

## **A chapter closing... and a new one beginning!**

“Hey, wouldn’t it be amazing if we had our own English school? A place to come together and learn, where we could put stuff on the wall and not have to take it down at the end of class? We could have a lending library and poetry readings and a community tea kettle? A school where kids and adults could get excited about learning, where English came to life? A space that was all ours?!?”

I’ll never forget this conversation, whizzing down from Gràcia one warm evening on our bicycles, Kate and me. It was the beginning of something, a seed planted, a little dream to open our own creative, hands-on English school. To build something that at that point did not exist in Barcelona, or at least we had never found it. We had already begun our Little Faces program, running it in a couple spaces around Gràcia, loading our shopping cart with materials and books, paints and toilet paper rolls, but that night on our bicycles in early spring of 2005 was our first toe dip into something very exciting, something that would ultimately become our baby, our curious toddler, our rowdy teenager, and then our more settled, middle-aged adult..

## **And now, 16 years, and quite a few changes, later, it’s time for a new chapter in the life of Collage.**

In the months that have passed since March 2020 I have had a lot of time to reflect. It’s been a very challenging 18 months, personally and professionally, but, coming out the other end, in many ways I feel blessed to have been able to live this. After the successful crowdfunding campaign in February of this year, which, thanks to our incredible community, teachers and students, kept us afloat and more convinced than ever that a place like Collage is not only very special but necessary, an important part of the learning fabric of Gràcia, Barcelona and beyond.

Personally it also was a revelatory moment for me in which I realized that my chapter at Collage had come to an end, had been coming to an end, and that it was time to pass on the reins.

**Success can be measured in many ways.** But for me this quote perfectly sums it up:

“I have a definition of success. For me, it’s very simple. It’s not about wealth and fame and power. It’s about how many shining eyes I have around me.” (Benjamin Zander).

I feel like the luckiest person in the world to have been surrounded by so many generous souls, so many children so willing to learn, to engage, to be creative and feel safe enough to learn as whole learners and humans. Students who have returned many years later to intern with us or who simply still stop on the streets of Gràcia to say hi and catch up (in English of course!) So many teachers who have given their all to Collage, who truly believe in the importance of child-centered, creative education and community. **So many shining eyes.**

And that two of these incredible educators who have already been with Collage for years and who embody in mind, body, spirit and experience the sort of holistic learning we value at Collage want to take over Collage and have it grow and flourish into its next chapter? Well, if that is not total success I don’t know what is!

So, **after 16 years I am stepping away from Collage**, handing over the keys to two women who I know in my heart of hearts will continue to offer the quality creative programs of Collage, and who will continue with the spirit that is so fundamental to Collage's success and longevity.

Of course the *adéu* is bittersweet, of course there is sadness in saying good-bye to a place that is so dear to me. However today my heart is not heavy. In fact, I am SO excited to see where Collage will grow to next!! The combined experience of **Ellie and Ela**, their ideas and energy, are all an assurance that Collage will not only continue but will improve and grow and write its next chapters...

I look forward to stopping by Collage, feeling that warmth and joy I felt every single day walking through those doors; I look forward to seeing Collage and sending Pau to summer camp there. I look forward to seeing all of you around the *barri*.

In the meantime you can find me out in the Penedès countryside with Pau and Joan, writing and translating amongst our chickens and olive trees, learning how to take it slow and also figuring out my next chapter...

**I wish everyone a fabulous new school year and Collage every success!**

Much love,  
Emilie.

"Tell me and I will forget.  
Show me and I may remember.  
Involve me and I will learn."  
- Chinese Proverb