



Guðlaug Elísabet Finnsdóttir is in the administration team in Vesturbæjarskóli and has around 20 years experience in teaching and administration.

She graduated from the University of Iceland with a teaching qualification, but had previously completed Tourism studies at the University of Iceland. Later she completed a diploma in Public Administration and a master's in Management of Educational

Institutions. For the longest time, Guðlaug has taught students at middle level, in grades 5-7, and most subjects, as is generally the case with teachers in Iceland. Today, she is a general head of department, ICT liaison and project manager of a development project on makerspaces. She is thus involved in projects related to the professional work of teachers, adviser on creative teaching methods and information and technology education. She is involved in the well-being and communication of children and the management of the school in general in the team of headmasters. Guðlaug is interested in many outdoors activities like hiking, golfing, sea swimming and skiing. What she appreciates in the Icelandic education system is the emphasis on children's well-being and safety and the emphasis in educational development on creative school work.

What is your role in Vesturbæjarskóli?

I am in the administration team in my school. I take care of a wide range of projects and I am a professional leader in school development and a supporter of teachers. I am an IT leader, project manager of the Child Respective School project and help and support children in solving communication problems. I monitor plans like the school curriculum and internal evaluation.

When you say Vesturbæjarskóli - what images come to your mind?

What differentiates your school from other schools in Reykjavik?

When I think about my school the first thing that comes to my mind is the wellbeing of children and staff. People who come to our school talk about how the school culture and atmosphere is good and kind. We strive to create an environment where the children feel good at school and make progress in their studies. Each child's experience is unique and by giving each child attention and space, we help them find where their strengths lie. That is what I think can differ from other schools.

From your bio, I know that you have 20 years' of teaching experience.

What it takes to be a good teacher?

A good teacher has to show interest to all children, get to know them and listen to their needs, so they feel noticed. You need to have patience and see the good in all children. I think it is important for teachers to be open minded and let children have influence on their learning based on their interest.

Your school has an absolutely cosy atmosphere and the unique class on the roof? How do you arrange the school interiors? Do students take part in it?

It is important to us that the school is clean and beautiful, decorated with art from the children. The children learn to respect each other's art and creations. It is important to be able to change rooms with little effort based on the children's needs for learning. We provide opportunities for the children to have influence on the school environment and culture in many ways.

On the project conference, you showed a presentation about your school. The title of the presentation is Makerspaces in school. Could you explain the choice of such heading?

We have been taking part in a development project about Makerspaces to change teaching methods with emphasis to empower children and seek various ways to arouse students' interest in projects in the spirit of makerspaces.

What methods of teaching are most effective to you?

I think it is important to listen to children's interest and be prepared to support them in their learning in that way. Let children be creative and curious so their studies are meaningful to them. Give students the opportunity to explore, to think, work together, be critical thinkers and be creative. Mistakes are to be learned of.

Unlike in Poland, you call each other by names at schools? How do you ensure that young people respect the older?

The grown ups in school are the role models for young people. In team teaching the children see how the teachers respect each other and see good communication. Our school motto is wellbeing, respect and success. The teachers show respect the children and the children learn to behave in the same way. We emphasize care, warmth and interest in the well-being of students and thus contribute to a positive school atmosphere.

Do you like to be a teacher? What is the most pleasant and most difficult thing about it? How do you improve your qualifications?

I love being a teacher. What I love most is to get to know all these children and listen to their ideas, and be able to help and support them to carry out their ideas. I am always trying to improve my qualifications through reading and browsing, testing new things with the children and having a talk about new methods of teaching with my colleagues. We have a strong learning community at my school and are always talking about new ways of teaching for the best interest of children.

Do you visit schools abroad? Are there any good practices that you would like to implement in your school?

We regularly visit other schools, both in Iceland and abroad, to seek ideas and learn from others. I would like to change the school timetable because I think it is too fixed for project based learning that I really want to learn more about and practice. I am also very interested about Thinking classroom methods in mathematics.