

The Scriptorium

– a reading and writing workshop for children

Verena Groer and Claudia Hub

Outline

The Scriptorium is a free reading and writing workshop at the Klösterleschule at Schwäbisch Gmünd. Established two years ago the project has been funded for five years by the Montag-Stiftung "*Jugend und Gesellschaft*" (Youth and Society).

Three afternoons per week first to fourth year- students have the chance to work together, in a self-reliant way and in accordance with their work-plans. This includes free and functional writing, browsing through kid's literature and choosing from various other materials.

The key target is inviting children to write and motivating them to read. From their personal interests girls and boys develop and intensify their competences in subjects and matters. They learn from each other in their roles as experts.

Work process and practical organisation

The afternoons at the Scriptorium, a modified classroom, follow a specific timetable and offer fixed rituals and work patterns. First, the students seal their "Scriptoriumsausweis" (Scriptorium User Card), put in the date, and confirm their presence by signing into the big red book.

In the following they devote themselves to completing the work they have already started or they look for a new challenge. One opportunity is writing with ink and quill. The examples given encourage the girls and boys, to try out old German fonts but also Chinese symbols.

Further the computers which are supplied induce to proofread and improve on the text in regard to contents and orthography. Meaningful teaching software helps the children to find a playful as well as attractive approach to the writing system.

Visual impulses further imagination and help while writing. Small copies of pictures showing animals, celebrities, and sport scenes can be added to their stories at any time or they can serve as a trigger for the children to produce texts themselves. However, the most attractive features are photographs of the kids who use the Scriptorium. These can be printed out and labelled.

Many pictures show the Scriptorium-Letterbox, an essential gadget of the workshop. It offers a way to contact other students but it also requires reading in an authentic context.

Many children look for a cosy place to browse through their letters and the reading corner can serve as such a place. In order to match the heterogeneous preferences, and competence levels of the girls and boys, a huge variety of books is supplied: non-fiction- and picture books, encyclopaedias, poems, texts for beginners, novels and pop-up-books and their own works – the printed texts from the Scriptorium.

In addition to the visual stimuli the "Lesestethoskop" (Reading Stethoscope) offers an interesting twist in reading aloud to each other. Medical stethoscopes, which are attached to a coffee jar, serve as loudspeakers, while one of the kids whispers into the jar. Additionally some of the picture books are available as MP3 files, so that the students can enjoy being read out to at any time.

If students take an extraordinary liking in a book they can fill in a recommendation card or suggest reading it to the other ones during the final circletime and maybe receive feedback. An old puppet stage which has been turned into the Scriptorium TV offers an ideal form of presentation. The favourite books, which are recommended here, then can be displayed and appreciated next to selected writing projects over the whole school building.

Teacher training at the Scriptorium

Additionally to being a meaningful scenario for children, the Scriptorium is also a fruitful branch of university education. The recognitions, attitudes and ideas students have gained during their studies and during their teacher training can be verified, modified and improved on by students and trainee teachers at the workshop.

By working practically budding teachers can experience teaching in accordance with the "Spracherfahrungsansatz", which is closely linked to the state regulations in Baden Württemberg. The future pedagogues understand, that school is no fixed system that cannot be changed, but that that it needs constant development and reform. For example the significance of regular testing, maybe by means of a word riddle, followed by individual assistance, becomes obvious to students when they work with children at the Scriptorium.

During the weekly "Tea for Teachers", students, lecturers, trainee teachers and the school's staff may exchange their views, talk about difficulties and come up with new ideas.

The people involved can profit from the project "Scriptorium" before and during their job life. In order to communicate the underlying principle of opening teaching processes to the world beyond the walls of the "Klösterleschule", the workshop is also open to the staff of other schools. Teachers are more than welcome to take part in the Scriptorium and to gather important experiences for their own teaching.

Information and contact

*Scriptorium – Lese- und
Schreibwerkstatt für Kinder
Klösterleschule
Schulstraße 1
D-73525 Schwäbisch Gmünd
E-Mail: scriptorium@ph-gmuend.de*

*head: Prof. Dr. Erika Brinkmann
Pädagogische Hochschule
Schwäbisch Gmünd
Oberbettringer Str. 200
D-73525 Schwäbisch Gmünd
Telefon: +49 (0) 71 71 / 983-214
E-Mail: post@erika-brinkmann.de*

<http://scriptorium.ph-gmuend.de>