

Cooperation of High school, Elementary school and Kindergarten, Frýdek – Místek,
funded institution, with Margaret K. Lewis School

Jan Vavříčka

Ladies and gentleman, I wish you good afternoon, which we will spend by watching beautiful presentations from your guests from USA.

First, let me present our school. High school, Elementary school and Kindergarten, Frýdek – Místek, funded institution, located at Pionýrů St. 2352 in Frýdek -Místek, which provide education for disabled students with special education needs as a result of lowered cognitive abilities and for students with multiple disabilities combined with mental disability. School consist of Kindergarten, Practical elementary school, Special elementary school, Two year practical school, One year practical school and Special pedagogic center for physically disabled.

Since 2001, our school cooperate internationally with schools from other EU states in the frame of Socrates and later Comenius program. That way we made long time connections with special schools from Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany, Estonia, Turkey and Italy. We also cooperate with special school from Poland as part of cross-border cooperation.

At the beginning of cooperation with Margaret K. Lewis School from Panama City, Florida, USA, there was one very happy event- marriage of our former colleague with teacher from the USA, who was at the time native-speaker educator of English language at High school in Frýdkek -Místek. At 2001 our former colleague Mrs. Andrea Weckherlin moved to USA with her husband, and after some time she started to teach at special school Margaret K. Lewis School. When she was visiting her home town Frýdek -Místek, she always come to visit our school, where she was teaching in the past. In the spring of 2007 an idea come up that it would be beneficial if our schools started to cooperate so headmistress of High school, Elementary school and Kindergarten Mrs. PaedDr. Ilja Maloušková offer cooperation to headmistress of Margaret K. Lewis School at the time Mrs. Barbara Hardy. At 14.th November 2007 authorities of Bay District authorized our cooperation and by this it was officially approved.

Cooperation was gradual. At first, there ware postcards and greetings exchange at Christmas and Easter holidays. In next years, plans for other cooperation emerged, like sharing of interesting ideas of non traditional education and exchange of information and material regarding forms, methods and means of work with disabled children. Since 2010 students from Margaret K. Lewis School also present their

pictures in our International exhibition intended for people with autistic spectrum disorders called „Glimpse of other, yet the same world“, which is held annually in May by our school in Frýdek – Místek.

In 2009 two teachers from our school went to USA, where they had an opportunity to get to know organization of special education in Florida as well as philosophy and methodology of school services for disabled people. In return, in 2010 five special teachers from Margaret K. Lewis School visited Czech Republic and our school. At this visit, Mr. Andrew Weckherlin, representative of Margaret K. Lewis School, put up an idea at round table, to present school at European days of handicap.

We are very pleased that our cooperation is evolving and that we can influence each other in making education of disabled children better. One of outcomes of our cooperation is also active participation of teachers from Margaret K. Lewis School at today's conference.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you have a pleasant afternoon.