



The Visiting Scholar Experience

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This was my very first time visiting Leysin as a Visiting Scholar and experiencing the Leysin American School and its magical surroundings in a snowy winter. When invited to come and share my own doctoral research work at LAS as a Visiting Scholar, I wondered: "Will this really be relevant to high schoolers"? After all, asking big questions about our future and career lives is usually something we do much later in life. However, my gut instinct told me that there could be value to be found here and that perhaps the sooner we start asking some of these difficult questions the better. We need to give ourselves some space to honestly discover what truly "floats our boat" in our study and work lives. The LAS experience certainly did not disappoint and showed me that the interest, hunger and search for a meaningful future are just as alive in most youngsters as they are among adults and career-switchers in their later years.

After arriving at LAS and being warmly welcomed by my kind host Dr Paul Magnuson, it was clear that this experience will not be only about delivering a few classes, enjoying the marvelous views, and then leaving. Rather, the spirit of connecting with other fellow LAS teachers and staff was imminent from the get-go. For instance, it was great to meet some new friends at the very first dinner and to be asked to discuss my work right away. Working with LAS faculty was interesting for me because it was clear that most teachers do care. They cared to hear new ideas, see how they could integrate them into their own practices, and some even wanted to stay in touch for further collaborations in the future.

Those I had the privilege to work with directly during my week at the Magic Mountain, namely Alex Flynn-Paddick and Tom Cosgrove, clearly demonstrated to me that the willingness and enthusiasm to allow "space" for relatively new perspectives, including doing things differently, can bring benefits to all, students and teachers alike. Their willingness to experience something new and to participate is exactly the sense of breath of fresh air, novelty and experimentation that schooling needs. Working with and getting to know the LAS teachers more personally brought real value to me also by making me realize the important role secondary school teachers play in shaping young people's minds and lives.

I believe some of the strongest qualities and attributes of the LAS Visiting Scholar program are undoubtedly its warmth and welcoming nature, the willingness to enable a free exchange of what one knows with the LAS community (and vice versa), and the ability to foster mutually-beneficial learning experiences that leave both sides uplifted through clear win-win scenarios. It became clear to me that having a Visiting Scholar program - anywhere - brings diversity and novelty to classrooms that can otherwise become stale due to the somewhat monotone and repetitive nature of school. It brings new and sometimes challenging perspectives that shake the status quo and can expand the intellectual and creative horizons for everyone.

My experience showed me that the LAS's Visiting Scholar initiative offers a truly unique education program and experience that brings the real possibility of something innovative and "new" to the field which can be (and often is) so often focused on and inevitably held back by what is familiar and known, rather than genuinely inspired and uplifted by what is yet to be discovered.