

Educational partnership between Brose and Ernestinum Gymnasium receives award



Dr Christof Pechtl (right) from the VBW presents the P-Seminar 2010/2012 award to two grade 11 pupils at the Ernestinum Gymnasium in Coburg. From left: Kevin Drenkhahn and Tobias Kerbsties, Michael Stammberger (Head of Training, Brose), Dr Bernd Jakob (head teacher Ernestinum), Frank Pfeffer (IT teacher, Ernestinum) and Prof. Peter Schwarz (Department of Electronic Engineering and IT at the Coburg University of Applied Sciences).

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The educational partnership in the field of IT between Brose and the Ernestinum Gymnasium (German secondary school) in Coburg received the P-Seminar 2010/2012 award on December 3rd, 2010. Of the 240 project ideas submitted by Bavarian secondary schools, three from each of the seven administrative districts were awarded prizes.

The prize is awarded jointly by the Bavarian Business Association (VBW), the Eberhard von Kuenheim Foundation, BMW AG and Bildungswerk der Bayerischen Wirtschaft.

As Dr Christof Pechtl, Head of the Education Department of the VBW explained at the award ceremony, "The prize, which comes with 500 euros, not only serves to reward the creativity of the school and its partners, but is also an incentive to develop the seminar concepts further".

"It is especially praiseworthy," Dr Pechtl continued, "when three organizations – a secondary school, a business and a university – work together to implement a P-Seminar".

The Robocar project at the Ernestinum Gymnasium came about as part of the restructuring of the Bavarian secondary school system. It is a 'project seminar' - an important component of university and career orientation at Bavarian secondary schools. The pupils learn about target-oriented teamwork and project planning and management methods,

and strengthen the relevant social skills, such as communication skills, independence and working with others.

In collaboration with Brose, the young people use Mindstorm NXT robots to learn about possible applications and uses of the software and hardware and expand their IT competence step by step by completing increasingly complex tasks. By building and programming the robots themselves, they increase their knowledge in the areas of IT, mathematics and science in a creative manner.

In the next project phase, the pupils are developing a safety concept for the car of the future: Robocar scans the road with light sensors and senses if the car veers off the road unexpectedly, maybe because the driver is not paying attention or has fallen asleep. If this occurs, the system slows the car down, as the situation requires.

The prize is awarded for the 2010 to 2012 period, in which the Ernestinum pupils will develop and program Robocar with Brose. As well as collaborating with the Brose training department, these secondary school children are also working with Coburg University of Applied Sciences and the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. This gives them insights into science and technology degree courses as well as into the world of work.

The final product – with theoretical solutions and a prototype of the car and software – will be presented at the Brose site in 2012.

“We hope this educational partnership will help make technical classes more attractive through practical exercises. At the same time, we can make the schoolchildren aware of Brose, show them our training and working environment and interest them in exciting occupations or university courses,” emphasizes Michael Stammberger, Head of Training at the Brose Group. In particular, he has his eyes on the occupations of IT specialist and mechatronics technician, and on degree courses in information systems and electronic engineering at universities of cooperative education.

So far, over 18 pupils at the Ernestinum Gymnasium have taken part in the Robocar seminar, and the project will be continued in 2011 and 2012.