

It has been several months since my last installment, and I have lots to talk about. Since we last spoke, my theater class has been to London and back, and this place still surprises me with how economically and efficiently they use their money. The trip included a one-week, unlimited use underground pass, hotel, several dinners, a workshop at the globe theater, a dance workshop with the studio that did the choreography to the Queen musical "We Will Rock You," one of the three, also included shows that we saw. The other two were Hairspray and Wicked, all of which were excellent. One year at this school costs around 15,000US dollars, and that includes room and board and trip and, considering the amount of guest speakers and elective classes, quite a bit more. In addition to the money collected from the students, every year the school gets a certain amount of money from the Norwegian government for improvements to the buildings and various equipment. Last year they added a mirrored dance studio with a system. Other amenities such as the sauna, swimming pool, and tanning bed, are geared less toward focused education, but the school believes these things are important because the purpose of this kind of school is to provide young people with a less-stressful atmosphere than high school so that they can concentrate on personal growth. There is as little or as much structure here as you like. If you want to join a class half-way through the year, go ahead. If you want to quit one, you receive no penalty. The only real requirements that you show up, don't abuse chemicals while at the school, and have respect for the school's property and others. I feel that this hands-off approach to learning is something that the United States would do well to look into. Back home we focus too much on fact regurgitation, test-taking skills and neglect the importance of creativity and the radical uniqueness of each individual. In fact, the American school system tends to reward people who show the lowest amount of original, critical, creative thinking. As long as you pass the tests and complete the homework, you are at least in C+/B range. America's high schools also have entire rooms devoted to sorting students into neat, little groups called careers. At my high school it was called "The Career Center." No one here seems to have heard of such a thing, and I think that it so because Norwegian educational philosophy never lost sight of the purpose of education: to better our understanding the complex machine that is the universe, not just train people to blindly push buttons and twist knobs.

Cheers,
Tyler Thomas Crepeau Ostby