

## READING COMPETENCE EDUCATION IMPLEMENTED IN SCHOOLS IN LATVIA

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From September 20 to September 24, 2021 in Latvia, a group of 50 teachers representing the partners took part in another 5-day training within the framework of the project "Effective Strategies in Students' Reading Education" organized by the Latvian partners.

### **On the first day, i.e. September 20, 2021, the training was conducted by Riga School No. 93 (Rīgas 93.vidusskolā)**

The discussion was moderated by Professor Gunta Siliņa Jasjukeviča of the University



Photo 1. Building of School No. 93 in Riga - Latvia.

of Latvia, who addressed the topic "How to promote personally meaningful reading in primary education." The theme of so-called "useful reading" ran through her speech:

– we read , in order to make the other person happy, e.g. to write a poem for grandma or grandpa, one must first choose it, read it, then think about how to

interpret it;

- we read recipes that will be useful for preparing a meal;
- we prepare theatrical performances that motivate us to read the work and interpret it appropriately;
- we read texts relating to traditions, culture, which will help prepare an event on customs, e.g. Christmas;
- on a piece of paper we write a sentence starting with the words "I like..." and ask them to complete it.

Next, Riga school teachers presented their experiences in promoting reading skills:

1) speech therapist Anda Mauriņa spoke on "Possibilities of using the DIBELS NEXT test to assess reading skills and determine support activities"; DIBELS measures skills related to the reading process. DIBELS results can be used to assess a student's individual development. They are used in Latvia to assess reading skills and determine support measures.

2) Indra Siksaliete, in her presentation on "About different platforms and tasks to promote reading skills," presented the apps, (they are mostly used in Poland as well): learning apps, edupuzle, padlet, classick, powerpoint, ingeniously used to teach reading in a way that is attractive to both students and teachers at every level of education. Indra also discussed "Promoting reading skills at School No. 93 in Riga," which is being done through board games, playing with pacemakers, arranging places to read to children in supermarkets, setting up language clubs, using to convey content - music, fashion, anything that might be attractive to teenagers, creating texts using codes, ciphers, using games to create words, etc.



Photo 2. Training session at School No. 93 in Riga - visible requirements of Covid -19 in Latvia.

3) Liene Valdmane, an employee of the State Agency for Foreign Languages, presented teaching and methodological materials developed in Latvia to promote literacy among returnees, asylum seekers and students whose parents have decided to live in Latvia.

4) Inga Volfa presented "Literacy in a foreign language (German)."

5) In addition, teachers of School No. 93 discussed the problem of evaluating literature textbooks.

Participants of the training divided into groups were also invited to the school library



Photo 3. A group of project participants during a training session in the school library of School

In the afternoon, the training group implemented activities at the Riga Youth Center „Kaņieris” Rīgas jauniešu centrs "Kaņieris"

*"Riga Youth Center "Kaņieris" is a space of opportunity for Riga youth and their organizations, where they can gain knowledge, skills and develop cooperation. The Youth Center's mission is to create and maintain an inclusive, welcoming and socially open environment. The driving force behind "Kaņieris" is Riga's youth organizations, their needs and the challenges of their development" (quoted from the Center's business card)*

The premises of "Kaņieris," their layout and technical equipment, were designed and created together with young people. Their needs were taken into account in determining the center's function and visual style. Young people participated in the creation of the center at every step, acquired new skills and learned creative cooperation. Children and young people from Latvia participating actively in the life of



the center can form reading habits and develop their reading interests. The visit to the Youth Center, showed how young people in action can learn how to create, how to search for relevant information, how to develop meaning and understanding of text, and how to apply the knowledge they have gained

Photo 4. Ladies from the project training group at the Kaņieris Center in Riga. The decor of the Center, designed by the young people as part of the cross-border project, is consistent with the solutions used in Libraries in Sweden.

**The training on the second day in Riga was organized by the Rīgas Lietuvišu vidusskola (Rīgas Lithuanian High School).**



Photo 5. in front of the Lithuanian School in Riga

It is the only Lithuanian school in Latvia with 480 students and 55 teachers.

The training group participated in an open lesson led by teacher Reinis Vējiņš. After a short warm-up, some speech exercises, the youngsters proceeded to read and analyze a fragment of the text of "Romeo and Juliet" and then presented it in theatrical form. Thanks to the theatrical (drama) classes, the student understands the text read, learns to work in a group, prepares for public speaking and, of course, practices diction.

The lesson was a vivid example of text comprehension. The children's interpretations were very beautiful. The students themselves are already able to identify what they lack in understanding the text: more reading, watching a film about the period, more practice in reading aloud, pronunciation, etc. The theater teacher shared with the participants some fun exercises for concentration.



Photo 6. Library at the Lithuanian School in Riga

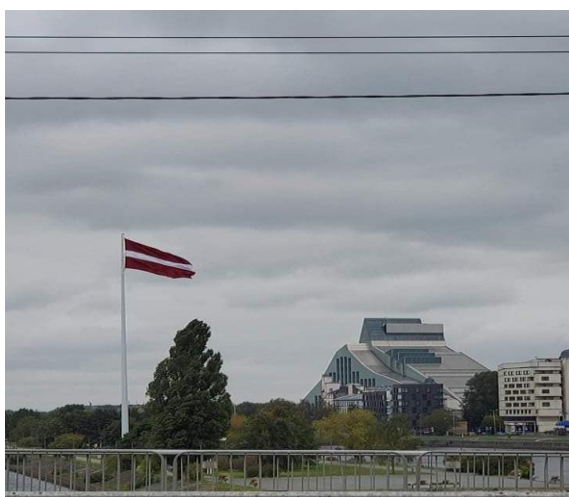
The next activity was a presentation by school teachers D. Potashova and S. Paula, "Pedagogical and psychological aspects of literacy." The lecturers defined children's abilities and difficulties in reading, as well as the roles of the teacher and psychologist. They presented methods of learning to read for students with dyslexia and psychomotor hyperactivity. The presentation was very informative and based on scientific methods and the strategies presented can be used successfully in any school.

The lecture was followed by a tour of the school's "nooks and crannies" and the school library. The participants were very impressed with the school's facilities. They agreed that every school should have such facilities. The children have many activities,

projects, trips, which are fully paid for by school funds. They emphasized the library's excellent provision of books and magazines.

In the afternoon, the group toured the National Library of Latvia in Riga.

Photo 7. In view of the building of the National Library of Latvia



The institution is housed in a purpose-built building, completed in 2014. It is characterized by an impressive modern building, with lots of glass, concrete and steel (Castle of Light).

For more than 20 years, the National Library of Latvia has been initiating an interesting reading project called "LASI UN VERTE" "Supporting the development of students' individual competencies," promoting the reading of good books. Books are recommended each year by a group of experts, the printing of these

books is sponsored by the Ministry of Education of Latvia and donated by the BN to institutions that apply to participate in the program. The libraries' task is to encourage the reading of 6 books in a given age category. For each reading, BN prepares supporting materials. After reading the selected items, participants fill out an evaluation questionnaire. The jury is made up of children, teenagers and parents. In the spring - during the festival of readers - the Great Reading Festival, the awarding of prizes takes place. Whole families are rewarded in the reading fun. Among other things, moms receive book prizes and dads, for example, cinema tickets.

**On September 22, 2021, Lithuanian, Latvian and Polish teachers-participants in the project held training classes at the Rainis and Aspazija'i Museum in Riga.**

Rainis, owner of Jānis Pliekšāns (1865 - 1929) - Latvian writer, playwright and journalist, translator of Russian, German and English literature, author of children's books. A social-democratic politician, he was Latvia's Minister of Education from 1926 to 1928. He exerted considerable influence on the development of the Latvian literary language and Latvian literature. In 1897 he married Aspazija.

Aspazija, actually Johanna Emīlija Lizete Rozenberg, Elza Pliekšāne 1865 -1943 ) - Latvian poet and playwright, advocate of women's emancipation, Member of Parliament (1920-1934). Source - Wikipedia

- <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainis>

, <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aspazija>

Rainis and Aspazija's house at 30 Baznīcas Street is a unique 19th century monument in the center of Riga. The house where the couple lived after their return from Switzerland was the center of Latvian cultural and political activity. The apartment-museum has been restored and decorated according to photos and documentary materials, memoirs, diaries of the poets. Rainis and Aspasia's library contains about 6,000 books in 14 languages and about 3,000 periodicals.

The teachers toured the "poets' memorial rooms," the library, and in the lobby ( a separate building in the courtyard where exhibitions can be viewed) listened to a presentation by University of Latvia staff (Associate Professor Antra Ozola and Associate Professor Rita Kiselova) on the evaluation of the LU OESD, PIZA, PIRLS surveys and the use of the results to promote reading skills.

The PIRLS survey, or the International Reading Proficiency Progress Survey, internationally is coordinated by the International Association for the Measurement of School Achievement - IEA . The object of measurement is reading for literary experience (reading literary texts) and reading for information (reading applied texts).



Photo 8. Teachers-participants in the project while listening to a presentation at the museum

In a recent survey in 2016, Latvian students performed very well, scoring an average of 559, a comparable level to Norway, Taiwan, England. The highest scores in this study were obtained by children from Russia (581), Singapore, Hong Kong, Ireland, Finland .... Poland. In Riga alone, children scored 571 points.

At the same time, the study shows that girls in Latvia read more than boys and the more books at home, the better the students perform.

Unfortunately, as in Poland, children do not want to go to libraries, reading is not interesting for them, they do not like to receive books as gifts.

For more information, read the monograph "Student Achievement in Reading at the Primary Education Level," edited by Antras Ozola.

[https://www.ipi.lu.lv/fileadmin/user\\_upload/lu\\_portal/projekti/ipi/Publikacijas/PI\\_RLS\\_2016\\_monografija\\_gatava\\_ar\\_vakiem.pdf](https://www.ipi.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/projekti/ipi/Publikacijas/PI_RLS_2016_monografija_gatava_ar_vakiem.pdf)

After watching a short film about Rainis and Aspasia, the teachers were introduced to a dissertation by Andy Kauliņa, a psychologist at Riga High School No. 93, titled "The Inclusive Methodology of Teaching to Reduce the Number of Students with Specific Reading Difficulties" and reviewed the effectiveness of these methods.

More information

[https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/bitstream/handle/7/45267/a\\_kaulinas\\_disertacija.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dspace.lu.lv/dspace/bitstream/handle/7/45267/a_kaulinas_disertacija.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

**On the next day of the training, i.e. September 23, 2021**, classes were held in extracurricular institutions in the city of Riga, whose activities affect the intensity of reading.

Before noon, the training was held at the Ziedonis Foundation. Ziedonis Foundation is a modern educational center located in an old factory, attractive to young people. It provides conditions for meetings, learning and reading books.

Imants Ziedonis (1933 - 2013). One of Latvia's most prominent and popular poets, publicist, author of short stories and film scripts, active cultural and public personality. He became famous both for his literary work and his unusual and powerful personality. His work, expression, lifestyle and expressed ideas continue to arouse great interest in much of contemporary society.

Source <https://www.ziedonamuzejs.lv/lv/engrus>

Teachers were impressed by the aesthetics of the interior space. They longed for the opportunity to teach children about the aesthetics of their surroundings, which should not be treated as a luxury, but an elementary quality. They noted with appreciation the three reading escape rooms.

At the Ziedonis Foundation, teachers participating in the training met with Iveta Ratinika Chairwoman of the Education and Culture Committee of the Riga City Council,

politician, teacher, poet. In her speech, "Creative Writing and Other Reading Techniques," participants were intrigued by poetry written on the body and on utilitarian objects.

Creative reading, "provocative" reading, walking with poets, reading on the roof, impersonating a character in a book and answering questions from people in a circle, monologue-playing, etc. - these are some ideas to be used in Poland and Lithuania as well. This was followed by Kaspars Špūle, head of the Examination Department - General Department of VISC, who spoke about the development of reading tests. Reading comprehension is important in a wide range of problems, whether technical, engineering, artistic, historical or other. Every written source requires comprehension. He also presented what progress Latvian students have made in reading comprehension.



Photo 9. in the reading escape room

In the afternoon, the group pursued activities at two more museums.

The Jānis Akuraters Museum is housed in the poet's family residence, built in 1933. The authentically decorated rooms, fireplace room, dining room, kitchen, kitchenware, poet's study, bright living room, daughter and wife's room, works of famous Latvian artists on the walls, and even the contents of the bathroom cabinet are impressiv.

Jānis Akuraters (1876 - 1937) was a Latvian poet, writer and politician. He was one of the initiators of the creation of an independent Latvia, participating in the founding meeting of the People's Council on November 17, 1918 and the founding act of Latvia on November 18, 1918. He became the first winner of the Literary Prize of the Fatherland.

Source [https://lv.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C4%81nis\\_Akuraters](https://lv.wikipedia.org/wiki/J%C4%81nis_Akuraters)



The poet's library contains books in various languages. The building is an architectural monument of national and historical significance, where contemporary writers, artists, musicians and actors gather.

The teachers were introduced to the unusual atmosphere of the twenties by an amazing, elegant elderly lady, who spoke with great passion about the life and works of the poet. We also had the opportunity to take part in drama activities, which discovered acting talents in some of the trainees.

Photo 10.  
drama  
activities  
at the  
museum



The Ojārs Vācietis Museum is a small museum located in the apartment where the poet lived for several years with his family. The collection includes about 20,000 objects: the poet's personal belongings, manuscripts, poetry notebooks, notebooks, letters, photographs, books, stationery, typewriters and many other interesting items.

The museum is carrying out a project for children and young people that combines elements of poetry and ecology. We had the opportunity to participate in such literary and ecological activities promoting the work of Ojārs Vācietis. Plenty of props, a poetic theme, the creativity of the participants and the teacher-pedagogue leading the classes passionately brought us closer to the work of this Latvian poet..

**On the last day of mobility in Latvia, i.e. September 24, 2021, the training was held at the Jelgavas Technical School - Yelgav vocational training center (Latvian: Jelgavas Tehnikum - .Profesionālās izglītības kompetences centrs)**



Photo 12. the Technical School building in Yelgava

At this school, teachers listened to lectures/presentations about promoting reading:

1) the mother tongue teacher talked about methods of activating students by filling in the blanks in the text, textual visualization, comparing the text to our personal experiences, reading readings: the whole class reads the introduction of the reading, discusses the main idea together, the teacher divides the class into groups, each group is given an excerpt from the text to read, then the excerpts are analyzed in class, the end of the book is read by everyone;

2) the Russian language teacher discussed her experience of literacy in her lessons;

3) the librarian told us about painting exhibitions in the library, author meetings, poetry days, where students read their own poems, contests, theater, pacing, dictations, etc. forms that encourage students to reach for a book.

In the spacious auditorium, the participants watched a presentation about Yelgava Technical School, and then toured the school (library, study rooms, laboratories, workshops).



Photo 13. in the library of the Technical School

The next stage of the group's stay in Jelgava was a trip to the Jelgava Municipal Library (26 Akadēmijas Street, Jelgava). The Jelgava Library is a cultural, educational and information institution of the Jelgava Municipality, the main library of the region, the largest public library in Semigalia (one of the four historical lands that make up modern Latvia, which lies in its southern part on the left bank of the Dvina River) Lat. Zemgale. The library has 3 branches - the Miežīte library, the Pārlielupe library and the children's library. The library creates a joint catalog of Jelgav city and district school libraries, a database of Jelgav local history, a database of prominent personalities, etc. It is a consultation and methodological center for 26 municipal libraries of the Jelgava region; a regional training center with a computer room, an interlibrary loan center. The library building is an architectural monument of local significance.

The education in Latvia ended with learning about the work of the "Zinitis" Library for Children and Young People in Jelgava.



Photo 14. In the children's and youth library

The library's basic services are free and available to readers of all ages. The library's children's offerings include print books for children in kindergarten through sixth grade: fiction, fairy tales, encyclopedias, experiments and many other books for acquiring new knowledge in both Latvian and Russian.

The library has a children's play area with nice books and board games for the little ones. The youth subscription includes a collection of thematic fiction - plays by Latvian authors, fantasy, horror stories in Latvian, Russian, English and German.

The library also offers a collection of professional literature in Latvian and Russian, specially separated and thematically arranged DVDs, animated (cartoons) and family film discs, audiobooks and music CDs. Books that have won recognition in the Children and Youth Reading Promotion Program are marked with special labels in the fiction sections.

Since 2017, the Jelgava City Library has been implementing the project "Development of innovative solutions in libraries for different generations of visitors in the border region." As a result, visitors to the Jelgava "Zinītis" Children's Library have access to a self-service book dispensing/transfer device and an interactive educational game table. These technologies help with intergenerational interaction and mutual education. With the introduction of these technologies, more and more families are spending their free time in the library and are eager to learn about new opportunities.

The libraries with whose work the trainees in Latvia became familiar, both school and public libraries, are spacious, with a lending library, storage for collections and a reading room where various forms of collective work can take place. Most have undergone extensive modernization. Bookshelves attract with colorful covers, arranged spaces with sofas, poufs encourage to stay longer among books. Beautiful decorations create a unique atmosphere. The appearance of the library and the person working in it, committed to acquiring new, attractive collections and looking for more and more new forms of work with readers, can have a significant impact on developing interests and forming reading competence.

### **Description of training in Latvia in Riga and Yelgava**

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