Interview with a student at a bilingual school

We’ve all heard about bilingual schools, but what exactly is a bilingual school? Well, as the names “bi -lingual” suggests (“bi”-two, ”lingual”-languages),the pupils at these special schools study two languages , usually the native language and an additional language like Turkish or German.

Today we invited a student from the famous German school “Goethe” here in Bucharest, to help clear up some of the confusion and help you make an informed choice regarding your or your child’s education.

1)Question: How is Goethe-and other bilingual schools for that matter- different from other schools where you study German once or twice per week?

Answer: In contrast to other highschools, the German “Goethe” College insists on German as a subject.Despite most students here being born and raised Romanian,the german language is considered “native”.We have four lessons of german a week and other subjects like history or biology are taught in german. From 5th to 7th grade we were also taught the “history of german minorities in Romania” which make up a small percentage of the country’s population.Also,the national evaluation exam to get into highschool also requires students here to take an exam for german,unlike most schools.

2) Question: You told me that you study subjects like biology in german.Is that something that people new to the highschool who speak german without having an advanced or academic vocabulary should be concerned about?

Answer:Technically speaking,there may be a loophole in the rules of the school or a 1 in a million exception where someone that isn’t from a german school can start attending Goethe,but you are practically expected to know german well enough that you can understand the lessons by the time you reach highschool since you are technically supposed to start learning german in 1st grade.Still,it is very difficult to memorise a lot of the scientific terms in german like the ones from biology and I wish good luck with that to anyone new to the school!:)

3) Question:Some people associate bilingual schools like “Goethe” with private british schools that have their own british curriculum. Is that true?

Answer:It is not true at all.”Goethe” is not a private school so that makes it similar to other Romanian schools in terms of what is being taught to the students.The only difference is found at the “special” section where german,maths and history is taught by teachers that come from Germany and respect the german curriculum.

4) Question:What exactly do these bilingual schools do for you that most others just don’t?

Answer: First of all,you gain a lot of experience in german-or the 2nd language being taught at your bilingual school-which is represented by a language certificate which proves you can speak german at a level of B1,B2,C1 or C2 without having struggled as much with the language as most other students at public schools. In addition to this, if you are lucky enough to go to the “special” section,you will be allowed to take the “Abitur”,the german version of the USA’s SAT and Romania’s BACALAUREAT which can help you get into colleges from Germany.

5) Question: Speaking of college,are there other ways besides the “Abitur” in which the school helps increase your odds to get into German colleges?

Answer:There are in fact.First of all, a lot of colleges in Germany require proficient knowledge of german backed up by a language certificate.As you might recall from the previous question,”Goethe” does provide a degree for its students.Also,being familiar with the german curriculum and many of its terms will make it easier for you to adapt to a college from another country.

6) Question:Are there any disadvantages with attending bilingual schools?

Answer:One of the “disadvantages” that may throw some people off is the fact that since you study both German and Romanian,you spend more time in school than a lot of other kids which brings up a whole different discussion regarding the best ratio between free time and school time that is not worth starting here.

7)Did you have any doubts about attending a bilingual schools when you were young?

I was 5 years old when took the admission exam for the school.I remember having a few worries regarding the vast differences between “Goethe” and the regular schools that my friends attended,but ultimately my parents made the decision to go to the school.While I was quite anxious, I got used to it very quickly and it all went smoothly.

8) Question: And what made you decide to opt for “Goethe” this year as well?

Answer:Well of course for the many advantages mentioned previously which would help me significantly in achieving my goals as well as for the very friendly and safe environment where practically everyone knows each other since 1st grade.

9) Question: Who would you recommend bilingual schools like “Goethe” to?

Answer:I feel like bilingual schools really suit someone who especially enjoys learning other languages,and other cultures for that matter since it can serve as a really informative introduction.You will also learn French and English as foreign languages.So,you technically learn 4 languages if you also count Romanian,the foreign language.The best part is that the focus on german doesn’t stop anyone from performing well in other subjects.Anyone who is interested in learning german can come here!

10) Question: Are there really no regrets you have regarding the decision to attend “Goethe”?

Answer:Not at all! Despite all the other schools in this huge city, I chose to continue studying here because as it is probably the best choice to help me achieve my academic ambitions.

11) Question: A lot of people say that there is no use in learning german when you already know English.What is your opinion?

Answer:I believe that knowing many languages is not useless at all.While English has practically become a universal language,learning say german at an advanced level can really come in handy.Imagine you are travelling to Germany.You may be able to get around just fine with English alone,but when you speak their native language,it is much easier to connect with their culture.Learning another language also gives you a lot of “flexibility” since you never know when you might receive an amazing job offer in Germany.It truly isn’t “a waste of time”.

12) Question: What advice would you give to anyone who is starting their school life at “Goethe” or any other bilingual school?

Answer:I would tell them that despite all of the differences between “Goethe” and a normal school, adapting is not as difficult as it seems and that they shouldn’t be stressed about having to study a new language,as hard as it may seem.