

Travel journal Tilburg 07. – 12.04.2019

As part of the ERASMUS + program, our school set out to learn about dealing with and supporting gifted and especially high-performing pupils in other countries. Furthermore, we set to learn from their experiences.

Prof. Mönks, Anouke Barkx and Ton van Houtert have been very supportive in the search for internships of suitable schools for us. Furthermore, we met many kind teachers on our trip who have welcomed us with open arms and who patiently explained to us their teaching methods, materials and course content. With this report, we want to provide a brief overview of our impressions during our trip.

We would like to start with a short round of introduction. "We" are Heike König, Sabine Morgenthaler and Heike Erbsmehl, three teachers from Berlin. We all work together with a large team of colleagues at the Reneé - Sintenis - Primary school in Frohnau, Berlin.

For many years now, our school board has been interested in recognizing the needs of our gifted students and finding appealing solutions. We can proudly say that our school offers access to many different programs which are extremely well received by our pupils. Thanks to the programs they enjoy coming to school and learning new things. In addition to the differentiation in regular lessons, we also offer the opportunity to participate in so-called "plus-Groups", where they can use skills and abilities according to their interests and they can deepen their interest or explore new areas. In the different groups covering a range of topics (botany, mathematical riddles, chess, philosophy) especially high-performing children, meaning not only highly gifted girls and boys, can work in regular classrooms during school times. Additionally, we offer interested children the chance to participate in various mathematical competitions, such as "Känguru" or "Mathematik-Olympiade".

We were therefore very curious to see how the system of fostering highly gifted or potentially talented children works in the Netherlands.

We started our first day at the Jan Lighthart Driecant School in Tilburg.

Already upon entering the school we sensed a relaxed, friendly and very open atmosphere. Many children worked diligently in the hallways and in rooms which we were able to observe through the many windows to the classrooms. We were quite surprised when we met Alexandra (Coordinator for gifted children) who explained to us that this working style was already part of the



regular school lessons. This so called “Werken on maat”, Alexandra told us, is supported by many parents and served the purpose of working off or developing individual tasks or projects. We watched the children with delight and also observed how they worked alone or in small groups

We later learned from Alexandra and Marion (director of the school) that this especially is also part of the learning culture at the school and who also told us about further plans for the exchange week and gave us a brief introduction to the Dutch educational system. We had already been very pleased with the openness and transparency with which we were received and the patience with which all our questions were answered.

The exchange was very interesting for us as there are some obvious differences in the structure and administration of the education system compared to the German one. In a subsequent small tour we were able to get even more impressions of the school. We noticed immediately the modern technical equipment of the school in the age of Media technology. Here we realized how important it is to the school to develop the children also in the area of media literacy. Every



classroom was equipped with a smartboard as part of the basic

equipment as well as a set of Chromebooks, each shared by two classes. We were able to observe that even children with learning level 3 (comparable with 1st grade in Germany) were handling the devices and programs in an experienced and sophisticated manner. This is a very drastic contrast to the media work in our

school. A poster, promoting an internal school app, additionally highlighted the advanced handling of the new media at the Jan - Lighthart - Driecant - School.



On our first day at this school, we were also able to shortly participate in a plus group (highly gifted children of learning levels 5 and 6) which was led by Martin. Despite our missing knowledge of the Dutch language, we followed the course with high interest.

Here we had, unknowingly, our first contact with the project POINT13.

It was striking that all the children were able to maintain a portfolio, do crafts and participate in small discussions while following Martin’s explanations. Martin told us he has experienced that the children listen better when using their hands simultaneously.

Following this, Anouke Barkx picked us up and we went together to FONTYS University. Here, Anouke and Ton van Houtert presented and explained to us the POINT project in more detail.



We learned about the structure of the project POINT13. In addition to the plus groups fostering gifted and highly talented pupils at the regular school, children with special qualities are given the opportunity to also learn something about themselves. This can take place in an interlude class once a week or in talent classes throughout the school year. In addition, the faculty is educated about the needs of gifted and highly talented children. We consider the project, which was launched jointly by the schools and the university, to be very well thought through.

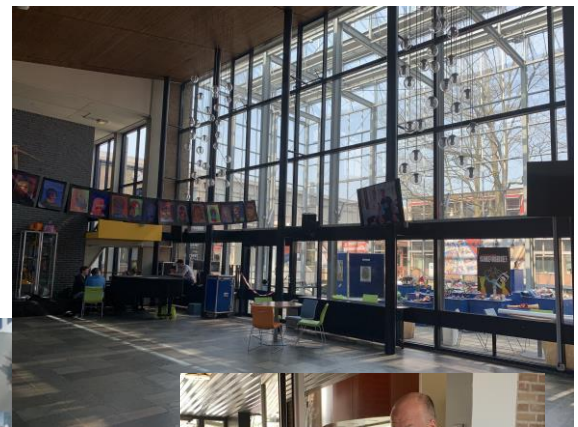
As in the Netherlands, the awareness of special needs for gifted children are not emphasized enough in Germany. Anouke proudly introduced us to a digital game that was being developed recently and was close to finalization. With this game, the teachers receive a better understanding of the complexity and diversity of many different behavioral spectra based on case studies.

At the end of the day, we went together with Anouke and Ton to visit to the Teresialyceum-School (secondary school). There we were welcomed by Tina and Deborah who introduced us to their program of fostering gifted children at their school.

Similar to our plus-Groups highly gifted students can work in the TOM-Project (Traject of Maat - personal Program) on specific modules or projects. Mostly independently the pupils work on their topics and meet their stated goals. Through targeted coaching and mentoring children are accompanied individually by teachers. We noticed in this

context that this school is also working with the so-called TASC-Model.

Hence, it is not only the content that is taught to the students but mainly the gradual approach to complex tasks. This also makes a big difference to the learning content at our school. In the past we



only focused on teaching the knowledge but not how it was done. On a final tour through the school building the eight self-built 3D-printer and the milling machine in the factory space of Teresialyceum-School were a special highlight for us.

On Tuesday we visited the two talent-classes in Oisterwijk (fixed classes for highly gifted children with an IQ of 130 or higher and severe problems with "normal"

schooling). Here it welcomed us very the day. The two Anne have always patiently. Here we ideas which we puzzles, material individual receives - of practical like to share with And here, too, we Model. We also conscious use



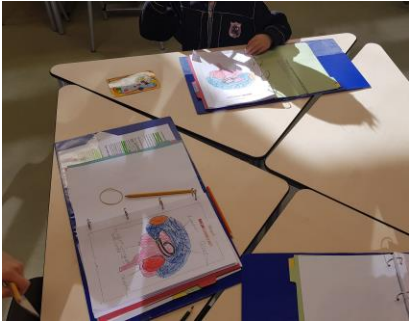
was Wendy (Coordinator) who friendly and was our guide for classroom teacher Eva and answered our questions found inspiration and many were able to collect. Games, for activities or an example of an schedule that every child everything was a treasure trove experiences which we would our colleagues at our school. saw the usage of the TASC- would like to acknowledge the and management of personnel.

Both classes were accompanied by two teachers which was necessary as many gifted children came together. The children made a very satisfied impression.

We felt the challenge of playing chess with the Talentklas 6-8 children as an especially nice moment. With awe and respect, we faced this challenge, since one of the two teachers was a successful chess player and thus the children were well trained. But we were proudly able to hold our ground in one or two of the games. It was a lot of fun for everyone.



We visited a simplified version of the Talentklas, "Intermezzo", on Wednesday. There we met Nathalie and Britt. Both work every Wednesday with highly gifted children between 6 to 9 years from different schools. Here, as well, were the individual learning goals of the students the main priorities. The students set their own individual goals on which they want to work over a longer period of time in consultation with the teachers and their parents. We could see many joint projects in which the children came to a conclusion by discussing and trying out different approaches to solve the tasks. And also here it became obvious to us that much emphasis is placed on the



awareness of one's own "I". No matter whether the children set their own personal goals or they were in line with their strengths and weaknesses, it is always important that they strengthen their own personality. We found the book "The fantastic, elastic brain" especially suitable for this exercise. The kids are exposed with the functioning and the technical terms of the brain and can identify and recognize themselves this way.

The comprehensive visit of the Jan-Lighthart-Driecant-School on Thursday completed our stay in Tilburg.

We would like to thank the many Dutch colleagues of this school who took the time for us and let us observe their work, especially Derk who accompanied us on this day. We would also like to thank the children who gladly and willingly shared their tasks and results with us. We will remember this warm and open nature for a long time.



But our stay in the Netherlands was not over yet despite assumed by many. We felt especially honoured to receive an invitation by Anouke Bakx to the ceremony of her appointment as professor. We met lots of people who accompanied us throughout the week and worked in the project POINT13.



This made the week an all around impressive experience.

Overall, it was a very revealing and enjoyable stay!

Many thanks!

Bedankt
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