GOETHEANUM COMMUNICATIONS

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**“You have to listen more intensely”**

**Coronavirus: Practical suggestions for online teacher conferences**

**Teachers are currently communicating not only with their students and parents exclusively via internet, but also with each other – and that mostly via a computer screen. The Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum has expanded their tips for school life during the time of the coronavirus to include suggestions for conducting video teacher conferences.**

“The first feeling is pure joy at seeing and hearing each other again!” This is how Tomáš Zdražil describes his impression of a web conference at the Freie Hochschule Stuttgart (the College for Waldorf Pedagogy in Germany) on the blog of the Pedagogical Section at the Goetheanum. “You have to listen more intensely to what someone is saying or wants to say”, has been Christof Wiechert‘s experience with web-based meetings. The Waldorf teacher, lecturer, and former head of the Pedagogical Section participates once a week in the virtual conference at a school in Asia.

The prerequisite for a web conference is that all participants are properly trained in the necessary software. There might be parents who can help with the setup and operation. A video conference is also made easier if relevant documents are available in advance. Tomáš Zdražil gives three reasons for this: “To ensure that everyone is familiar with the issue, that participants‘ attention is not overstretched, and so that time spent talking can be reduced to the necessary minimum” – prior experience points to a maximum duration of between 60 and 90 minutes.

Christof Wiechert recommends that someone be responsible for chairing the discussion. The rules of the game include short contributions, as longer statements can be submitted in writing later. The spoken word should have priority over a parallel chat function. More complex topics can be delegated to a sub-conference, which reports the results back to the main teacher conference.

According to Tomáš Zdražil, video conferences reach their limits, “the more personal and the closer the topics are to us”. This applies, for example, to questions of hiring new colleagues. It is also difficult to discuss controversial issues; voting tools might help to deal with yes or no questions.

(2163 Characters/SJ; translation by Bettina Hindes)

**Online** www.goetheanum-paedagogik.ch/en/homeschooling

**Contact Person** Dorothee Prange, dorothee.prange@goetheanum.ch