

Working for a School of Competences

“Learning to learn” is not simply a slogan. It is the very premise for the foundation of a method that puts the child in a central role of his or her learning process, through “knowledge and active participation”.

The focus therefore shifts from the act of teaching to that of learning: Simply to “teach” will no longer suffice. One must “teach to learn” by developing the child’s learning and study skills.

The very concept of skills and learning abilities are therefore embodied in this change of perspective.

How do we define skills and competence*?

Competence does have an effect on ability, knowledge and understanding.

It is, in simple terms, the ways in which we put our abilities to use, or how we make use of our acquired knowledge in new contexts as opposed to purely instructive ones.

Competence is therefore a collective of knowledge, abilities, behaviors and motivation that drives children and adults to resolve the challenges and problems met in specific experiential spaces effectively.

Group work, projects and a scientific approach aimed at discovering new knowledge make the student a protagonist of his or her learning process.

Continuous research allows for a clear and rational choice of strategies, which in turn are shared and passed on to peers: an acquired knowledge and understanding of incalculable value.



Japanese Multiplications

The primary school’s year 3 is tackling a new challenge in Maths class with Teacher Annalisa. Multiplication is more than just times tables, and can take on a more visual, graphic and at times even material appearance.

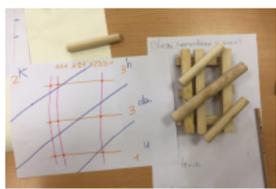
By introducing a typically Japanese method of calculation, and comparing it to the more orthodox “long multiplication”, the children were able to compare the two methods by using them on identical problems. An opportunity for the class to discover and discuss different mathematical strategies and the value of numbers.

This research was suggested by the children themselves, and gave them more possibilities when calculating mathematical problems, taking one step further from simply memorizing their times tables. Promoting a more logical, visual method encourages the development of the children’s mathematical, logical and expressive abilities, as well as extending their concentration span and allows them to gain greater confidence in their abilities.

This is some of the student’s feedback from the new method they had learnt:

“I prefer multiplying like this because I can draw while I’m calculating”

“I think it’s better than the usual method because it looks complicated, but it’s actually easier and more fun this way!”



Program continuity: one school, one path.

Educational Continuity means to add an element of progressive development to the didactical program, emphasizing the abilities acquired by students in a natural way.

This is an essential requirement for an education that tends to the children’s needs, and a solid basis for our school which is, first and foremost, a place where individuals meet and grow together.

The step from Preschool to Primary is an important moment in which students express their feelings, curiosity and imagine what their new classroom, routine and relationships will be in the future. Beginning in the Primary school means that the children will have to leave behind their safe and solid relationships established so far, and will have to deal with building new relationships with their teachers and peers, learn new classroom rules, responsibilities and a new routine.

In our continuity project (outlined in the National Curriculum guidelines), an opportunity of exchange and dialogue is given to the 5 year old students in the Preschool and the students in Year 1 of the Primary school.

Continuity, however, is not to be considered a process that moves in only one direction. The knowledge and experiences that the Primary Year 1 children pass down to their younger friends is in turn exchanged by the Preschool children, and this constructive dialogue and sharing of experiences and abilities therefore goes back and forth, bringing both groups to work together and sharing projects and activities proposed by their teachers.



A very special tree: the Ginkgo

The continuity project in the 4/5 years classroom in Preschool focused on a study of the marvelous Ginkgo Tree, a beautiful specimen of nature in continuous evolution throughout the course of year, and that we are lucky to have right outside of our window.

The children have visited the tree on many occasions and have observed it closely, meanwhile asking themselves many questions concerning the changes that the Ginkgo tree has experienced over the course of the autumn and winter seasons.

The boys and girls exposed and shared their theories on how the tree “works inside”, and how it “feeds itself” in preparation of its reawakening in the spring. They observed the tree’s leaves and bark, and made visual representations of these using a variety of artistic tools and techniques. This allowed the children to pursue lines of enquiry and discovery, which encouraged them to branch out into various learning experiences. Furthermore, the study and observation of a living organism implicitly gives the children an opportunity to observe themselves, acquiring an understanding of the big and small changes that take place within their own bodies. By observing, the children put themselves in a position where they learn to distinguish their emotions, to articulate their own personality, gradually becoming more aware of their own bodies and learning to work alongside their peers as they explore the outside world.

The Ginkgo is a metaphor of a living being that changes and transforms itself, which should be listened to, observed and understood to learn about respect and tolerance.



Events and initiatives

February 3rd

Open Day, from 10 am to 3 pm.

Our Scientific Coordinator will take two small introductions about the School (h.10 am and h.11.30 am)

February 8th

Atelier del Gusto CNY edition, Apt. 3.1.11, h. 5.45 pm

February 13th

Chinese New Year Party.

Preschool: Apt. 5.1.11, from 9.00 to 10.30 am

Primary: Apt. 5.1.11, from 11.00 to 12.30 am