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Belgium

Practical work visit 5-6-7/09/2012

For the last three days I went to a special kindergarden that takes the kids out of the city which takes them to a beautiful piece of nature. It’s a building that looks like a farm with a huge garden; chickens, rabbits, a vegetable garden with carottes and pumpkins and a lot of play area are in it.

At first I did not know what to expect because I knew it would be something with nature but not exactly what the concept was.

As soon as we arrived Anders, the headleader, gave us a guided tour.

It was really amazing to discover everything. He tooked us everywhere and gave an explanation at every location. For example you had the fireplace and the kids know that when they make a campfire they have to be calm and they can cut into woods with knifes. The youngest children will get help from the leaders but the oldest children are used to work with all the tools and the leaders trust them.

I noticed in that three days that they really trust the children and that the children are really independent.

They are already so independent that most of the children don’t need any help while they’re eating. When you compare that to the 3 year old children in Belgium, it is a huge different because in Belgium they still need a lot of help.

Another thing I have learned about this place is that they are not afraid to confront the children with death and I really admire that. For a lot of schools and kindergardens it is a taboo to talk with the kids about the death because it can scare them. But there are situations that require talking about it without any problem for example when someone’s dog died or his/her grandmother.

Here they do it because when the kids are in nature, they find a lot of dead animals in the area.

They use the founded animals as examples. With the oldest children they even cut them open. As adult you would probably say that it is filthy but the children really like it.

I only discover the most beautiful thing of the whole kindergarden during the last day by playing with the children. They showed me that at any moment the leader can enter their play.

For example they took me to the bicycle road (they have a really cool one) and they wanted to do it together with me. At first sight I thought that that would be impossible because the bikes looked too small. But as soon as I sat on one I noticed that it was made to do it together. There were bikes that you could sit on with two, there were bikes that the child could sit and you could stand at the back to give the bike more speed... I had a really great time and I didn’t had it cold anymore after that.

Even the swings are made to be used both by children and adults.

Which lead me to another part that I really like about this place: they invite the parents to come and play in the kindergarden with their kids so that they know what their kids are doing and that they understand the concept.

All the people that are working there have chosen to work here because they love being in nature, love working with children and they are really convinced about the concept. It’s also so great to watch them playing with the children. They use a lot of humor and I haven’t heard anyone screaming in those three days so it really works. The children love their leaders.

I tried to find a nature school or kindergarden in Belgium but apparently it does not exist. But I would really want to take this experience with me to Belgium and maybe I can use it in my activities in the school. I have learn a lot those three days and I’m planning to go one day back before we have to leave Copenhagen to enjoy one more day of that amazing place. I hope that this concept will spread out over Europe because it’s so much more fun for the children.

Thank you for this opportunity!