

## Evaluation after the Kassel meeting: Free learning.

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During the Kassel meeting, our ambassador students and teachers had the opportunity to witness and experience the strength (=molehill) of the Offene Waldau Schule: free learning.

As we are aware of our teaching methods (often) not being "guide at the side" but "sage on the stage", we were eager to learn from our German partnerschool. Convinced of the advantages of problem/student based learning we realise that free learning - step by step - opens doors, ways and minds.

During the visit, we understood how students are made responsible for their own learning (processes). By means of free and guided projects and using experts from outside school, students are highly encouraged to manage their own way of learning.

Since our own school has a lack of space - our classrooms are very crowded, we don't dispose of "open space" or multifunctional rooms - it's not always easy to implement this way of teaching/learning.

Nevertheless we tried to filter out some workable aspects of free learning: we do dispose of a beautiful outdoor space (owned by the local authorities) and our school is in walking distance of the local library (in 2017 chosen as 'the most beautiful library in Flanders'). We encourage students and teachers to make (more&better) use of these spots.

As our school is well equipped with ICT facilities and wifi connection, presentations by our students can be done easily. Combined with active type of work (current topic in our Belgian schoolsystem) we feel approaching the "free learning style" bit by bit.

After the Kassel meeting we felt the urge/had the inspiration to give our school a boost in free learning.

Following a brainstorming session on the organisation of a "European day" our European team (members of staff and students involved in various European projects) decided to give it a go...

We organised a cooperative day full of activities - all having to do with the 60th anniversary of Europe. All 500 students were divided in 28 mixed groups (cfr. 28 countries). In the morning the groups got the assignments for the day. The students had freedom to decide when and where they worked on their tasks. Methods and media were offered by teachers and junior ambassadors in order to succeed the set tasks. As the day went on, the students got very excited by winning "the game". We realised students were organising themselves quite well in order to get another star (stars were given by an accomplished task) .

Students started to study different topics (art, politics, ...) or figured out themselves which member of the group was good in practical work, sports, writing or ICT. Others left for the library to find another clue or practised some dancing outdoors.

Although we are aware of the fact that a free learning session is not meant as a competition or game, we think to have triggered some aspects of free learning - as well as by students as teachers. Responsibility was given to each group, problem solving thinking was highly needed and students took full advantage of free use of space/media. And above all - they all enjoyed working independently.

As the European Day was a success and has a rich benefit in different levels, we plan to organise it on yearly base.

During that day, not only our main everest - free learning - was dealt with. We also tried to implement other aspects of our MEYM1517 project.

One of the given assignments was an outdoor activity (a kind of relay) as well as a Kahoot! - a game based learning platform. (digital skills)

In other missions (e.g. about European art) students needed their creativity to succeed. And by getting to know other European habits/countries... our students might have gained attitudes of tolerance and respect towards others.

To summarize: we are sure we will be able to manage future teaching more effectively.

In one way or another, the learned skills and knowledge of our MEYM1517-project trickle through our way of teaching and learning.

They definitely excite and inspire. Lifelong...

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