through a set procedure, and belonging is never used as leverage. Rules have tangible consequences, and the children have a say where their decision counts.

Read more: Article 5 · Living Together

How do we work with families?

A school works for families, not only for children; everyday life with Fido should get easier, not more demanding. The school day covers a full working day, drop-off and pick-up happen in a time window, not to the minute, and late and holiday care is there for those who need it. Because each weekday has its own face, you know on Sunday what goes in the school bag. There is no homework; the evening belongs to the family. What parents need to know is in the learning journal and comes from one face, the child's guide, who knows the child over the years and gets in touch when something is up, not just at the parents' evening and not on slips of paper in the school bag. And what the family decides, values, faith, food, the contested questions of upbringing, the guides uphold in front of the child.

Read more: Article 4 · A Day at Fido, the section for parents

What does society get out of it?

Fido Campus will be a private school that charges fees and selects children. A school like that serves its own children first; what it gives back to the city and the school system it has to show. Our answer has four parts: fees by income, admission by fit rather than by performance, open source, and a yearly report.

Fees will follow family income as shown on the tax assessment, with discounts for siblings and with free places; the German constitution requires this of private schools, which may not separate children by their parents' means. On top of that comes a scholarship fund, financed from the first year. We set the amounts in the application for approval. Inside the school a scholarship is invisible, and donating buys no priority in admission.

Admission is about fit. Our model asks that a child learn to sustain the focused work of the morning. There is no entrance test and no ranking, and we do not advertise as a school for the gifted. It starts with a concept evening, a family conversation and a trial day. Children with special educational needs are welcome where the support they need is secured. Even so, we will not be a cross-section of Munich.

That is why the school has to give back more than its selection costs. The learning platform, the curriculum and the methods will be open source, including the mistakes from the pilots. A state school, another founding team or a family at the kitchen table may take what we develop without asking us. There are two reasons for this. The loop gets better with every school that joins, and people only contribute when the result belongs to everyone. And what works at the lab school should help children at state schools too.

Every year we report publicly: the share of scholarships, the cost per child, what has flowed back, and how far each child has come from their own starting point, not just where they ended up. We also form lasting partnerships in Munich, for instance with a school in another neighborhood, local clubs or a farm, where children from both sides work together over years, as equals.

Read more: Article 10 · A New School · Article 9 · Fido Alongside Other Schools

What role does AI play?

For us, AI is above all a tool. It helps the small team build and check curriculum, material and software. In the learning platform, for example, an AI model grades handwritten math work; its verdict is provisional, and the guide can overrule it. The software that steers practice, by contrast, is not a chatbot. It picks the tasks from checked material.

Clear rules apply for children. AI runs only under guidance, and it stays off when doing it yourself is the point. For everything that reaches the children, a person is answerable in the end. Where AI has contributed, we say so. The learning app also has a local mode in which no data about a child goes to a server.

Read more: Article 7 · How We Build the School

Where do we stand?

We are at the beginning, and the plans are at an early stage. In October 2026 that looks like this:

- The learning platform runs in the browser and on Android devices. It includes the learning software, a view for the guides and a knowledge network that maps the LehrplanPLUS topic by topic. The app works without an account; the demo mode, though, takes some digging in the settings to find.
- Since August 2026 a volunteer group of three to six children at a small free school has been practicing with our arithmetic course for half an hour a day. In September it became clear that the first times-tables course produced a lot of practice but little learning: one child had answered around 2,000 questions and still met 6 × 8 as if it were new. Two days later the course had been rebuilt. In early November the school decides whether to continue and whether reading and writing join in.
- For the approval, the pedagogical concept exists in a first complete version, the other documents as drafts. The meeting with the Regierung von Oberbayern, the regional school authority, is still ahead.
- So far Fido is a private project of a small team. The school's operator will be a non-profit company; it has not been founded yet. What we lack most is first-hand primary-school teaching expertise.

The road to our own school is a ladder of pilot steps: prototypes with small groups, single lessons with whole classes, a multi-week pilot at an existing school, a group of our own, then our own school. We climb to the next rung only once the one before has delivered evidence. In the course of 2027 we submit the full application. The first class is to start in 2028, with 2029 as the fallback; in 2029 our eldest child starts school too. The Gymnasium needs its own approval and is to follow when the first children finish fourth grade.

Read more: Article 11 · The Pilot at an Existing School · Article 12 · Where We Stand

What could go wrong?

Five hurdles could hold the school up. We name them so that you know what you are getting into.

- **Approval.** Under the German constitution, a private primary school is only approved if it serves a special pedagogical interest, and the bar is deliberately high. We are preparing the application thoroughly, seeking an early conversation with the authority, and holding 2029 as the fallback.
- **People.** We need teachers and educators who want to shape this kind of day and give up the security of a civil-service post for it. We are already looking for them, first as advisers to the pilot.
- **Effect.** Whether children learn better and more gladly with us is not yet shown. The pilots are designed to test it, and we also publish what does not work.

- **Money.** To build up to the opening and through the first years, we need funding, for instance from foundations. The first conversations are under way.
- **Demand.** A new school needs families who trust it before it exists. That is why we are talking to families now, and their questions and objections feed into the concept.

How can you help?

Nobody builds a school alone. Depending on who you are, you can contribute different things:

- **Families:** Talk to us if you can imagine a school like this for your child, for a pilot, a holiday course or the first class. Your doubts help just as much, and every piece of feedback from the learning app reaches us.
- **Teachers and educators:** What we lack most is experience from primary school. We are looking for a teacher who will accompany us as a coach and tell us plainly where the model misses reality. Later we will be looking for the founding staff.
- **Politics and administration:** Advice on the approval process helps us, as do a contact with the right office in the school administration and the city, leads on premises in Munich, and a school willing to try a pilot. And we would welcome your view of where the open material could be useful in state schools.
- **Contributors:** We are looking for subject experts to review or write learning material, developers for the platform and people with experience from other schools. Later, craftspeople and artists can lead workshops.

And whoever you are: pass this paper on to someone it might interest.

Where can I read more?

For each question in this paper there is a full, interactive article of 10 to 20 minutes; all of them are at fidolearning.com. Questions, objections, keen to join in? Just reply to our email.

As of October 2026 · Fido Campus, Munich · fidolearning.com · The one-page summary is on the website too.