A Learning Objective

The following is a chronicle of a History teacher from the United Kingdom as he travelled across Europe to visit various schools for a week. Teaching and observing in schools in Scandinavia to Spain, from the Adriatic Sea to the English Channel, his experiences served as an expose into different classroom philosophies, and the benefits of cross-continent collaboration.

Hertford, Hertfordshire: The United Kingdom: *Exams, Uniforms, and Single-Gender Classrooms*

I write this as my thirteenth year in teaching rapidly approaches its conclusion. My classroom is dark, primarily due to all lights being turned off, but then again, in the United Kingdom, it is relatively rare to see sunlight-even in the middle of July. The fact that I have to continue teaching through the third week of July is a bit of an annoyance in and of itself, but then again, that is teaching in the UK-and, having observed lessons across continental Europe over the past three years, I don't think I could teach anywhere else.

The United Kingdom has seemingly become almost notorious recently in the wider educational landscape. There is too much emphasis placed on testing, it is said. And why do students still have to wear uniforms, with some even attending single-gender schools? Surely it is time to realise this is an outdated attempt at representing a 19th century ideal of aristocracy that is not relevant to nearly all of the students that enter your classrooms? Such comments are valid, but surprisingly, the greatest impact on the way education in the United Kingdom has been viewed-both domestically and internationally-has been due to the way it has demeaned itself, and lauded the approach of other countries.

"They're brazenly elitist", stated former Prime Minister David Cameron, describing the attitudes of the Finnish educational establishment five months before becoming Prime Minister in 2010. This, he suggested, was the type of perspective that the United Kingdom needed to adopt. The Finnish may not wear uniforms, and school children may not need to pay for their lunches, but teachers were all in possession of "good degrees", and were held in high esteem by society. This approach would jump start the changes needed to UK education that were apparently required. Unsurprisingly, those actually working in education-particularly government funded education, which the aristocratic Cameron had never attended-did not agree.

"I think Michael Gove is an idiot", one guest speaker at my previous school announced. He had been brought in to lead a training session on the benefits of changing the school pastoral system to a "vertical" set up, in which students of different ages were put in the same group under one Form Tutor to look after their pastoral needs. However, he made no effort to hide his own opinions, and whilst this was in part an effort to entertain his audience, there was one further line of his that stuck in my memory.

"I think you are just as good as any teacher in Finland".

Well, that's nice to hear, I thought. Yet still, I was curious about what a Finnish classroom would be like, and how amazed I would be at the differences inherent in Finnish pedagogical practice. At the time (the 2013-2014 school year), I did not think I would ever be in a position to visit schools across continental Europe. However, after joining an organisation entitled Euroclio in 2020, which allows History teachers from across Europe to create networking opportunities, I began to immediately ponder the possibilities. I soon concluded that, when the coronavirus-induced hell that the world was experiencing passed, I would pursue every opportunity I could.

Espoo, Finland: *The supposedly "elitist" Finns*

I first reached out to Riitta Mikkola, a former president of the Euroclio board and experienced teacher at Karakallion Koulu in Espoo, Finland. I wrote about who I was, my desire to see Finnish education in action, and described the school at which I teach: a four-hundred-and-seven-year-old school for ages 11-18 that is only boys between the ages of 11-16. This was something I knew did not exist in Finland, and, I hoped, would serve to explain my interest in observing Finnish practice-and international practice in general-as what I observed was likely to be significantly different from what I confronted on a daily basis. "An all-boys school sounds very exciting in Finnish ears", Riitta wrote in reply. When asked later what she meant by this, she offered simply "well, it's weird". Excellent, I thought. A mutual exchange of perceived weirdness is something I was very much hoping would transpire!

This has been only a small portion of the large array of wonderful experiences I have had at Karakallion Koulu in four separate visits since October of 2021. I have been privileged enough to observe Finnish pedagogy in every subject from History to Chemistry to English to Mathematics. Whilst being suitably impressed by the quality on offer, I came away not with the impression that Finnish teachers were so alarmingly elite in comparison to their counterparts in the United Kingdom, but rather had virtually no pressure from external assessments to worry about, and therefore spent many lessons engaging their students in conversations about the topics at hand. What would the process be to build a successful factory? What would you sell, and how would it be made? Which propaganda poster would be most effective for convincing a society to follow a dictator? These questions do not need to have written responses that show evaluation from each student-in fact, students did not appear to write down lesson titles, much less the famed "learning objectives" that many UK lessons require. Rather, they were to be explored as a collective in each lesson, with students understanding how to communicate their ideas effectively through interaction and articulation, rather than formulaic written expression. Students made suggestions to sell vegan chocolate and shoes made of penis foreskin. The direction and feasibility of their conversations and decisions were irrelevant, as was, most notably from a UK perspective, how much, if anything, they wrote down. They were developing their abilities to orally express themselves as individuals and use such ideas in group collaboration, and thus, I soon understood, fulfilling one of Finnish education's primary pedagogical objectives.

In my time in Finland, I have taught lessons on the objectives of NATO, the consequences of Brexit, power in the Roman Empire, the industrial revolution in British cities and agricultural rebellions in the East English countryside. The feedback I received was always consistent. "Those lessons could be Finnish lessons", I have been repeatedly told. This was reassuring, but having taught in the United Kingdom for the amount of time that I had, not terribly surprising. I knew I had observed excellent practice by my colleagues in the UK, at each of the three schools I had taught at. Their skill level was no different from the supposedly "elitist" Finns. The assessment objectives which they had to teach to, however, very much were.

Whilst my experiences in Finland have been hugely illuminating, there is no denying that any two-dimensional exploration of a topic, and particularly the topic of education, is by default limited to the point of inadequacy. I visited Karakallion Koulu in October of 2021 and again in April of 2022. It

was clear that, due to a combination of the fantastic overall environment of the school, the hospitality of the faculty, and a burgeoning personal appreciation for Finnish culture, I would continue returning. However, it had always been my aim to expand my observation possibilities beyond simply a comparison between the inherent assessment focus of the United Kingdom's system and the conversation-based flexibility of Finland's educational outlook. It was to this end-and a few others-that I welcomed the chance to have breakfast with then-President of Euroclio Steven Stegers in Moscow in the first week of October, 2021. We were both attending the first World Congress of History Teachers, taking place at the Hotel President in Polyanka, Moscow. Steven had already been grilled by Russian media on the methods which western nations use to portray Russia, particularly pertaining to the Great Patriotic War, and they had done everything except directly accuse him of "Russophobia" (at least, if such a direct accusation did happen, I was not there to see it). Surrounded by Russian teachers who were split largely along two lines-one group in their late twenties and thirties who were willing to welcome teachers from across the world to Russia, and one group of middle-aged teachers educated under the Soviet Union who felt their country had no need for our "democratic" outlook-Steven and I each seemingly were eager to seize the opportunity to have a plate of eggs and potatoes whilst sitting across from someone who was not continually searching for an opportunity to accuse us of deliberately discrediting their nation for our own purposes. It was during this conversation that I ever so casually dropped the suggestion that if Steven knew of anyone in his home nation of the Netherlands who might be interested in having a teacher from the United Kingdom visit, I would jump at the opportunity. This was before I had travelled to Finland for the first time, and I had little to offer him except optimism and excitement. This appeared to be enough, however, and it was through him that I was given the name of Hellen Janssen, a teacher at Zwijsen School in Veghel, Netherlands, and told that this would be my most promising opportunity if I was to visit a Dutch school.

<u>Veghel, Netherlands and Bologna, Italy</u>: *May many more opportunities for such collaboration be ahead*.

Eight months later, in June of 2022, I found myself checking into The Yard Hotel in Veghel, Netherlands. After being shown to my room, and having it emphasised that my television was a Phillips model, I turned on my laptop and began to reflect upon the lessons that I would be teaching to the Dutch students I would be meeting throughout the following week. How would I go about this? What did I really know about Dutch suffrage and Aletta Jacobs (answer: nothing)? And, most importantly, what style should I use? My tried and tested UK style, where thinking and analytical progress must always be shown by written work? A Finnish style of conversational discovery, attempted in a Dutch system I had never before observed with students that did not know me? Or, possibly, should I try to emulate the style I had observed-and then used-in Bologna, Italy, in February of that same year? Whilst having the experience of visiting Espoo, Finland on two separate occasions and Liceo Copernico in Bologna, Italy four months earlier undoubtedly provided a large amount of confidence, it also had increased my pedagogical perspectives to a point of weirdly intriguing confusion. During my week in Bologna, at the selective, seemingly politically left-wing Liceo, I had observed teachers presenting information to students in a slow, deliberate manner, and giving them the opportunity to take notes. Whilst this was effective, it was, if anything, far more traditional than anything I could ever hope to implement in my own classrooms in the United Kingdom. Whilst this practice was influenced heavily by the fact that the school was selective in nature and the academic capability of all students was above average, the emphasis on assessment-and, specifically, the importance of

written exam answers-had been shown to be far from unique to UK education. What would the Dutch system present me with, and what would be the best way to cope?

The answer to such questions was the most spectacular and pleasing collection of manifested stereotypes imaginable. As I walked to school, Zwijsen College students cheerfully sped past me on their bicycles. When I arrived, I was greeted by a warm smile from the front of school administration, then led into the most spacious and expansive staff room imaginable. Couches and easy chairs made way only for shelves of books and magazines, and the room had seemingly been designed with an environmentally conscious theme in mind. During a short and pleasant conversation with Hellen Janssen, I looked up to see what I assumed were two of the youngest teaching assistants I had ever met in my life walking into the staffroom. They marched over to the table Hellen and myself were sat at, and she reacted as though she expected them. “These are the two students you will be coordinating with during the Model United Nations Project”, I was told.

Students? They just marched into the staffroom!

“We’re allowed to when we have a meeting with a teacher”, I was told by Jurre, one of the students whom I quickly gathered was a natural organiser of a variety of endeavours. “I follow most of my teachers on Instagram”, I recall him saying later in the conversation. Coming from a traditional institution that has been around for four-hundred-and-seven years, and would never allow either students in the staffroom nor staff/student contact on social media, I sat there quietly, in a state of shock, now fully ready for the most stereotypical Dutch behaviour of all to occur-surely he was going to pull out a bong in the next few moments?

By the end of the conversation, however, I was told that I was going to play Nazi Foreign Minister Alfred Rosenborg in a recreation of the Nazi hierarchy’s discussion regarding how to handle documents discovered on the body of an apparent British army Captain washed up on the southern coast of Spain which suggested that the Allies planned to attack Greece and Sardinia. This was a project conducted by the Zwijsen College Model United Nations, which students organised and then performed on their own volition. Students had decided to examine the famed British military ruse Operation Mincemeat, which was intended to divert Axis defences away from Sicily, the intended target of invasion by the Allies, through the assumption that the apparently neutral Spanish government under Franco would, upon finding the body of “Captain William Martin”, share the supposed Allied plan to target Greece and Sardinia instead.

Whilst the discussion amongst “Nazi ministers” (each one being portrayed by a Dutch adolescent, or, in one instance, a grey-haired American in his thirties) was expectedly dominated by older students, the project, which was performed in the school’s auditorium, was a testament to student initiative and creativity, with each student offering at least one idea before I took it upon myself to inform all of them that their “Italian allies” (Dominoes Pizzeria) had taken it upon themselves to provide two large pizzas for all members of the meeting as a show of friendship, and that we would not pause for dinner. It is likely accurate to suggest that Mussolini at that time could have used all the allies he could possibly get-his time as Prime Minister ended only fifteen days after the termination of Operation Mincemeat in 1943. However, I was able, as I watched students present ideas and arguments to each other, to put aside any focus on historical accuracy and replace it with an appreciation of the students developing their abilities to think critically in a fun and engaging context.

The meeting concluded with students deciding that cardboard tanks and guns would be placed on top of Sardinia and Greece, and resources would still be dedicated to protecting Sicily. Whilst I found this a peculiar decision, I was told that in previous meetings of the student Model United Nations, decisions had been made to divide the moon, amongst other solutions. In all fairness, the conclusion of the Dutch students would likely not have worked out any worse for the Nazis than what actually did occur. Creativity as a method for creating further engagement was clearly embraced by the Dutch system, as I gleefully found when teaching a class of fifteen-year-olds about the Industrial Revolution in Britain. Having taught this topic many times before with twelve and thirteen-year-old ("Year 8") students in Britain-and once in Finland-I was still slightly unsure of how Dutch fifteen-year-olds would respond. Within 72 hours, however, I had "sawed off" the leg of a student (re-enacting the methods of surgery used in 1750) and then met that same student and his friend for an after-school session in which I reviewed the different components of imperialism and contemporary political attitudes toward its practice. This was in part an attempt to put into practice kinaesthetic activities which represent the type of pedagogy more commonly seen in boys' schools in the United Kingdom, and also an attempt to see students operate and build relationships in a small group setting away from their normal teachers. Whilst I was told the boys were proud of the newspaper assignment they completed after their session with me, their fluency and confidence when speaking English, eagerness to take risks and challenge themselves, and casual confidence when speaking English-shown most emphatically when making sarcastic comments about football transfers-was fantastic to behold. It is often, as educators, the off-hand comments that remain in our memory after lessons finish and that we reflect upon later, usually with a large amount of either caffeine or alcohol close at hand. I can hardly remember anything that was said about imperialism or political attitudes, but can vividly recall reactions to points being made about footballer Mario Gotze only signing with PSV due to his injury history, and one of the boys protesting-through a typically broad, toothy Dutch smile-about his likelihood of diabetes increasing due to my offering of chocolates as a reward for participation. These moments are, in truth, far more likely to be informative of the wider ethos of a school, and provide invaluable insights into the attitudes students have toward their school days.

Eight months later, in an otherwise-empty library just north of the Piazza Maggiore in Bologna, I performed a similar project in my second visit to Liceo Copernico with three seventeen-year-old-boys who explored the infamous 1921 criminal trial of Niccolo Sacco and Bartolmeo Vanzetti in 1920. The three students, despite experiencing what appeared to be far more didactic pedagogy in their lessons each day, responded much like their Dutch counter-parts. They engaged brilliantly with opportunities to perform kinaesthetic arrangements of trial evidence, dramatic re-enactments of events from the past of the two accused anarchists, and song lyric analysis (all in English). This concluded with a discussion about how Sacco and Vanzetti are remembered. The history professor of two of the boys, the indefatigable and eternally patient Fabio Todesco, was kind of enough to carefully read over the written work completed by his pupils during the session. He commented that their work possessed an "unexpected fluency", and stated that "because of the new situation (they were) capable of a better fluency and, at the same time, less attentive to grammar structures and syntax errors". This was very much in line with the impression I had gotten after working with the two Dutch students the year before, and served to confirm my own impressions cultivated over years of working in British, single gender environments. Boys, in

particular, can benefit greatly from educational environments in which risk taking is encouraged, new ideas are presented regularly, and discussion and kinaesthetic activity are frequently on offer.

“I have been working with your one minute reading and more up-tempo teaching. Combined with quick interaction to check what they have learned”, reflected Hellen, less than three weeks after I departed Zwijsen. I didn’t bother trying to stifle a smile. May many more opportunities for such collaboration be ahead, I thought to myself. I had been asked many times by my British colleagues how on earth I could give up my holiday time to go to other schools and continue teaching during a week when I was supposed to be relaxing. There were times when I almost thought they had a point. In reflecting upon each visit, however, I had been given so much by each of the institutions that had allowed me to visit, and the thought that I might have provided something in return to benefit their teachers-and, subsequently, students-instilled a sense of fulfilment no week of sun worshipping could ever hope to achieve.

Despite these moments of contribution, I knew from the first moment I stepped into Karakallion Koulu on my first visit that I was not there to inspire changes in the schools I was visiting, much less find out areas that needed improvement, and nor was I there to focus simply on certain students. As a visiting teacher, I always felt it was my responsibility to aspire to positively impact each student I was privileged enough to come across. It was due to this aspiration that I always asked numerous times after each school visit for student feedback, hoping students could reflect in their native language in front of teachers with which they had established positive rapports. Hellen had told me that her older (sixteen-seventeen) year old students had described their lesson on the post-WWII communist takeover of Eastern Europe as “intense…(they) had the feeling they had to work hard”. However, on the whole, they “liked the experience”. Well, I thought, there was little point in bringing in a visiting teacher if they were simply there to have a minimal impact. Of course, hard work from students was a prerequisite to having a visiting teacher from another country. Each of these students was attempting to study complicated History in at least their second language, and at times their third.

“I have tremendous respect for each and every one of you already”, I always said the first time I met a class. “You are doing something my students in the United Kingdom could not do. They could not have a History class in French or German”. I meant this genuinely every time I said it, and would often stand in awe at the sophistication the students showed in confronting challenging conversations in English. While I admired their abilities as they were, however, their own ambitions continued to climb. Fabio, after my second visit to Bologna, reported that “many (students), after your lessons, are seriously considering the possibility (of enrolling) at the University of Bologna in an English speaking degree” and that they felt “at home” with the methods that were used with them. He quoted one student as saying “for the first time I realised that I University course in English is something I could do in my future”. As previously alluded to, the unforeseen positives are often the most rewarding in the world of education, and students from this same class would provide me with further insights the following February when I returned to Liceo Copernico and conducted a lesson with them about 1905 Russia. Students, as they had on each of the previous occasions, performed admirably. However, upon reflecting after the class (when I was still in the classroom), they responded by stating that in the previous year, when I had used significant amounts of group work in a lesson about the American Revolution, I had treated them “more like children” and that in the lesson they had just completed on Russia, they felt that proceedings were more conducive to adult instruction. In the United Kingdom, any notable level of didactic instruction in lessons is often frowned upon as causing a lack of engagement and not allowing for the frequent checking of

progress, so I found it interesting that Italian students-albeit in a selective environment-had responded with praise. Like all of the feedback I was able to receive, I was grateful for it.

Warsaw, Poland and Bilbao, Basque Country: *My old friend The Unexpected*

The unpredictability of student responses is one of the main reasons the teaching profession continues to be engaging, and of course any one lesson can be perceived as childish by some students and engaging by others. This was made clear in Warsaw, Poland in April of 2023, when I spent a lovely day at Liceum Ogolnoksztalcace and had the chance to teach a lesson on feudalism to a group of fifteen and sixteen year old students. Whilst I had been given the topic ahead of time, I had no real understanding of student levels of English (although, having visited a number of different schools across Europe by this point, was prepared to be pleasantly surprised). I therefore decided to play it safe, and taught virtually the same lesson on feudalism I had taught to eleven-year-old boys in England for over a decade. This involved students sitting on the floor, grabbing onto the legs of their desks as “plots of land”, while other students, seated on chairs, performed the role of “knights”, taking “food cards” from the “peasants” on the floor, and then had “lords” (students who were standing up) taking “taxes” from them. The “king”-a self-conscious adolescent in a paper Burger King crown seated at the front of the room-then collected the “taxes” cards from the lords. A very kinaesthetic method, and only a paragraph or so of writing, but students, far from disengaging or complaining, did not hesitate at the unusual situations they were presented with, and appeared to comprehend the systematic nature of the feudal system well. When asked for feedback, their regular History teacher responded by saying that “class was amazed” and that it was “good to see someone who gives new inspiration”.

I had always felt like the recipient of new inspiration at each school I visited, and could not help but expect a similar experience when I approached Ikastola Urretxindorra in Bilbao, Basque Country, where I visited for one week in April of this year. This educational complex, which served students from their earliest years in education through secondary school, was rooted in the ethos of preserving the Basque culture and, particularly, language, with the speaking of Spanish was forbidden except in Spanish lessons. Luckily, English could be spoken at anytime, and the teacher I was shadowing for the week, the irrepressible Esti, had forewarned me that the atmosphere would be very relaxed. I expected the environment to be a joyous one, as Athletic Bilbao had won the Copa Del Rey over the weekend for the first time in forty years, and the city had not slept-or stopped consuming alcohol-since the winning penalty went in during the first few minutes of the previous Sunday morning. I smiled as virtually every student-of every age and both genders-walked in wearing their “Atleti” shirts, and made their way to the first period classrooms. I sat down in a class of sixteen-seventeen year olds, ready to observe Esti at work, and, before saying anything, was greeted by a student at the back of the room with a thumbs up gesture. This will be a good week, I thought.

This was confirmed a few moments later when that same student, along with two or three of his classmates, continued to engage in conversation as Esti tried to teach. Finally, in a moment all classroom teachers have had-most of us on a regular basis-she turned around to face the corner of the conversing students and loudly exclaimed “You! A pencil case! I throw you! And, I think, I kill you”!

I am going to get on very well with this woman, I thought, smiling to myself. *We have similar classroom management methods!*

Esti did not actually throw a pencil case, or anything else, at her students, and on the following day, invited me to teach the same class. I performed "freeze frame" activities (students taking on the postures and expressions of characters in pictures displayed behind them, then describing the thoughts and desires of the character they were portraying) with them in their English lesson about emphasisers, maximisers and boosters, and then had them reflect on their beloved Athletic Bilbao's victory in a paragraph using adverbs. However, it was, unexpectedly, with the final year students that the greatest impact was apparently achieved. I had been warned that this class did not have the best attitude, and that there was a worry about their upcoming exam results. I was asked to teach them a lesson on how to write an introduction to their 135 word mini essays that they have to complete on a topic given to them, and designed a lesson the only way I knew how-breaking down the different components of an extended piece of written work in order to allow students to construct their own work from scratch. This was a challenge, however, as I was not used to confronting pieces of written work that were so short. At the end of the lesson with "Batxi 2" (final year students), Esti approached me smiling. Was it that much of a relief to not have to teach them for a single lesson?

"I never thought of doing it like that", she said.

Like what?

"Dissecting it like that", she continued. Really? I nodded slowly. I had never thought of *not* teaching writing like that.

This experience, as a vignette, was a perfect example of why these trips were so valuable. What was new to her was old to me, and what had proven so natural to so many of the teachers I had observed across the continent gave me new insights I had never before considered.

It is my hope that in future years, I will continue to have the incredible privilege of visiting schools across Europe, particularly the fantastic institutions which have already entrusted me to contribute to their impressive students. I have had the opportunity to learn from their practice, reflect upon my own, contribute in small but meaningful ways, and observe, over time, how each school experiments with different methods and pedagogies. In a further visit to Karakallion Koulu in Finland in October of 2023, I witnessed Finnish students taking notes when watching extended film clips, representing something far more didactic than I had witnessed in my three previous visits. In a second visit to the Netherlands, this time in Cuijk in June of this year, I had the opportunity to visit Merlet College, and observed lessons that were seemingly stylised directly from what I initially saw in Finland-discussion upon a topic-in this case the renaissance-in whatever direction the students saw fit. This discussion was frequently interrupted by laughter, random noises, and, at times, odd forays around the room from students, but all were responded to jovially by the teacher. This was the Netherlands, after all.

Familiar patterns of engagement and risk taking following along gender lines also emerged. In an English lesson I was asked to teach to twelve and thirteen-year-olds in which students had to describe themselves and their priorities, only the boys volunteered for the "freeze frame" activity despite the fact that one of the characters in the picture they had to represent was female, with girls often refusing to even make eye contact. However, just as I was reminding myself how lucky I was to teach regularly in an environment where the majority students were happy to get involved and take chances in lessons, my old friend The Unexpected reminded me that it had never left my side either. After teaching a lesson to a different class of the same age about the so-called "Glorious" Revolution of 1688 (at least, that is what the English call it) in a style that I would use for my own "Year 8" boys in England, the most positive feedback I got was from the girls in the class. "I really enjoyed that", they responded, whereas the boys, who were not used to doing the amount of writing they had been asked to do, had not responded as keenly.

<u>Upon Reflection</u>: *Our capability and responsibility*

An emphasis on written work in lessons in order to aid exam preparation will always be an essential part of the exam culture of the United Kingdom, and that is unlikely to ever change substantially. It is the feature of British education that appears most prominent, much like discussion for the sake of expanding communication abilities is in Finland, directed, analytical conversations surrounding a chosen topic are in the Netherlands, and didactic note-taking appears to be in Italy, at least in selective environments. It may limit pedagogical creativity in some ways, but in an all-boys environment, there will always be at least twenty-plus eager faces hoping for their teacher to pull a proverbial rabbit out of a hat-and I live for those moments. I will never get tired of the experiences I have when visiting schools across Europe, but do not think I could ever leave my current situation, where students regularly get their legs sawed off, re-enact battles on land and at sea, and eagerly put on capes and crowns to connect with the past, always providing me with plenty of potential volunteers with raised hands. Undoubtedly, teachers are forced to prepare perpetually for the omnipotent results day, which eternally sits above the horizon of the students' futures. It is just such a moment of consequence, however, that we all, I believe, as educators, hope to celebrate with our students. The priceless moment when our students observe their own quantifiable success and accredit it to themselves, then reflect upon your contribution to them, is something that would inspire any teacher to continue marking work at 1:00 in the morning, drafting and redrafting lesson plans on a Sunday night, or forcing our students to copy down those dreaded learning objectives. I hope to have such a moment in almost exactly one month as I write this, and have it replayed for months on end afterward each time the students I taught see me in the halls or on their way to or from school.

Eventually, all of our students leave us, in one way or another. Even those whom we contribute to the most and are closest with during their time at school eventually become another Whatsapp profile in our phones or Facebook profile we seldom, if ever, view. They most often remain forever seventeen in our minds, full of potential, vitality, creativity-and needing just that slight bit more encouragement to bring all of those characteristics, and more, to fruition. During our time with them, we obsess over finding whatever door we need to open to accomplish that, because seeing them have that moment, and include you in it, is a thrill that only those who have dedicated their working lives to education can truly understand. Any chance we have to make ourselves more able to achieve that impact, and to make more likely the possibility a student will realise his or her potential, should be explored. This is not because we are not already doing everything we know how to do, as educators, to create such an outcome. It is because each one of us has the capability-and, therefore, the responsibility-to be even better than we already are. Collaboration with other schools

in different countries, in different systems, and with different expectations and surrounding cultures, allows us to potentially take those necessary steps to further help our own students, and, just maybe, students from a city far away, become the utmost of what they could be. This means a greater chance that the set of memories we know we will be left with one day will contain more of the invaluable moments of student self-accreditation, and those even more precious moments when they invite you to celebrate their success with them.

One day, those memories will likely be all we have left from our time as teachers.

Well, except for maybe a pension. That would be nice as well.

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For further information on Euroclio, please follow the following link: https://euroclio.eu/

For further Information on AEDE Netherlands, please follow the following link: https://aede.nl