



An Inspiration in Times of Change

Photobook about Sudbury schools

by Monika Wernz



I would like to gain your support for a project which has been at the focus of my attention for some time now and which is already becoming reality: The creation of a photobook to document life and learning at Sudbury schools throughout the world. I have been travelling for the last six months gathering material in various different countries. It has been hugely exciting to plunge into the multifaceted life of these schools for extended periods, and this has enabled me to capture elements of their individuality, of their atmosphere, as well as lots of stories from pupils and staff. I have seen how issues and challenges come and go and observed the creativity which goes into addressing them. The photographs I have taken and will take in the future provide a unique 'insider' perspective on the Sudbury concept and the way it is lived out in reality.

In order to be able to continue to the next phases of this ambitious project, I am in need of further financial support. The following pages provide an overview of the concept. I very much hope that it will kindle your enthusiasm for the project and you can share my view that the Sudbury model represents an important – perhaps vital – alternative to established models. I invite you to join in with me to help transport the inspirational and much-needed message which Sudbury schools are sending out into the world.

What are Sudbury schools?

Sudbury schools are free, democratic schools which operate according to the Sudbury model, named after Sudbury Valley School, which was founded over 40 years ago in Framingham (Massachusetts). Today there are 35 such schools throughout the world, of which most are in the USA and the rest are in Canada, Israel, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Japan. There is also now one such school in Germany.



The essence of a Sudbury school is to be found in the way the basic principles of our free, democratic society are lived and realized in full consequence. In Sudbury schools, the right to self-determined education is taken completely seriously and exercised without restriction by children and adolescents who attend them. Not only can they freely determine their own self-development, but they can also create and form their educational environment according to democratic principles. The schools' foundations consist of confidence, liberty, responsibility and respect.

You can find more information at: www.sudval.org and www.sudbury-muenchen.de



Educational Study Trip undertaken by Monika Wernz

For over five years I have been actively committed to the cause of democratic education in my capacities as educator, kinesiologist and artist. I am also spokesperson for and executive board member of an association aiming to found a Sudbury school in the Munich area: Sudbury München e.V.

In August 2010 I set out on an educational journey to visit a number of Sudbury schools around the world. My itinerary took me from Germany to the Netherlands, and from there on to Israel and the United States. The trip has afforded insights into daily life in seven different schools so far, and I plan to visit more schools in Denmark and Japan.



The sheer diversity of these schools has made a deep impression on me already. Added to this, the opportunity to plunge into the day-to-day routine in each school has enabled me to make authentic observations and find out about the realities of life in these unusual surroundings.

Photobook documentation of Sudbury schools

The main result of this study trip will be a comprehensive illustrated book which reflects the participative nature of the Sudbury experience not merely as an aspect to be documented, but in the way the book is coming into being:

The photobook will not just contain many of the photographs which I have taken during the journey and will still take. Pupils and people who have already left school can contribute their own impressions. The book is not simply an observer's report, but those directly involved have the opportunity to present their schools as well. The contributions can be of many different kinds: descriptions of life and learning experiences, challenges and successes, personal insights, artistic works such as poems, stories, songs, pictures and photographs etc. etc. Articles written by experienced members of staff are also welcome. Thus all the different modes of expression that can be included in a physical book can combine to transport a common message. The purpose of the book is to provide a reflection of the atmosphere of confidence, variety, individuality and respect which pervades Sudbury schools, giving readers the opportunity to 'experience' Sudbury as authentically as possible. It will



demonstrate what happens when one places one's confidence in children and young people to be able to exercise their right to self-determination and co-determination. Charged with inspiration gathered from schools throughout the world, the photobook will itself provide inspiration at both national and international levels. A bilingual publication (German and English) is planned.



Personal thoughts on the genesis of the book

So far, my experiences during the trip have been many and varied, and sometimes challenging and painful. In conscious deference to the Sudbury idea, I have decided not to determine in advance exactly how the photobook is to be designed, but to let it develop at its own pace and as a direct reflection of the common experience. Questions have arisen regarding both my own contributions as well as those of others: How will I express my personal impressions? Will I only have my own photos to present? Should I also write about my own path towards more freedom, responsibility, respect and faith in others – with all the doubts and anxieties which

have attended me so faithfully along the way? Will I concentrate on aspects of learning and/or should I give more weight to the highlights, the wonderful insights which have come simply by being amongst self-confident young people, watching them and empathizing with them as they completely commit themselves to their games and their lives.

I can remember moments when my eyes met a child's eyes. I like to think of these moments as jewels of openness, of stillness and of inner joy. Right now, as I look at the photo on the right, I can hear a still, small voice within me: "Be still and know: This book will become a living expression of a wide and vivid spectrum."



Would you like to become part of this photobook?

This book can become reality with your help!

Funds are required to cover travelling expenses, layout, translation and production costs.

With your financial support or by passing on this appeal to other people, you can make a significant and valuable contribution to positive change as an advocate of children's and adolescents' right to self-determination and co-determination .

By way of acknowledging your support, your organisation or company will receive mention in the photobook together with your logo. This is a win-win opportunity to demonstrate your support to a worldwide readership in a very effective way.

I will be glad to accept support in any shape or form and am looking forward to hearing from you!



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For further information, please go to:

www.sudval.org, www.sudbury-muenchen.de, www.monika-wernz.de