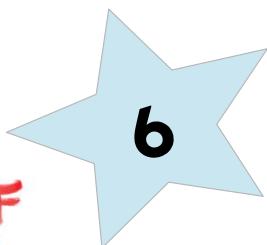




36.
RIDEF
2026
POLSKA



AKTUALNOŚCI • NOUVELLES • NEWS • NOTICIAS

RIDEF 2026

Rencontre Internationale des Éducateurs Freinet



Wersja online:

<https://2026.ridef-fimem.com/pl/gazetka/>

Ta gazeta została wykonana podczas warsztatów przez:

Gosia, Pierre, Gina, Arnout, Marguerite,
Giancarlo, Kasia, Aurélia, Kamila

Africa isn't that far away

Why did Togo's two bids meet with so much resistance ?

What were we afraid of ? What message does this send ?

Yes, we signed motions, we committed to taking action to make it easier for comrades from non-European countries to take part in our meetings.

But, as Europeans, is it really too difficult to go to Brazil and then to Togo ?

Our African comrades have come to Mexico, then to Poland; they'll go to Brazil in two years' time and then back to Europe in four years' time – simply because that would be easier for us ?

I understand that the new regulations – which have sparked so much debate and served as a pretext for challenging first Samié's candidacy for the Executive Committee, and then Togo's bid for RIDEF 2030 – stemmed from the trauma of the Agadir RIDEF. Sometimes fear leads us to make the wrong decisions. And regulations must not prevent us from acting in line with our declarations. If we want to meet our African comrades, we – who have the freedom to cross borders without a second thought – can visit Africa more often. We can choose to trust.

Hélène Aubert

COME TO BRASIL!



We, the Brazilian women of the REPEF Movement (Network of Educators and Researchers of Freinet Education), open our arms to welcome all Ridef members to Brazil in 2028.

Why are we proposing to organize a Ridef?

Freinet is the first to inspire and encourage us in this endeavor. He is the only educator we know who took it upon himself to organize his followers around a movement, FIMEM. Freinet proposed these international meetings, the Ridefs, and this practice has been very important in the training of educators who, in this way, improve their pedagogical work, experience collective life, and broaden their perspective on different cultures and realities. This opens up the possibility of looking at our own reality in a different way. I don't believe any other educator has had such a bold vision!

But it is always necessary to remember that a Ridef is an event of teachers, for teachers, made by teachers.

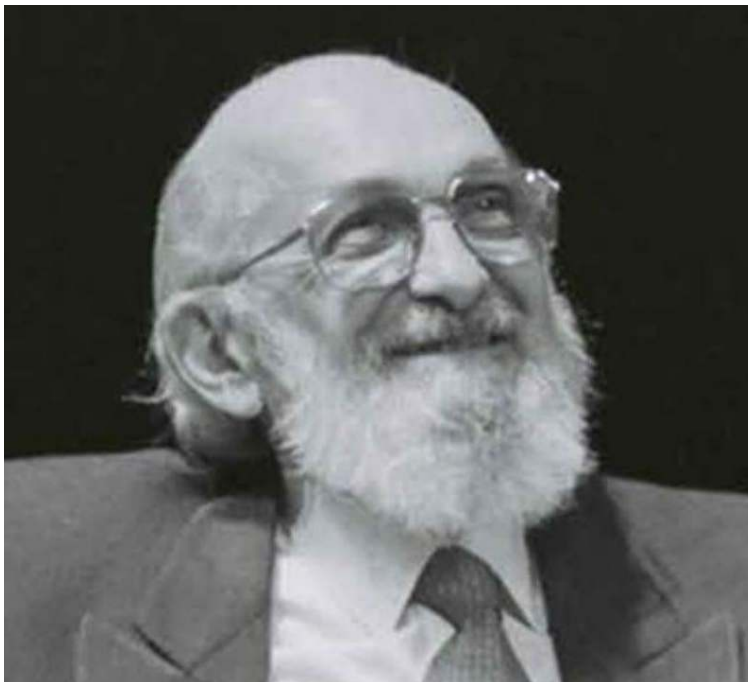
Rich countries, less rich countries, or poor countries share what they have. It is the differences experienced in Ridef meetings that enrich us and bring us closer together.

And, thinking this way, we Brazilian women extend the invitation: come and meet us, come and experience a little bit of Brazil that is not the postcard image, or the samba and Carnival. It is that too! But we are more than that. We are a complex reality, we have our contradictions, we have our struggles and also our beauties and joys.

We want to share all of this. We propose as our theme a dialogue between Freinet and Paulo Freire.

Once, in 1996, at a symposium at a University that commemorated Freinet's centenary, Paulo Freire gave the closing speech and among so many beautiful things he said: "I am Freinet's poor cousin."

We want to create a Ridef in which we can all feel like comrades, some richer, some poorer, but all united by the conviction that we will indeed build a better world and, above all, that we are not alone.



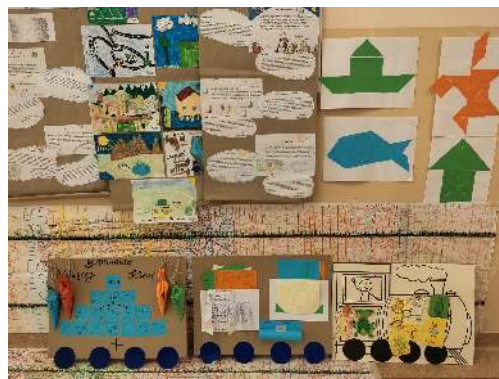
Long workshops – a short resumee

AI as a modern printing press: towards a pedagogy of emancipation – Jakub Piasecki (Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, Adam Mickiewicz University)

Participants explored the challenges and opportunities associated with artificial intelligence, its application in a teacher's daily practice, and ways to engage the class. Various types of AI were presented, and the possibilities for detecting the use of AI tools were examined. The role of critical thinking and the human factor – which remains the most important element of the process – was emphasised. Lesson plans and visual aids were prepared to help teachers convey their specific messages more effectively, thereby saving them time.



How maths multiplies goodness, divides joy and subtracts uncertainty, or... added value – Ewa Grzanka, Izabela Skierska, Grażyna Szczepańczyk



The workshop participants came up with the following keywords: exploration, discovery, action, perseverance, thinking. Mathematics was used in conjunction with various Freinet-based techniques aimed at younger children. There was plenty of hands-on fun, for example with tangrams, which inspired the subgroups to create free-form texts.



Capture your impressions and make prints using whatever you have to hand. Printmaking techniques using everyday materials – Dörte Rieck

Participants began with impressions made from Play-Doh and Tetrapak cartons, and finished with classic linocut prints. They created both individual pieces and a single collaborative project, which will be presented during Saturday's wrap-up sessions for the long workshops.



Folk dance, painting and calligraphy – cultural education in Japan – Tadayoshi Sakai, Sachiko Kawakami, Fumihiko Sakagami, Shinya Kamitsumagari

An exceptionally large number of people signed up for these workshops, keen to spend their time in an enjoyable way whilst learning more about dance, writing Japanese characters (calligraphy) and painting, all rounded off with a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. The participants praised the atmosphere and the instructors, and they enjoyed every moment 😊

Storytelling through art – Heleen van den Broek

Through various forms – painting, clay modelling, and collage techniques using natural materials and stencils – the participants were able to tell their stories. They found it particularly rewarding to share their work with others, so that others could describe what they saw and felt when looking at the pieces, and then each artist could explain what they had in mind when creating them. The event also provided an opportunity to exchange experiences from different countries and schools.



A diverse world – a diverse school. ‘Positum MGS’ psychosocial games as a pathway to the inclusion of neuroatypical children in the classroom – Alicja Bogaczyk, Magdalena Migda

Participants sit in a circle and play psychosocial games in which there are no winners or losers; everyone has a role to play. The aim is to build a group, get to know one another better, accept differences and foster a sense of community where everyone feels at ease. Suitable for use with both adults and children, particularly those with neurodiversity.



Teaching languages with the use of Freinet techniques - Katrien Nijs, Alessandra Bilani

In this workshop, the members are learning practical ways of teaching languages in the spirit of Freinet with testimonies from all around the world. The organization of the workshop is clear and the content is different every day. There are practical exercises and many examples of different techniques.



Nurseries and schools – a laboratory for social change – Kinga Wiśniewska, Magdalena Kruszyńska, Agnieszka Jankowiak-Maik, Marzena Kędra

The aim of the workshops is to bring about social change through the use of good practices. Participants identified issues facing the local community through field interviews with residents, drew up a list of problems, selected one of them and designed a solution for the community of Gniewino. The entire process involved discussion, the sharing of experiences and best practices from various schools, as well as elements of art.

Kasia



Cooperation and the Body as the Essence of Emancipation in Freinet Pedagogy– Juan Fernandez Platero

These were exceptional workshops on cooperation, combining the development of team skills with the wisdom drawn from nature and natural social processes. Participants learned how to cooperate in harmony with nature and their own pace.

Ania (Poland)



Free Writing – a Path to Respect – Bożena Ruszkiewicz

Many participants, many languages, and free text focused on each person. It requires a lot of attentiveness, a moment of pause, but also a constant admiration for words. All of this is done with respect for others, in accordance with C. Freinet's pedagogy.

Kamila Trojan (Poland)



Education in democracy and for democracy

Our team (Ewa, Julia, Colett) was small but creative

THE GOAL OF OUR SEARCH WAS GUIDED BY THE QUESTIONS::

- What does democracy, citizenship, and freedom mean, and how can it be implemented in contemporary education?
- Is it possible to practice democratic education today, in situations of social tensions and conflicts, and if so, how?
- What guidance and strategies for building a culture of democracy and civic education did Celestin Freinet provide? Can we still use them? So
- How do children learn citizenship, democracy, and self-governance in a Freinet classroom?



WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF OUR WORK

1. We have developed an understanding of democratic education as education for peaceful co-existence with others in a shared world based on mutual recognition, cooperation, and equality despite differences. In our discussions, we referred to the ideas of Celestin Freinet and Janusz Korczak.
2. During our meetings, we prepared posters and other materials that outline the directions of democratic education.
3. We discussed and planned a research project on what children and their teachers in different countries think about democratic education, freedom, and self-governance. We worked on research tools. The short time did not allow us to complete this task. We want to give a voice to children from different countries, from different continents, including preschool and early school education children, but also teenagers and their teachers. We want to understand their perspectives and thoughts on democracy and freedom from the viewpoint of their own country.



We want to invite partners from different countries to this project different continents. As soon as we develop the tools, we will send information about the project through FIMEM

Ewa, Julia, Colett

Regionalism and Kashubian Identity... – Witold Bobrowski, Iwo Miśkiewicz

From Kashubia to Japan, it's not really that far

Many nationalities, different people, diverse languages and experiences. Yet for a few days, one place united us – Kashubia. We were also connected by Professor Witek and Iwo, thanks to whom we could enter the world of Kashubian culture not as random tourists, but as attentive guests invited to explore it from the inside.

Even the first meetings showed us what an extraordinary, colorful, and culturally rich land Kashubia is. Here, language, music, daily customs, stories, old objects, and family traditions create a single story – the story of people deeply connected to their place.

A special place during the workshops was, of course, taken by the Kashubian language. For most of us, it was completely new, yet surprisingly melodic, interesting, and full of sounds that seemed to reflect the very character of the region – its diversity, nature, the sea, and the changing landscape. The passion with which the instructor spoke about the language and ways of teaching it quickly erased the language barriers between us. And suddenly, something extraordinary happened: Japanese, Swiss, Greek, French, and we, Poles, started speaking, repeating words, and even singing together in Kashubian.

Not always perfect. But with huge joy.

It turned out that a language that, just a moment ago, none of us knew, could become a shared space for meeting people from very different parts of the world.

During the classes, we could also see books, illustrations, and incredibly rich collections of materials gathered over many years. Among them were educational publications, texts, archival studies, and materials showing how consistently the Kashubians take care of preserving their language, culture, and traditions.

It was truly impressive.

Because regional culture doesn't survive on its own. It needs people who want to describe it, document it, pass it on to children and young people, sing old songs, remind others of stories, and still use the language of their ancestors.

Our workshops were also joined by an instrument that's hard to miss – the diôbli bas, or Kashubian devil's fiddle. Tall, colorful, noisy, and resembling the figure of the devil, it's one of the most distinctive Kashubian folk instruments. You can't pass by them unnoticed. Just their appearance sparks curiosity, and the sound serves as a strong reminder that Kashubian culture likes to have personality.

The films we watched during the meetings, in turn, took us into the world of seaside towns and the everyday life of the region's former inhabitants. We could see the hard, exhausting work of fishermen and their families, and learn about customs related both to daily life and to holidays.

Culture stopped being just a collection of information written in books. It started to smell like the sea, bread, the wood of old houses, and... snuff.

Of course, there was also the chance to see how traditional Kashubian snuff works. Some will remember this experience as an interesting part of the culture, while others might primarily remember it as a very intense encounter with Kashubian tradition.

A special moment of our stay was the trip to the open-air museum in Nadol. Stepping across the thresholds of old houses, we could, for a moment, imagine the lives of Kashubian families from many years ago – peek into the rooms, see the farm equipment, everyday objects, and the places where ordinary family life took place. One of the most beautiful experiences was baking bread together. Maybe it tasted a bit different from the bread we know from our own homes. Maybe it had a different recipe, was baked in a different way, in a different place. Yet, in the moment when we broke it and ate it together, a very simple thought came to mind: bread is bread everywhere.

Everyday food. A sign of home. Something you can share.

And I think that's when we especially felt that cultural differences don't always have to push us apart.

The best proof appeared a moment later.

While exploring old Kashubian cottages, our participants from Japan were amazed to notice how much they resembled the old houses from their own country. Similar designs, similar simplicity, similar closeness to nature.

And suddenly, it turned out that from Kashubia to Japan, it's not that far after all.

A few thousand kilometers can be crossed with a single memory, the similarity of a wooden cottage, or the shared experience of people who—no matter where they are in the world—needed a home, food, family, work, celebration, and stories passed down to the next generations.

Those few days showed us Kashubia as a land far richer than what you can see during a short tourist visit. We got to know the language, music, traditions, daily life, objects, stories, and people who take great care of their heritage.

But probably the most important thing happened in between all of that.

People from different countries met. They started repeating the same previously unknown words. Singing the same songs. Laughing at their own language mistakes. Sharing bread. Comparing their hometowns and discovering that what initially seems very distant is sometimes surprisingly similar. The workshops ended, but they left us with something very valuable – awakened curiosity. A desire to come back. To listen to even more Kashubian. To learn more stories. To see places we didn't get to this time. And to find out how many more secrets the land holds, which for a few days managed to make people from different parts of the world start speaking one language.

Even if just for a moment. In Kashubian.

Dorota Koziol-Żurawska



BEING TEACHERS IN AFRICA

Every two years, in a different country around the world each time, the international meeting of teachers from the Freinet Movements, the RIDEF (International meeting of the Freinet Educators), takes place. The Freinet Movements are present not only in European countries but also in many African and Latin American countries and in some Asian countries. The Movements from different countries are associated within FIMEM (Federation Internationale des Mouvements d'Ecole Moderne).

Since travel and accommodation costs for the RIDEF are obviously the responsibility of the participants, the group in charge of organizing these meetings (the BD, Board of Directory) sets different fees for accommodation based on average salaries in the various countries (those coming from "rich" countries pay more so that others are less disadvantaged) and implements other necessary forms of solidarity.

These are important choices, because having teachers from different continents is essential to ensure that these meetings help train educators in a reality where problems are increasingly interconnected, giving them a broader perspective on a global scale and the possibility of building, through education, a less unjust and more humane world.

In Gniewino, Poland, the thirty-sixth RIDEF is taking place these days, with more than 250 teachers participating: 10 days of workshops, debates, meetings, exchanges, assemblies... and evening parties.

Well, in issue no. 2 of the newspaper published daily in Gniewino to provide information about activities, we read news that shakes us and makes us question things: some teachers from African countries, who intended to participate in RIDEF and had painstakingly and correctly completed the complex bureaucratic process required for the trip, were denied entry visas to Poland by the Polish embassies and consulates in their countries at the last moment. Out of 30 Africans, only 12 (!) had the chance to participate. Among those excluded is Karim Kaborè, who from Burkina Faso had worked hard for several months to prepare, together with European colleagues he often met online, materials and proposals to lead a workshop on peace education. And Thierno Abdoulaye from Senegal, a member of the environment commission.

The visa denial was another slap in the face for African colleagues, adding to other difficulties: the huge costs of applying for a visa and buying plane tickets, the strict border controls, and the fact that sometimes you have to personally go to submit a visa application in a faraway country because the embassy is not present in your own.

In the mentioned newspaper, Cheikh, a teacher from Senegal, recounts in an interview that in 2024, in order to participate in the Ridef in Mexico, he had to fly from his country to Morocco to submit the visa application at the embassy. He regrets that, due to the impossibility of obtaining visas, delegations from Togo, Benin, and Ghana are completely missing in Gniewino.



Ouidah (Benin) The door of no-return, from where the slaves departed

He emphasizes, if it were needed, that "currently Europe is increasingly tightening restrictions on the entry of people coming from Africa." He recalls the thread of hope represented by the hard work of the Fimem commission 'Visas and Solidarity.' Will it be able to chip away at the ever-thicker walls of Fortress Europe?

Nerina Vretenar, MCE Italia

Intercultural Evenings – Thursday, Friday

Thursday



The Cultural Evening at RIDEF 2026 is not only about the countries we come from. It is also about what matters to us.

This time, the presentations were prepared by the groups from Spain, Italy and France. They were colourful, full of humour and music, but they also addressed the issues that teachers face in their daily work.

The Spanish delegation came with messages advocating quality public education, smaller class sizes, respect for teachers, recognition of the Valencian language, and the right of the youngest children to education.

The Italians showed that protest can go hand in hand with constructive action. “On the streets, we protest; in the classroom, we propose” perfectly captured their message. Alongside it was another powerful slogan: “Together we stand against the darkness.”

The French delegation told their story differently—through images, theatre and collective singing. Their presentation also highlighted the threatened Freinet archives in Mayenne and the need to preserve the memory and legacy of the educational movement that brings us together at RIDEF.

This is what our Cultural Evenings are all about. We discover one another's countries not only through music, dance and traditions, but also through the questions, concerns, experiences and causes that teachers wish to speak out about. Different languages. Different stories. Yet, as we listen to one another, we realize how much our educational experiences have in common. That, too, is RIDEF.

Friday

Every RIDEF Cultural Evening tells the story of a country not only through its music, language or traditions. Today, Brazil, Uruguay and Mexico also showed us what matters to their societies and what people are standing up for.

On stage, words appeared that need little explanation: violence, invasion, inequality. There were voices speaking out against human rights violations, violence and injustice. The Mexican group reminded us of Ayotzinapa and the 43 missing students — a story that continues to demand truth and justice.

There were flags, songs, images, banners and powerful voices. Different countries, different experiences, but a shared belief that education cannot remain indifferent to the world in which we live.

This is particularly closely connected to what we have been discussing throughout RIDEF 2026: solidarity, freedom, democracy, and every person's right to dignity and to have their voice heard.



*Text and photos are from the Facebook page RIDEF 2026
Polish Association of Freinet Pedagogy Animators
International Federation of Freinet Movements, FIME*



Translation of the text of Uruguay

A Sea of Little Fires

A man from the village of Neguá, on the coast of Colombia,
was able to climb to the highest heaven.
When he returned, he told what he had seen.
He said that, from up there,
he had contemplated human life.
And he said that we are a sea of little fires.
That is what the world is, he revealed.
A multitude of people, a sea of little fires.
Each person shines with their own light among all the others.
No two fires are the same.
There are great fires and small fires,
and fires of every color.
There are people with a calm fire, who scarcely notice the wind,
and people with a wild fire, who fill the air with sparks.
Some fires—foolish fires—neither give light nor burn;
but others, others burn through life with such passion
that no one can look at them without blinking,
and whoever comes near catches fire.



Eduardo Galeano, The Book of Embraces



The significance of Spain's presentation

Regarding the Spanish presentation at the intercultural event, some doubts arose about our intended message due to excessive symbolism. The opening song, played at full speed, represented a typical Spanish celebration, but then the sound slowed down, bringing us back to reality. This reality made us feel grounded and resilient, and we immediately referenced the three-month teachers' strike in Valencia (a veritable sea of green shirts), which became a symbol for the entire country. Finally, we ended with joyful dancing, because joy gives us the strength to continue fighting.

Alfredo "Bux" Lopez

Multilingual collaborative writing sessions

3 August 2026, Short workshop Peace education

Pido la paz y la palabra
Paix, poésie, construire. Oui
Mais comment ?
Quel chemin ?

Camino hacia la paz y voy dejando atrás mis guerras.
Tu n'es pas seul dans ce monde.

La paz no es colorear palomas,
es poner sobre la mesa "cualquier" conflicto que no me permite vivir en paz
O diálogo abre caminhos para o encontro.

La paix ce n'est pas un vain mot,
c'est un comportement.
Ahora y así espero, estoy en PAZ.

La paix est le bien de tous, riches comme pobres.
La paix c'est le sourire de la vie.

Bux, Béatrice, Fampari, Giancarlo, Glaucia, Haidé, María Clara, Marguerite, Solange

„Life is bearable only if we infuse it not with utopia but with poetry – that is to say, with intensity, celebration, joy, communion, happiness and love”.

Edgar Morin, quote from the book *Vers l'abîme* (Towards the Abyss)



Short workshop 'Making Initial Stamps'

A total of 50 people from twelve different countries took part in my short workshop, which I ran five times! I am absolutely delighted and would like to thank everyone who gave me their stamped signature as a lovely memento!

Julu Müller, Switzerland

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	ISABEL	BUEVO	ESPAÑA
	ALICIA	CANOLA	ESPAÑA

Atelier de courte durée RIDEF Gniewino 2026
Tampons à initiales avec Loulou Müller Suisse

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	LETIZIA	FAGLIONI	ITALY
	SIMONE	BOLOGNINI	BRASIL
	Silke	NOVAK	BRASIL
	Marta	Infesta Alemany	ESPAÑA
	Maria Jose	BUEVO	ESPAÑA
	Anne Swickowski	Swickowski	POLSKA
	Maria Nadine	Maria	France.

Atelier de courte durée RIDEF Gniewino 2026
Tampons à initiales avec Loulou Müller Suisse

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	ASIA	ANTZAK	POLSKA
	JUSTYNA	PRUD	POLSKA
	Matgorzata	Klausek	POLSKA NIEMCY
	Iza	Skienska	Polska
	Leo	Piurda	Polska
	Ewa	Gizanka	Polska
	Max	Dziurda	Polska

Atelier de courte durée RIDEF Gniewino 2026
Tampons à initiales avec Loulou Müller Suisse

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	Kaja	Kunte	Germany
	Colette	Charlet	France
	Heike	Hirsekorn	Germany
	SARA	DESPICHT	FRANCE
	Fumihiko	Sakagami	Japan
	Shinya	Kanitsunagiri	Japan
	Madeleine	HEMA	Côte D'IVOIRE

Atelier de courte durée RIDEF Gniewino 2026
Tampons à initiales avec Loulou Müller Suisse

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	Martina	Kajewska	Poland
	LOUIS	GE-BEERS	POLAND
	ROCIO	TRIGUEROS	ESPAÑA
	SÉVERINE	BRUNETON	FRANCE
	Barbara	Knabl	Austria
	JOANITA	ROMANOWSKI	POLAND
	Riccardo	RIMONDI	ITALY

Atelier de courte durée RIDEF Gniewino 2026
Tampons à initiales avec Loulou Müller Suisse

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	Gisèle	EFOUBA	Cameroon
	Zoro leu	Tinay	Côte d'Ivoire
	Sabine	Auerswald	Germany
	Anne	Lesch	Germany
	Pangni	Catherine	Côte d'Ivoire
	Marta	Kosielka	Polska
	Virginia	Kosul	Uruguay

Atelier de courte durée RIDEF Gniewino 2026
Tampons à initiales avec Loulou Müller Suisse

tampon à initiales	prénom	nom de famille	pays
	Robert	Janiszewski	Poland
	Julia	Czyz	Poland
	Sybran	De Graeve	Belgium
	Nora	Pasón	España
	Sachiko	Kawakami	Japan
	Valeria	Maria Páez	España
	Federico	Germini	Italy

“Reading the World”: without pressure, there is no impression

The wood then allowed ideas to be expressed

The debate of ideas over five days, through contemplative walks (walking classes), photography and subsequent interpretation of images, and the creation of free-form texts, guided by the praxis of Celestin Freinet and Paulo Freire, as well as the contributions of Bolívar Echeverría and Ryszard Kapuściński, was not enough. It allowed us to understand the diverse ways of reading the world and the existence of a parallel between what happens to children and adults before literacy. Likewise, in reading the world, we can perceive power relations, which, incidentally, are reflected both in school and in society.

One of the aims of the extended workshop was to symbolize the reading of reality, external states, and internal states through signs, words, images, or concepts. This allows for a critical perspective on things and events.

Wood and chisels were the bridge that allowed for the symbolic expression of the environment and thought. Now, with the return to schools and classrooms, it is necessary to continue building upon this foundation with children, fostering reflections that question the obvious, debate absolute truths, and challenge dogma. In this way, we will avoid scholasticism and the domestication of learning.

Patrocinio García Hernández – Mexico



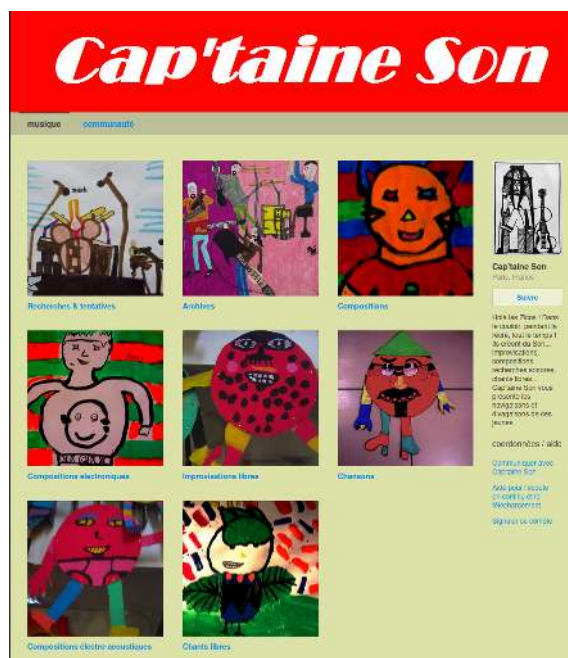
Theatre Workshop Theatre Workshop

"Express Yourself" was the motto of the theatre workshop, where participants explored different forms of expression. Using props and theatrical costumes, they created a variety of stage performances inspired by ancient Greek theatre, Baroque opera, Shakespearean drama, and the Theatre of the Absurd. The sessions, filled with enthusiasm and creativity, brought great joy to everyone involved.

Joanna (Poland)



Where can you listen to the music created by the children ?



Would you like to know who composed the musics for the French show at the intercultural evening?

In our classrooms, the children experiment with sounds, improvise, and compose using various materials—both conventional and unconventional instruments, recorded sounds, computers, and their own voices. To share their creations, we've created a page called "Capt'aine Son" on Bandcamp: <https://captainson.bandcamp.com/>

The children's music is organized in categories corresponding to the various activities in our classrooms: Explorations and Experiments, Compositions, Electronic Compositions, Free Improvisations, Songs, Electroacoustic Compositions, and Free Singing. Sometimes there's a photo or a short description explaining how the piece was made, sometimes not, but the name of the composer(s) and their school is always included. There's also an "Archives" section so that children and adults alike can listen to music created in Freinet classrooms in the past. For the performance, we've chosen a free-form song by

Pierrot from the Archives section:

<https://captainson.bandcamp.com/track/le-petit-oiseau-classe-de-paul-le-bohec>

and a composition by a group of four girls—Mégane, Ilham, Lena, and Maëlys—from the "Composition" section: <https://captainson.bandcamp.com/track/megane-ilham-lena-maelys-n-1>

Translated with DeepL.com (free version)

Hélène Aubert

Workshops for children

Zuzanna Skierska and Weronika Spelbert ran weekly children's workshops throughout the entire week. Due to the small number of participants (and at times their absence) they flexibly adapted the originally planned programme, responding above all to the children's current needs and interests. Thanks to this, participants were able to take part, among other things, in an outdoor adventure game, in collectively weaving wreaths (wianki), in cyanotype workshops, and in activities based on the free-text technique, expressed not only through words but also through drawing. The youngest children took part in sensory activities. Zuzanna also led acrobatics workshops, developing physical agility, coordination and self-confidence. This openness to the group's needs made it possible to create a space for authentic action, cooperation and creative discovery of the world, in keeping with the idea of Freinet pedagogy, in which it is the child and their interests that set the direction of shared work.

Weronika Spelbert



The body market

The body and its ailments in advertising

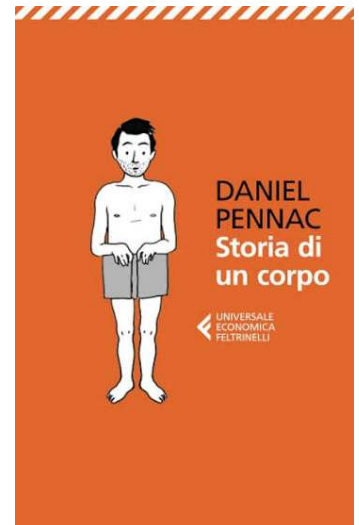
We can see that, with the gradual aging of the global population being evident, the privileged consumer market segment has become the 60-80 age group and their psychophysical extensions: dogs, cats, parrots. Childhood, alas! is disappearing: there are so few children! And in any case, they are satisfied with so little... candies, diapers... we shouldn't spoil them too much... and quickly, off to school! So we can look for remedies in all the bodily and emotional joints that take up most of our days. And don't come telling us that we're individualistic: health comes first.

Let's start from the bottom. It's true that the most important part of the body is the head, which is above our thoughts, but I dare you to cope without looking for relief for swollen feet. So, here are some suggestions for: heavy and painful legs, venous insufficiency, difficult evacuation, intestinal swelling and discomfort, constipation, hard stools, urinary tract issues, urinary burning, male and female urinary leakage, prostate, ingrown nails, hemorrhoids, difficult walking, flatulence.

Moving up toward the center: fatigue, fever and bone pain, stressed digestive tract, skin pain, muscle and joint pain, obesity, nausea. With animals, we have in common insect bites, ticks, fleas, mosquitoes, bedbugs.

And, finally, we get to the 'noble' part of the human being, reserved for broadcast hours that aren't too late, when children can still watch (it's not very educational to see a man in his underwear advertising hygiene products for men): so there are drops for tired and burning eyes, for dry eyes, mental sensitivity, removable dentures, oral hygiene, dry hair, hair loss, deafness...

For animals, there's a lot of care and attention, the result of our projections onto them. Up to hotels for animals' vacations. But it's the bodies of men and women that can be taken apart, put back together, redone partly or entirely, like in the Frankenstein myth.



Giancarlo Cavinato

SIN TRADUCCIÓN

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SANS TRADUCTION

Building a Common World at the RIDEF

There is something slightly dizzying about watching a FIMEM General Assembly.

In the room, languages move slowly. A sentence begins in French, comes back in Spanish, passes through English, and sometimes searches for its way into another ear. A piece of software tries to translate automatically, but people sometimes have to repeat, go back, clarify what has just been said. Hands go up. Eyes turn toward the translators and interpreters. We wait. We check that we have understood one another.

It is not spectacular. It is not perfect. But perhaps this is precisely where something democratic is being made.

From a distance, one might think that the General Assembly is mainly an institutional moment: an agenda, reports, proposals, votes. But when we look more closely, it may be one of the places where Freinet pedagogy appears most clearly: not as a school method, but as a way of inhabiting the world together.

For what is really happening here? People from different countries, with different languages, political histories, urgencies and habits of discussion, are trying to make common decisions.

Already, in a class of twenty-five children, this is difficult.

We have to listen without interrupting. We have to understand what is really being said. Those who feel most at ease must not take up all the space. Those who are quieter must be able to enter into speech. We have to decide, but without crushing anyone. Move forward, but not too fast. Keep a record. Make democracy live, without believing that a vote is enough to create something common.

So let us imagine this at the scale of a RIDEF: several countries, several continents, several languages, several relationships to school, to the State, to cooperation, to borders, to social urgencies. And yet, something is being sought. People speak, translate, reformulate, wait, return to a point, vote, doubt, begin again.

It is not always smooth. It is not always fast. It is not always comfortable.

But perhaps that is exactly where it becomes interesting.

A meeting that has to decide

RIDEF 2026, in Gniewino, Poland, is part of the long history of the international Freinet movement. Its theme, “Solidarity, freedom and democracy in education as a force for social change in the face of global challenges,” could remain only a slogan. We all know how easily big words circulate in congresses.

But at the RIDEF, these words are tested against reality: meals, workshops, translations, debates, misunderstandings, commissions, joys, tiredness, and absences too.

FIMEM is not only a network of friendship between educators. It is a federation of Modern School movements that also has to make decisions. Its General Assembly brings together delegates from the movements every two years. And deciding together, when we come from such different realities, is never a mere formality.

Here we find a deeply Freinetian tension: it is not enough to proclaim cooperation. We must give it real forms.

A great worldwide cooperative classroom

In our classes, we know how difficult it is to bring real cooperation to life. It is not enough to place the chairs in a circle, to say, “Now you can speak,” to distribute a few responsibilities, or to write three decisions on the board.

A space for speaking can become a real place of shared power. But it can also become an empty ritual. People can speak there without anything changing. They can vote without decisions being followed up. We can listen to children while, in reality, keeping all adult sovereignty. We can pretend to establish democracy, while only imitating it.

That is exactly why these collective forms matter: they oblige us to check whether our shared structures truly give people power to act, or only the appearance of participation.

At the FIMEM General Assembly, the same question returns, but on another scale. How can we ensure that the movements are not only represented, but genuinely heard? How can we prevent languages from becoming invisible borders? How can the organisation remain at the service of the movement, and not the other way round?

There is a simple but strong analogy here: for a few days, the RIDEF may be a great worldwide cooperative classroom.

Not because adults become pupils again. But because the same problem arises: how can different people become capable of making a common world?

Perhaps we also come to the RIDEF to learn, among adults, what we ask of children every day: to listen, to wait, to search, to cooperate, to begin again.

Deciding without crushing

What is impressive in an international General Assembly is not only that decisions are made. It is that they must be made without denying the diversity of those who make them.

In a classroom, the adult can always go faster. They can decide. They can say, “Now this is how it will be.” Sometimes, they must guarantee the framework, protect, recall a rule, prevent one voice from crushing another. But if they always decide in place of the group, then the group never learns to decide.

In an international federation, the same temptation exists: to go faster, to entrust decisions to those who already know, to let those who master the codes speak, to turn the Assembly into a rubber-stamp body, to avoid conflict in order to preserve the appearance of unity.

But a democracy that avoids all conflict often ends up avoiding democracy itself.

Deciding together does not mean always agreeing. It means building forms that allow disagreements to be worked through. It means accepting that speech takes time because it passes through different languages, histories and wounds.

Organising speech is not only a matter of distributing turns: it is making sure that a hesitant voice can count. Sharing power is not only voting: it is accepting not to decide alone.

Experimental trial and error does not apply only to individual learning. A group also experiments. A federation also experiments. It tries, observes its limits, corrects, begins again, transmits.

One could say that the General Assembly is the experimental trial and error of a movement seeking to organise itself democratically.

This can be seen very concretely: in a reformulation, in a requested translation, in an amended proposal, in an objection that is welcomed, in a decision taken up again because it was not clear.

The movement learns by doing. Like a class.

Slowing down to make room

In our schools, democracy is often judged too slow. Collective speech takes time. Cooperation takes time. Inquiry takes time. Correspondence takes time. Trial and error take time. And so we are asked to go faster: finish the programme, fill in the tables, produce results, prepare assessments.

But speed is not neutral. It always favours those who already master the codes. It leaves less room for hesitations, detours, translations and returns. It turns learning into execution. It turns democracy into procedure.

At the RIDEF too, slowness can be tiring. It can be irritating. At times we wish things would move forward more simply. But part of this slowness may be the fair price of equality.

When translation is needed, we slow down. When something has to be repeated so that automatic translation can follow, we slow down. When we have to listen to very different national realities, we slow down. When people who are new need to understand the issues, we slow down.

Slowing down is not always moving backwards. Sometimes it is the condition that allows more people to get on the train.

We should also say this: all of this is tiring. Cooperating is tiring. Translating is tiring. Deciding together is tiring. Producing a journal is tiring. But this tiredness is not the tiredness of powerlessness. It is the tiredness of living work, the kind that leaves something behind.

Freinet was not a pedagogue of immobility. On the contrary, his whole work is crossed by movement, invention, research, production. But he knew that real work has its own rhythm. We do not make a plant grow by pulling on its leaves. We do not form free subjects by injunction. We do not manufacture the common in fast-forward.

From school autonomy to the autonomy of the movement

This question connects with the research work I carried out this year on school autonomy in Freinet pedagogy. The further I went, the more one idea seemed important to me: autonomy does not mean leaving everyone to manage alone. Nor is it a simple individual skill, as if an autonomous pupil were someone who no longer needed anyone.

Autonomy, in the strong sense, requires institutions.

It requires structures, responsibilities, a common memory, real rights to speak and decide. A class becomes more autonomous not when the adult disappears, but when the group gradually becomes capable of orienting itself, producing, choosing and taking up the work again.

At the RIDEF, I had the feeling of encountering this question again on another scale.

What I had observed in the classroom, I found here enlarged: the same hesitations, the same risks of empty ritual, but also the same possibility of regaining power over what we do together.

FIMEM too is seeking its autonomy: not as isolation, but as a collective capacity to organise itself democratically. The General Assembly, the commissions, the translations, the journal, the concrete solidarities around visas and travel are all tools that allow the movement not only to exist through conviction, but to govern itself, tell its own story and transform itself.

This makes the RIDEF precious to observe. It shows what a Freinet movement tries to do with its own principles: organise speech, share power, produce traces, decide without crushing, remain alive.

Freinet: a way of making society

Célestin Freinet never thought of school as a place separated from life. He did not invent a few techniques to make the classroom more pleasant. The printing press, the school journal, free text, correspondence, inquiries, the cooperative: all of these only make sense within a deeper conception of education.

The child is not a receiver. The child is a producer of culture.

The classroom is not a place where we prepare abstractly for social life. It is already a society, with its rules, its possible injustices, its possible solidarities, its conflicts, its decisions. School is therefore not only responsible for instruction. It establishes ways of speaking, working, obeying, resisting, cooperating, keeping silent or taking part.

This is perhaps what Nicolas Go helps us hear when he insists on the Modern School as a historical cooperative undertaking, and not as a pedagogical chapel. Freinet is not a name to preserve in formaldehyde. He is not a repertoire of techniques to apply faithfully in order to reassure ourselves. He is a demand: to create environments where children can truly work, think, produce, decide, experience the joy of living and a form of sovereignty over their own work.

Thus, the RIDEF is not only a gathering of people who talk about Freinet pedagogy. It is also an environment where the Freinet movement tries to practise itself.

If we believe in cooperation in our classes, how do we cooperate between movements? If we believe in children's voices, how do we welcome the voices of comrades whose language, accent, culture or status make speaking more difficult? If we believe in the school journal, how do we produce our own congress journal? If we believe in cooperation, how do we make our General Assembly live?

Freinet pedagogy begins in the classroom, but it does not remain locked inside it.

The living institutions of the RIDEF

From this point of view, what might seem scattered across the RIDEF takes on another coherence. The journal, the commissions, the translations, solidarity, intercultural evenings are not simply activities alongside the congress. They are living frameworks: concrete forms through which the movement tries to speak, remember, welcome, connect.

That is why the long workshop "Journal of the RIDEF" seemed so important to me.

In a RIDEF, too much happens for one person alone to see everything: workshops, commissions, intercultural evenings, the General Assembly, excursions, conversations over a meal or in a corridor.

The journal is therefore not an additional communication tool. It is a living form of the encounter. It transforms dispersed experiences into common memory. It allows those who were not in a workshop to receive something from it. It gives a place to details, voices and surprises.

Freinet understood this very early with the school journal. When a child writes a text that will be read, printed, shared, sent, something changes in their relationship to writing. They no longer write simply to fulfil an instruction. They write because their words enter a living circuit. They meet readers. They become addressed.

The RIDEF journal works in a similar way. We do not write only to produce a report. We write so that the encounter can think itself. So that words do not remain locked in the moment. So that invisible gestures become visible. So that the RIDEF can reread itself.

In this workshop, my work took several forms: a first text to "keep the embers alive"; a piece on the commissions market; a text on the Belgian and Dutch intercultural evening; a multilingual message inviting participants to keep traces.

There was also this less visible work: sitting behind computers, collecting documents, rereading, adjusting. We used the tools available, including AI for translation, but we insisted on paper versions: because a printed trace circulates differently.

Here again, this small gesture is deeply Freinetian. It is not about waiting for "the editorial team" to produce the journal for others. It is about opening the journal to cooperation: so that participants also become authors of the common memory.

The RIDEF journal is a little like Freinet's printing press moved into an international congress. A printing press without lead, without a press, sometimes with tired computers, quick translations, last-minute corrections and impossible deadlines. But the spirit is there: producing together a word that circulates.

Responsibilities that hold the common together

The commissions market struck me for the same reason: it makes visible what often remains in the shadows.

It is easy to see the RIDEF as an event: ten days, a place, a programme, workshops, evenings. But FIMEM also holds together through continuous work, often discreet, sometimes thankless, but indispensable. The commissions are perhaps the federation's permanent workshops.

Some ensure the material and democratic life of the movement: communication, website, translation, finances, statutes, organisation of RIDEFs, external relations, visas and solidarity. These words may sound technical. Yet they touch democracy directly.

Translation, for example, is not a secondary service. It is a condition of equality. Without translation, some people understand faster, speak more easily, intervene with more confidence. Others remain on the edge of the discussion.

Solidarity and visas are not administrative details either. They decide, concretely, who can be there. An international gathering is never fully international if comrades are prevented from coming by borders, costs, visa refusals or economic inequalities.

Other commissions carry the major concerns of the world: the rights of children and adolescents, equality, current educational policies, the environment, peace education. They remind us that Freinet pedagogy is not limited to the inside of the classroom.

In a class, responsibilities are not decorative: library, materials, journal, correspondence, display, mutual help. Each takes charge of a part of the common. In FIMEM, the commissions play a similar role: they prevent everything from resting on a few people.

Still, they have to remain alive. A responsibility can become a label. A commission can become a name on a list. That is why doors must constantly be reopened, new people invited, tasks passed on, needs made visible.

None of this holds without the people who translate, prepare rooms, reread texts, tidy up, welcome, explain, begin again in the shadows. They too make this democracy practicable, sometimes discreetly, often in tiredness.

Perhaps a RIDEF also serves this purpose: to verify physically that we are not alone.

The absences that speak

This question of the material conditions of democracy can also be seen in the absences.

We spoke of solidarity, freedom and democracy. But some people could not be there. Comrades, particularly from Africa, were prevented from taking part by visa refusals or by administrative and economic obstacles.

This must be said clearly: these absences are not details. They are part of the encounter. They oblige us.

In a classroom, we sometimes learn as much from those who do not speak as from those who do. An empty chair, a repeated absence, a silence, a withdrawal: all of this says something about how the group functions. If we want to make democracy, we must also learn to hear what is missing.

At the RIDEF, forced absences remind us that internationalism cannot simply be declared. It is built against very concrete borders. It requires funds, invitations, procedures, letters, guarantees, political struggles.

The “Visas and Solidarity” commission takes on great importance here. It shows that Freinet pedagogy, if it wants to remain popular and international, must concern itself with the material conditions of encounter. Who can come? Who can pay? Who gets a visa? Who remains outside?

These questions are not peripheral. They touch the heart of our project.

From traditions to common struggles

The Belgian and Dutch intercultural evening shed light on another dimension of this common world: we do not come only with traditions, dishes, songs and languages. We also come with struggles.

One might have expected a folkloric presentation: a few national symbols, a few cultural elements. Something else happened. The Belgian and Dutch comrades spoke about school under attack, reforms, anger, mobilisations. They sang in several languages, not to display a fixed identity, but to circulate a common struggle.

It was a simple but powerful moment: understanding that the intercultural is not only the meeting of traditions. It is also the meeting of struggles.

Freinet pedagogy has never separated school from society. It does not see the child as an abstract individual, but as a being situated in a milieu, a social class, a language, a history, a world. Defending school therefore also means defending the conditions that make emancipation possible.

That evening, something of the RIDEF was condensed: we come from different countries, but we often face similar logics — austerity, control, competition, contempt for the profession, imposed reforms, the reduction of school democracy to slogans. And we discover that our resistances can recognise one another.

We are not alone.

This sentence may seem ordinary. But for educators who are sometimes isolated in their schools, it matters a great deal.

Like a printing press being lit again

So, what does this RIDEF teach us?

First, that cooperation is never given. It requires time, tools, shared responsibilities, discussable rules, places to speak and to decide. It also requires constant vigilance: our forms can become empty, our collective spaces can become rituals, our commissions can become invisible, our assemblies can become too difficult to access.

Nothing is guaranteed. But Freinet remains current precisely because he does not give us a closed model. He gives us an orientation: start from life, make work real, institute cooperation, produce traces, recognise children and adults as capable, refuse the school of sorting and submission.

I then think again of Freinet's printing press. Not only as a historical object, but as an image. A printing press is not magic. One must compose, correct, ink, press, begin again. There are errors, stains, reversed letters, lines to redo. But in the end, a word exists outside the person who wrote it. It circulates.

The RIDEF is a little like that.

For ten days, we composed something together. With our languages, our awkwardness, our disagreements, our tiredness, our enthusiasms. The General Assembly composed decisions, the commissions composed projects, the workshops composed knowledge, the evenings composed links, the journal composed traces.

Not everything is perfectly aligned. There are blanks, erasures, incomplete translations, missing pages, voices we would have liked to hear more. But the whole holds together. It forms a common work.

And this work is not finished.

As in a Freinet class, the most important thing may not be that everything is perfect. The most important thing is that the group has really worked. That it has experienced, even imperfectly, its capacity to do things together.

Continuing after Gniewino

The question that remains is simple: what do we do when we return?

A RIDEF can become a beautiful memory. That would already be something. But it can become more: a new impulse, an energy, a responsibility. We do not return only with memories. We return with classes to find again, struggles to continue, journals to write.

Returning with texts to share. With contacts to maintain. With a commission to join. With a question to bring back to one's class. With the desire to bring a school journal back to life. With new attention to languages, absences, the material conditions of participation. With this simple idea: democracy is not only taught, it is practised.

We know it will be difficult. Even with twenty-five pupils, it is already difficult. So with movements from different countries, different histories, different constraints, it will necessarily be complicated. But complication is not an argument against cooperation. It is the reason why cooperation is necessary.

If everything were simple, we would not need spaces for speech. No need for journals. No need for commissions. No need for a General Assembly. No need for Freinet pedagogy. It is because collective life is difficult that we need frameworks to make it habitable. It is because speech can be confiscated that we need forms to share it. It is because decisions can crush that we must learn to decide differently.

The RIDEF is therefore not a parenthesis. It is an exercise. A great international exercise in Freinet pedagogy applied to ourselves. And perhaps this is, in the end, its most beautiful demand: to remind us that we cannot defend in our classrooms what we would give up practising among ourselves.

So let us return. Not reassured, but strengthened. Not with recipes, but with presences. Not with a model to apply, but with this demand: to keep alive, wherever we are, environments where speech truly counts.

If we want children to learn to cooperate, let us truly cooperate. If we want them to learn to decide, let us truly decide together. If we want them to learn to write in order to be read, let us write and publish our own traces. If we want them to discover democracy as a power of life, let us make our movements places where that power remains possible.

In Gniewino, for a few days, we lit the printing press again, opened the notebooks, took back the floor, shared the work.

It was not perfect.

It was alive.

And perhaps that is what is most Freinetian.

See you soon in our classrooms, our struggles and our journals,

Pierre

50 Years of Membership in the FIMEM

A Brief History of the Development of Freinet Pedagogy in Poland

Key Events

In 1957, Halina Semenowicz meets the teachers from France in Warsaw who are attending a FISl (International Federation of Teachers' Associations) congress. Halina acts as an interpreter for the participants. During the Second World War, Halina worked as a nurse in Belgium and France. Her husband was a Polish officer, and she had followed at the time. She has no difficulty with the French she speaks it fluently. The Moderne School (École was represented in Warsaw by Paulette Quarante Fernand Delean.

The French teachers tell Halina Semenowicz about Freinet Method. She decides to get to know Célestin and his school in person.

After the war, Semenowicz works as a teacher at a school attached to the hospital in Otwock (Poland). She is fascinated by Freinet's 'Natural Method'. In her method is the best for children suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis. Since 1958, the school in has been operating according to Freinet's Principles. children write their own texts and correspond with two schools in Marseille and Châtelet. They publish a newspaper entitled 'Syrenka'.

Paulette Quarante and Halina Semenowicz



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In 1958, Halina Semenowicz is welcomed as a participant at the 14th Congress of the École in Paris. Whilst in France, Semenowicz visits several school classes that are using the Freinet Method. Her account of her experiences is published in a Polish journal of education.

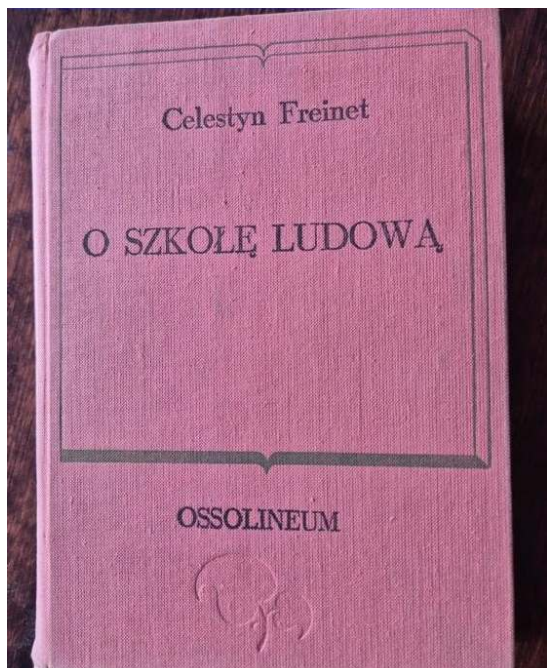
In 1962, Halina Semenowicz visits the Freinet School in Vence. She reports on her experiences there and the materials she collected in the book 'Freinet's French Ecole Moderne', which is published in 1966.

In 1968, Aleksander Lewin – a professor at the Research Institute of Pedagogy in Warsaw – takes part in the Congress in Pau. In this year, he is founding an informal Freinet group together with Halina Semenowicz. Its members include Halina Semenowicz, Aleksander Lewin, Maria Błachowicz and others.

Between 1970 and 1972, many teachers take an interest in Freinet Pedagogy. Representatives of the Freinet Pedagogy organise numerous courses and conferences in Poland. René Linares from FIMEM attends a meeting in Grodzisk Mazowiecki (1972).

In 1973, the Congress of the École Moderne takes place in Aix-en-Provence. Halina Semenowicz, Bogumiła Kollek, Maria Ruka and Teresa Śliwińska attend from Poland.

In 1974, the informal Freinet group in Warsaw becomes the Polish Freinet Movement, comprising teachers from 15 regions. Roger Ueberschlag – President of FIMEM – visits Poland and takes part in a conference where he meets with the Polish Freinet teachers.



In 1976, the first RIDEF in Poland is taking place in Płock!

200 teachers from 14 countries take part. Unfortunately, the RIDEF is not organised by the teachers of the Polish Freinet Movement, but by the Ministry and the Regional Centre for Teacher Training in Płock and Rembertów. Only a few Polish Freinet teachers take part in the RIDEF.

To mark the RIDEF in Poland, Halina Semenowicz and Aleksander Lewin give the Polish teachers a great treat: they translate selected works by Freinet from French into Polish and published them as a book.

In 1978, Zofia Napiórkowska, Teresa Śliwińska and Ewa Morus attend the École Moderne congress. Two years earlier, they had assisted the Ministry in organising the RIDEF in Poland.

The following teachers working within the Freinet Movement take part in the **1980** Congress in Madrid: Halina Semenowicz and Krystyna Kowalska. Halina Semenowicz publishes her next book, 'Freinet in Poland'.

A year later, in **1981**, Halina Semenowicz travels to Grenoble to attend the École Moderne Congress once again. Her account of the experience is published in numerous educational journals.

Halina Semenowicz and Aleksander Lewin's participation in the **1983** Congress in Nanterre brings new insights. Since that year, Polish Freinet teachers have been discussing at length the rights of children and their needs in today's world.

Prof. Aleksander Lewin presents a report on the Nanterre congress during a seminar at the Institute of Pedagogy (IBP) in Warsaw. Halina Semenowicz presents the new FIMEM Constitution in a Polish translation.

In the same year, Prof. Aleksander Lewin organises the International Korczak Symposium in Warsaw, attended by ICEM representatives from France (Maria and Noel Rist, Jacqy Chassane, Jacques Masson) and several Freinet teachers from the Polish Freinet Movement.

In 1984, Halina Semenowicz is welcomed as a participant at the XVth RIDEF in Leuven (Belgium). An informal Freinet group organises three seminars in Poland:

- 'Children's Rights'
- 'Charter of the Modern School (Charte de l'École Moderne)'
- 'Theory and Practice of Freinet Pedagogy'

The École Moderne Congress in Lyon in **1985** provides a good opportunity to discuss the developing of the Freinet pedagogy in Poland. The report on this is presented to the international guests by Halina Semenowicz. Zofia Napiórkowska, Halina Semenowicz's colleague, organises Freinet meetings for students at the universities in Gdańsk and Poznań (Teresa Śliwińska).

In 1986, the bibliography of Célestin and Elise Freinet is to be revised. The *Institut de Recherche Pédagogique* in Paris commissions Halina Semenowicz to undertake this task. This represents a major contribution to the development of Freinet Pedagogy and the FIMEM.

Halina puts a great deal of effort into this and begins work on the international bibliography of Célestin and Elise Freinet as early as 1984.

In 1988, we celebrate 30 years of working according to Freinet's concepts and principles. During the celebrations, the idea arises to transform the informal Freinet Movement into an association and have it registered at the local court.



Thanks to Professor Lewin, I take part in the international seminar held in Oer-Erkenschwick (Germany) in July 1989. Due to language difficulties, it is a challenging and exhausting experience for me. Nevertheless, I already know then that I want to take part in the next meeting – if possible. After the seminar in Germany, I also realise what I – and what we in Poland, with its

changing present (Solidarność, Lech Wałęsa, etc.), should be doing differently.

great deal of valuable experience.

Halina Semenowicz travels to Switzerland at the of Peter Steiger. She meets with teachers in Baden and takes part in meetings of the Modern School French-speaking Switzerland in Gland and Lausanne.

In 1990, the RIDEF takes place in Finland. Whilst I am Germany, I receive an invitation from the Finnish Movement for myself and another teacher. Dr Ewa from the University of Education in Bydgoszcz travels After my first RIDEF I return home completely From my experience at the time, I know that we organise similar Freinet seminars in Poland with children and students. In 1994, I just do that in The theme of the meeting is: 'What does it mean to be teacher today?'

1991 – The school where Halina Semenowicz taught from 1957 to 1984 is after its patron, Célestin Freinet.



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Since this year, the Polish Freinet Movement has been publishing a bulletin twice a year. Editors: Zofia

Napiórkowska and Regina Chorn.

In 1992, ten Freinet teachers from the informal Freinet Movement write the statutes of the new association, thereby establishing the organisational framework and founding a Freinet association. It is registered in the Register of Associations at the District Court in Warsaw (KRS No. 202998). The association is named *Polskie Stowarzyszenie Animatorów Pedagogiki Celestyna Freineta (PSAPCF)*.

The purpose of the association is to promote and further develop Freinet Pedagogy. Zofia Napiorkowska is elected chairperson. The association has approximately 300 members, who are active in 16 regional groups. We organise various meetings, attended by well over 100 participants. Any teacher or student at a teacher training college can become a member of the association. Until 2003, the association is based in Otwock (at Halina Semenowicz's former primary school); since 2003, its headquarters have been in Gniezno, in a detached house belonging to Regina Chorn.

Also in 1992, the RIDEF takes place in Poitiers, France. The participants are Halina Smolińska Rębas, Regina Chorn, Ewa Filipiak and Kazimiera Michalczak.

During the General Assembly, the Polish delegation proposes hosting their second RIDEF in Poland. They argue: 'Let us meet again 20 years after the 1976 RIDEF in Płock; in Kraków in 1996'.

In the same year, a delegation of teachers from Switzerland is coming to Otwock. Silvia Herzog (CA of FIMEM) visits Halina Semenowicz's primary school together with other teachers from Switzerland – including Heidi Bosshard and Peter Steiger. This proves to be a very interesting meeting, an exchange of ideas and experiences relating to Janusz Korczak (visit to Warsaw) and Célestin Freinet.

In the same year the next school (a small rural school in Obora near Gniezno) is named after its patron, Célestin Freinet.

In 1994, at the RIDEF in Sweden, Grazyna Maszczyńska-Góra from Kraków represents the PSAPCF association. She invites the Freinet teachers to the RIDEF 96 in Poland.

In 1996, the RIDEF is held in Poland for the time. Over 300 teachers from 26 countries take 100 Freinet teachers registering from Poland. Preparatory group: Zofia Napiorkowska, Maria Kościuszko, Grażyna Maszczynska-Góra, Ewa Halina Smolińska, Wanda Frankiewicz, Kazimiera Michalczak, Viola Michalczak, Wanada Silezin and Chorn.

Following the RIDEF, the PSAPCF association collaborates with the Ministry on the school programme for 6–9-year-olds. The programme is drawn up by the regional group in Wrocław, led by Kollek.

Various Freinet meetings are taking place in The Freinet teachers are undertaking interesting with the children. Membership rises up to 600.



To mark the RIDEF in Poland, the second edition of Halina Semenowicz's book 'The Modern French School' is being published

second
part, with

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Regina

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Bogumila
Poland.
projects



In the RIDEF of Japan in **1998** Grażyna Maszczyńska–Góra, Danuta Klimkiewicz and Regina Chorn take part.



The Berlin Freinet group, led by Hartmut Glänzel, establishes links with the Freinet group in Poznań (led by Regina Chorn). Freinet teachers from both movements attend each other's conferences. Classroom pen-pals are also organised, and the children explore the language, history and culture of the other country. The exchange of experiences between the teachers has a major impact on the quality of education.

Due to insufficient language skills, the collaboration gradually wanes (at that time, Russian is the only foreign language taught to Polish pupils).

Regina Chorn with a Polish group
at the Freinet School in Vence, France, 1998

In 2000, Izabela Bajbak, Ewa Bajbak, Magdalena Zakrzewska, Marta Krzywda and Regina Chorn take part in the RIDEF in Austria.

A seminar entitled 'Teaching and instructing, rather than letting children learn' takes place in Gniezno, accompanied by an exhibition entitled 'Free expression by children'.

In 2001, a Berlin-Saxony-Poland regional meeting takes place in Rydzyna (Poland). The Freinet meeting is organised by Kazimiera Michalczak, Hartmut Glänzel and Regina Chorn. We present our experiences from the RIDEF events in Japan and Austria.

In 2002, Hanna Piekarska and Izabela Bajbak take part in the RIDEF in Bulgaria with their children. To mark the 10th anniversary of the PSAPCF, a conference entitled 'Between Freinet's Ideas and Educational Reality' is held in Warsaw, combined with a presentation of the achievements of the regional groups.

On 24 August 2002, Prof. Aleksander Lewin passes away. For Freinet teachers, Professor Lewin has been a leading figure; a distinguished scholar and educationalist. Among other works, he wrote the book 'Korczak – Makarenko – Freinet'.

On 4 July **2004**, Halina dies at the age of 94. The Freinet movement loses its famous Freinet educator, the Freinet pedagogy', as Hartmut President of FIMEM from 2004 puts it. The journal 'FI No. 28' is Halina Semenowicz.



Semenowicz Polish most 'mother of Glänzel, to 2006, dedicated to

Halina Semenowicz, 1910–2004 – pioneer

the

of the Freinet Movement in Poland

Izabela Bajbak takes part in the **2004** RIDEF in Varenholz with her children and A. Wozniak. Marzena Kędra (Vice-Chair of the PSAPCF) writes the projects 'Flying Without Wings' and 'Children's Festival', which receives financial support from the J&S Foundation.

In **2006**, Marzena Kędra, who would go on to take part in Ridef 2008, organises a national Freinet Conference in Prudnik entitled 'Joining Hands'. Subsequently, the book 'Freinet and his moral education' is published under her editorship.

Kazimiera Piwko (Chair of the PSAFCF since 2003) organises a seminar entitled 'Close to Nature', attended by 120 Freinet teachers.

2007, during the national seminar in Kraków, we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the PSAPCF and the 50th anniversary of our involvement within the FIMEM.

In **2008**, the PSAPCF has 280 members and 26 regional Freinet groups. The chairperson is Kazimiera Piwko. The PSAPCF's journal is called 'Freinetowskie Inspiracje' (Freinet-inspired ideas). The journal serves as the communication platform for the Polish Freinet educators and is published twice a year. The editorial team rotates between the various Freinet groups.



Marzena Kędra, Irena Nyckowska, Magdalena Zakrzewska and Regina Chorn are taking part in the RIDEF in Metepec, Mexico.

For this event, they are preparing short workshops:

- 'Everyday life at the Freinet primary school in Moszczanka' (Marzena Kędra)



- 'A historical overview of the development of Freinet pedagogy in Poland – 50 years of collaboration within the FIMEM' (Regina Chorn)
- 'Learning French using the natural method' (Irena Nyckowska)
- and a workshop on Polish culinary traditions: 'Pierogi mojej babci' / My grandmother's dumplings (Magdalena Zakrzewska).

Compiled by Regina Chorn (Text written for the RIDEF 2008 in Mexico)

Translation assistance: many thanks to Gesa Meisen – Freinet-Kooperative e.V. (2008)

and Andi Honegger – FGS Freinet Group Switzerland (2025)

Ewa Filipiak

Katarzyna Gawlicz

Astrid Męczkowska-Christiansen

A question of democratic education in a world where democracy is under threat

The panel will focus on democratic education and the future of democratic schools in a world where democracy is becoming increasingly fragile, vulnerable to crises, or openly threatened. We are interested in the tension between education for democracy, the practices of democratic schools, and the changes taking place in politics, the public sphere, and social life.

In our discussion, we would like to focus on several interrelated issues:

First, we are interested in whether the weakening of democracy translates into educational practices and whether it poses a real threat to them. In this context, it will be important to reflect on the meaning of democratic education today: does it require redefinition, a shift in emphasis, or the adoption of new forms of action?

Second, we want to examine the specific practices of democratic schools in the face of contemporary social tensions: the presence of refugees, marginalized groups, the radicalization of youth, and the rise of social polarization. It will therefore be essential to ask whether and how democratic education can be practiced in situations of social tension and conflict.

Third, a key theme will be young people and their experiences: isolation, alienation, withdrawal, a weakened sense of agency, and difficulties in developing social competencies. We want to ask whether democratic education can be a response to these problems.

Fourth, we are interested in the sources of resistance to democratic education: bureaucracy, the creation of the appearance of democracy in schools, prevailing notions of children as incapable of participation, the distortion of the meanings of democracy and democratic participation, and practices for overcoming this resistance.

Fifth, we are interested in the actors involved in democratic practices and the space for their actual agency: children, parents, and educators.

Sixth, we want to address the question of the place of democratic education within the broader social landscape: can it support the development of democratic social practices and the public sphere, or does it remain more of a defensive bastion?

In conclusion, we want to propose a set of principles for democratic education that supports democracy.

The Polish education system

State and non-state education

The Polish education system is universal, free in state schools and is based on the following structure:

pre-school education (including a one-year 'pre-school' year), 8 years of primary school, secondary schools (grammar schools, technical colleges, vocational schools) and higher education. Compulsory schooling lasts until the age of 18.

The structure of the education system in Poland is divided into the following key stages:

1. Pre-school education

Ages 3–6: Optional for children aged 3–5 (the local authority is obliged to provide a place). Compulsory pre-school education: Applies to 6-year-olds (the so-called 'zero year').

2. Primary school (8 years)

Early primary education: Years 1–3 (integrated teaching). Block/subject-based teaching: Years 4–8. At the end of Year 8, pupils sit the national Year 8 exam, the results of which determine admission to secondary schools.

3. Secondary education

After completing primary school, pupils continue their education at one of the following types of school:

General secondary school: Lasts 4 years, culminating in the school-leaving examination (matura). Technical secondary school: Lasts 5 years, combining vocational training with the school-leaving examination. First-level vocational school: lasts 3 years, focuses on vocational training and entering the labour market. Second-level vocational school: lasts 2 years, enables students to obtain a secondary education and pass the matura (for graduates of first-level vocational schools).

4. Higher education

First-cycle studies: Bachelor's degree (3 years) or Engineering degree (3.5–4 years). Second-cycle studies: Master's degree (1.5–2 years). Integrated Master's degree programmes: last 5–6 years (e.g. medicine, law).

Compulsory schooling: lasts from the age of 7 until the end of the 8th year of primary school (or until the age of 18).

Compulsory education: Young people aged 15–18 are required to continue their education (at school or through non-school forms, e.g. with an employer).

Education is managed at central level by the Ministry of National Education (general education) and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (higher education and science).

Further information on pre-school education, primary school and secondary schools

The Kashubian language is particularly noteworthy, as it is the only regional language in Poland that enjoys legal protection. Pupils learn it at all stages of education – from nursery school through to primary and secondary school. Pupils can take the Kashubian language as an optional subject in their A-levels. The classes are funded by the state and are mainly taught in schools in the Pomeranian Voivodeship.

Pre-school education

Children aged between three and six attend pre-school, and in special cases from the age of two and a half. Six-year-olds are subject to compulsory pre-school education (reception class). Pre-school education may take place in pre-schools, pre-school departments within primary schools, and in pre-school centres and pre-school education groups. The latter two forms of pre-school education are intended for small groups of children, and the organisational requirements are less stringent than in pre-schools.

Primary school

The eight-year primary school, known as the 'szkoła podstawowa', is divided into two stages: Years 1–3 and Years 4–8.

In the first stage – in Years 1–3, intended for children aged 7–9 – early years education is provided. The main part of lessons takes place in combined classes and is known as integrated education; it is led by a single teacher, who also acts as the class tutor. Within the integrated teaching curriculum, foreign language learning, music education, art education, physical education and computer classes are taught separately. These classes may be taught by a teacher qualified to teach early years education or by a teacher qualified to teach specific subjects. At this stage, the teacher is not required to adhere to lesson timings, i.e. to divide pupils' time into 45-minute lesson units, as is done in higher year groups. Pupils also take part in religious education or ethics classes. The latter, due to low numbers of pupils wishing to attend, are rarely organised in Polish schools. Parents decide whether their child attends religious education classes. In addition to compulsory lessons, the school must also provide children with extracurricular activities designed both to develop talents and to promote equal opportunities.

In Years 4–8, for children aged 10–15, education takes place within the framework of subjects taught by specialist subject teachers who are qualified to teach that subject. One of the teachers teaching a particular class acts as the form tutor.

The compulsory subjects taught at this stage are:

- Polish / 5 hours per week
- a modern foreign language / 3 hours per week
- a second modern foreign language (Years 7–8) / 2 hours per week
- mathematics / 4 hours per week
- natural science (Year 4) / 2 hours per week
- Biology (Years 5–6, 8) / 1 hour per week, (Year 7) / 2 hours per week
- Geography (Years 5–6, 8) / 1 hour per week, (Year 7) / 2 hours per week

- Physics (Years 7–8) / 2 hours per week
- Chemistry (Years 7–8) / 2 hours per week
- History (Year 4) / 1 hour per week, (Years 5–8) / 2 hours per week
- Music (Years 4–7) / 1 hour per week
- Art (Years 4–7) / 1 hour per week
- Technology (Years 4–6) / 1 hour per week
- IT / 1 hour per week
- Physical Education (general physical development classes adapted to the pupils' developmental age) / 4 hours per week
- Career guidance (Years 7–8) / 1 hour per week
- social studies (Year 8) / 2 hours per week
- safety education (Year 8) / 1 hour per week

Optional subjects are: religious education or ethics (the decision on whether a child attends these classes rests with the parents) and health education.

At the end of the school year, pupils sit an exam which is the same for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with adapted exam papers and writing conditions, and may be granted extra time to complete the exam. The exam is organised by the Central Examination Board. The exam result does not affect the completion of primary school, but sitting the exam is a requirement for completing primary school. The exam results achieved by the pupil are taken into account in the admissions process for secondary schools.

Secondary schools

The following types of secondary schools exist:

General secondary schools. The course lasts 4 years. Graduation entitles students to sit the school-leaving examination.

Technical schools. The course lasts 5 years. Graduation enables students to sit the school-leaving examination, and passing the examinations confirming vocational qualifications leads to the title of technician.

First-level vocational schools. Former basic vocational schools.

The basic course of study is supplemented by:

Post-secondary schools. Schools admitting graduates of general secondary schools or technical schools. They teach vocational subjects, enabling students to obtain vocational qualifications and the title of technician.

Second-level vocational schools

Schools for graduates of first-level vocational schools in professions where a common qualification has been established for the profession taught at both first- and second-level vocational schools.

Vocational training schools

These schools prepare students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities and students with multiple disabilities for work. Completing this type of school enables students to obtain a certificate confirming their readiness for work.

Non-state education

Non-state (private) education refers to institutions established and run by natural or legal persons (e.g. associations, foundations, companies). These schools operate on the basis of their own statutes, often offering bespoke curricula and smaller class sizes. They are funded mainly through tuition fees and local authority grants.

How does the non-state system work?

- **Funding:** Schools receive grants from the local council or district budget (provided they meet the requirements and have the status of a state school), but their main source of funding is fees paid by parents (tuition fees).
- **Management:** These institutions are not directly subject to the authority of the local education authority in matters of organisation and recruitment to the same extent as state schools, but they must follow the national curriculum. Admission procedures: These take place under conditions set by the school's governing body, often including interviews or aptitude tests.

The most popular types of non-state schools

1. **Private (commercial) schools:** Most often run by companies, foundations or private individuals focused on delivering a specific educational or language programme.
2. **Community schools:** Established by parents' associations. They are characterised by being non-profit (all funds generated are reinvested in the school) and by significant parental involvement in the school's running.
3. **International schools:** Implementing foreign curricula (e.g. the International Baccalaureate).
4. **Alternative schools:** Based on specific pedagogical methods (e.g. Montessori schools, Waldorf schools, democratic schools).

Both the establishment and operation of such institutions are governed by Polish education law. Detailed procedures and requirements for entities intending to set up a new institution are described on the official website of

the Ministry of National Education.

The higher education system in Poland

The Polish higher education system is based on a three-cycle structure in line with the Bologna Process: first-cycle studies (bachelor's/engineering degrees), second-cycle studies (master's degrees) and third-cycle studies (doctoral programmes). Higher education institutions are divided into public and non-public, as well as academic and vocational. They are supervised by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

The main pillars of the system include:

Degrees and levels

- First-cycle studies: usually last 3 to 3.5 years and lead to a Bachelor's or Engineering degree.
- Second-cycle studies: last 1.5 to 2 years and lead to a Master's degree.
- Integrated Master's programmes: last between 4 and 6 years and cover fields where the course of study is indivisible (e.g. medicine, law, psychology).
- Third-cycle studies (doctoral programmes): usually last 3–4 years and prepare students for a doctoral degree.

Study modes

- Full-time (day): Free at public universities.
- Part-time (extramural/evening): Fee-paying at both public and private universities.

Types of higher education institutions

- Academic: Authorised to award doctoral degrees and place an emphasis on scientific research.
- Vocational: Focus on practical vocational training (e.g. State Vocational Colleges) and do not always award doctoral degrees.

Credit system

All universities use the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), which facilitates student mobility and exchanges between European Union countries.

Quality and supervision

The institution responsible for accreditation and the assessment of the quality of education across all degree programmes is the Polish Accreditation Committee.

Compiled on the basis of the following sources:

- The eurydice.org.pl website
- Wikipedia
- Diagram of the education system reform in Poland, available online:

<https://perspektywyzawodowe.pnwm.org/informacje-o-ksztalceniu/systemy-edukacji/system-edukacji-polsce>

<https://study.gov.pl/pl/struktura-studi-w-w-polsce>

Plastic-Free Holidays – Three Years of Discovering the World Together

There are projects that we plan for a few weeks. And then there are those that begin to take on a life of their own. **“Plastic-Free Holidays”** belongs to the latter – an initiative that we have been carrying out for three years at the First Community Primary School in Gdynia. Each new edition brings new ideas, new questions from the children and new discoveries. The project develops together with them.

It begins with a simple gesture. Before the summer holidays, each child receives a wooden box. It is not a box for souvenirs, but an invitation to experience the holidays mindfully. The boxes are filled with shells, stones, pinecones, feathers, dried plants, travel tickets, drawings or short notes. We do not collect plastic trinkets. We collect experiences, traces of encounters with nature and stories worth telling.

After the holidays, the boxes return to school with the children. Each one is different, just as each child’s holiday experiences are different. These experiences become the starting point for our work over the following months. We do not follow a previously prepared script. Instead, we follow what the children bring with them. Their discoveries, questions and stories determine the direction of our activities.

In the spirit of Célestin Freinet’s educational philosophy, free writing plays an important role. The children describe their discoveries, record memories, and create stories and poems inspired by their holiday experiences. Their texts are read in class, edited and illustrated, and become material for further work. In this way, children discover that their own experiences are valuable and can become a source of learning for the whole group.

The boxes also accompany us during nature studies, mathematics, art and technology lessons. We compare collections, classify specimens, make observations, build, design and experiment. In English lessons, natural objects become tools for developing vocabulary, describing the world, asking questions and having conversations. A foreign language emerges through action, rather than being separated from experience.

The project encourages children to develop skills related to nature, observation, cooperation and environmental responsibility. Each skill they acquire is evidence of real abilities and commitment, rather than simply the completion of a task. The children plan their next challenges themselves, document their activities and proudly observe their own development.

Yet the greatest value of the project is something that cannot be written into a curriculum. Children begin to look more closely. They notice the beauty of simple, natural things. More and more often, they talk about walks together, their delight at finding an interesting stone or watching birds, rather than about souvenirs they have bought. Their way of experiencing holidays changes. There is less collecting of objects and more collecting of experiences.

For me, as a teacher and facilitator of Freinet pedagogy, **“Plastic-Free Holidays”** confirms that environmental education does not begin with talking about ecology. It begins by building a connection with nature, through wonder, freedom to act and trust in children’s curiosity. When a child feels that they are part of the natural world, caring for the environment becomes something natural and obvious.

The project was initiated by Magdalena Błęńska from the Miejsce Tworzenia Foundation. Today, after three years, I can see that it has become much more than a one-off campaign. It is a space for authentic learning, cooperation with families and developing environmental awareness through everyday experiences.

I believe that projects like this demonstrate the power of Freinet pedagogy. We do not teach children ready-made answers. We create the conditions in which they can experience, discover, ask questions, write their own texts and learn from one another. And then education becomes a genuine encounter with life.

Author: Martyna Kozłowska

Speech by the Gdańsk Education Superintendent

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Participants of the 36th Congress for Facilitators of Célestin Freinet Pedagogy,

It is with great joy that I accepted the invitation to this international event, being held in Poland for the third time. At the same time, I feel immensely proud to welcome you to the most beautiful region of Poland – Pomerania. As you have probably already discovered, Poles are renowned for their hospitality.

The organizers were determined to prepare the event that is now beginning to perfection. There was just one thing we could not agree on: what kind of weather to order for the coming days. So, in our desire to show you Pomerania as fully as possible, you will experience both hot summer weather and the first days of spring and autumn. 😊

I am convinced that there is no better place to talk in the spirit of **freedom, solidarity and democracy** than Pomerania – a region proud of its unique Kashubian traditions and culture, while also sharing with the wider world the values rooted in the legacy of the Solidarity movement and in the community's collective resistance to the communist regime.

Nor could there be a better time to discuss the place of democracy and student autonomy in schools than now, as we are implementing what I consider to be a fundamental change in Polish education. With the **Compass of Tomorrow** reform, we want to once again highlight the directions that matter most in education: practical learning, student autonomy, democracy, project-based work, critical thinking and knowledge rooted in real life.

How close these ideas are to your everyday work!

To all of you – the participants of this Congress, teachers and educators – I wish you fruitful discussions and a time filled with the exchange of experiences, but also with meaningful integration and the opportunity to make new connections. May these new relationships contribute to the further development of the ideas of Célestin Freinet pedagogy in Poland and around the world.

Grzegorz Kryger

Dear Friends,

It is with great joy and emotion that I welcome you to Poland, to the 36th International Meeting of Freinet Teachers – RIDEF 2026.

When I was thinking about how to welcome you, I thought that I would bake bread for our meeting. And it was then that Freinet's words came to my mind:

"Our children need roses and bread. (...) But even more than bread, they need your kind look, your smile, your voice, your thoughts and your promise. They would like to feel that they have found in you and in the classroom that tone which gives meaning and purpose to their lives."

These words are not only beautiful, but also true.

Each of us has come here from a different part of the world. We are different, we speak different languages, we live in different cultures and work in different educational institutions. And yet we are united by the conviction that education begins with meeting another human being. With a kind look. With attentiveness. With trust.

At a time when the world is experiencing divisions, uncertainty and rapid change, we increasingly need an education that gives children a sense of security, teaches them dialogue and cooperation, and helps them find their place in the world.

We believe that education is about much more than passing on knowledge. It is a space where a child learns to think, to create, to ask questions, to take responsibility for themselves and others, and to experience that their voice matters.

Freinet reminds us that children need bread and roses. They need knowledge, but also beauty. They need skills, but also hope. They need freedom, but also community. Above all, however, they need adults who believe in their abilities.

Over the coming days, we will create such a community ourselves. We will learn from one another, ask questions, share our experiences, laugh, be moved, and discover that despite our differences, we speak the same language – the language of respect for the child.

I hope that you will leave Poland not only with new ideas, but also with the feeling that you are not alone. That all over the world there are people who, just like you, believe that education can change lives, and that school can be a place of democracy, freedom, solidarity and peace.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for the journey you have made in order to meet one another. Thank you for creating an international Freinet community for so many years.

May RIDEF 2026 be a time of encounters that will stay with us for a long time. May it be a place where we find not only bread and roses, but also what Freinet wrote about: that special tone which gives meaning to our work and reminds us why we chose the teaching profession.

In Polish tradition, bread is a symbol of goodness, hospitality and respect. It is with bread and salt that we traditionally welcome our guests, opening before them not only the doors of our homes, but also our hearts. Today, we would like to welcome you in the same way. May this symbol be a sign of our gratitude for your presence and an invitation to share this extraordinary time together.

I welcome you with all my heart.

Welcome to Poland.

Welcome to Kashubia.

Joanna Antczak
President of PSAPCF

Freinet Group Switzerland (FGS)

Groupe Suisse de l'École Moderne (GSEM)

The Freinet Group Switzerland (FGS) has been in existence since 2000. Two years earlier, at the 1998 Swiss Congress in Yverdon-les-Bains, the General Assembly of the German-speaking Swiss *Arbeitsgruppe Freinetpädagogik AGF (Working Group on Freinet Pedagogy)* – which at that time still had 179 members – decided to disband and merge with the French-speaking Freinet movement, the *Groupe Romand de l'École Moderne (GREM)* (50 members). The now defunct *Groupe Genevois de l'École Moderne (GGEM)* no longer played a role in this process.

The fusion took place officially at the 2000 Swiss Congress on the Herzberg near Aarau. At this General Assembly on 2 June 2000, the 36 members present agreed on the name *Freinet Group Switzerland FGS (Groupe Suisse de l'École Moderne GSEM)* for the new Swiss Freinet movement. In addition, Frédérique Aeschbacher from Lausanne was elected as the new president. Heidi Bosshard, who had already been elected in 1998, was confirmed as secretary, and Petra Schuhmacher as treasurer.

In French-speaking Switzerland, a Freinet movement – the *Guilde de Travail* (Labour Union) – had already existed since 1952. The occasion for its founding was Freinet's visit to Jean Ribolzi's class in St-Prex on Lake Geneva, accompanied by his pupils, a fellow teacher and his daughter Madeleine, known as *Baloulette*. In 1996, Jean Ribolzi wrote about this highly significant and extraordinary visit: *'For the first time, it wasn't the school inspector who visited my class, but a teacher – a foreigner, no less – who spoke to my pupils as if he'd known them for ages. He helped them and gave them advice in his charming southern French accent.'*

In 1968, the GREM was founded with the aim of bringing colleagues from the other French-speaking cantons on board.

The German-speaking Swiss *Working Group on Freinet Pedagogy* was established in Zurich in 1977, evolving from the *Zurich Teachers' Group (LGZ)*, which had been founded five years earlier, as Peter Jakob writes in an article. These were predominantly young teachers at state primary schools who were seeking new forms and content for their actual lessons. Peter Jakob also mentions weekly meetings in year-group-based working groups, which produced documents and worksheets. An LGZ-office was set up as a meeting place and archive, funded by monthly contributions of up to 50 francs. In addition, so-called 'assistant teachers' – teachers without permanent posts – were employed as educational support staff, assisting their active colleagues with lesson preparation and through classroom observations. Until then, Freinet pedagogy had been unknown in German-speaking Switzerland.

In the autumn of 1976, a guest lecture series by Prof. Johannes Beck from Bremen began at the University of Zurich; he repeatedly referred to Freinet's approaches and the experiences of the *Pädagogik-Kooperative* in Germany. In May 1977, the 'Pedagogy' and 'Secondary School Teachers' basic groups, the LGZ and the teachers' section of the VPOD trade union organised a weekend event on Freinet pedagogy. This led to follow-up meetings, particularly amongst secondary school teachers who had now begun putting these methods into practice in various cantons – including our colleague, Peter Steiger.

The *Freinet Pedagogy Working Group* was thus established, and an increasing number of primary and lower secondary school teachers joined – including Heidi Bosshard and Dany Gross. The LGZ-office, with Peter Jakob, served as the contact point. A real boom, with many new faces, took place in 1979 and 1980 with the seminar *'School without Fear'* and the film *'Giving the Children a Voice'*, which attracted around 1,000 visitors.

On the fringes of a Freinet meeting in Gibswil in the Tösstal valley near Zurich, the association was formally established in 1981 with a small executive committee, statutes, a PO box and a postal current account. In the same year, the course *'Den Kindern das Wort geben'* (*Giving the Children a*

Voice) was launched as part of the Swiss teacher training courses organised by the *Association for Handicrafts and School Reform*.



Symposium on Freinet Pedagogy in Hausen am Albis 2025

Following the decision to merge into the *Freinet Group Switzerland FGS*, new statutes were also adopted in 1998. These designate the FGS as a bilingual association for as long as there are no members who speak Italian and/or Romansh. – Incidentally, at that time our General Meetings were interpreted simultaneously into German and French.

The statutes further state that the General Meeting takes place annually, every two years at the congress and in the intervening years when there is no congress.

In 1983, the first *Swiss Freinet Congress* took place in Bern; the second followed as early as 1984 in Geneva. From then on, a nationwide Freinet meeting was held every two years. In 2025, the 23rd meeting took place under the title '*Symposium on Freinet Pedagogy*' in Hausen am Albis, near Zurich.

Up until the year 2000, one of the regional groups would organise the national congress and another one would take on the editorial responsibility for the '*Bindestrich – Trait d'Union*', the Swiss Freinet magazine. It has been published for a good 40 years, with 2–3 issues per year; the current issue is number 103.

From 1978 to 1997, the newsletter '*I-I-I – lehren, lernen, leben*' (teach, learn, live) was also published, with a total of 61 issues – the name is derived from a summer holiday seminar.

Since the fusion, the FGS has unfortunately shrunk considerably, and membership has fallen below



50. In French-speaking Switzerland, there are no longer any active members at all.

Some of the regional groups have also ceased to exist or are lying dormant. The Aargau-Baselland and Biel groups are active.

Evening singing outside our accommodation in 2025

In addition to the organisation of the congress and the editorial team of the '*Bindestrich*', there are currently two working groups: the Archive Working Group and the Website Working Group.

The collaborative children's magazine '*Kinderwelt*' for children and school classes has been in existence since 1986 and publishes 3–4 issues a year, featuring texts written by children for children, with minimal administrative effort; the current issue is number 138.

Also worth reading is Peter Steiger's article '*How we came across Freinet pedagogy in 1976*' in the '*Bindestrich*' No. 70, 2011.

Andi Honegger, 2026



General Assembly of the Freinet Group Switzerland 2025