

A TRANSFORMATIVE JOB SHADOWING EXPERIENCE

*Daniela Tagliafico, ErasMove Network Coordinator, interviewing **Federica Ferraro**, Student mobility Coordinator of the ErasMove Consortium, and **Simonetta Fraulin**, Teacher of Spanish Language and Literature, about their job shadowing experience at **IES Sácilis, in Pedro Abad (Córdoba).***

Participants in the job shadowing:

Simonetta Fraulin and **Federica Ferraro**, teachers of Spanish language and literature, and **Antonella Parente**, administrative staff at “Giovanni da Castiglione” High School, Italy

Destination: IES Sácilis, Pedro Abad, Córdoba, Spain

When: 6-10th november 2023



DT: Hello Federica and Simonetta, and thank you for sharing your experience with us. First of all, I would ask you to tell us something about the school where you carried out the job shadowing.

FF: I'll make a premise. In 2019 I came into contact, for the first time, with José Carlos López the principal of the IES Sácilis Institute in Pedro Abad. José Carlos was preparing the candidacy for the accreditation of a consortium of European schools and was looking for an Italian school interested in joining their group. On that occasion we had a long conversation because it was essential before proceeding - he said - that I understood how they worked in his Institute. In fact he was more than right: their educational project was different and original and I was fascinated by it. Unfortunately, due to various impediments, our school did not become part of that European consortium but I always had this desire to go and see how they worked.

And finally, with ErasMove, in November 2023 I had the opportunity to carry out a job shadowing there.

Pedro Abad is a tiny and silent village of less than 3000 inhabitants in the province of Córdoba. The first thing you notice when you enter the town is a welcome sign that says “Pedro Abad against gender violence” and several heart-shaped road signs with the same message.



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>>> A WARM WELCOME

On the main road of the town, there is the IES Sácilis school, which appeared before our eyes, the same evening of our arrival, with the colors of the Italian flag projected on the facade of the main building. “A tribute to you and to Italy”, José Carlos told us. It was enough to arrive at the entrance to understand that **it was not just any school**. The welcome was warm, the students came in with us, they all left their smartphones in a box and we felt their curious eyes on us. But they didn't seem surprised: we were not the only foreigners, actually, there were also two French colleagues from Strasbourg accompanying three students who would carry out a two-week mobility in Pedro Abad. In fact, IES Sácilis has been working with Erasmus+ for more than 10 years, and they currently form a European Consortium with an institute from Strasbourg, a Finnish one and an Italian one from the province of Lecce.



>>> SMALL BUT GOLD

Do you want to know how many students the school has? You won't believe it, but they are only 69 and they range from 12 to 15 years old. By day three, we knew almost all of them by name!

The school is a small and lively environment, the colors of the paintings immediately catch the eye, one in particular made me smile: it reproduces the photos of the teachers and students of the school with Warhol's pop art technique. I thought to myself: “We have to do it too!”.

>>> A “COMUNIDAD DE APRENDIZAJE”

DT: Federica, tell us more about how the school in Pedro Abad works...

FF: The IES Sácilis is a “Comunidad de aprendizaje”, a term that can be translated as “Learning community”. It is an innovative pedagogical proposal that puts special emphasis on the need to build an environment in which the different members of the educational community - students, teachers, families, and residents in the area - can collaborate together to create a common project that guarantees school integration and improves academic performances. The objective is to make this educational center an active agent of social change, promoting social and economic emancipation of pupils and families, also through volunteering.

“The results are visible,” our colleagues from IES Sácilis say. “Pupils are more motivated to learn, develop a critical spirit, and improve their academic performance; furthermore, teachers feel particularly stimulated, and the local community is part of the school community: they collaborate, assist, and feel involved, even if it is not always obvious. It's a continuous challenge.”

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>>> A LOT TO TAKE HOME

DT: Beyond the methodology, what are the aspects that struck you most during your stay?

FF and SF: There are several aspects that struck us in this experience. There is one thing, among many, that we would like to take from Pedro Abad's school, which is the idea of not using a bell to mark the end of class time. At IES Sácilis, the beginning and the end of each lesson is marked by music, every month with a different playlist and pieces that range across genres, even if the favorite is rock (the principal is a musician and rock enthusiast!). Music, therefore, welcomes and accompanies the times of the day, and instills good humor and joy: we can testify!

Another extraordinary activity of IES Sácilis is radio. Despite its small size the school has a radio station. Students are familiar with the functioning and value of this means of communication. At the end of our week-long job shadowing we were interviewed on their radio, the students asked us to give feedback on the experience and we were amazed by the ease and communication skills they had. We were definitely more embarrassed than they were, but it was so fun and challenging.

DT: Are there some aspects of their way of teaching that you have introduced into your school or that have influenced your way of working?

SF: As far as I'm concerned, I participated in some activities as a protagonist and others as an observer; in particular I liked the "Tertulia", a sort of circle conversation on a specific theme. I was surprised by the kids' involvement and desire to express themselves. Their curiosity allowed them not only to analyze the proposed topic, but also to gain confidence in dealing with their classmates. I believe that it could be introduced in our school, to promote critical skills and learn to respect the opinion of classmates.

FF: I too was fascinated by the "Tertulia". I would like to deepen my knowledge of the dynamics of this practice and apply it regularly in my lessons. I made some attempts upon returning with a couple of classes and I must say that it is very stimulating to work with a different approach. It would be nice to share these practices with the teachers at my school and start making them part of our teaching.

I also took many creative ideas from them for the presentation of new topics both in literature and in art and civilization; I must say that I came back very energized and full of stimulation.

This "Comunidad de aprendizaje" applies methodologies that are the result of international scientific research, and on which their project-based teaching is founded. There are three projects per year and they are presented by the teachers with a "spectacularization" of the themes, that is highly engaging. You have to watch to really understand what I'm trying to explain. To carry out each project, teachers implement different types of activities and methodologies. These include art therapy, "tertulia dialógica", interactive groups and various "thinking routines" practices that are used daily in their lessons.

The school organizes job shadowing weeks at specific periods of the year, which coincide either with the presentation of the quarterly projects or with the conclusion, usually November and January. The hosting capacity is not huge, but the center can accommodate two or three job shadowing experiences to be agreed upon directly with the Principal. Knowing the Spanish language could be an important requirement because it allows for a deeper understanding of their educational and also human experience.

For anyone who would like to learn more about this center and get in touch with IES Sácilis, the school website is the following:

IESSACILIS.ES