

Ralph Bartolomew

A brief look back on my first nine months

in the After-School-Program of

Stadtpark-Schule Lübeck

OGS Betreuung `Tintenleckse`

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Marcus Berg

Interviewing the children to reflect their approach and

expectations towards bilingual education

May 2020

How long have you been working in the Stadtpark-Schule ?

Now in April 2020 I have been working for nine month in the Stadtpark-Schule at the After-School-Program.

I `ve met many children of all classes, from first to fourth grade.

I like the job a lot, thinking of my situation I find it more mental than physical challenging which is due to my walking handicap.

What were your experiences during the first months of working in the After-School-Program?

The team of the `Tintenkleckse` is very professional and good organized, the system of taking care of up to 180 children per day is running good although you have to react every new day on the situation.

Most of the children didn`t have any contact with the English language before but some of them spoke a few words already from day to day. Some kids, who are in the bilingual-class, already are more familiar with the basic vocabulary.

Interestingly I found at first that a lot of girls were interested in English and wanted to learn the English language.

The boys didn`t learn so much, although some tried. I have found there is a bigger barrier for the boys to talk frankly using words of a language that is new to them. In fact, they seem more shy or embarrassed.

How did you get in contact with the children? What kinds of tools or games were helpful?

So it took some time for me to get aware of what I can do to get in communication with the kids, for the program is very dynamic, with external courses and kids coming and going.

But in the rooms, for example the gaming room or artist room, the kids used many words I told them while drawing or playing.

The games I offered were monopoly, chess or halli-galli when they had to react on recognizing a pair of cards.

So they got to know the English word for things they saw.

When I was outside it was very much harder to get the children attract to the English, because they were busy playing.

So we put on some tables outside and chairs to gather some kids together to do some group playing games. Another activity Marcus suggested would be taking a group of kids outside to do some games like treasure hunting in the nearby Stadtpark or some detective play. We think this will be very motivating for the pupil.

Was the team helpful?

I always could ask for assistance or a second person to help with the activities or in case of misunderstanding, to get the kids motivated or to encourage them and help building a relationship.

To improve the learning of English we need regular time schedule, at least twice a week, and a fixed room in the school we can use, so the kids can get used to the weekly routine.

So we would like to bring these ideas into the next year`s learning program.

Could you think of ideas to improve the integration of the English language in the daily life of children?

We have to go on thinking of ways to attract the kids with subjects or themes they are interested in.... other project works could be: investigating nature, insects or plants.

More important points are open talks where the kids can tell about what they have experienced at weekend or in holiday. Of course they would do it primarily in German, but I could comment or react to their stories with the English counterpart.

Can you think of any issues or problems you faced during your work?

There are moments when children don`t understand me. Therefore I try to speak to them in German, and slowly change into English....or a mix.

I live a long time here, but my German is not perfect but quite good and through the German and English mix most English learner start to understand me.

I think speaking slower and more direct would help me and the children to improve the communication and to make them more confident to speak to me in English.

I`m looking forward to the near future to develop, together with the team , new and interesting ideas for the kids to enrichen the After-School-Program of the Stadtpark-Schule.

*Ralph Bartholomew/Marcus Berg
(Native speaker/Erzieher)*

Kids reflecting ideas of integrating the English Language in the After-School-Program

Interviewing the children from first to fourth grade reveals some interesting ideas of suggesting games and activities to do while using basic English words and easy sentences.

Not all of the kids are aware of the native English speakers that accompany us. To integrate them more into the daily program, assistance is needed by us as educators to help them work methodically and to build `bridges` to rise the kids interest. The more the Bilingual Speakers train themselves and tighten the relationship to the kids, the more we can withdraw from support.

There are different approaches and reactions if they are confronted with the new unknown language.

As mentioned above with what Ralph experienced, the older the kids are the more they are interested and open for activities held in English or in a bilingual way.

So when I was wandering round to ask the kids of different ages what they are interested in the result was like this:

The younger ones prefer doing things they already know from daily stay at the OGS :

- playing cards
- playing board games
- painting and drawing
- handcrafting things and building/ construction with bricks etc.
- situational approach in the wide field of free play
- sports games like soccer or schoolyard tennis

That leads me to the thoughts and topics the children are interested in as there are:

- Space and Stars
- Soccer
- Rome and Greek
- Animals and Nature
- England and Britain
- Foreign School

- Africa
- Theater play
- Robotics

and many other topics.

The kids of the grade 3 or 4, more familiar through some years of English as a school-subject, obviously seem to be more open for testing out how English could be used in their field of interests.

Asking them what speaking in English means to them, could be summed up as:

- exciting to speak
- sometimes funny
- could be embarrassing, especially with teacher present
- makes me feel shy
- bores me when I don't understand what is said
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Suggestions here are e.g.:

- Learning numbers using bingo
- doing a `speak-the-whole-day-just-English` day
- getting to know other cultures and school forms (e.g. the British kids wearing school uniforms...)
- preparing typical English or American meals like pizza, macaroni cheese or hamburger
- doing a treasure hunt in the nearby park with just using English hints
- exchanging English book, adventure , crime...for those who like reading
- watching documentaries in English

So for me there are numerous occasions plain to see to adapt the childrens` fields of interest into our educational planning and their motivation and interest to learn.

To come to an end, we can see from here that we have to develop further the model of bilingual education especially for the after-school-program. Working together with the native speakers hand in hand will result in progressing in the idea of barrier-free handling the English language along the themes and topics the school kids bring to us from their perspective.

Marcus Berg, Erzieher im Offenen Ganztag