

## **Imagine...**

Imagine an elementary school where you can freely immerse yourself in the mysteries of the world, fight for the adventures of discovery, experience unlimited free play with your friends and, alongside experienced guides, overcome your own challenges and curiosity regardless of the journey and progress of others. Imagine a **childhood the way you want it** - the kind you would like for yourself, your children or grandchildren.

## **We founded such a school - in Slovakia.**

One hundred years ago the Summerhill English School was founded. In 2017 we started with a community garden, in 2019 we continued with an educational group, and from the year 2021 we are an **elementary school** with an experimental verification of free democratic education. What is it? We have created documentation for our elementary school with descriptions of the educational model, which was finally approved by the National Institute for Education and the Ministry of Education. By 2030, our school alongside the universities will evaluate what **systemic changes** could self-management in children's education, a heterogeneous inclusive group and democratization of processes in primary school bring. The individual educational needs of children are the key to a satisfied and fulfilled life of a future adult. During the day, students choose for themselves what they will do, where they will take a trip to, what and how they will learn. Practically, there is no school bell, grading, testing or exams. **Democratic self-government** establishes the rules of coexistence, which every adult and child vote on, equally. And don't worry, in a century of functioning abroad, independent schools have produced a whole range of standard graduates: from manual workers to artists to top doctors. We do not yet have a free high school in Slovakia, but we all know that the solutions from the era of Maria Theresa are not enough nowadays - that is why we are creating a bridge to an inclusive, self-directed and personalized education with our initiative and concept of education.

### **We grew by 100% in one year!**

We started the first school year with 300 students, currently we have over 600. A third of them belong to educational groups and the rest are homeschooled children. Families have opted for this way of learning for years in an effort to enable the child to **develop their own interests** according to their abilities and choices, **at their own pace** and **without**

**comparison** with their peers or a uniform state curriculum. We also support dozens of students with various disabilities, athletes, children of foreigners or gifted children who have not been able to integrate into the regular school system with its many restrictions.

We provide our experts and skills to educational groups all over Slovakia in order to help them **grow with the children** .

We believe that thanks to our experienced colleagues, we can provide **space for self-realization in a respectful and diverse environment** , regardless of the students' abilities, interests, age, language and cultural background. Pupils feel safe with us, gain confidence in their abilities, learn new skills even without the use of coercion, sugar, a whip or any other form of external motivation. Our guides lead children to critical thinking, self-knowledge, working with emotions, understanding the principles of how the world works, give students the opportunity and **space for natural curiosity**, research, building responsibility and relationship with oneself, other people and the environment with confidence in one's own steps without stigmatizing unsuccessful attempts. The result of free education is also valued characteristics on the labor market: creativity, teamwork and leadership skills, critical and divergent thinking and respect for oneself, others and the democratic establishment.

These qualities and skills are needed to face the challenges of this era.

## **Help us prepare them for this journey!**

How did you come about free democratic education?

The initial inspiration for the creation of our school is based on the ideas of the **Summerhill** school , which is relatively well-known abroad today. Free or otherwise known as democratic way of learning consists of extending the "adult rights" to make decisions about one's being, environment and spending time to children's age. Adults most often call children's activities and spending time as play or education, while children begin to distinguish these activities only after starting compulsory school attendance - most often in connection with words about duties, responsibilities, homework, evaluation or comparison with the performance of other children.

**Exercising the student's free will** when deciding on his education means deciding on the student's participation, the form of education, its content or other aspects such as the educational environment or the teacher with whom they want to discuss this topic with. During the last century, dozens of schools **around the world** as well as an American branch of liberal education named after the Sudbury Valley School have been created according to

this model. We actively cooperate with European and American associations of democratic education and research in pedagogy.

How will you use the donated money?

We will change the world of education :) even though it may not be tomorrow. Suitable spaces and research are crucial, we cannot operate legally without it and without its results, a systemic change in education cannot take place. As far as we know, **we are the only ones in the world who carry out research in this area on such a large scale** with the potential to change the paradigms of educational systems and policies. Therefore, during the first year, we wrote dozens of applications for grants and support and approached a large number of potential partners: several foundations, many companies, the city of Košice and The Košice Self-governing Region, several ministries and the Government office. Unfortunately, without success.

Therefore we are turning to you, to support our efforts and help us cover the costs of psychologists and test licenses we use in our research. **The annual cost** for wages and tests are approximately **50,000 euros** and the research will continue until 2030, so without including inflation, we will need more than half a million euros. We financed the first year of research with a loan, our second year has just begun and we do not have financial coverage which can be devastating to our intention.

We know that our goals are high and the journey is long and difficult, but we got ready and set out. We will be humbly grateful for every contribution and support along the way.

## **How else can I help besides financial support?**

Each of you can help us by **sharing** our story and this plea for support.

We are also looking for people who are fond of the idea of the Free School so much that they decide to help build and improve it. You can connect us with people who own or manage interesting **real estate** in regional cities or with an investor who will provide us with a loan or buy a suitable property and rent it to us in return. We would appreciate help from companies in the form of goods and services.

We also welcome people who can influence legislative changes, especially in home education, or whose heart beats for the right of every child to suitable conditions for education and would like to work with us directly, for example in daily work with children or behind the computer.

You can help by making a small regular contribution or by actively building civic engagement - thus you will help the growth of a new generation that will look at education from a completely different perspective than we did. And thanks to that, this new generation will experience the childhood they choose..

You can find **more information** about us on the school's website [www.SlobodnaSkola.sk](http://www.SlobodnaSkola.sk) and the founder's website [www.TahanovskaZahrada.sk](http://www.TahanovskaZahrada.sk) .

We thank everyone who helped us and everyone who decided to help a good cause right now!