

School in Radowo Małe representing the best European standards

Radowo Małe is a small village in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. Like in any typical Polish village there is a post office, a "Dino" shop, a small church, and a small building of a primary school. And this is where our stereotypical view of the school in a rural environment ends....

The Kuyavian-Pomeranian Center for Teachers' Education (KPCEN) in Toruń organized a study trip to the school as an innovative and extraordinary institution. Headmasters and teachers from the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship went there to seek inspiration and knowledge hoping that something that others would consider impossible could be carried out. Primary School under the name of Kornel Makuszyński in Radowo Małe belongs to the Ashoka network, an international association of innovators searching for and bringing together people introducing unconventional solutions to social problems. It is called a "school with the power to change the world." The school's headmaster Ewa Radanowicz, the originator of the innovative school, welcomed the participants of the trip and told them about the institution: how it works, what its mission and vision are, what values it is guided by, and how children and young people learn.

18 years ago Ewa Radanowicz decided to introduce changes in the school. She emphasizes that they are a school of constant change - focusing on developing students' skills and not on improving learning outcomes, despite the fact that they used to be a school with low results of external national examinations. Teachers continue to develop students' competences, and the consequence of this was to increase the learning results to a very high level.

For two years, the school's priority has been:

1. Well-being of students and teachers.
2. Development of competence and education.
3. School knowledge and skills.

The school's vision is "We are a school of competence". The school's headmaster is open to teachers' ideas and supports their initiatives. Innovation and creativity go hand-in-hand with systematic action planning at this school.

The school space is attractively arranged- it includes exhibitions of children's works resulting from experiencing the world, antique cupboards, shelves, and old barn doors. Everything is redecorated, undamaged and full of children's work made and collected in projects. The participants of the study trip admired three well-equipped studios: a theatre studio , a cooking studio and a travel studio, in which children from grades 1-3 have classes.

Educational studios

The school has three main studios: a theatre studio , a cooking studio and a travel studio

In each of these studios, children acquire specific competences. In the theatre studio there are classes in i.e. the Polish language, history, art education. Children master their self presentation skills; they get to know each other, learn cooperation and sensitivity to others. In the cooking studio, they practice mathematical issues, e.g. measuring, weighing - they work in a group and plan their work. In the travel studio, children learn about nature and geography - they experience the world, learn to ask questions and develop their awareness of the surrounding reality.

The core curriculum is inscribed in the studios' activities. Children study in them altogether 6 hours a week. For older students there is a workshop "Old things and antique shops" along with a laboratory. They implement thematic blocks called "wisdom tables". In the corridors you can admire the things made by students during ceramics and stained glass workshops. Classes in all these workshops are used to develop soft skills. Children acquire the skills to select information and present acquired knowledge. They also master their learning techniques. Work in thematic workshops is also an opportunity to shape attitudes, teach responsibility and decision-making skills.

The headmaster and teachers from Radowo Małe emphasized that students love such lessons, as they build their self-esteem, and parents see measurable effects of such classes.

Teachers organize educational opportunities for students 3-4 times a year to motivate children to work on projects. The inspiration for such activities was the Wrocław School of the Future of Prof. Ryszard Łukaszewicz.

System of working with students

"Lab" constitute 10 various workshops in which youth from grades 4 to 8 participate every Wednesday during the 3rd and 4th teaching hour/ lesson. "Labs" are chosen by students every six months, after which students change their labs to others. Labs are mandatory.

Well-being program

In the kindergarten there is a place for relaxation, rehabilitation, mindfulness exercise, sensory and artistic art, manual development. This curriculum is carried out every day for several minutes. Denison exercises and massages are added in grades 1-3, while in grades 4-8 children work in a circle, have mindfulness and relaxation workshops, work with stress, paying attention to their personal development.

Active break

The active break lasts 45 minutes, 10 minutes of which is scheduled for dinner, while the rest of the time is spent going out and spending time outdoors (the weather does not matter). Students have fun in the well-designed space around the school building. An active break is compulsory for all students.

We are learning to learn

Workshops "How to learn" is to provide students with the information how the brain learns. They learn about themselves and their sensory profiles. The workshops consist in acquiring and practicing learning techniques, but also in strengthening the sense of self-esteem.. Relaxation exercises constitute part of these workshops to help shape the awareness of their bodies.

Individual Work Office

Teachers arranged tasks for students under the guidance of specialists and experts, often leaving for intensive work for a day or two outside of Radowo Małe, for example to the sea. Tasks constitute the so-called interdisciplinary content tasks, and are divided into several types, e.g. detective tasks, project tasks, tasks combining issues from the Polish language with mathematics, etc. From the task database, students choose the ones they want to take care of, and solve them themselves. One teacher looks after a group of 14 students and watches over their work. The teacher is a mentor and tutor. Over time, some students reported they would rather set up tasks themselves; therefore, students are also the authors of some of the tasks. First, the student tries to solve the task himself or herself, then they can ask for help from a

friend. If the students still has problems, they approach the teacher. The Individual Work Office consists of the task database, work plan and notebooks. During the Expert's Day, young people present one task in the form of a poster, film or presentation.

The work with students takes place in three areas:

1/3	1/3	1/3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thematicworkshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with the teacher- master (normal classes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual work (Individual Work Office)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groups mixed in terms of age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • methods of work may be traditional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning aboutoneself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forming competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sorting out knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learnhow to learn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is carried out by a few teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning to plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • classes with no marks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation/ givingmarks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning to decide
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takingresponsibility for oneself
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deciding whether one wants to be evaluated.

Constant change and improvement

Teachers visit schools in various European countries. They learn there about new educational solutions. They acquire the information about innovative activities and judge how reasonable they are - later adapting them to the needs of students in Radowo Małe.

As Ewa Radanowicz emphasizes - the introduction of innovative solutions is not sufficient. The key is the regularity of such work with students to make certain skills in children appear automatically. Creative work is a process, not an accidental variety of everyday activities.

We thank the school director Ewa Radanowicz for receiving consultants, principals and teachers and for organizing workshop classes for the participants of the trip. Many thanks to teachers: Jacek Mielcarek for showing us around the school, showing the studios and all explanations as well as to Elwira Stawska, Kamila Pesiakowska, Alina Tchurz and Joanna Mały for introducing us to work in workshops, "labs" and the Individual Work Office.

The following sentences heard during the visit are definitely worth remembering:

1. How many times do we see children and how many times do we see the core curriculum?
2. We lacked communication between teachers.
3. Teachers have problems with planning, they set too many goals.
4. Do one task, but specifically, let the child process, feel ...
5. Teamwork and system thinking are important.
6. A friendly school is a school where children like coming, where they are interested, where they ask questions and want to know the answers.
7. Teachers' passions are important.
8. First you need to take care of man and then to teach him.

The visit in Radowo Małe shows that study trips are worth organizing. The organization and content of the trip were highly rated by the participants. The trip was organized by the KPCEN team for international cooperation and study trips - Marzenna Wierzbicka, Wiesława Kuban and Danuta Potręć. Openness, giving space to others so that they can reach higher and higher, overcoming internal and external difficulties, and patiently implementing their vision of education is a recipe for "a school with the power to change the world", to which teachers from all over Poland come to seek inspiration. It is worth remembering that a "school in change" begins with us, and in us.

Trans. Agnieszka Chabros