

EAO Sustainability Workshop Summary
Katy Basch
Kennesaw State University

Participating in the EAO Workshop in Otzenhausen, Germany was the highlight of my 2017-2018 professional year. On May 10, a group of fellow KSU faculty and I embarked on a week-long intensive experience to learn about sustainability practices in Europe. I will be honest that I did not fully understand what was in store for me on this trip. A departmental colleague of mine encouraged me to apply because she had participated the previous year and found it enriching. I was looking forward to a new experience as well as meeting colleagues from other disciplines. It turned out to be so much more than I anticipated.

The first day was exhausting. After a long overnight flight we jumped right in to the itinerary upon arrival. The staff at the EAO were so welcoming and I immediately felt at home in their beautiful facilities. The first lecture was an overview of the experiences to come. Each day would be dedicated to a different system and its relationship to sustainability. While the delivery style for these talks were very traditional, I found most of them to be very interesting. I especially appreciated the feedback and questions my co-participants had for the topical experts. Initially, I had a hard time imagining how these topics would fit into my personal discipline. However, the engagement with my peers provided some outside of the box thinking and soon I was exploring the possibilities from an educational perspective.

Many of the themes we explored were supplemented with a hands on field trip. For example, when our topic was Energy and Climate, we toured an Energy Landscape Field. This allowed us to explore different options for people to access sustainable energy for their homes. I found the walking tour of the wind turbines and the solar panels to be fascinating. I have never seen wind turbines up close and they are huge! When the topic of the day was Food and

Agriculture, we went to an Community Supported Organic Farm in the afternoon. This was an eye opening experience. I think the impact these types of resources are making in the community is powerful and beneficial. I found myself wondering why we aren't taking these measures in the U.S. It just makes so much sense. Although we did not have a field trip to compliment the Water theme, I found that segment the most interesting and engaging. I have always loved the ocean, so hearing Dr. Frauke Bagusche talk about her projects in ocean research and recovery very powerful. One thing I took away from all of the talks is now is the time to take action if we want to change the direction we are headed. For me, this means educating young children about the status of our world and providing solutions that they can achieve.

After this trip concluded, I learned I would be teaching a class on Content Literacy this fall. One of the topics of this course is helping children becoming critical readers, which includes reading about topical issues that need awareness and action. The sustainability workshops have definitely provided some applicable content to my new course. I am finding my adult students have limited sustainability awareness, as well. So, I am happy to be incorporating what I have learned in my undergraduate program this semester.

Although, the EAO experience was mostly educational, I thoroughly enjoyed the additional experiences we were provided. Some of the highlights were the walking tour of Cologne, dinner at the Biergarten, the hike to the Celtic Wall, the wine tasting in an old castle, the Nine Pin Championship, and the regional style barbecue. Each experience contributed to my understanding of the German culture and history that I knew so little about. I also enjoyed the friendships I formed with my colleagues. We were entertained by a jazz pianist and opera singer who happen to teach on the same college campus as me. I met many interesting and friendly

people from other departments I would have never have had the opportunity to know if I had not been a part of this trip. I am very grateful for this engaging and enriching experience.