

PROJECT WEEK



2/13/2015

„The World“

OVERVIEW

From 9th until 13th of February Viktoria English Medium Schools conducted a project week about "The World" with all students from Standard II-VI.

For all the students and for the whole staff, a project week was a new experience that they did not know beforehand.

Our goal was, to bring the children out of their normal learning environment and through new exercises and other teaching styles, create a new learning experience for the children. We wanted to take them out of their "box" and make a five-day "journey". We wanted to enhance curiosity and initiative, as well as, enhance motivation and fun. In addition, the children should not have had any pressure to perform.

By choosing the topic "The World", we wanted the children to have a deeper understanding of different countries. Also, we wanted them to experience how beautiful, unique and vulnerable the world is that they are living in. We hope they learned how diverse, and at the same time, how similar different countries and people are.

All children were mixed up by age, gender, class and temperament into five different groups. These five groups rotated every day, while a team of two teachers always stuck with one country and taught a different group every day.

THE FIVE CONTINENTS

The countries for the five continents were Tanzania for Africa , Germany and Liechtenstein for Europe, the United States for North America, Brazil for South America and India for Asia. Apart from other exercises, for each country there was a text with general information and a "Country Profile" to fill out.

Tanzania

The exercises in Tanzania focused on bringing up knowledge the children already had, reflecting in their everyday life and a lot of drawing. Exercises included brain storming about associations with Tanzania, drawing their favorite animal, describing their daily routine, reflecting what "home" means to them, as well as, drumming and dancing outside.

Germany/Liechtenstein

This was the only continent where the children learned about two different, but similar countries. Because Johanna Sele-Rutinwa, one of the directors, is from Liechtenstein and Sophie Grosse-Rueschkamp, the volunteer who came up with the idea of this project week, is from Germany, both countries were represented. Exercises included watching a video of an orchestra playing Beethoven's "Ode an die Freude" (9th Symphony), reading the Grimm-fairytale "Snow- White" and making crowns out of yellow paper.

United States of America

This day was probably one of the most difficult days for the children. It focused on showing the United States' diversity, as well as, unity and core values. Exercises included looking at different pictures to see the diversity in nature, watching a video of the National Anthem sung at the Super Bowl (Final of the American Football League), reading a text on the "Declaration of Independence" and "The American Dream", as well as, making Native American jewelry.

Brazil

Brazil was an active day and consequently one of the children's favorite days. Exercises included watching a documentary on the Amazon, drawing an animal from that movie, playing an outside game and dancing to Samba music (Video can be seen on the school's Facebook Page).

India

This day was quieter. The children took lots of time to coloring a mandala while listening to meditation music. In addition they did some Yoga and read a story from India.

EVALUATION

For the evaluation of the project week, we will share our own observations. Additionally we had several children and teachers fill out a feedback paper.

Observations

During the project week itself, especially during the first days, there was a lot of stress. Many teachers had questions and problems, because they did not know the concept of a project week. A big problem was, that several teachers were missing from the first day on, because they were sick. Therefore some of the remaining teachers had to teach a group all by themselves which was very tiring and challenging. Particularly in the first day we had to help with issues that did not become clear in the preparation, especially about logistics so which group had to go to which room.

At the same time there was great optimism among the teachers to join in the project week and let it be successful. Understandably the children were very excited and curious.

As the week progressed everything calmed down and everyone seemed to have more fun.

The mixed groups were a challenge for everyone because it became clear that for many of the younger students many exercises were too difficult.

Since it was quite warm that week, some children got sleepy during the film session or outside activity, but it was manageable.

During the week we saw how the children loved activities, like working with paper and dancing the best. They loved the Brazilian music and when they did the Native American jewelry (USA) and the crowns (Germany/Liechtenstein) they even wore them the next day. They talked to each other a lot about the project week and greeted themselves in Portuguese (Brazil) the next morning.

Feedback Paper

In general filling out the feedback paper was somehow difficult because the students are not used to be asked to give feedback. That means that sometimes they had difficulties with the questions and tended to answer in an unspecific and very positive way (even though it was conducted anonymously). Unfortunately we realized too late that it would have made sense to take more time with the feedback paper and explain each question in Swahili, as well as, to make sure everyone understood the questions. Of all the papers, we looked for the ones where we could see that the student understood the questions.

In the end we had 28 papers, filled by students aged 8–13 from grades 2–6. Overall the feedback was very positive. Most of the children liked the project week a lot. Some children said the exercises were easy, some thought they were very difficult.

Their favorite countries were (in the following order): United States, Brazil, Germany/Liechtenstein, India, and Tanzania. The reasons for the US were Brownies, Jewelry and the National Anthem; for Brazil, dancing, Amazon–documentary, different animals and learning Portuguese; for Germany/Liechtenstein, the royal family and the crowns; for India, yoga and meditation music. Some of the younger students thought the India–day was too difficult, the reason was probably also the way the teacher was running the day. Tanzania had some negative feedback because some active exercises were missing.

The idea of mixing the groups was assessed separately. Many students liked it, some did not.

The having different teachers each day, as well as, the topic "The World" got positive feedback.

The students suggested some ways to improve, such as, making exercises easier, learning more about climate/weather, discussing the meaning of the flag, using more media, like music/film, more active games and making sure everyone understood the purpose of the activities.

100% of the children said they would like another project week.

Teachers's feedback

All of the ten participating teachers gave feedback. Most of them thought the project week was very good. They thought that sometimes the exercises were too difficult and having mixed groups got very mixed feedback. Everyone thought the topic was interesting, but some thought their preparation was not enough.

Improvement suggestions included, to mix the groups according to age/abilities, to learn specifically about African countries, to discuss the specific program with the students and the teachers in more detail, more countries/more time, more use of media like music/film and more preparation time for teachers. It was interesting to see that all the teachers wrote that they would like another project week.

From observing and oral feedback we found out that for some teachers the project week was a big challenge, especially for those who had a group on their own. Nevertheless many teachers said they had fun as well and they learned a lot.

Overall, the project week can be seen as a success with some room for improvement for the next time.