

SWITZERLAND FINAL REPORT

1. Information and Support

- PH Zug

Both the staff and students were very accommodating, inclusive and welcoming at PH Zug. Everyone was more than willing to attempt English and there was always volunteers to translate for us which made the classes not only easier to understand but made the content and classes a learning experience for us too. In the Mensa we were always greeted with happy hellos and it was a great way to chat and hear about all the places that we should visit in Switzerland. They also shared stories of adventures in Australia which was entertaining.

- PH Zug International Office

Patrick and Stefanie were very supportive throughout the planning process and made the transition to Switzerland a breeze. I felt well prepared and organised coming into the placement due to the extensive emails and information sent to us. The friendly nature and personal approach was warming and gave me confidence that I would survive teaching internationally. Since arriving the support has continued and their extensive planning has paid off. Everything has run smoothly and has been very enjoyable. The bag of goodies that we received on our first trip to the PH was very thoughtful and has been very handy throughout the teaching practice.

- Elementa

All of the students and staff go above and beyond to make us feel welcome at Elementa. The staff include us in conversations within the staff room and have genuine interest when asking about our stay in Switzerland. The staff are also approachable and friendly which made it easier to feel comfortable when asking questions or advice.

The students were all beautifully behaved and seemed to enjoy our presence within their classroom. It was a delight to see their confidence grow over the weeks and the interactions with them that developed as they began to feel more comfortable practicing their English. They even taught me some German words which they found evidently hilarious, noted by their laughter at my "attempts" to pronounce the said words.

- Classroom teacher, Monica

As the classroom teacher and the principal Monica involved us within all aspects of the school. She was generous in allowing us the chance to experience all year levels and observe a wide range of classes throughout our practicum at her school. She allocated our time to a number of different lessons which was eye opening and truly gave us a unique insight into the Swiss schooling system as seen in her school. Monica reflected on our lessons with us and gave us feedback so that we could effectively improve and develop our lessons to best cater for the needs in her class. Her guidance was helpful and I feel as though our lessons positively improved because of it.

- Buddies, Andre and Ben

Andre and Ben are fun loving boys who were both friendly and welcoming throughout our stay in Switzerland. They both took Ellie and I to the Zuger Messe on our first night and since then Ben has taken us for a day trip to Zurich where he showed us hot spots and highlights including the best place to buy a sausage. Yum! When in Zurich Ben also took us to Uetliberg where we climbed a tower and got to see incredible views over Zurich and surrounding

villages.

My weekends and the occasional weeknight were spent with the PH Luzern buddies and the other Australian students' host families who took us around and volunteered their time to show us all that Switzerland has to offer for which I am very grateful for. I am very glad I befriended the other Australians on the plane trip over. They became very handy contacts in combination with their buddies and host families.

2. Living in Switzerland

- Accommodation

Monika Conrad is very welcoming, friendly and generous. From the very first night I felt comfortable with her and she always ensured that I felt happy, safe and warm in their house. She was committed to ensuring that I had enough food and left snacks in my room just in case I was nervous going to the kitchen. Her generous nature and effort put towards practicing her English was very touching and made my stay homely and enjoyable. Hanspeter is also very friendly and through his complete lack of English we have discovered the art of sign language and the convenience of Google translate. Andre's siblings Martina and Fabian are also very friendly and are more than willing to offer suggestions of places to see or things to do. They are inclusive in conversations and Fabian even sacrificed his room for the entire month!

As a host brother Andre made sure that I was welcomed and comfortable in the house. He was generous in ensuring I had enough to eat, was warm in my room and knew where everything was around the house. He would ask about my day and what I did at school making sure I was enjoying it. However apart from the brief interactions and the car trip to pick me up or drop me off at the station I did not spend that much time with Andre. Due to his extremely hectic schedule, apart from taking Ellie and I to the Zuger Messe on our very first night and the short interactions after dinner he was busy. As a studying student I understand that work and study needs to be completed as it is part of daily life. Luckily I met Amanda, who also came to do placement in Switzerland on the flight over so I have been exploring Switzerland with her and her host family as well as the occasional day trip with Ellie and her host, Corrine.

- Transport

Although I have been happy living in Auw and have definitely enjoyed going to school in Neuheim, the daily distance can get draining particularly when it means nearly 12 hour days! Even longer on Mondays when I get home at 7:40pm. I am in awe of the Swiss transport system and have a new appreciation for perfectly timed trains and buses. Next time I would suggest either choosing the host family and then selecting a school closer or choosing the school and selecting the family based on the location of the school. I understand that I was warned of the distance but I did not expect the school to be so far from the PH. In saying that, I have never struggled to get up in the morning and happily trek to school knowing that I'll be greeted by a sea of smiling faces eager to learn and have a day full of fun, new experiences and learning opportunities waiting for me.

- Cost

Living with the Conrads has been comfortable but I feel as though I have spent very minimal time with them and in their home. The Conrad family live a very busy lifestyle with it being a rare occasion for them to be home, or if home it is rare for them to not be rushing off somewhere else. Additionally, every morning I have to catch the bus at 6:30 to make sure I get to school on time and I usually get back after 6 each evening. Then on the weekends I would do my own thing exploring Switzerland while they would go about their own weekend routine.

Because of my minimal time spent with the family and in their house I think the price is too

expensive. Especially considering 3 of the other Australians are paying under CHF500 and are in similar living situations. I don't regret this amazing experience I just wish it was a little more cost effective so the money could be better spent further exploring Switzerland.

3. Overall Program

- Teaching Practice

Going to the Elementa was an incredible experience and I thoroughly enjoyed my time there. I have had the opportunity to witness the approaches different teachers take and have enjoyed learning about an entirely new approach to the ways teaching and learning can be executed.

I especially love the life skills priority that I have observed within Switzerland and the importance of knowing ones surroundings. We have had multiple times to teach and given adequate support and freedom in planning and executing the lessons. We were given a topic and time for the lesson then had complete freedom to approach the topic how we would like. Expectations were unidentified for the initial lesson but after a slight hick up we were able to improve and adjust for the next lessons. At first it was daunting because the timing differs from Australia and I was inexperienced. However, thankfully I am much more comfortable teaching for 1 and a half hours now! Throughout the practice we even had the opportunity to teach the 5/6s how to cook Australian food and then fed the entire school. This was a very memorable experience and one that I will remember forever.

The range of lessons we taught was also exciting because it meant we got to plan and implement a range of different ideas. As a result throughout the placement we taught English, Australian geography, Australian animals, aboriginal art, Australian cooking, sport and even the classic Australian dance, the nutbush.

- Program at PH Zug

The classes at the PH are great and an excellent opportunity to meet more people. I absolutely loved the pictorial design class that we did and the morning we went to school with one of the PH students to visit their placement. Olivia and Sylvia's English classes were also a pleasure to be in and were a great class to go to. It was interesting to observe the differing class dynamics from that in Australia and to have the opportunity to participate and interact within them.

Similarly Cederic was brilliant as a German teacher and taught us useful sayings and words that would improve our stay in Switzerland. He taught us applicable sayings that could be used in day to day life such as "what is the time?" and "where can I find...?" as well as important sayings that were useful for a limited English speaking classroom including "please sit down" and "do you understand". He was friendly and made the lessons enjoyable.

Learning the German that we did, although not extensive gave me to confidence to ask small questions and feel comfortable when exploring knowing that if got lost I could ask for directions or where to find certain places. It was also very helpful in the classroom when needing to give instructions or redirect attention back to the front of the class.

4. Personal Evaluation of the Stay

- Benefit for Future Studies and Profession

Coming to Switzerland has been 100% worthwhile. It has opened up my eyes to the world around me and allowed me to experience a whole new perspective on education, teaching, learning and life. It has allowed me the opportunity to not only immerse myself into the Swiss style of life, encompassing the culture, cheese and amazing scenery but also experience, teach and learn in a diverse and new environment. It has been inspiring, motivating and engaging. I can't wait to take back ideas and suggestions and apply them to my very own future classroom in Australia.

I feel that throughout this journey I have developed as both a teacher and person. I feel more confident, better equipped to make decisions, have increased spontaneity, have become more flexible in my thinking and doing, am open to a whole world of new ideas, and have established a strong sense of place, identity and morals.

Because of this program, I have been able to see a new interpretation of how to adjust to the curriculum and appreciate the focus on educating the child as a whole. I now see that in Australia attitudes tend to be directed at teaching academically rather than truly increasing ones knowledge about the world around them. At Elementa I loved witnessing the Outdoor SEM class which solidified the importance of taking learning beyond the classroom. Increasing learning whilst educating about the significance of the environment and encouraging the responsibility of caring for it was insightful and motivating. This is a behaviour that I will definitely take on board when planning lessons and teaching in Australia.

- Recommendations for Future Students

Advice for any future students would be to definitely do it! Just do it. Plus, although a month seems like a long time after spending the week days at school it's important to make the most of the weekends and see as much of Switzerland as possible. To do this I would definitely recommend a Youth Saver Travel Pass. They are expensive but it's completely worth it in the long run and gives you freedom to catch the train wherever and whenever!

The best thing about his program is that you really get to discover and experience Switzerland. Not only do you get to live their lifestyle but you also get endless opportunities to eat the delicious delicious cheese (the cheese alone is worth coming to Switzerland for)! The chance to see a whole new schooling system is exciting and very good learning curve. It helps to not only broaden perspectives but notice differences. Similarly, it opens your eyes to the Australian school system and highlights aspects that may have been previously overlooked. It creates a critical eye that can be used to improve and benefit the classroom! Basically, it's an opportunity of a lifetime and you won't regret it!

- Personal Evaluation

NEGATIVES

- a). Turns out I am shocking at German, especially the Swiss German "ch". Despite his best efforts Cederic just couldn't help me conquer it. I have tried multiple times but for some reason always resort to saying "ck". Luckily Swiss Germans can decipher through my Australian accent so give points for trying and pretend they understand.
- b). I need to be more proactive at checking my emails, particularly in another country when the ones received are valuable and contain a lot of important information. Luckily Ellie was there to prompt when I needed to check them and gave me friendly reminders when I should read them.
- c). The language barrier was a negative at times especially as I didn't understand majority of the German apart from the very basic. If I was to return I would definitely practice up and master simple every day sayings that could be used to communicate with others so I don't feel like a burden forcing them to speak English without trying to replicate their effort.

POSITIVES

- a). I have made the most of every experience I've had. I've explored discovered and done things I could never have imagined before. I have absolutely loved my stay in Switzerland and have discovered the beauty of Zurich, Zug, Auw, Neuheim, Basel, Bern, Alpnach, Lucerne and even spent a weekend in Milan! Overall I have 100% loved my stay in Switzerland. I have had the chance to not only immerse myself in the Swiss lifestyle but embrace the culture, cheese and incredible scenery. I have ventured all around and made the most of every experience I've had.

b). I feel like I have positively developed as a teacher. I have become more confident and have now practiced a range of strategies to help students understand by implementing and trying out new ways to deliver the same information. I will now feel more experienced at teaching students with English as a second language and have strategies and steps in place as practiced here.

c). This program went above and beyond all my expectations and it truly has been a trip of a lifetime. Coming to Switzerland has created memories that I will never forget and I am completely thankful for this program. Teaching alongside the Czech Republic volley ball coach in sport, feeding the entire school Anzac biscuits and sausage rolls, building a snow man with the grade 3s and helping out at the kindergarten are among the many many highlights!