

Inspiring Pupils to Achieve

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Half a year after the first international Conference on Gifted Education in Switzerland in 2014, a group of distinguished teachers, education experts and authorities in the field of education from all over Switzerland gathered once more for a symposium on promoting gifted children.

At school, achievement is often considered as "uncool". When it comes to fields such as music and sports, as well as the professional life, however, accomplishment is approved and recognized. The symposium discussed how school can inspire gifted children to achieve.

On Saturday, 21st March 2015, approximately 120 participants were attracted by the topic "Inspire to Achieve".

At the beginning of the conference a gifted high school pupil, a young skier, a trainee hair dresser and a young violoncellist reported on their passion, their achievements, and their moments of success, but also the setbacks that come hand-in-hand with success. These highly-gifted young individuals were accompanied by their mentors, coaches and parents, who support them. The discussion, moderated very thoughtfully by Cornelia Kazis, demonstrated the importance of mentors in supporting young talents to achieve success.

In the subsequent presentation, Victor Müller-Oppliger, co-initiator of the conference, professor at the University of Teacher Education Northwestern Switzerland and member of the ECHA Executive Committee, made connections between the statements of the podium discussion and the Swiss education system. Müller-Oppliger suggests that in order for a child to reach excellence in a certain domain, three things need to exist: talent, interest and will, respectively perseverance. Victor Müller-Oppliger still sees a large need for improvement at both the primary and secondary areas of schooling. "The ideal system would consist of half a day



Young gifted people report about their talents



Victor Müller-Oppliger in discussion with participants

classes in core subjects, and the other half on education programmes to support students in their preferred topics."

After the lunch break, the participants discussed the subject "achievement" on four different "creative platforms":

The school and teaching staff...

- inspire and initiate: What awakens interest?
- enable and facilitate: How does school inspire?
- coach and accompany: Who encourages you? How do we accompany?
- recognize and share: How is success celebrated?

The conference concluded with a presentation detailing the implementation

of educational programmes to support pupils at a state school, illustrating how this school manages to inspire the children to achieve.

It took place for the 10th time and was organized by the University of Teacher Education Zug, in collaboration with a small group of interested experts in gifted education.

Further information in German is available under: www.symposium-begabung.phzg.ch

Marianne Ettlin, specialist in gifted education ECHA, MAS iBBF FHNW, is coordinator of the group of experts, who organized the symposium.

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