

# GEP Switzerland – Final Report

## Information and support

Whilst in Switzerland, I felt right at home due to the amount of support I received. The PH were a wonderful support, helping us to apply, giving us contact information for our schools, setting us up in bilingual classes, giving us information about Swiss public transport, giving us a schedule to follow and welcoming us with some much needed stationary and chocolate.

At Elementa I taught with my peer, Brianna Stephens. There, we had two mentors, these being Stephanie Koelewijn and Monica Roth. The amount of support we received from our mentors was outstanding and made us feel very comfortable and welcome at the school. They provided us with so much opportunity to teach and plan a range of different classes and trusted us with our lessons. We are so thankful for Stephanie and Monica for making our experience so wonderful.

Another amazing support system we had in Switzerland were our student buddies from the PH. Jana and Miriam were so lovely and made us feel really welcome. They came with us on our tour of Zug, chatted to us at the PH and even took us to the Frey Chocolate Factory (a really fun day). Thank you so much Jana and Miriam!



## **Overall programme / living situation**

The program layout that Elementa prepared provided us with lots of opportunity to experience and teach a range of different classes and interact with students from all different year levels. They allowed us to plan and teach 3 Art lessons focussing on Aboriginal Art, some English lessons focussing on phonics, 3 weeks of sport classes from 3-6 focussing on dance, as well as an entire unit on Australian Animals. We were also able to be a part of many other programs the school offers, such as going to the forest with the younger children, going on an excursion to the zoo and more. The children at Elementa were some of the loveliest children I've ever met and I will miss them a lot. As Elementa is quite a small school, throughout the 4 weeks I was able to form great connections with a lot of the students. Teaching alongside Brianna was great as we were able to work as a pair to plan lessons and there was always someone there going through the same thing as me. It has been an absolutely wonderful experience.

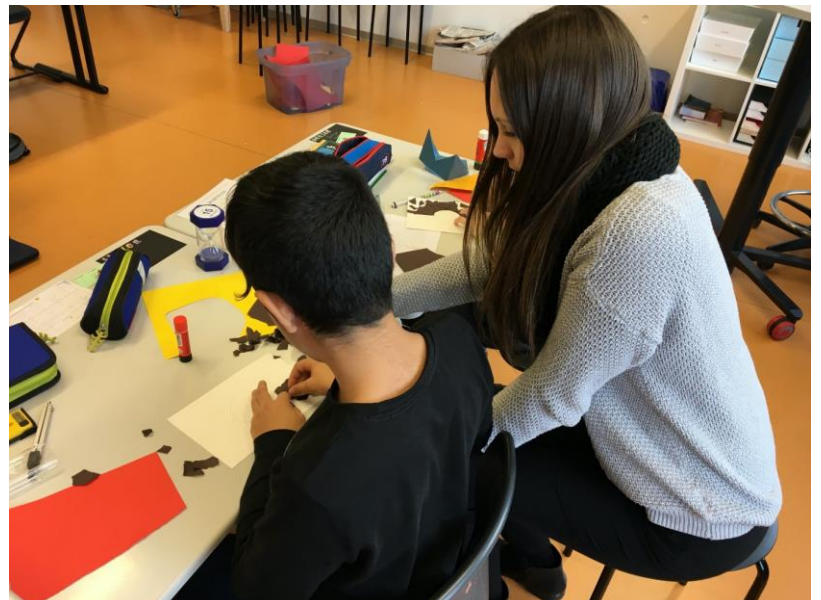
The program and the PH was a great experience. Judith, along with our buddies, made this time at the PH really stress free and enjoyable. It was great to attend some classes, singing songs in Music Methodology and making our letter openers in Art and Design was really fun. It was so nice when the teachers spoke English and even made some lessons Australian themed – it didn't go unnoticed. My favourite part about coming to the PH on Friday was playing Badminton during lunch. We met and played with so many cool people, were able to do a little bit of exercise and have so much fun.

My living situation was wonderful. I lived in a village called Hünenberg with my home stay parents, Corrine and Erich. It was really lovely living with them, they were very welcoming and really helped introduce me to Swiss culture. Corrine is a primary school teacher so it was really great to talk about different experiences in the classroom with her. One of my favourite things about the home stay was that Corrine and Erich are avid rock climbers. It was so great to hear about their many adventures and I even got to go bouldering with them, where they taught me many tips and tricks on how to make it easier. I really enjoyed staying with them.

## **Goals and professional benefit**

One of my goals was to make the absolute most out of the placement, including getting to know the students, teaching as much as I can and taking every opportunity that was present to me. I think I've really achieved this while I've been here. As discussed above, Brianna and I were given so much opportunity and trust to plan and teach so many lessons. This allowed me to continue developing my time management and team work skills. During our time here, Brianna and I also made and found many resources about Australian Animals, phonics, dance and Aboriginal Art. These resources and lesson plans will greatly benefit my future practice as I can reuse them. Also, teaching at a school that is mostly German has given me really great opportunity to develop my skills when working with EAL (English as an Additional Language) children in Australia. I was able to find many creative ways of explaining things to students who only spoke German. It has also given me an extra insight

into how EAL students feel when they are in an Australian classroom and has allowed me to be a bit more empathic for them.



## Recommendations for future students

For future students, I highly recommend getting a Zugerpass (sort of like the Canton's version of a Myki), this will get you to and from school and travel within the Canton. You can get this at any SBB CFF FFS (there's one at Zug station, you can't miss it). Also, during your stay you will most likely travel throughout Switzerland on the weekends, if you plan on doing this, I highly recommend getting the half fare card! I didn't get the half fare card and I really wish I had, it gets you half price tickets within Switzerland so that if you go on weekend trips within the country, it's half price! This helps a lot as the public transport in Switzerland is nicer than Melbourne's BUT it's really expensive. It can also get you half price on other things, such as cable cars to the top of mountains. Other recommendations include to bring a passport photo for your rail pass, download the SBB app (really easy to use), get Swiss Franc out before you leave so that you don't have to deal with extra fares on your cards (many normal travel card companies don't carry Franc), bring resources such as Australian picture books, prepare for amount of bread and cheese you'll be eating and pack Vegemite.



## **Personal evaluation**

### **3 Negatives**

- Amount of time at the PH – As much as going to the PH was a wonderful experience, the day was quite long. As some of the lessons are in German, I think the amount of time we spent at the PH was a bit unneeded. I think if we stayed for the first 2 classes and the lunch break, this would be enough time to give us a good insight into studying education in Switzerland.
- Not enough time to see the country – I think that as we are in a foreign country for a whole month, we really had a big urge to see a lot of it. I think that it would be useful in the future to allow the students one day off a week. One idea could be to shorten the PH day and place it on a Wednesday after school as school only goes until 12 and then have Friday off to explore.
- The price – As much as I have loved this experience, it has been a pricey one. I'm not sure if it could happen, but as this is a teaching practicum that we had to apply for, possibly Deakin could provide future students with (at least) some of the accommodation cost and a Zugerpass (as this is absolutely necessary to complete this placement). I'm aware that there are scholarships available to us, however these are not guaranteed. Possibly a scholarship that comes along with receiving a place on the GEP would be great.

### **3 Positives**

- The placement at Elementa – my placement was such a wonderful experience. Teaching in another country was something I will remember forever, I was able to gain so many resources and refine my practice, improving not just as a teacher but as a person.
- Teaching with a peer – teaching and planning with someone else from home was a really great idea. We were able to thoroughly plan some very successful lessons, create lots of resources and bounce ideas off one another during planning time. As we are in a foreign country with a different schooling system, having someone to navigate that with is very helpful and stress relieving.
- Travelling on the weekend – Travelling and exploring Switzerland with other students from home has been amazing. I have been to Zurich, Lucerne, Schwyz, Interlaken and even to Milan in Italy!