



GOOD PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: LOOKING AT EARLY EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES IN SIX EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



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With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union
(Project Number: 517999-LLP-1-2011-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP)



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

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ISBN 978-960-8183-88-9

© : **Christodoulidi Publishers:**

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Deep appreciation is expressed to all the educational districts, municipality directors and the 122 early childhood teachers and caregivers that participated in the project and made its completion possible. The educational district and the municipalities are the following:

Municipality of Kalamaria (Greece)

Educational District of Primary Education of East Thessaloniki (Greece)

Agrupamento Escolas do Valadares (Portugal)

Agrupamento Escolas do Pinheiro (Portugal)

City of Jyvaskyla (Finland)

City of Kaajani (Finland)

Guldborgsund Municipality (Denmark)

Municipality of Bucharest-Sector I (Romania)

Municipality of Bucharest-Sector II (Romania)

Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus

Special recognition is also given to all the early childhood teachers and caregivers that so graciously allowed our trained educators to observe their classes and record their good practices.

Necessary permissions have been obtained when required (e.g. for publication of photographs that include images of people).

The coordinator of Early Change project

Professor Evridiki Zachopoulou

Acronyms

Early-C	Early Change project
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised
GPIF	Good Practices Inventory Form
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ERS	Environment Rating Scales

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INTRODUCTION

1. Good Practices in Early Childhood Education

The 21st century has been described by many researchers as an era of educational change. The constantly evolving smart technologies, the Internet and the ICTs claim a substantial part of teachers' and children's daily time, interest and practices. It is true that the change that has occurred in education practice and tools over the last fifteen years has been truly remarkable. Theoretical frameworks like constructivism, sociocultural theory, attachment theory and others, have enhanced the way we approach children's learning and development. The traditional face-to-face and teacher-centered approaches have been substituted by discovery learning, individualized learning, creative thinking, hands-on experiences and child-centered practices.

The recent reforms in several early childhood curriculums of the international educational community have highlighted the demand to develop learning environments that will meet children's needs in the most effective way (Gettinger, 2003). But what constitutes a high-quality early childhood education environment? What are the basic requirements for an early childhood education environment in order to be described as qualitative?

Despite the technological advances and the shift of educational interest towards children's needs, abilities and motivation, the fact remains that there are some classic and global criteria that must be met for an early childhood environment to be characterized as qualitative. Harms, Clifford and Cryer (2005) mention that in order to provide quality of life care and education, we must provide for the three basic needs all children have: (a) Protection of their health and safety, (b) Building positive relationships and classroom climate, and (c) Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience.

Based on these criteria the Early Change project developed an instrument named 'Good Practices Inventory Form' (see Appendix) in order to collect good practices from the six participating European countries' early childhood education environments. The instrument focused on collecting good practices for five specific categories of the daily practices in early childhood education environments:

- (a) Health & Safety,
- (b) Activities/Play,
- (c) Interactions,
- (d) Classroom Management, and
- (e) Diversity/Inclusion.

The Early Change project defines the term "Good Practice" as the wide range of individual activities, policies, and programmatic approaches achieving positive changes in student attitudes or academic behaviors (MAEOPP, 2014). Also, it is important that the descriptions

of the good practices contain detailed information to be implemented such as: (a) detailed description of the phases of the activity; (b) critical elements for implementation; (c) essential resources and materials; and (d) well-described roles and tasks of the participants.

The 122 early childhood teachers and caregivers that participated in the Early Change project were trained in using the ECERS-R and the Good Practices Inventory Form. During the Training Phase II of the project where the data collection for the main study occurred, they collected a total of 146 Good practices from Greece (32), Portugal (26), Finland (12), Denmark (14), Romania (37) and Cyprus (35). The majority of these good practices (113) are being presented in this publication representing the early childhood educators' ideas from six countries about what constitutes a good practice and a qualitative early childhood education environment.

It is imperative to mention that none of the presented good practices have been changed or tampered in any way by the academic staff of the Early Change project. The selected good practices are examples that the participating teachers of the project observed or had implemented themselves in their classrooms and decided to choose them as such. All the good practices that are being presented in this report reflect solely the perspectives of the early childhood educators from the six participating countries.

The Early Change project considered that this was a unique opportunity to present the views and the interpretation of in-service educators on what a good practice is from so different sociocultural backgrounds and different early childhood education systems. The Good Practices Inventory Form was not an initiative to present high quality environment, programs and activities approved by academic researchers, something that was done anyway in the past numerous times, but its purpose was to show the in-service practitioners' daily practices and the way they cope with the various issues they face daily in the class.

Furthermore, the collection of such a wide range of good practices from so many different educators working in six European countries was an opportunity to record the strengths and weaknesses of the different early childhood education framework of each country, to highlight the educators' common beliefs, values and attitudes and initiate the discussion about the cultural differences and similarities that the European early childhood education systems share.

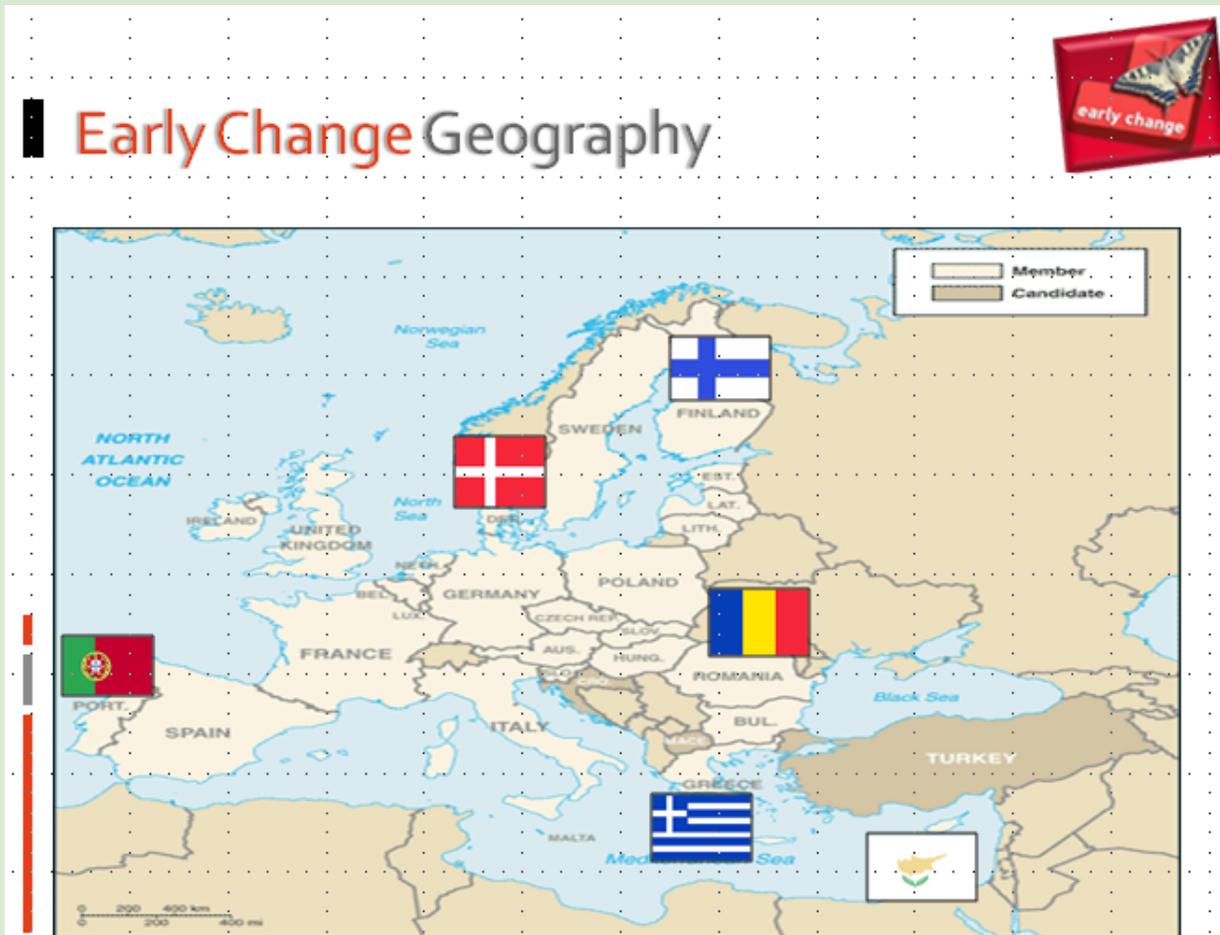
2. Brief Description of the Early Change Project

The Early Change project is a European project funded with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. The project Reference Number is 517999-LLP-2011-GR-COMENIUS-CMP and its total duration was 30 months. The project started on the 1st of December 2011 and finished on the 31st of May 2014.

The consortium of the Early Change project included academic

staff, early childhood teachers and caregivers from six European countries. These countries were Greece (coordinator), Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Cyprus and Romania. Overall 19 partner organizations participated in the project, 9 universities and 10 municipalities and educational districts (see graph 1).

A basic presupposition for the improvement of the quality of early childhood education across Europe is the enhancement of the early educators' professional development. Towards this direction, the current project contributed to the early educators' professional development from 6 European countries (Greece, Finland, Denmark, Portugal, Romania, Cyprus). Specifically, this project trained a number of approximately 120 early childhood educators in using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-R (ECERS-R). ECERS-R evaluates the quality of early childhood education (day care and kindergarten classes). ECERS-R (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005) was selected, because it is a widely accepted and tested scale and has already been implemented in many developed countries (USA, UK, Germany, Sweden, Japan etc.).



Graph 1: The Geography of the Early-Change project

The Early Change project attempted (i) to enhance the professional development of early educators, (ii) to implement ICT's in the training of early educators from 6 E.U countries, and (iii) to evaluate the early childhood education environments of these countries. More specifically, early educators from highly developed (Denmark, Finland) and developed (Greece, Portugal, Cyprus and Romania) educational systems acquired skills that enhanced their professional identity (trained assessors), their e-literacy and their self-assessment skills.

This project applied a mixed method model of teachers' further training that combined both elements of theoretical training and practical experience. The main objective of the project, which was the professional development of early educators, was achieved through the implementation of training phases I & II. Academic key staff members, who are experts on the implementation of the ECERS-R scale, introduced early educators to the holistic approach of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale. Theoretical background presentations, case studies, video observation, observation instruments, and site visits were some of the techniques applied in the training phase I. Phase II of the early educators training involved visits and observations in kindergarten and day-care environments. After their training in the use of ECERS-R, the participating early educators of each country visited a number of classrooms in order to practice in the implementation of the ECERS-R scale and collect evaluation data and good practices regarding the quality of preschool environments.

Part I

3. Early Childhood Education Quality Among Six European Countries

An important method for examining and understanding the diversity and complexity of early childhood education in Europe is cross-national and cross-cultural studies among European countries. Despite the contextual differences, there are certain similarities in the early childhood programs and environments (Sheridan, Giota, Han, Kwon, 2009). One apparent commonality refers to the existence of widely accepted values that are crucial to children's learning and wellbeing (UN, 1989). Comparative studies on a cross-national level highlight the importance of policy inputs, such as expenditure on children, policies for children's wellbeing, inclusion and high quality learning environments.

Valid comparable data are better provided with a common measure. Thus, in the current project it has been decided that all participating countries would use the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revision (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005) for the evaluation of the ECE quality. ECERS-R is a widely used instrument with sound psychometric properties. It was developed in the USA in the early 1980s and since then it been used in more than 20 countries worldwide, gaining an extensive international reputation.

The purpose of this chapter¹ is to present the results of the ECE quality evaluation of the six participating countries (Greece, Finland, Denmark, Portugal, Cyprus, Romania) in the project "Early Change." This study examines (from a qualitative perspective) the scores of ECERS-R by presenting tendencies and not actual quantitative scores. Such results can spark a discussion about the differences and similarities in the provision of European ECE quality, and can promote cross-national efforts towards a more unified European Open Education.

The participants of the current study were 546 early childhood classrooms from six European countries (Greece = 126, Cyprus = 52, Finland = 98, Denmark = 70, Romania = 128, & Portugal = 72). These classrooms were evaluated during the school year 2012-2013 and randomly selected by the municipalities and educational districts that were partners in the project "Early Change." The total number of the evaluated classrooms was higher, yet for statistical reasons some of them were not incorporated in the final analysis.

Instruments

The Early Childhood Education Rating Scale-Revision (ECERS-R) was used as the evaluation instrument of the current study. ECERS-R

Method Participants

¹ This chapter is based on the following publication which was made for dissemination purposes of the project:

Grammatikopoulos, V., Gregoriadis, A., Liukkonen, J., Zachopoulou, E., Gamelas, A., Leal, T., Pessahna, M., Barros, S. (2014). Evaluation of early childhood education quality across Europe. Conference Proceedings of the International EIF / LINQ Conference "Changing the Trajectory: Quality for Opening up Education", pp. 82-90. May 2014, Crete, Greece.

(Harms et al., 2005) is an observation instrument widely used since the early 80s. It comprises 43 items and over 470 indicators and it is considered a valid and reliable measure to capturing the quality provided in ECE settings. The ECERS-R consists of 43 items, organized under seven subscales that include 470 indicators. In the current project, the seventh subscale (Parents & Staff) has not been used after the suggestion by the authors of the scale. For a detailed presentation of the six subscales and the 37 items of the ECERS-R see Table 1.

Table 1. Subscales and items of the ECERS-R

Subscales	Items
<i>Space & furnishings</i>	1. Indoor space 2. Furniture for routine care, play and learning 3. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort 4. Room arrangement for play 5. Space for privacy 6. Child-related display 7. Space for gross motor ability 8. Gross motor equipment
<i>Personal care routine</i>	9. Greeting/departing 10. Meals/snacks 11. Nap/rest 12. Toileting/diapering 13. Health practices 14. Safety practices
<i>Language-Reasoning</i>	15. Books and pictures 16. Encouraging children to communicate 17. Using language to develop reasoning skills 18. Informal use of language
<i>Activities</i>	19. Fine motor 20. Art 21. Music/movement 22. Blocks 23. Sand/water 24. Dramatic play 25. Nature/science 26. Math /number 27. Use of TV, video, and/or computers 28. Promoting acceptance of diversity
<i>Interaction</i>	29. Supervision of gross motor activities 30. General supervision of children (other than gross motor) 31. Discipline 32. Staff-child interactions 33. Interactions among children
<i>Program structure</i>	34. Schedule 35. Free play 36. Group time 37. Provisions for children with disabilities

The trained observers evaluated the ECE classrooms between October 2012 and June 2013. They made day visits in the ECE centres and evaluated each classroom per day by observing the daily activities for at least three hours. Immediately after the completion of the observation in each ECE centre, they filled in the score sheet of the ECERS-R and concluded the evaluation. The assessors in each country followed the same procedure in every classroom.

Procedure

The results of the evaluation of the ECE classrooms from the six participating countries are presented in Table 2. A more “qualitative” procedure was adopted to present the evaluation results, as it was decided not to present mean scores due to limitations in training procedure.

Results

In all six European countries the subscale valued higher was the “Interaction” subscale. In five countries the subscale valued lower was the “Activities” subscale (in Romania was in the fourth place). The subscale “Language & Reasoning” was valued as the second best in two countries (Greece & Portugal), as the third and fifth best in one country (Denmark & Romania respectively), and as the fourth best in two countries (Cyprus & Finland). The subscale “Personal Care Routines” was valued as the third best in three countries (Greece, Finland, Romania), as the second best in Cyprus, as the fourth best in Denmark, and as the fifth in Portugal. The subscale “Program Structure” was valued as the fourth best in Greece and Portugal, in the fifth place in Cyprus and Denmark, in the last place in Romania, and surprisingly at the second best place in Finland. Finally, “Space & Furnishings” was rated in the second place in Denmark and Romania, in the third place in Cyprus and Portugal, and in the fifth place in Greece and Finland.

Table 2. Ranking of the ECERS-R subscales from highest to lowest score in each country

High to low	Greece	Cyprus	Finland	Denmark	Romania	Portugal
1	Interaction	Interaction	Interaction	Interaction	Interaction	Interaction
2	Language & Reasoning	Personal care routines	Program structure	Space & furnishings	Space & furnishings	Language & Reasoning
3	Personal care routines	Space & furnishings	Personal care routines	Language & Reasoning	Personal care routines	Space & furnishings
4	Program structure	Language & Reasoning	Language & Reasoning	Personal care routines	Activities	Program structure
5	Space & furnishings	Program structure	Space & furnishings	Program structure	Language & Reasoning	Personal care routines
6	Activities	Activities	Activities	Activities	Program structure	Activities

Discussion

Some would argue that early educators might be biased because they had to evaluate their colleagues' classrooms. Thus, instead of presenting quantitative scores and comparing means, we decided to proceed to a comparison of the ranking of the different subscales in the scores of each country. This was a way to overcome the "bias" issue. It was assumed that if an educator/assessor was biased, then he/she would be equally biased towards all the subscales and items. Thus, the internal ranking of the subscales in each country could be considered valid. Based on the results, the most interesting finding is that in all six countries the subscale "Interaction" was valued as the best, and that in five countries (except Romania) the "worst" subscale was "Activities."

The quality of classroom interactions with an emphasis on the teachers' interactions with children has been shown to be a critical mechanism by which children develop (Pianta, Belsky, Houts, Morrison, & the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network, 2007). Domains of classroom interactions (e.g. instructionally supportive interactions, organizational interactions, emotionally supportive interactions) have been positively related to children's academic gains (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Ponzitz, 2009). A possible explanation on the highest ranking of "Interaction" in the six participating countries could be that interpersonal relationships, the socio-emotional support and development of children have traditionally been a basic element of the European culture. For example, the Nordic countries paradigm is focused much more on the socio-emotional development of children, their autonomy, their self-regulation and the development of their social skills in comparison with the Northern American early childhood education. An additional reason could also be attributed to the teachers' higher level of education (bachelor degree), as many studies revealed the merit of having a bachelor degree for ECE educators (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007; Burchinal, Roberts, Riggins, Zeisel, Neebe, & Bryant, 2000; Croninger, Rice, Rathbun, & Nishio, 2007; Early, Bryan, Pianta, Clifford, Burchinal, Ritchie, Howes, & Barbarin, 2006).

Another interesting finding was that in five out of six countries the "activities" subscale received the lowest scores comparing with the other subscales. A possible interpretation of this result could be based on the lack of specific "activities" in some countries. For example, in Greece, Portugal, and Cyprus there isn't any provision for indoor or outdoor "sand/water" activities. An overall finding was also that "nature/science" and "promoting acceptance of diversity" activities were underdeveloped. Thus, the total scores for the subscale "activities" were the lowest in five out of six countries. However, these results were based on educators' observations only and in order to draw firm conclusions further research will be needed. Generally, it can be argued that the diverse and low scores for the "activities" subscale reveal some differences between the US and European approach to ECE.

In this chapter the academic staff of the six participating countries (Greece, Portugal, Finland, Cyprus Denmark, Romania,) describe their experiences and thoughts from their participation in the project.

Greece is a country that requires a four-year bachelor degree from the early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers. Despite this initial important investment in early childhood educators' training, after graduation the notion of in-service early educators' professional development and assessment is very limited if not absent. Also, till today there are no official evaluation procedures established in the Greek early childhood education system regarding the evaluation of early childhood environments or the evaluation of kindergarten teachers and caregivers.

This gap along with the placement of early childhood education in the epicenter of attention in most European educational systems and policies were the spark for the preparation and implementation of a project like Early Change.

The Greek participants in the Early-Change project were university staff (professors and assistant professors) from three different institutes and early childhood teachers and caregivers from public kindergarten schools and child care centers. The coordinating institute was the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki and the other two participating universities were the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Crete. The 20 kindergarten teachers and caregivers that participated in the project were from the Educational district of Eastern Thessaloniki and from the Municipality of Kalamaria.

As coordinators the Greek academic staff organized all the phases of the project according to the initial work plan. In the beginning of the project the kick-off meeting was held in Thessaloniki where all the partners met and the timeline for the implementation of the project was set. The academic staff prepared all the training materials in preparation of the Training phase I. Prior to the beginning of the Training Phase I, the second meeting of the project occurred in Porto where all the partners prepared for the organization of the training seminars. The Greek and the Portuguese academic staff traveled in all partners' countries (Denmark, Finland, Romania and Cyprus) and implemented the training seminars. In these seminars the participating early childhood teachers' of each country were trained in using the ECERS-R. Apart from the training in the ECERS-R scale, the Training phase I included training in the Good Practices Inventory Form as well, an instrument that was developed by the Greek academic staff for the collection of good practices in early childhood centers in the six participating countries.

In Greece, the Training phase I followed the general guidelines of

4. Reports from the Participating Countries

4.1 The Greek experience

the Early-C project and included both theoretical training and field observation in early childhood centers. The educators' maternal language was used in the training seminar in Greece, while in the other countries the seminars were held in English. Twenty Greek early childhood teachers (12 kindergarten teachers from the educational district of eastern Thessaloniki and 8 caregivers from the Municipality of Kalamaria) participated in the training seminars. All the participants had a four-year university bachelor degree and were female.

The Training Phase II commenced in the Spring of 2013 and ended in June of the same year. The Early-C project received a formal authorization from the Ministry of Education, the directors of the educational districts and the teachers themselves. In their first observation, every early childhood teacher was supervised by a trained observer (an academic staff) and after the observation a debriefing procedure followed discussing all the scored indicators. The 20 early childhood teachers and caregivers visited and evaluated in total 126 classrooms in public kindergarten classes and childcare centers.

Additionally, the early childhood teachers that participated in the Early-C project implemented the Good Practice Inventory Form to record examples of good practices that they had observed or taught themselves. A total of 32 good practices was selected. The selection was based on the categories and the criteria dictated by the Good Practice Inventory Form and its manual. The collected good practices reflect, up to a point, the philosophy and the guidelines of the Greek national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2002) for early childhood education that is implemented in the kindergarten classes.

The Greek national curriculum called "Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework (CTCF)" was designed to provide a cross-thematic approach to knowledge, promote the implementation of children's projects, initiatives and discovery learning and empower child centered approaches and practices. Children are taught through hands on experiences; through play various subjects are approached in cross-thematic way and not as discrete domains. The CTCF promotes learning through play in domains like literacy, mathematics, science, arts and crafts and ICTs. The educators are free to design and implement organized activities that are based on children's interests and individual needs (Doliopoulou, 2006).

The good practices that are presented in the current e-book have not been tampered but depicted exactly as the teachers had recorded and selected them. In this way they reflect the teachers' perspectives on what constitutes a good practice in the educational praxis and not the academic's view, which on several occasions could be different.

The Greek academic staff also organized the last meeting between the academic partners and the international workshop for the dissemination of the results of the Early-C project. The international workshop was held in Thessaloniki in January 2014 where international guests

from early childhood institutes and universities along with the academic staff of the project talked about the educational policies and the future of early childhood education in Europe. Moreover, academic staff from the Early-C project presented the results from the evaluations of the early childhood environments in the six countries and also discussed the cultural differences among the participating countries.

The three Greek partner members that participated in the project improved their expertise in a multi-faceted way. The gained administrative experience was important because coordinating and training a large number of early childhood educators from six European countries and cooperating with the academic colleagues from so many countries was not an easy task. The smooth closure of the project and the completion of all the designed tasks gave the academic partners valuable information and data to proceed to further analyses and future cooperation. The expertise gained from getting in contact with early childhood teachers from six European countries, training them, interacting with them, exchanging experiences and also taking the opportunity to observe and evaluate early childhood centers in all the countries can only be described as an extremely valuable experience. The acquired knowledge helped the academic staff to improve its awareness and expertise on teachers' training and professional development and to further expand their horizons.

The Greek early childhood teachers and caregivers who participated in the project were provided with the opportunity and the stimuli to improve their self-evaluation skills, empower their professional qualification and acquire important knowledge in order to improve their daily practices. In addition, the exchange of experiences and ideas with their colleagues from the other European countries provided valuable insight into various structural and process characteristics of a qualitative early childhood environment.

In Portugal, several research groups have been studying early childhood environments, regarding their structural and process characteristics, as well as their influence on child outcomes (e.g., Abreu-Lima, Leal, Cadima, & Gamelas, 2013; Barros & Aguiar, 2010; Pessanha, Aguiar, & Bairrão, 2007; Pinto, Pessanha, & Aguiar, 2013). In many of these studies, overall quality has been measured with the broadly known Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (e.g., Barros & Leal, 2011; Gamelas, 2003; Leal, Gamelas, Abreu-Lima, Cadima, & Peixoto, 2009). Results have shown relatively low or minimal quality in child care for infants and toddlers (e.g., Barros & Aguiar, 2010; Barros & Peixoto, 2012) and minimal conditions for preschoolers (Abreu-Lima et al., 2013; Leal et al., 2009). These studies point out the need to promote preschool teachers' education and training. Thus, in Portugal, projects focusing

Final comments

4.2 The Portuguese experience

on professional development in early childhood education are imperative. The Project “Promoting the Professional Development of Early Childhood Educators” (Early-Change Project) intended to combine the widely accepted need for the early childhood educators’ lifelong training and professional development with the implementation of Information & Communication Technologies.

The Portuguese participants in the Early-Change Project were university members (researchers and professors from the Polytechnic Institute of Porto, School of Education, and the Porto University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences) and early childhood educators from two cooperating public school institutions (Agrupamento de Escolas do Pinheiro and Agrupamento de Escolas de Valadares).

The Portuguese team participated in all the phases of the project, according to the initial plan. At the beginning of the project, the four academic members translated the materials needed for the Portuguese participation. They participated in the organization of the training seminars (Training Phase I), and actively participated in teachers’ training in Finland, Denmark, Romania, and Portugal. For this training phase, a video previously filmed in a Portuguese preschool was used (subtitles were included for the Early-Change project). In Portugal, the training followed the general guidelines of the Early-C project, the Portuguese video was completely analyzed and all the indicators were scored and discussed. Furthermore, trained observers supported this discussion. The educators’ maternal language was used. Another topic of the Training Phase I sessions was the presentation and discussion of the manual and the inventory form of Good practices. One example of a Good Practice was organized and provided to the educators by the team in Portuguese. Twenty-one Portuguese early childhood educators (14 from Agrupamento de Escolas do Pinheiro and 7 from Agrupamento de Escolas de Valadares) participated in the training seminars. All preschool teachers were female and had a bachelor degree in preschool education.

The Training Phase II began in February 2013, after having received the formal authorization from the Ministry of Education, the school directors and from the teachers to be observed. Each of the 21 educators’ first observation was supervised by a trained observer (member of the academic team or researcher collaborator). This observation was followed by a debriefing session in order to discuss all the scored indicators. During the Training Phase II (i.e., data collection period), a collaborator monitored some additional observations to identify possible difficulties and misunderstandings, and clarify scoring procedures. A total of 71 classrooms, all from public centers, were observed.

The abovementioned process allowed the team to identify the following difficulties during the Training Phase II (observation with the ECERS-R): due to professional constraints, educators had a very short period to observe and interview the teacher of the classroom; lack of

time to score indicators that were observable and lack of training to conduct a good interview that might have influenced the scoring of the indicators; in some cases, scores seemed to be influenced by previous information about the classroom and/or the knowledge about the leading teacher (sometimes observers and observed educators happened to be colleagues); and some educators reported discomfort with the evaluation role (i.e., they were assessing peers). In this process, inter-rater reliability was not controlled for. Therefore, data obtained with the ECERS-R, should be carefully used by the educators. Specifically, these data should not be compared to those collected by trained external observers. However, as all the indicators of the ECERS-R were scored, a rich description of a wide range of practices was obtained.

During this process the teachers collected Good Practices according to the Early-C Good Practice Collection Inventory. A total of 27 practices was selected. This selection illustrates the Good Practices Categories proposed by the Early C Project. Furthermore, and perhaps more important for Portuguese teachers in general, these descriptions are examples of the way Portuguese Curriculum Guidelines (Ministério da Educação, 1997) are implemented in our preschool classrooms.

Portuguese Curriculum Guidelines are based on the greater questions that today's society poses for preschool education: citizenship and democratic participation, interculturality, ecology, nonsexist approaches to education, access to technologies, motivation to use the instruments of reading and writing, aesthetic and cultural participation. These Curriculum Guidelines are organized in content areas: Personal and social development, Expression and communication (which includes mastering different forms of expression, language, an initial approach to writing and reading, and mathematics), and Knowledge of the world. They imply an organization of the educational environment (group, classroom space and time); organization of the educational setting, relations with parents and other partners. These guidelines also support an educational continuity and an educational intentionality that result from a process of reflecting on observation, planning, action and assessment (Vasconcelos, 1997, p. 10).

In some descriptions, the connection between the Good practice and the content areas was clearly expressed by the educators; in other cases, that connection could be easily inferred by the reader. Some of the activities were embedded in Portuguese specific traditions. Additionally, preschool commitment to inclusion, and to family and community participation in the educational process, was present in several reports.

The four academic members engaged in this project have improved their expertise on the assessment of early childhood environments through several tasks. We highlight the organization and participation

Final comments

in training seminars and the observation of early childhood classrooms in Portugal and in the other countries for training purposes. The interaction with international and national researchers, teachers, university professors and stakeholders has improved the knowledge and skills of academic staff in teachers' training and professional development. Considering that these team members work in the context of training psychologists, early childhood educators and teachers, social educators and other educators in general, these skills and knowledge of education and educational systems and policies (cross nationally and across different cultures) are, and will be particularly useful.

The twenty-one Portuguese early childhood educators who participated in the project had the opportunity to improve their professional qualification and gain essential knowledge in order to enhance their practices and be able to assess early childhood environments as well. This knowledge and these skills are crucial for their schools. The participation in the project has strengthened the links between educators from the same school district, which can be relevant to improve their practices in the present and in the future.

4.3 The Finnish experience

Introduction

In Finland, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) has never been used for a whole in the research of quality of early childhood environments before the Early change project. Hence the professor from the Department of Sport Sciences and researchers from the Department of Education in the University of Jyväskylä were very interested to in participating to the project. The Rector of the University of Jyväskylä signed the agreement of Comenius cooperation on January 1st 2012. Also the agreement of research co-operation with the city of Jyväskylä was signed on January 5th 2012 and the one with the city of Kajaani on January 5th 2012. As a result, 20 selected experienced kindergarten teachers from 13 day care centers in Jyväskylä and 10 teachers from 10 kindergartens in Kajaani joined the Finnish team.

Meetings

The university members of team and kindergarten teachers met several times with the early educators of Jyväskylä and Kajaani to prepare the training seminar and organize the implementation of the instruments too.

Learning experiences during the project

Considering the goal of the project, teaching kindergarten teachers new skills to evaluate their work and education was successful. Getting to know ECERS-R as a material and learn to use it with other colleagues was inspirational. Good practices were shared fluently through conversations and it seemed that Finnish kindergarten teachers were creative and innovative and used plenty of methods in their work. Their professional qualifications increased during this project and they are

now able to assess any kind of childhood environment using the ECERS-R assessment tool.

The early educators (N=23) who participated in the project in Jyväskylä towards the end of the project assessed the ECERS-R quality evaluation measure using an evaluation form. Additionally, students who participated in the project wrote an essay in which they evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the ECERS-R quality measure as well as its applicability to Finland.

Based on the evaluation forms and essays it can be concluded that ECERS-R quality evaluation measure provides good information about the learning environments in the early education.

Early educators also considered the quality evaluation measure very useful in developing the early education. ECERS-R quality measure examined extensively the learning environments of the early education and helped small details, which may have received less attention during regular work days, to be observed. Especially the interaction component was perceived interesting and functional entity of the measure. Early educators also found the results of the measure useful. The results helped them to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the kindergarten as well as the things that need to be improved in order to enhance the quality. The participants of the project considered the ability to compare the results internationally a great opportunity.

Early educators found the evaluation made with the ECERS-R quality measure very beneficial to their own learning. The evaluation with the quality measure helped to consider new perspectives and to expand the concept of quality. The discussions related to the evaluation and the feedback discussions after the evaluations were also perceived as important to one's own learning. Using the measure and evaluating the quality also led the participants to reflect on their own actions and the way the early educators with their own actions could enhance the quality of the kindergarten.

Early educators perceived the number of measured factors as appropriate. The scope and accuracy of the ECERS-R quality measure received positive feedback but it also received some criticism. The extensive measure gave a versatile image of the learning environment, and the extensive evaluation scale and specific word descriptions helped to complete the evaluation. On the other hand, familiarizing oneself with the measure was perceived that it took a long time and performing a thorough evaluation was found laborious and too heavy within the instructed time limits. Additionally, counting the minutes, the percentages and accurate quantities was perceived as hard and unnecessary; early educators pondered: is quantity quality?

The early educators believed the ECERS-R quality measure suits well to the Finnish early education culture. However, some participants brought up that the measure had some items that did not suit

Evaluation of the project

the Finnish early education culture. For example, a Finnish kindergarten does not usually have a single room where the action takes place but the place consists of several small areas. Therefore, as the children spread out, some of them do not have an adult to look after them. This, however, is not considered a security risk in Finland but rather an indication of trust. Also, the emphasis on hygiene was considered frustrating, as the hygiene level in Finnish kindergartens is usually good. Third thing criticized was the scale for enhancing tolerance as early educators perceived it to be too strict. Early educators also wished that the measure would have better considered Finnish culture and living environment, such as the changing seasons. On the other hand, the early educators recognized that adjusting the measure too much toward the Finnish early education and culture would eliminate the possibility of international comparison of the results.

The early educators were very satisfied with the training they received during the project. The given familiarization and instructions helped to complete the evaluation.

The early educators, who participated in the project, were also asked what in their opinion was missing from the quality measure. Early educators found that the measure emphasized too much the external factors defining quality and wished that the measure had included more evaluation of the interaction between the children and adults as well as among the children. Also, the children's and the parents' perspectives in evaluating quality was requested. Furthermore, early educators longed for more value of exercise on the quality measure because in the Finnish early education the importance of exercise in children's development is acknowledged. Additionally, the value of play was perceived as low in the quality measure. Finally, according to the early educators, the quality measure also lacked the evaluation of different work methods (the daily use of PCS images, documenting, cooperation with parents, and group size) and the staff (leadership and teamwork) as components of quality.

4.4 The Cypriot experience

Research as well as praxis in terms of assessment in the field of early childhood education in Cyprus is limited and early childhood teachers often improvise in their classrooms making it hard for them to have the necessary supportive documents, be reliable and in the meantime promote quality in the field. In addition, officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture do not have the necessary tools, experiences or knowledge to assess quality (e.g. environment rating) in the field.

Cyprus participated in the Early Change project with a group of fourteen early years' teachers, from which three were members of the University faculty, six were graduate students from the University of Cyprus and two ministry officials. All the participants were qualified University graduates in Early Childhood Education. The Cypriot team par-

ticipated in all the phases of the project as it was planned. Before the meetings began the academic staff of the University of Cyprus in collaboration with the Greek team of the Early Change project, the principal investigator of the project, had translated the ECERS scale in Greek.

The first meeting that took place in Cyprus was organized by the academic staff of the University of Cyprus in order to inform all the early childhood participants about the project, its purpose and the specific goals that were to be attained. During this meeting the necessary material for the ECERS official training was handed out and a brief explanation was provided in order to have the teachers study the materials and prepare for the training. There was constant electronic communication between the academic staff of the University of Cyprus and the teacher participants before the training sessions and specific queries on the material and training were answered.

Then, a three-day training seminar by two of the members of the Greek team who were certified assessors of the ECERS scale was organized and all the members of the Cypriot team were invited to participate. The purpose of the three-day training was to prepare and train the teacher participants in utilizing the scale as practitioners and consider its outcomes as researchers (training phase I). The seminar presentation included information on the philosophy behind the ECERS scale and its implementation in different countries. Then, in more detail the trainers provided the teachers with information on the different items of the scale explaining the terms and the scoring system. Moreover, the teachers were involved in scoring specific examples (through video watching and site visits) and had the opportunity to discuss their thinking and how the experience was translated in their own classrooms. After the training phase I, the teachers were expected to implement the scale in different classrooms. In total during the training phase II, fifty-two early years classrooms, including public, community and private ones, were assessed using the ECERS-R.

Throughout this procedure (the training phases I & II) the teacher participants reported interesting comments in reference to their overall experience. Particularly, they mentioned that during the implementation of the scale they were able to identify through the scoring of the different elements the environmental limitations of each classroom and the aspects of quality that were absent from the Cypriot context. Additionally, it was reported that the evaluation of a variety of classrooms, in reference to the different sectors; public, community and private, allowed them to make comparison between those sectors. On the other hand, during the implementation of the ECERS-R there were some difficulties, in relation to its content and implementation. Specifically, some elements of the scale were difficult to be translated into the Cypriot context and the team had to agree on what the direct reference of the specific item would be. For example, the item of “Isolation Space”, which is a space in the classroom that enables children to

be alone, is not something that exists in itself within the Cypriot early years classrooms. Moreover, the participants commented on the limited information provided for some items and the time needed to implement the scale suggesting that there can be problems in implementing it within the Cypriot context.

Part of the Early Change project was each country to collect good practices employed by the early years educators of the classrooms under evaluation. The Cypriot team provided a selection of twenty-five good practices. This can insinuate the teaching culture the specific team of teachers endorses.

The overall project provided opportunities for all (in-service teachers, graduate students and university faculty staff) to gain valuable knowledge and specific skills in assessing early childhood classrooms and also created space to reflect on quality, what is important for children, and the best way of using assessment for the most interest of children.

4.5 The Danish experience

Early-Change project in Denmark

The University College Zealand (UCSJ) decided to go for the program Early Change in cooperation with the UCSJ Nykøbing Falster, the daycare, kindergartens, preschool etc. in Guldborgsund Municipality. Lise Sanders Olsen and Claus Henriksen participated from the UCSJ. From Guldborgsund, the main participant was Bill Lehmann.

The Danish team participated in the first meeting in Thessaloniki in January 2012 to get a strong hold of the program. There we met representatives from the other countries and got the same knowledge about the program. We were to arrange a training seminar in Denmark in October 2012, so we were busy translating the material and preparing the seminar during spring 2012.

Guldborgsund Municipality selected a number of Social Educators

with a professional bachelor degree in social education. They were all employed in kindergartens, daycare or preschool centers in Guldborgsund. During spring the UCSJ had a seminar in Danish in cooperation with Guldborgsund Municipality for the Social Educators to inform them about the program and what was expected of them.

In September 2012,



Picture 1: from the seminar in Denmark.

Claus participated in the second seminar of the Program in Porto, Portugal. The program was presented in Danish at the seminar, on the Campus Nykøbing in spring 2012 and the first discussions on how the program ECERS-R would fit in in Danish pedagogy found place. Everybody was excited. Especially they were very excited to learn about pedagogy in other countries and perhaps have communications and discussions.

In October we held the seminar in Denmark (see photo 1).

We invited a local newspaper because it was a kind of an event to have professors from Greece and Portugal in Nykøbing Falster who presented an evaluation tool that harvested international acknowledgement. We had an interview and a picture in the local newspaper.

From October 2012 to January 2013 we were finishing the material and doing preparations in Guldborgsund. The Social Educators tried ECERS-R out in their own institutions and could comment on the material on our internal Internet and ask questions regarding the material too. In January 2013 we held a kick-off seminar with the Social Educators. There we learned about issues in the kindergartens from the Social Educators who had tried to use ECERS-R

From January to June the pedagogues involved were expected to carry out the research in daycare, kindergartens and preschool centers. At the kick-off seminar all problems were discussed and we were ready to start the research. The pedagogical institutions were also informed by Bill Lehmann from Guldborgsund and a plan was made.

Lise and Claus were ready to do the translation of the good practice stories and support the Social Educators if there were any questions. Unfortunately the Danish state and the teachers in our schools had a long lasting conflict, and as a consequence many institutions for children were closed from the end of March till the beginning of May.

At the end of June we had a meeting in the UCSJ, where we evaluated what we had managed to do. In August, September and beginning of October we did the final work.

Lise participated in the final meeting and conference in Thessaloniki in January 2014. We hoped to do the final work for the publication of ECERS-R in Danish so that we could use it in Danish institutions. Lise prepared a paper for the international conference in Thessaloniki

The UCSJ has a better knowledge of Guldborgsund and the work the Social Educators carry out. We know more about what the Social Educators consider good and not so good practice. Guldborgsund has had a new kind of evaluation of the quality standard of its pedagogical work and on top of that an international comparison with countries like Portugal, Romania, Greece, Cyprus and Finland.

Guldborgsund has incorporated parts of ECERS-R in their regular supervision

We have learned a lot about how busy Social Educators are in Guldborgsund

**What
have we
achieved?**



Picture 2: *Danish Kindergarten Centre*

borgsund and how difficult it can be to carry through a project like this when other things have a great influence such as other projects, conflicts and challenges in the daily work.

We have got an international network with which we plan to cooperate in the future. We have learned a lot about pedagogy and Social Education from the participating countries as well as the challenges they have faced during the time of the

project. That has been of particular value. Thank you!

We have learned that Danish Kindergartens are different from American kindergartens according to ECERS-R, in several ways. First of all we don't have classrooms in kindergartens in Denmark. The children in kindergartens are expected to use more than one room and the Social Educators work together to observe the children and make sure they are all right and don't get hurt. We use the outdoor playground a lot.

We don't wash hands so much and we don't control the children all the time. It seems to us that this part (to be clean) is more important in ECERS –R than in Denmark.

The Danish Social Educators are not teachers and the children are very often in the Kindergarten from early morning till late afternoon.

On the other hand, there are a lot of issues that seem to be very much similar to ours. That goes for caretaking, the relations between Social Educators and children, the support of children's joy



Picture 3: *Two of the participating social educators in Denmark*

and play etc. and of course our desire for children to learn a lot.

The participating Social Educators told us that they have learned a lot by having an opportunity to observe how other Social Educators worked. They have learned a lot about themselves by doing the evaluation and the way their colleagues work.

They have noticed a lot of good ways to do pedagogical work. These are good practices. They told us about one pedagogue who was all alone with twenty children and did a fantastic job helping the children with their clothes, talking to them and so on. The children were happy and engaged and there was no yelling or shouting. They were impressed.

They also told us that they were shocked or surprised at the big difference of how they work in the different institutions in Guldborgsund. They accepted like everybody in Denmark that there are differences and we value the differences, but they questioned if everything was ok. It seems to them that not every way of pedagogical work could be ok? That is a very good question. The answer might not be important but the discussion is very important in our view.

The current social and informational context calls for a different approach to the educational process. One usually insists on the changes taking place in the learning mechanisms, the patterns of structuring the educational action, and the identification of the optimal combination of didactic strategies.

Out of this entire context, the child/the subject of teaching is given little attention. The pedagogical discourse has to target an approach, which is closer to the individual needs and ambitions, and one's capabilities towards one domain of development or another.

Thus, the education of children in early stages must focus on a number of directions such as: the activation of the internal motivation for learning; the creation of contexts for the discovery/manifestation of abilities/talents; offering the children opportunities to be actively involved in the learning process; physical, mental, emotional, organizational and social safety and health; the dilution of social and economical discrepancies.

At the level of early education, some of the most spectacular transformations can take place, transformations in which the effects on the personality of the child can be found. In order to have congruence with the goals, the learning process, the didactic efficiency, the support for the development/learning process and the kindergarten/school environment, the following characteristics need to be met:

- to mirror a coherent didactical program (all the partners involved should promote the same values).

Feedback from the pedagogues

4.6 The Romanian experience

- to hold a good organization and usage of material resources and space.
- to insist on an effective style of relating and a positive attitude towards learning in the educational institutions.

At the level of official documentation, a sizeable part of these directions can be found in the “Curriculum for the Early Education of Children from the Age of 3 to 6/7”. In accordance with the relevant studies in the respective domain and with other educational systems, the goals of the early education in Romania are:

- “The full, harmonious and free development of the child’s personality, based on its own rhythm and needs, bolstering its autonomous and creative formation.
- The development of the capacity to interact with other children, adults and the environment.
- The discovery of a child’s own identity, autonomy and the development of a positive self-image by each and every child.
- The support offered to the child regarding the accumulation of knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes which are necessary when he/she goes to school.” (Curriculum, 2008, p. 9).

All four directions of the early education curriculum can be placed within the integrated dimension of the child’s personality development as a response to the challenges of the contemporary world to which the child is exposed from the first years of his/her life. At an international level, two complex educational dimensions are attributed to this particular age: the child’s socialization and the ability to interact with peers and surroundings, as well as his/her preparation for school.

Along with curricular modifications, one can notice an extended perspective of all the educational influences to which the child is exposed. Thus, one can find typical elements in the document: extension; equilibrium; relevance; differentiation (p. 11).

The respective document has got a structure based on two age levels: the one regarding 3 to 5-year-old children which shows that the categories of activity held with children need mostly to emphasize the socialization of the child (collaboration, cooperation, negotiation) and the gaining of a personal autonomy, while the other level, referring to children 5 to 7-year-old children focuses on the formation of abilities and skills necessary for school learning.

In the context of an education whose focal point is the child, heterogeneity and gradual elimination of establishing groups of children based on the chronological criterion are encouraged.

An element of novelty and flexibility regarding the process of early education during kindergarten classes refers to its structuring in accordance with “experiential domains”.

These represent “*real integrated cognitive fields*” which transcend the border between disciplines and which, placed within the context created by the current curriculum, bind with the traditional domains

of child development”.

<i>1. The aesthetic and creative domain</i>	<i>1. The psychomotive domain</i>
<i>2. The human and society domain</i>	<i>2. The language domain</i>
<i>3. The language and communication domain</i>	<i>3. The social and emotional domain</i>
<i>4. The science domain</i>	<i>4. The cognitive domain</i>
<i>5. The psychomotive domain</i>	
<i>Experiential domains</i>	<i>Child development domains</i>

The educational plan as well as the experiential domains presented above, grant an interdisciplinary and integrated covering of the learning content; the teacher possesses the pedagogical context created with flexibility regarding the outline and organization of the daily educational activity of the group of children.

The kindergarten and school need to be preoccupied with:

- ensuring the conditions for a normal physical development and the protection of the child’s health in cooperation with the family and with means of involving the doctor/psychologist in these actions.
- outlining the activities schedule in accordance with the individual development, the development of the maintain concentration and not to abandon the effort.
- social adaptation – one of the most important acquisitions and abilities typical for the individual, which need to be completed by enabling the child’s integration into the social group.
- the formation of self-awareness – even from the first years of life, the child must develop a correct and positive image of his/her own personality in relation to others.
- the identification of the real balance between the educational finalities and individuality, an action carried out through: the perfect combination of an excellent education at home and a “wonderful” kindergarten, self-confidence, the intimate understanding of the language – word and the formulation of the ability to take an intellectual risk to solve a new problem/situation.

All these can ensure the premises for a successful start in school and the overall success in school throughout the period of formal education.

The documents that govern the organization and function of early education in Romania are:

- Education Law No. 1/2011
- MECTS (Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport) Ordinance No. 3850/17.05.2010 “The standards regarding the teaching-learning material in early education” and “The normative ones

for minimal facilities of early educational services for 3 to 6/7-year-old children”

- MECTS Ordinance No. 3851/17.05.2010 “The Basic Reference Frame in the Early Education and Development of the Child from Birth until the age of 7”
- MECTS Ordinance No. 5233/01.09.2008 “The Curriculum for the early education of children between birth and the age of 6/7”.

At the level of early education, numerous national and international projects have been held, whose purposes were the teachers’ instruction in pre-school education, the identification of the ways of implementing the new directions of individual and social evolution, and ensure the quality of educational actions. One of these projects was *Comenius-Early Change: Promoting the Professional Development of Early Childhood Educators* in which Romania was a partner through the participation of the University of Bucharest, which joined universities from Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Denmark and Finland. The purpose of the project was the evaluation of the development environment during early childhood and the identification of good practices in the child’s early education among the partner countries. The instrument used was the ECERS-R Evaluation Scale.

Following the completion of the activities, one could notice a few particular aspects of the implementation of the project in Romania. Out of all these, we need only to mention the fact that every person taking part in the project as an expert has observed or evaluated the educational space of at least 8 groups of the selected classrooms/centers. Thus, a number of 33 charts could be selected regarding the examples of good practices which referred to activities, methods being used, the educational space used for the completion of goals and the work with children having special educational needs.

Out of all these, the most relevant are:

- *Item 30 from the grid – the general supervision of children*

Activity in the experiential domain Human and Society, Practical Activity, Spring Scenery. One has noticed that the material given to the children is sufficient and in accordance with the type and the purpose of the activity; the laying-out of the available space for easy usage on behalf of the children; the exposition of the works done at the level of the children; and the staff that offers help, guidance and support in the fulfillment of the educational task.

- *Item 26 from the grid – Mathematics/Numbers*

Activities in the experiential domains, Mathematical Activity, the Consolidation of numbering within the limits of 1 – 7 (the expansion of the number)

One has noticed a good child-educator relationship regarding communication, explanation and motivation; the work space is properly laid out to avoid physical constrictions; the educator puts forward

questions that encourage children to answer in order to find various solutions to solve the required tasks. The children's predisposition to identify new answers and personalize their answers is encouraged and appreciated.

- *Item 22 from the grid – blocks/cubes*

Constructions: The Eskimos' igloo. The most relevant observations refer to the variety of accessories made available to the children; these are some didactic materials made by the educator or purchased ones which are laid out, so that all the children can visualize and analyze them; they can easily reach the materials in order to accomplish the given task.

- *Item 9 from the grid – greeting/departing*

The morning greeting. Characters from stories. The most important aspect identified and observed was the educator's and children's attitude. This attitude is open, they are eager to play and take part in the activities of the respective day. The educator received them with great pleasure, he/she has a warm and pleasant tone of voice, the children share the experiences of the previous day as well as the intentions for the respective day.

What one notices through the implementation of this project can surprise in a positive way, in relation to how well early education in Romania functions and is organized.

The project brings forth elements of assessment, evaluation and improvability of the quality of the Romanian educational endeavor regarding the domain of preschool learning by placing the child in another position in relation to the adult and the personal needs of appreciation and relation to others. Another constructive dimension of early education is the one that refers to the successful integration of the children with special educational needs.

Although the action has taken place in various areas in Bucharest, regarding children from various socio-economical background, children from disadvantaged social groups (Kindergarten no. 47 – 25 children in social protection) and not pertaining to this, an analysis of the educational standards can be carried out in relation to the groups and children to whom the project refers.

The evaluators and the coordinators of the project have treated with great seriousness the issue under observation and the way the evaluation of the educational endeavor should be performed, both at the individual and group level.

The national Curriculum allows the integrated teaching and the existence of points of interest to be carried out through the compartmentalization of the space with respect to the same coordinates as the ECERS-R Evaluation Grid.

The teaching staff, most of which is qualified through university education, supports the development of every individual and follows an equal assessment/measurement way of the quality of the education,

the standards that establish this fact.

The Romanian educational system concerning the preschool segment benefits from a modern curriculum, focusing on the child and the individual needs. However, there are some *particular aspects* of this process within the abovementioned international context. These particular aspects are, mainly, the by-product of medical and sanitary legislation at a national level which imposes some constrictions on the performance of activities concerning the groups of children. The following are taken into consideration:

- the stuffed toys that are not recommended to large numbers for groups in order some forms of allergic reactions or diseases caused by these toys to be prevented.
- the sandbox can be used only in the center for sand and water; it isn't generally recommended to be placed in the playground, unless it is properly covered.
- the buildings of kindergartens are old and have classes with double or triple functionality (playing/activities, meals, sleep); the construction of spaces fitted from the beginning with the conveniences for kindergartens is still a challenge to the Romanian preschool education.

The aspects that can be improved at the level of the activities in the kindergarten refer especially to the interior and exterior dimensions and the endowments of the learning institution as well as to the partner's personal disposition and effort involved in early education (teachers, parents, evaluators). Thus we exemplify with the following aspects:

- the class space: the games of the children are hampered. Difficulty in arranging all the works of children.
- the kindergarten yard: sometimes the space was too small and it didn't allow a good observation of the child's movement.
- the parents: some reluctant to change. They are embarrassed to accept the idea of a child with CES.
- the staff: sometimes reluctant to change, bringing only sketchy information.
- the evaluator: lack of time because of other work duties. High costs for the multiplying of various material.
- the evaluation procedure: it presupposes a lot of attention and objectivity. Activities that span way over the schedule for rigorous filling in.

However, the staffs' protection, hygiene and positive attitude in kindergartens allow an optimal fulfillment of early education in Romania.

Part II

One of the basic objectives of the Early Change project was the collection of good practices from the early childhood classrooms of six European countries (Greece, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Cyprus, Romania). Early Change project collected good practices regarding five specific categories of the daily practices in early childhood education environments: (a) Health & Safety, (b) Activities/Play, (c) Interactions, (d) Classroom Management, and (e) Diversity/Inclusion.

The good practices were collected by the participating early childhood teachers in the Early Change project. A total number of 122 teachers from the six countries-partners were trained in using the instruments Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) and the Good Practice Inventory Form (GPIF). From October of 2012 to January of 2013 separate training seminars were conducted in each country. The good practices were collected from the regions of the educational districts and municipalities that were associated partners of the project.

The Good Practices Inventory Form is semi-structured diary/inventory form for recording good practices from early childhood classrooms (see Appendix). It collects a wide range of information for each recorded good practice such as: (a) the number of children engaged in the good practice, (b) the duration of the good practice, (c) the category of the good practice, (d) the purpose of the good practice, (e) the teaching methods, (f) the materials and resources used, (g) the content and structure of the activity, and (h) the teacher and the children's role in it.

After their training during the training phase I (September 2012-January 2013), the 122 early childhood teachers of the project collected the good practices during the training phase II of the project, that lasted from January 2013 to June 2013. A total of 146 good practices were collected and 113 of them are included in this e-book. At this point it is important to mention that all the presented good practices have not been changed or tampered in any way from the academic staff of the Early Change project. The selected good practices are examples that the participating teachers of the project observed in early childhood education environments and represent the early childhood educators' ideas from six countries about what constitutes a good practice and a qualitative early childhood education environment.

The most important, among equals, criterion for a qualitative early childhood education environment is the health and safety of children. Children's health and safety, encompasses children's physical health and comfort, healthy eating and physical activity and children's safety

5. CATEGORIES OF GOOD PRACTICES

5.1 Method

Participants

Instrument

Procedure

5.2 Health & Safety

and protection from harm. Healthy and safe environments protect children from harm and promote children's psychological well-being by allowing them to exercise their independence through making decisions and taking on new challenges.

Learning about how to live in a healthy way, and being able to take increasing responsibility for making good health choices and caring for themselves, enables children to experience well-being in their present lives, and lays the foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the future. A key part of learning about and adopting healthy lifestyles involves children in seeing these be modeled positively and enthusiastically by the important adults in their lives, including their families, communities and early childhood educators. Learning about healthy lifestyles often occurs most effectively when educators identify and use the learning opportunities in everyday experiences such as meal times, hygiene procedures, active play times and toileting routines. (NQSPLP, 2012).

Early childhood education teachers and caregivers promote physical and mental health and appropriate nutrition and provide an emotionally and physically safe environment for young children in partnership with their families. Sound health, safety, and nutritional practices provide the foundation for development and learning. Good nutrition is critical in young children's overall development. Meals and snacks encourage good nutrition and eating habits. A safe environment prevents and reduces injuries to young children who are only beginning to recognize dangerous situations.

Of course children's health and safety is not only about their physical well-being, but it also includes their whole welfare. This means that early childhood educators think about more than practical health and safety issues in their daily practices. They also recognize that children will have different emotional support needs and therefore they deal with each child differently, respecting his/her individual life contexts.

The difficulty that many educators face is how to balance children's health and safety by giving them genuine opportunities to explore, experiment, predict and take managed risks. This balance can be achieved when the physical environment is arranged so that it is a predictable, 'known quantity' for children; where they can make decisions and do things for themselves, and experience success in doing so. It is important that educators demonstrate trust and respect for children's abilities to make sensible decisions and keep challenges within their current capacities. Educators can then acknowledge children's achievements and support them to move forward when they experience difficulties or do not immediately succeed in their undertaking.

In sum, promoting children's health and safety and ensuring their total well-being—including their physical and psychological welfare—requires that educators think critically about the routines, environment and relationships in their setting. In particular, educators need to get to know each child and their life circumstances so that they use

these understandings in their work. Educators use this knowledge to provide each child with a sense of place and importance within their setting, and they support children to build upon their current knowledge, skills and abilities as they gain increasing independence in caring for their own and others' welfare. These are the kind of good practices that Early Change educators' attempted to collect for this report.

Good Practice 1

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

Morning to 10.00 a.m

Number of children

involved:

In the 1st phase the whole class, in the 2nd phase two children.

Purpose - Goals:

Encourage the acceptance of the importance of the healthy eating habits.

Promote the development of healthy eating habits, including the consumption of bread.

Promote the understanding of the relationship between nutrition and health.

Involve children in preparing their own meals (snacks in the morning). Foster the ability to conceive and develop projects as a team, promote autonomy, taking responsibilities and the ability to accomplish the tasks.



Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Every day, and in each of the preschool classrooms, two children are alternately chosen to prepare snacks in the morning, guided by an adult.

The ingredients to put in the bread are chosen in advance (voted) in the classrooms, by the groups of children, according to the knowledge already built on healthy eating habits.

When preparing the snacks, the adult supervises and guides the entire process, giving instructions and explanations, encouraging children's autonomy and serving as a model (modeling).



Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Bread, knives, ingredients for baking bread, milk offered by the school (individual packages), napkins.

Tables are previously sanitized.

Content of the Activity:

In large group, in the classrooms, children and teachers check the presences and choose the ingredients to be put in the bread. The "responsible" children of the day go with the teacher to the cafeteria to prepare the morning snack.



After all children wash hands (with teachers' supervision), the adult cuts the bread and the children put the ingredient chosen by the group

in advance, in accordance to the knowledge they already have about healthy food (e.g., cheese, butter, marmalade, jam, honey, etc.). (Occasionally the children are engaged in activities to cook/bake healthy cakes or biscuits and/or yogurts are also served).

Finally, children place the napkins on the table, in every individual place, put the bread on top of the napkin and the milk / yogurt on the side.

At the end of snack, each child tidies up the place by separating the waste (garbage).

The project was initiated (at the beginning of the school year) with the active participation of a father who owns a bakery and came to show children how to make bread. All children had the opportunity to see him work in the several tasks, to knead and to eat their own bread.

Teacher's role:

In large group, the teacher elicits daily reflection on the accountability of each child in this activity encouraging children to choose the "responsible" of the day (from the task board). Encourages the group to count the children present in that day and shows the list of ingredients available for them to choose. Raises questions about the food they chose, in relation to the knowledge they already had about them. Teacher raises questions whenever children's choices are repetitive (same ingredients in different days) and remembers the procedures, whenever necessary. Teacher maintains a warm attitude and is actively engaged. The auxiliary teacher guides and encourages the participation of children in the confection of the morning snack, with a calm, but also challenging, attitude.

Children's role:

Children have a very active role in all the process. They make suggestions and share their ideas, make choices, ask / answer questions. They are actively engaged.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This project promotes the development of the skills abovementioned, and approaches, in a comprehensive way, the content areas included in the national curriculum guidelines for preschool education, mainly under the domains personal and social education; language and communication; math; and the understanding of the world.

Children's parents were involved in the planning of this activity at the beginning of the school year, and they pay for the expenses involved (the acquisition of the bread and all the other ingredients; the milk is supplied by the Ministry of Education).

The assessment was periodically done with parents (regular meetings); parents showed they value this preschool "good practice". Family involvement is crucial to successfully promote healthy eating habits.

Good Practice 2

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

1 hour per day

Number of children involved:

Whole class and small groups.

Purpose - Goals:

Promote, through the morning snack, healthy eating habits.

This goal was included in a broader project: Eating well to grow well (“Comer bem, para bem crescer”), under the theme Healthy Eating.

Through this activity the teacher intended to promote child’s learning about healthy food and about the importance of healthy eating habits, and to decrease the systematic consumption of high-fat and high-sugar food. Teacher created opportunities for children to participate in the preparation of snacks. This activity also promoted child autonomy and allowed children to take the responsibility and try to accomplish tasks

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The following strategies were used:

- Preparation of daily snacks in the morning (a small group of children, assisted by an adult);
- Creating the weekly menu, with children’s suggestions;
- Cook / bake food such as bread, fruit, juices, jam, etc. (whole group);
- Learn, from parents, what kind of food children seem to dislike (questionnaires);
- Parents’ evaluation of the project (questionnaires);
- Building and discussing the food wheel.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

- Kitchen tools and cookbooks.
- Different ingredients: different types of bread, butter, cheese, yogurt, honey, marmalade, jam, ham, juice, and fruits.
- Milk offered by the school (individual packages).
- Space in the kitchen / school cafeteria.

Content of the Activity:

After discussing the project with the parents, the activity began in the “World Food Day”.

The group participated in a baking bread activity, which was oriented by a father (who is a baker).

Afterwards, they made other healthy food, such as jam and jelly. They also made butter, whipping the cream inside small bottles with a stone inside (named “rodo”), which when stirred caused the whey to separate from the fat (Activity developed in the Science Area).

A child was elected the “Responsible for the Cafeteria”, and helped preparing the snacks, distributing the milk packages, and setting the tables for lunch.

Children discussed the rules that should be followed when deciding the menus, and also the rules that the “Responsible” should follow. For instance, the afternoon snack should always have fruit.

In the beginning, the chosen ingredients/food were those that the children already knew, but then new food was gradually introduced, such as yogurt, honey, cereals, various types of bread, cheese, new fruit, etc.

Sometimes, children's relatives came to the preschool to show how to cook different things, such as noodles, rice pudding, "rabanadas" (a kind of French sweet toasts).

A Food Wheel was built in the classroom, to register what they ate daily. Children used to check if all food groups were present in their meals.

Children's weight was measured frequently in the scope of a project developed by the municipality about the prevalence of overweight people. Children were also engaged in gardening activities: they helped sowing / planting, accompanied the growth of plant / fruit trees, treated and collected the products for soups, salads, etc. *Home* composting was used, and its product was used to fertilize the garden.

This preschool center promoted a workshop for parents about healthy eating.

Teacher's role:

The teacher oriented the activity, provided moments of discovery, reflection and evaluation of children's progress, encouraging them to have healthy eating habits, to try new foods, and to participate in cooking/preparing food.

Contacted families, trying to integrate their knowledge either in cooking/preparing healthy foods, either in taking care of the preschool garden; invited families to promote these healthy habits at home. The teacher informed parents about the children's progress.

The teacher was able to develop activities in other curricular areas, developing new knowledge and skills.

Children's role:

Children actively participated in the various activities, enjoyed helping to prepare the snacks and other meals, and demonstrated responsibility when performing the tasks. Children were able to meet the hygiene standards.

In this activity, there were moments of participation in large group (several discussions about food, food tasting, daily assessments...), small group (construction of the food wheel, learning about food chains), individual work (preparing the snack and other related tasks) and work with the family (for example, the workshop).

Children were very interested in acquiring new knowledge related to this subject, and were actively engaged in all tasks, including the assessment of their performance. Above all, children raised the interest on trying new foods.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity was organized to promote the knowledge and development of skills in the area of social and personal education. However, it was expanded to other curricular areas such as the knowledge of the world, math and language skills (expressive language). It provided the opportunity to learn about plants, the importance of water either in nature or to human life, to get to know new food and their derivatives, to learn about some animals' life cycles and about the food chains.

Children were also engaged in gardening activities and home composting.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote literacy but keeping as a central goal the purpose of promotion of healthy eating habits and dental hygiene.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

The following practices were used: verbal guidance/instructions, searching and sharing materials. A play was read aloud. Searching and collecting images to depict the play. Images used to solve a problem. Puppets were made with the children to put the play together.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Theatre play: 'Mr. Dentist' (unknown author)

Cardboard, colour pencils, glue, adhesive paper, sticks, grilling sticks

Drawings searched, chosen and downloaded from the internet by the children. These were later used to illustrate the play and build the puppets.

Content of the Activity:

The theater play was read aloud to the whole group by the teacher. After reading, the teacher asked some questions about the events. The images, which had been previously collected, were used as clues to help identify the problem depicted in the play (what food is healthy/less healthy?).

The children made drawings of the problem and of its resolution individually.

Puppets were made to perform the play.

Teacher's role:

The teacher participated in this activity along with the children and provided support whenever necessary.

Children's role:

In this activity, children participated as part of the whole group (listening to the play) and in smaller groups/individually (internet search and drawings).

The children participated actively.

The material was available during the rest of the school year and it could be used by individuals or by small groups.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity enabled its expansion across/to other areas: personal and social development, knowledge of the world and arts.

Good Practice 3**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

Three afternoons
(All day program)

Number of children involved:

The whole group
(22 children)



Good Practice 4

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

The purpose of this activity was to promote habits of oral hygiene. Therefore a dental hygienist was invited to explain to the children (in a playful way) the necessity of healthful habits/routines of dental hygiene, some features/characteristics of dentition and how to brush the teeth adequately.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The strategies that were used were based on modeling (the adult was the model) and verbal instructions/guidance.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

It was used a video of tooth brushing, Dental plate and a Tooth-brush.

Content of the Activity:

After a first approach to the story 'The mouth and the teeth', the invited health professional gave verbal orientations/clues/instructions to explain the need for good dental hygiene.

Using an artificial dental plate an explanation about the different types of teeth and their functions/uses was carried out in a playful way.

Afterwards, a toothbrush was presented to the children and it was explained to them how they should brush their teeth by giving them specific orientations about the amount of necessary toothpaste, for how long they should brush, etc..

Hereby, children were motivated to brush their teeth and they were encouraged to do so every day – a routine which from that moment on started to be carried out in preschool.

Teacher's role:

The role of the teacher was to approach this theme using stories and speaking with the children afterwards. After these activities the teacher contacted a health professional to demonstrate the adequate way of brushing the teeth.

Finally, the teacher monitored tooth brushing on a daily basis, providing guidance and motivating the children to perform this task.

Children's role:

The children participated in large numbers in the activity implemented by the health professional by interacting and answering various questions.

Afterwards each child brushed the teeth individually.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This good practice was noted/written down to be an example of the Early C. project. This good practice was part of a health promotion project.

Purpose - Goals:

To make sure that children leave the school with safety. To practice the routine of departing. To make sure that children and parents leave the school feeling happy and satisfied.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Practicing a daily routine.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

-

Content of the Activity:

Going home time:

The children are sitting on their chairs, around the circle.

The school assistant unlocks the door leading to the exit 5 minutes before the school bell rings for home time. She stays there, at the exit, making sure that no child leaves the schools without an adult escorting.

The teachers open the classroom's door and welcome the parents. They might also refer to specific incidences or information that they need to share with the parents at this point. Parents are also invited from time to time (usually Fridays) to the school and the children present something that they've learnt e.g. a new song, a poem, a dance.

We never allow to a person that we don't know to pick up a child without calling the parents and making sure that they are aware of the situation.

Teacher's role:

The teacher is the one that needs to get the children ready for home time - it's very important for each child to leave the school feeling happy and with a smile on its face. She is responsible to recognize all children's parents and make sure that each child leaves with an adult – she is also responsible to call parents if a person that she doesn't know came to pick up a child.

She also participates in the presentations that the children do when their parents visit e.g. a song.

Children's role:

The children know that their parents will come to pick them up and that they have to be ready. They also like it when the school invites their parents and they prepare something to present to them. These presentations make them feel proud for themselves and they all want to participate.

The children are also aware that nobody is allowed to leave the school without an adult escorting.

Good Practice 5**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Departure time, approximately 15 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 6

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good

practice:

Approximately

10 minutes

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

- Crisis prevention activity-Keeping safe and happy during routine transition time by having a creative and fun activity
- Participation of all children
- The children will
- have own experiences
- Build self esteem
- Develop listening skills-
- explore dance

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Discussion with children using observation and communication skills. Using the extracting method by making them searching in their selves and experiences, for their answers

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

- Table with list of days and children's nametags(Calendar)
- CD player/computer(internet)
- CDs children bring from home
- Chairs in circle(getting ready for circle time)

Content of the Activity:

Transition time between activities and especially the ones before having snack, after snack or coming inside from outdoor play, where every child has to wash hands, used to be very noisy and some time hazardous. That is because in the class there were 25 children and no helper present at transitional time. This was the situation in my class so the teacher and the children decided to have a discussion about what was happening at this particular period.

At circle time, children stated the facts and expressed their feelings about the noise and some of the 'negative behaviors' that were demonstrated. When the teacher popped the question 'what should we do about it' and 'How can this be accomplished', children came up with ideas as: 'Listen to music', 'read books', 'talk to each other'...All ideas were discussed and the children along with teacher continued with their discussion on a different lesson where in the end each child voted on the idea he/she preferred. Listening to music was voted for. The teacher then questioned how they were going to choose on the music they would like to listen. It took one more group time to decide how they were going to choose and who would provide the music and also what activity was going to take place at that time. Listening, singing, dancing were the options and they decided that they would do all three. Children would bring the music.

On a five-day calendar, five children placed their names by each day. Each day a child was responsible to bring his/her music from home and choose a song or a piece of music for the activity. Any kind of mu-

sic would be acceptable. Monday was the day that the teacher would choose the music.

Every Friday new nametags were placed on the 5-day calendar.(All children participated in a month's period). If a child forgot to bring a CD, or did not have a CD for the song he/she would choose, the teacher would help with providing the music.

Every day the child would prepare for the transition time as soon the previous activity ended.

Children will be at the circle area as the activity goes on.

Children would listen to music, sing or dance.

Teacher's role:

The teacher organized the group time activities (lessons)

The teacher accepted all different opinions, led the discussion using extracting ideas and insight from the children.

The teacher organized activities during playtime so children practiced their computer and CD player skills so they could use the devices when needed.

The teacher provided the CD player and computer (devices needed) for the activity.

The teacher would provide the music if a child forgot to bring it.

The teacher would watch over children and secure their safety

Children's role:

- Children felt confident about bringing their own thing to the class. Children were happy and proud about bringing their own music and 'showing' it to friends.
- Children were eager to listen what would the new piece of music would be about.
- Children put their own music to play (self confidence)
- Children practiced their skills in music listening
- Children danced in their own creative way
- Children expressed their feelings through music and songs

Good Practice 7

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

Daily routine

Number of children involved:

The whole group of children (16 children)

Purpose - Goals:

To prevent bacteria from spreading

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

A daily routine in children's health practices

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

WC, sink, soap, disposable paper towels, pictures of how you should wash your hands, latex gloves, alcohol gel and inventory disinfection

Content of the Activity:

It is just before lunchtime, some of the children are still cleaning up the class room, and others are gathering at the WC to wash their hands. A social educator/kindergarten teacher is at the WC as well, helping the children and making sure that the washing is done properly. After the children have finished washing their hands, the social educator washes her own hands. When lunch is over, all the children wash their hands again. The Social educator wears latex gloves while helping going to the toilet, and cleans her hands with alcohol gel skin sanitizer between every child. When all the children are finished, she empties the garbage cans, opens a window to let in fresh air and sprays the sink with inventory disinfection.

Teacher's role:

To help keep a good hygiene. Preventing the children and Social Educators from getting ill.

Children's role:

Listen to the pedagogue and follow the instructions.

Purpose - Goals: How to be safe in using the playground (children from crèche). Exercising motor skills and movement in order to ensure the safety of very young children outdoors.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*): “Let’s see how you do it”.

Michael shows the children how to use the playground tower, and what possibilities there are. He smiles and laughs and finds it amusing. That inspires the children so they don’t feel unsafe. He quietly supports and helps the children up and down the tower so all children dares to be part of the activity

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*): Playground tower (outdoor play).

Content of the Activity: Michael’s good humor inspires the children. Michael levels with the children and through encouragement and support, the children feel safe and dare to be in the game. The children lift themselves up on the bottom step of the ladder on the tower and jump laughingly down in the sand. A bit later all children have managed to crawl up 3 steps to a small platform and they are thrilled with the progress and give each other “high five” There is solidarity and happiness in the small group in a way that you want to participate.

Teacher’s role: To initiate, supervise, encourage and support.

Children’s role: To actively play and participate.

Good Practice 8

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good

practice:

Half an hour in the morning (10 am)

Number of children

involved:

A small group of children (6 children) 2-3 years old

Good Practice 9

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good practice:

2 days

Number of children involved:

Three classes
(62 children)
in an experiment.

Purpose - Goals:

To empower children's attitudes concerning healthy diet and eating habits.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Discovery learning, experiment, hands on experience and cooperative learning.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Big jars, labels, markers, milk.

Content of the Activity:

The three classes of the specific early childhood center are visiting a Farming School & Institute that is located in a farm outside the city (Thessaloniki). There the children observe how the milk is collected and the procedure that is followed in order to transform fresh milk into yogurt. The staff explains to the children what they are doing and answer to children's questions. The children are divided in small groups and are imitating the whole procedure of producing yogurt. In the Farming School they experiment with the milk and the transformation into yogurt. They also experiment with the way the ice cream is produced. The next day in their school the children discuss and write what they saw, what they learned and what they tried in their experiments. They taste their creations and discuss about the nutritional value of yogurt and milk.

Teacher's role:

The teacher together with the staff from the Farming School support children's experimentation. They help them form hypotheses and questions and encourage their discovery learning and their cooperative work. They also empower children's critical thinking and reflection.

Children's role:

To cooperate, to be actively engaged in the experiments, to observe the guided tour in the Farming school and reflect on their experiments and experiences.

Additional comments-Highlights:

Children were absolutely thrilled to visit the farm and observe the procedure of turning milk into yogurt, but also to produce and try their own yogurt.

Purpose - Goals:

To train children into circulating in the city and to teach them to endorse safety practices as pedestrians.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Playful learning, experiential learning, active engagement.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

A field trip to the traffic safety park. Use of the equipment of the park and also a digital camera for photographs.

Content of the Activity:

Children are visiting a traffic safety park where they are taught basic safety rules for walking in the city and then they get to experiment with miniature electric cars and small bicycles. Their teachers each time supervise them and take photos with their digital camera in order to show to children their mistakes and discuss them.

Teacher's role:

To supervise and encourage children's practices. To scaffold their learning through open ended questions and support of children's reflection. To use dialogue as a basic tool for realizing the importance of following the safety rules.

Children's role:

To observe the presentations, to practice with the equipment of the traffic safety park, to cooperate in small groups and to reflect on their field trip.

Good Practice 10**Country of origin:**

Greece

Duration of good practice:

1-week project

Number of children involved:

Two classes
(40 children).

Good Practice 11

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good**practice:**

One-week project

Number of children**involved:**

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To adopt healthy lifestyle and healthy dieting habits.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Brainstorming, cooperative learning, experiments, drama play.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Fresh fruit and vegetables.

Content of the Activity:

Children are expecting a visit from a healthy diet specialist and are preparing the visit. Together with their teacher they brainstorm about the things they want to learn and the questions they want to ask. The next day the specialist explains to children why fruits and vegetables are necessary for our health and presents pictures and videos to the children. Afterwards children experiment with their teacher in various recipes with fruit and vegetables. How they can cook them and how to wash them and clean them. Also they create a story with a small child as the hero that wants to improve his eating habits. The story is also being played in drama play. Children work in groups and write the play and then play it. In another activity children schedule their diet and their eating program for a whole week, trying to include various fruit and vegetables. They also write a letter, together with their teacher to inform their parents about their dieting schedule. Reflection and evaluation on how the planned schedule is being kept, occurs on a daily basis from the children.

Teacher's role:

The teacher supervises, encourages and supports children's initiatives, experiments and ideas about the drama play and dieting schedule.

Children's role:

The children learn to observe and classify fruit and vegetables. They practice in washing fruits and vegetables. They recognize the fruits and their names. Children are called to display creativity and imagination, to write and play a drama play. Also they experiment with healthy eating habits a whole week.

Purpose - Goals:

To train children how to protect themselves in case of domestic violence or abuse

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Project method.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Printed materials, books, a puppet doll for the narration of the history.

Content of the Activity:

A series of activities that range from cooperation with experts that visit the school and talk to the children to learning activities that empower children's empathy and ability to talk about their feelings. Also some activities focus on story narrations with the help of a puppet that talks to children about safety practices and what to do when they have a problem. Activities that help children understand the differences between genders and how to differentiate the safe and accepted physical contact from the kind that is not accepted.

Teacher's role:

To support children, to use dramatic play, to create a positive classroom climate, to build positive relationships with children

Children's role:

Active engagement of the children through dialogue and dramatic play.

Good Practice 12**Country of origin:**

Greece

Duration of good practice:

Two months

Number of children involved:

The whole class

5.3 ACTIVITIES/PLAY

The notion of an effective classroom learning environment includes a wide range of dimensions that cover the educational procedure. A high quality early childhood program provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children.

Modern learning theories have proven that child centered approaches, discovery learning and individualized learning are considered the most effective way for learning. Children learn more effectively when they co-decide the selection of the daily activities, when they cooperate in small groups and especially when they play. According to Zandvliet and Fraser (2005), students' satisfaction with their learning and classroom independence and task orientation are related to teachers' behaviors, instructional strategies, learning processes and learning settings. Even children at preschool age are in position to evaluate the content of their daily activities and programs they follow in their class.

What is now undeniably clear in the 21st century is that play is essential, vital, critical, and fundamental to a child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Without adequate, healthy play, children run the risk of entering school unprepared, growing into teens and adults without needed skills, and failing to meet their potential.

The Early Change project was given the valuable opportunity to visit and observe a large number of early childhood classrooms from six European countries (Greece, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Cyprus, Romania). This opportunity provided knowledge and information about how each educational system and curriculum approaches learning and play in the preschool age.

The participating early childhood teachers and caregivers recorded examples of various activities from all six countries that they selected as good practices. These activities were selected from various domains of the curricula or the national guidelines such as science, math, music, movement, language art, multicultural diversity, dramatic play, social studies, motor and cognitive development.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote, in a comprehensive way and within the interaction with families, different domains of the native language.

This goal was operationalized in the scope of a broader school project which addressed the need to encourage family involvement in the child's education, and worked in conjunction with the Project "Leitura de Vaivem" suggested by the National Reading Plan.

A second aim was to learn cultural aspects of native language and to work the language in a playful contextualized manner.

In addition to working concepts and to identify problems, it allowed the development of various areas of language, as well as the knowledge of some letters, and the emergent writing and oral communication.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*): The following strategies were used:

- Use of interests and projects developed in the classroom: for example, professions, father's and mother's day, child's name, the discovery of animal's names.
- Integration of the proposals presented by the children;
- Registration on paper – worksheets (with a space to indicate the possible solution, and for the illustration, by the child, of the solution found in the family);
- Weekly "sending - receiving" materials;
- Sharing materials; display the materials in a panel, in the classroom;
- Large group discussion;
- Written records of the conclusions;
- Creation of a book (collective registration).

These records, presented at an exhibition held at the *Group of Schools* within the activities developed by Early Childhood Education Department, were created by the children at the end of the school year celebration.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

- Paper, cardboard, pencils, scissors, glue;
- Computer/printer;
- Board;
- Some texts and books

Content of the Activity:

After the group had chosen the theme and after the educator's oral presentation of the activity and the worksheet (written record that would be sent to the family), a first approach was made, encouraging the large group discussion, and rising several hypotheses about the identification/resolution of the problem. Then the worksheets were sent home, where they remained several days (3/4 days). It consists in

Good Practice 13

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

Two sessions of thirty minutes

Number of children

involved: Whole class

sending to the child's home some activities, to be accomplished together, such as riddles, rhymes, find words beginning with a certain letter... contextualized in the projects that were being carried on the classroom, in the basis of group's proposals.

The activity began with answering the riddles, then moving on to the exploration of rhymes and, later on, the discovery of words. After receiving the completed records, they were posted on the bulletin board in the classroom.

The solutions presented were analyzed/discussed weekly, in large groups, according to the schedule. That programmed activity implied a deliberate exploration in various areas of language development, encouraging the construction of a linguistic awareness (phonetic, semantic, and syntactic exploration that best suited each record).

In the case of the riddles/rhymes the record the group selected as the best one, and, later on, a collective record has been produced (book).

This record was included in an exhibition held at the *Host* School within the activities developed by Early Childhood Education Department, and was presented by the children at the end of the school year celebration. As far as the discovery of words concerns, children prepared, in small group, lists of words that were found using the internet.

Teacher's role:

The teacher was actively involved, encouraging dialogues and discussion in large group, proposing and looking for documentation.

The teacher has diversified the proposals and has emphasized the work done at home with the family. The teacher has prepared documents, has diversified the strategies and has promoted different ways of recording the results.

The teacher has proposed to the group the dissemination of the work, promoting the development of children's positive self-concept; she has involved the family in children's activities and has provided the opportunity for the development of literacy in families with some difficulties in this area.

Children's role:

In this activity, there were moments of large group participation (analysis of the proposed solutions, choice of subjects, exploration of various linguistic awareness activities, work presentation...); small group activities (record of words/symbols using the computer); individual work (illustration) and work with families (resolution of work proposals).

Children have actively participated, they were responsible to engage their families in the activity, they made records and were interested in promoting their work, they have learned riddles to present them to the community.

Children have demonstrated interest, by playing a lot with the language, by being attentive, and by identifying, during daily activities, natural rhymes in dialogues.

Additional comments-Highlights:

“Good practice” drafted to set as an example, in the scope of the Early-C project, based on the work done in the area of communication and language development.

This activity has enabled the expansion of the work to different content areas (e.g., personal and social education, expressions, and knowledge of the world). This activity has allowed the interaction with the family, the development of literacy processes and has also intended to create opportunities for the success of all children and facilitate their performance in curriculum development in the scope of the 1st cycle of basic education.

Furthermore, in the future this activity can be extended by inviting families to collect oral tradition texts, for its preservation.

Good Practice 14

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One day

Number of children involved:

Whole class, small groups (23 children).

Purpose - Goals:

Promote preschool-family partnership.

Experience practices within the professions' domain (learn to bake Easter Cake - "Folar da Páscoa", traditional sweet bread with eggs).

To develop skills and to promote the acquisition of knowledge on the following content areas: personal and social education, and expressions, especially in different literacy domains ("writing the recipe", "phonology of few words"), motor expression at the level of fine motor skills (handling and modeling dough), and also in mathematics domain (such as "grouping, quantity, weight..."), and knowledge of the world (connected to the project "Pré Ciência", fermentation of the dough).

Literacy was worked out through in the acquisition of a specific lexicon, through work in the construction of phonological awareness, the (re)cognition of the written letters, and the emergence of writing.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The following strategies were used:

- Invite a baker to go to the classroom (one of the children's grandfather).
 - Involve children in gathering all the necessary ingredients, and invite them to bring some of the ingredients from home (articulating with families);
- Organize the group according to the phase and development of the activity;
- Bake Easter Cake.- In this activity the adult acted as a model (modeling), providing verbal directions and involving children in the observation of processes.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

- Ingredients and utensils for making the Easter Cake
- Easter Cake dough, baking tray, kitchen ovens, dishes for the final product.
- Classroom: (re)arrange the space, in order to have space for everyone around the table.

Content of the Activity:

- The group was very excited when rearranging the classroom for the activity and when distributing tasks.
- The ingredients were mixed up, while the teacher intentionally talked with the children in order to discuss with them their previous knowledge and experiences on this issue. The group folded the dough, which should be very well mixed, with the support of the adults (grandfather and educator). The teacher managed the time and the intervention of each child, while supervised and encouraged all children's participation, including two children with special education needs (who also had the help of an auxiliary teacher).
- The dough had to be left to rest, according to the grandfather's teachings. The teacher raised questions about the dough, such as what would happen to it while *sleeping*, and took photos.

- While waiting, other routines were developed. Children were very curious about what was going on with the cake dough.
- In right time, the dough was uncovered and it was “very large”! The grandfather had prepared more dough at home, and brought to preschool to have enough Easter Cake for everyone. So, the group decided that they would share the cake with the other classrooms’ children and teachers.
- At the time of extending the Cake dough, children could use their imagination to decide its shape and to decorate it.
- Children were very happy!
- They also helped to put the cakes in the pan for baking and in the oven, with adults’ supervision. Then, it was lunchtime.
- In the afternoon, the grandfather returned to share the afternoon snack with all the preschool children. Children were encouraged to make the registration of the recipe, or a drawing of this activity.
- The “go between” strategy was used to elicit family participation.

Teacher’s role:

- The teacher acted as a proactive mediator, leaving for the children the main role; she supervised and intervened when necessary only, in order to assure the conversations and actions allowed children to acquire the ideas and concepts involved in several preschool curriculum areas. She facilitated processes and prepared materials (e.g., decided with the baker and the school cook the best days for the activity).
- The teacher adequately managed the time and children, and developed the activity with the children, always paying attention to their abilities, in order to work different concepts and learning contents, revealing much competence.
- She encouraged children to make registers of the activity. Embedded in the activity, she worked language skills, such as the articulation of words and phonological awareness.

Children’s role:

Children were very excited with the activity, and had an adequate performance throughout the process. They actively participated in all tasks, helped each other and respected their/others’ turn. Revealed high engagement levels and enthusiasm, and were happy to share the product of this activity (Easter Cake) with other children and teachers.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This Activity was included in the Preschool Annual Plan, in the context of Traditional Festivities (Easter in this case).

It was a very enriching activity, not only by the possibility of integrating various curriculum areas, such as personal and social education, knowledge of the world, and expressions, but also (a) by the connection with the family, through the participation of a grandfather who shared his experience and talked about “past times”, and (b) by sharing the final product with all the Preschool.

Good Practice 15

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

One day.

Number of children

involved:

Whole class and
small groups.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote language development and to approach the written language

- increase the vocabulary
- improve words' articulation
- promote the development of phonological awareness

To provide children (especially those who have language or speech difficulties and other problems) with diverse materials, which motivate them to overcome these difficulties.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The strategies were:

- Identification of words;
- Searching for images, with teacher mediation;
- Printing the image(s) and writing the word and its symbol;
- Protecting the material (lamine the paper materials);
- Working with children in a playful way, repeating the words that match the pictures, slowly articulating them and respecting the syllabic division;
- Using the material to play games that develop the visual memory.
- Using the *language box* to motivate and support children with Special Educational Needs (especially in the language domain).

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

- Paper, computer connected to the internet, laminating machine...
- Working in small groups requires an adequate arrangement of the classroom (tables and chairs organized for small groups) and supervision of the whole group.

Content of the Activity:

- Children are involved in intentional conversations, according to the subjects that are being worked in the classroom, and in keywords identification on the same subjects.
- The Educator and the kids use the internet to search for and to select some images related to those subjects. The corresponding word is written underneath the picture, with a symbol that indicates the number of syllables in each word. This symbol also corresponds to an instruction (such as clapping the number of times corresponding to syllabic division). These images and other material are protected in order to be handled without damaging it.
- This material is built throughout the year and is made available to children; they can explore it whenever they want to. It is also used by the educator for planned activities.
- The *images' box* included subjects such as: animals, plants, food, seasons, transportation facilities, traditional holidays / festivities. Literacy skills are also worked through the acquisition of specific vo-

cabulary, working on the construction of phonological awareness, and the identification of written letters.

- Teacher has begun the activity by articulating and repeating words during the (online) search for images.
- The *image's box* elicits talking about several subjects and playing with words: associating ideas, searching for same family word, developing dialogues and looking for rhymes... Children were highly engaged when playing with words.

Teacher's role:

- The teacher is proactive, motivating children, and taking advantage of spontaneous conversations, involving children in activities to promote the development of language and an approach to writing. The teacher tries to develop skills and to promote learning related to the knowledge of the world (a content area included in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool), through intentional conversations about this material, such as about the animals, what they eat, or their natural habitat.
- Time management depends on children's engagement and on the type of structure: individual work, small group or whole group.

Children's role:

- Children were motivated and had fun. Children were very excited about the online research. Sometimes they had difficulties in choosing the image that they wanted to print.
- Their behavior was appropriate during the whole process.
- Because the material for the *language box* is built throughout the year, children can play with it whenever they want to (free play) and while it is being built.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity emerges from the need of motivating children with some language difficulties.

It is a very rich and enriching activity that allows children to develop language, communication and reasoning skills.

Good Practice 16

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

One Day

Number of children

involved:

Whole class and
small groups
(20 children)

Purpose - Goals:

Promoting literacy using the story 'Stem/Branch, the boy from the village'.

This goal generally approached:

- language
- the emergence/appearance of writing
- knowledge about the world

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The strategies that were employed were:

- making puppets
- sharing materials
- drawing

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The book 'Stem, the boy from the village' written by "Luís Carvalho and Patrícia Ferreira, pencils, paper, puppets and a puppet stage.

Content of the Activity:

This story was presented by two teachers who did not belong to the school to the preschool and primary school children. Puppets were used.

After a brief introduction to the book, the teachers presented the story using puppets.

The children paid attention and showed interest, as the story was attractive. In the end, the children answered several questions about the plot.

Afterwards, the children were allowed to play with the puppets and retell the story using their own words. In the activities room children explored the images of the book, registered the story in pictures and built some puppets.

Teacher's role:

In this activity, back in the activities room, the teacher got involved in the activity dynamically by reading and exploring the story with the children once again, providing material for the children to explore the story in their own way.

Children's role:

The children participated in a large group (preschool and elementary school) when the story was presented to them using puppets. They also engaged in the activity individually drawing and creating some puppets.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote knowledge about the production of honey and to teach respect for nature.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

The method used was to invite a beekeeper into class who then explained the process of producing honey to the children. The beekeeper brought the tools related to his activity, too.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Material related to the activity of beekeeping/apiculture, pencil, paper.

Content of the Activity:

The beekeeper came to class and reported how the bees live in their beehives, showing them the necessary tools for producing honey.

The children asked questions and the teacher clarified some issues. At the end the children were allowed to taste the honey directly from the honeycomb. Afterwards we assessed how much the children had really learned. Then the children painted pictures portraying the production of honey and those pictures were transformed into a book which was placed in the library.

Teacher's role:

The teacher participated in the activity with the children, encouraging them to preserve and respect nature.

Children's role:

The children participated in the broader group when listening to the presentation carried out by the beekeeper and the participated individually when drawing/painting and making the book.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity enabled the expansion of different areas: personal and social development, knowledge of the world, approaching oral and written language and arts.

Good Practice 17**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

Two weeks.

Number of children involved:

Whole class and small groups.

Good Practice 18

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

Two-year longitudinal project

Number of children involved:

98 students from primary school and 50 children from kindergarten.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote different areas of development combining the domain of personal and social development, the domain of expression and communication, especially the domain of oral/verbal and written language and the domain of mathematics and world knowledge. Thanks to the Interchange project with the primary cycle 'Playing with science we learn as well' several experiences were carried out / performed. All children collaborated and different themes were addressed using various materials.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Several experiences were conducted which led the students to ask questions and draw different conclusions.

The children considered different hypotheses and then checked their conclusions after the experience was conducted – they could see what was wrong and the reason why it was wrong.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

According to the experience, different materials were used. Materials related to nature – flowers, plants, and fruit. Materials related to waste – wooden sticks, cork, lids, and nails. Materials that were bought – vinegar, sodium bicarbonate, and eggs. Other materials – balloons, and press-studs.

The children took notes about their predictions and afterwards about the conclusions.

Content of the Activity:

This project has been initiated a year ago and has been maintained due to the big interest all children demonstrate.

Each month a challenge is suggested to the children and material and research are requested. Afterwards the problem is presented to the children and they all say what they think is going to happen.

If we proceed like this, what is likely to happen? And if we do it like that, what is probably going to happen?

Then the experience is carried out with the help of an adult and the results are registered next to the initial predictions.

The results were «discussed» and explanations were found.

Finally, the group of older children makes a written description of the experience and the younger group draws what they have witnessed.

All the children have the opportunity to express their ideas.



A table with two columns is always made – the first column has the question «What do you think is going to happen?» and the second column «What has happened?»

Each child can express what he/she thinks.

Teacher’s role:

The teacher actively enrolled in the activity by asking questions and encouraging the children to find out the results of the experiences.

The teacher also guided the children so they would ask themselves why things occurred that way and not differently.

Children’s role:

Children participate by bringing the materials for the experiences, doing searches and asking their parents about the causes of the results.

Children are given the opportunity to carry out the experiences themselves and confirm the results.

For a better understanding of the experiments there is always a description/ an account of the procedure that can be examined and enables repeating the experience.

The materials and results of the experience are left in the classroom for the children to observe/examine them and for them to replicate the experience if they wish to. If new questions arise they can ask them and try to find answers/solutions.



Additional comments-Highlights:

The project «Learning when playing with science» is being carried out jointly with primary school for already two years now and the results have been very positive – children participate enthusiastically and show very much interest. Therefore we will maintain it in the next school year.

This activity develops all developmental areas.

Good Practice 19

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

1-2 learning activities

Number of children

involved:

Whole class or small groups.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote tools and resources at the level of experimental sciences and scientific literacy taking into consideration experiments that take place in the child's daily routine. The aim is to motivate them and to enable new ways of learning, never forgetting the playful nature of those learning opportunities.

To be able to foster and engage the ones less involved and to guide the group to focus and to reach the desired conclusions and concepts.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The following strategies were used: introducing the song 'A little boat was floating fast...'

Exploring the song. Placing a little boat in a water basin/bowl letting children observe and comment. Using the comments as a starting point to identify the main question – Can other objects flow as well?

Making predictions/ register the predictions.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

CD player, CD, water, basin, potato, doe, nail, wood, apple, cork, boat. Children's drawings.

Content of the Activity:

The activity is introduced with the help of the song on the boat. Later, the boat is placed in the water. For a brief period of time, children can explore this situation for themselves. While this happens, the teacher pays attention to the comments that emerge. Other objects are selected to assess how they behave in the water. Before resuming the experience, children make a prediction about what is going to happen – this is registered in a table. Then, the experience is conducted and the children can observe if the object does or does not float – this is registered in a table, too. In the end, the two tables are compared and conclusions drawn. The teacher then registers these conclusions.

Teacher's role:

The teacher dynamically enrolled in the activity along with the children, providing them support whenever necessary.

Children's role:

In this activity there have been moments when the whole group participated (song, conducting the experiment) and others when participation was held in a small group/individual (table registration).

Children enrolled enthusiastically because they were the ones manipulating the objects and actively participating in what was happening.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity enabled expanding knowledge across different areas: knowledge about the world, plastic and musical expression.

Purpose - Goals:

To develop a sense of respect and caring for the natural environment.

Through the development of the project “Tampinhas” (“Bottle Caps”), we encouraged children to collect, separate and contribute to recycle materials, and to be involved in social causes (such as the support to people with disabilities).

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Informal talking between children and adults.

Encouraging children to collect bottle plastic caps. Building things with recyclable / reusable materials.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Cardboard, sticker paper, adhesive tape, markers, crayons, glue, inks and plastic bottles.

Content of the Activity:

We raised children’s and parents’ awareness for the importance of recycling and waste separation, through dialogues with children and families, through building *ecopoint systems* involving art activities and other environmental awareness actions. With this project, another project was developed: helping a child with our collection of plastic bottle caps (trade plastic bottle caps for equipment or treatments). In this school year, in this project, with the committed and solidary help of all, this preschool has raised an average of 800 5l-bottles full of caps. This contributed to help a child with the Norrie syndrome to benefit from expensive rehabilitation treatments, thus providing a better quality of life.

Teacher’s role:

Teachers, children, parents, teachers’ assistants participated in the activities, revealing enthusiastic and supportive attitudes.

Children’s role:

In this activity, there were moments of involvement in large and small groups as well as individual tasks.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity enabled the development of different content areas from the national curricular guidelines for preschool education: personal and social education; language and communication; and the understanding of the world.

Good Practice 20**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 21

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To promote and develop the expressive language and communication skills, across multiple languages, as a way to understand the world, through the construction of a daily newspaper.

With this task, we promoted the literacy, and engaged them in a comprehensive educational process that enabled them to develop attention, memory and reasoning skills, as well as critical and creative thinking. Families and communities were frequently involved in this task, since news were brought from home.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Informal talking between children and adults.

Construction of a daily newspaper; decisions made based on votes/elections, children illustrated the news.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Board made of cork, old newspapers, cardboard, sticker paper, paper, pencils, and markers.

Content of the Activity:

When planning the work to be developed with the whole group, the need to record and share the experiences and learning emerged (share with children from the other classroom, parents, and other relatives). From this situation arised the idea of building a daily newspaper. This task, that began in the first school period (september-december), allowed a daily record about the classroom, with suggestions for further readings and subject to talk about at home.

With the newspaper, all children were engaged, in one way or another (what name should we choose for the newspaper? What news to choose? who illustrates the news?). We voted several times to reach consensus on certain decisions regarding the management of the newspaper.

All children and adults actively participaed, making daily written records that were then placed on the bulletin board of the newspaper, and were displayed outside the classroom. This activity was a good way to communicate and inform parents and other relatives about the work developed in preschool with children.

Teacher's role:

The teacher participated with the children in the activities, revealing enthusiasm and support, and challenging them to fully develop and participate.

Children's role: In this activity, there was always active participation, in large and small groups as well as in individual tasks.

Additional comments-Highlights: This activity enabled the development of different content areas from the national curricular guidelines for preschool education: personal and social education; language and communication; and understanding of the world.





Purpose - Goals:

Videoconference integrated in an eTwinning project “Digital Fairytales” between a Portuguese kindergarten and a Lithuanian kindergarten. We pretend with the project: to cooperate with children from European countries, to learn

Good Practice 22

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One morning

Number of children involved:

Two classes, one from Portugal -one from Lithuania (20 + 17 children)

traditional fairytales, to dramatize the stories and express feelings through the characters, to make workshops with parents and to express through different kinds of art (using different plastic techniques).

Each group presents itself and then the children dramatize the story and sing songs sharing traditions and culture and learn some words in Portuguese, Lithuanian language and English.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

We prepared the entire scenario for making the videoconference, accessing internet and put the video projector in front of a whiteboard. We shared and showed the drawings and paintings made by the children of the both countries. We planned the videoconference and the presentations all together.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Video projector, camera, microphone, paper, whiteboard, dresses and suits, scenario.

Drawings and paintings made by the children.

Content of the Activity:

The children, both teachers and a Portuguese Comenius Assistant in Lithuania planned all the videoconference.

The Lithuanian children introduced themselves to the Portuguese children and we introduced ourselves to them. After that the Lithuanian children presented the dramatization of “Carochinha”, a Portuguese traditional tale. Then we sang some popular songs to them and after that they showed all the drawings and paintings made about “Carochinha” and



we showed ours.

The teachers made the effort to translate to children what we are saying and the Comenius Assistant was a good help to learn some words in Portuguese, Lithuanian language and English.

We took photos and we made small videos about this videoconference. We could work the different curricular areas in an interdisciplinary way.

Teacher's role:

Both teachers liked this experience and they have engaged in this project so that the children could have this kind of experience. The Comenius Assistant was a good help because he is from Portugal and he could establish a good pedagogical involvement between teachers and children.

Children's role:

In this activity the group of children all participated in the videoconference, they presented and spoke a little bit in English. The children were the real actors and protagonists of videoconference.

They made art works like drawings and paintings; they made dramatization and workshops with parents. They shared songs usually sang day by day in kindergarten.

Additional comments-Highlights:

“Good practice” done to be an example to the Early Change Project. Activities that have interdisciplinary and cross-curricular themes and that offer stimulation for a wide range of subjects. Activities' goals that focus on specific skills and competencies. Activities' goals that are adjusted for children's level and abilities. Activities that include ICTs either as content or as a mean. Innovative projects that include field visits, ICT's, discovery learning and open classrooms to society and to Europe.



Purpose - Goals:

The children to interact positive towards each other (general purpose). To state something positive they like on someone else

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Group discussion

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Small ball, storybook "Let's take another picture", music on the cd player

Content of the Activity:

The lesson begun with the preschool teacher had read the storybook "Let's take another picture" which talks about children accepting one another as they are and seeing that each person is special in its own way.

After the storybook was read several activities were acted out in relation to the context of the storybook. One activity that was done in order for the children to understand the context of the storybook but also to take the context of the storybook and implement it in their experience and social context, the teacher asked the children to tell one thing they like on another child. The preschool teacher let the children think and discuss together with each other for a few minutes. She then put on some music and gave a small ball to the children which passed to one another. When the music would stop the child holding the ball would say something they liked on someone else either it concern their appearance, character or abilities.

Teacher's role:

The role of the preschool teacher was to read the storybook while displaying the pictures of the book and to support together with giving a positive feedback to the children.

Children's role:

The children after the discussion regarding the content of the storybook, read to them, had to tell something they liked about someone else in their class.

Good Practice 23**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately

10 minutes

10 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

The whole class

Good Practice 24

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately 45 minutes.

Number of children involved:

The whole class (25 children)

Purpose - Goals:

To save precious time during a physical activity lesson
– the learning target can be different – this example will be based on the Learning Target: Dribbling (standing and walking)
– control of the ball, move in the specified area by dribbling
The aim is to give as many opportunities as possible to children to discover and improve personal skills

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Build up Stations

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Music to warm up. Build up stations:

1st station: 5 hoops and a ball

2nd station: 3 cones and a ball

3rd station a trampoline and a ball

4th station a hoop and a post

5th station: 10 plates and 3 hoops - mats for relaxing

Content of the Activity:

During a physical education lesson it's good to use stations to save time. To do that we can create different station (stop point) where children practice different skills and abilities. The number of the stations that we will have depends on the number of the children in our class.

e.g.

5 STATIONS: 5 children at each station (for a class of 25 children)

1st station: With the signal a child dribbles and at the same time walks around the hoops and then give the ball to the next child

2nd station: Children dribble around the cones (2 meters distance between the cones) in a zik-zak route and then return to the start point and give the ball to the next child.

3rd station: the start point is 2 meters away from the trampoline. The first child dribbles and moves towards the trampoline and dribbles around it – the child then throws the ball to the next child and then jamps on the trampoline 5 times.

4th station: The first child dribbles around the hoop once and then moves in the hoop and throws the ball aiming the post.

5th station: 2 children are standing opposite to each other (3 meters) with a hoop in the middle - they need throw the ball in the hoop in a way that the ball will bounce and then go to the other child. This can be then evolved by asking children to move while doing it.

It is important to have an Introduction to warm up and a Recovery: Relaxed running and extensions to relax the muscles – go to the mats and lie down, close their eyes and relax to soft music –

Teacher's role:

The teacher offers a variety of physical experiences aiming to improve children's abilities to move around with the ball. She gives the instruction and also demonstrates when necessary. She is responsible for children's safety and she needs to prepare the area where the lesson will take place keeping this in mind. She tries to encourage children and give them positive comments and specific instructions about how they can improve.

Children's role:

Follow the instructions, cooperate and share.

Good Practice 25

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately two hours.

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

For the children to

- express their creativity
- express positive and negative feelings
- materialize creative ideas
- build on each other's idea

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Group discussion, Problem solving

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Broken chair

Decorative materials (string, feathers, paper, wool, stickers etc)

Glue

Scissors

Paint

Musical instruments

Content of the Activity:

It is Monday morning. On Saturday evening there was a community feast in the school yard with food, music, traditional, dances. Every family attended as well as the teacher. On Monday morning a community worker cleaned the yard and collected tables and chairs.

The teacher walks into class holding a dirty plastic chair with three legs (one is broken). She tells the children that the man collecting the chairs outside left this one behind.

Teacher "why do you think this happened?"

The children explain that the chair is broken and this is why it was left behind. It is useless now.

Teacher "how do you feel when you look at this chair?"

The children express negative feeling about the chair

Teacher "I want to feel good when I look at this chair. How can we make this possible?"

Ch1 "we have to clean it, it is dirty"

The teacher asks a group of children to clean the chair

Ch2 "it is better now, but I still feel sad when I look at the chair"

Teacher "so what else can we do?"

Ch3 "we can make it pretty"

Teacher "how?"

"Ch4 "by decorating it"

Teacher "with what?"

The children suggest different ideas

Teacher "Let's all go into our store room and see what we can find. Each of you can chose what they think we will need to decorate the chair"

The teacher and the children go into the store room and gather dif-

ferent materials. They return to the classroom and start decorating the chair. The teacher encourages the children to talk about their ideas and build on each other's idea. She also encourages suggestions (while a child is busy with an idea another child makes an elaborative suggestion)

When all children are finished with their work the teacher asks "how do you feel when you look at the chair now?"

The children express their positive feelings.

A child starts singing a nursery song about a butterfly

Teacher "how about we change the words of this song and make it talk about our chair?"

The children respond enthusiastically and begin creating lyrics for their song.

When the song is ready they all sing it together. The teacher hand out musical instruments and the children accompany their song with sound.

The teacher sums up the lesson with the following questions "what did you like most about today?" / "how do you feel now?" / "what can we do when we have a negative feeling?" / "what did we learn today?"

Teacher's role:

The teacher encourages all children to express themselves, talk about their experiences and scaffolds children's answers with open ended questions.

Children's role:

Children are expected to participate, answer questions and talk about their experiences and feelings from the Saturday feast.

Additional comments-Highlights:

After the lesson the children suggested that the chair is placed in the classroom so it reminds them that negative feelings can be turned into positive feelings. Another child suggested we place the chair where everyone can see it and write its story on a piece of paper. The teacher discussed the idea with the children and found a spot in the school entrance area to place the chair (so that everyone can see it when entering the school building). The children dictate a text explaining the story of the chair and its symbolism. The teacher writes the text on a piece of paper and sticks it on the wall behind the chair.

Good Practice 26

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Daily routine

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

For children to get to know the daily schedule of the school through picture cards and titles which they display each time an activity changes.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Cooperative learning

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

- Clothboard
- Small basket with cards that represent the daily schedule of the school (for example Music, Story time, Breakfast ext)

Content of the Activity:

The children are the helpers of the preschool teacher and between other responsibilities they are in charged to display on the clothboard the card that represents the activity or period that their class has on that particular time of day. For instance at 9:45 in the morning they have their breakfast, at 10:45 it is story time, at 12:05 they have their break ext.

Teacher's role:

To encourage the children, to remind them if they need any assistance, to reward them or help them learn the schedule of their school through trying but also through their mistakes.

Children's role:

The children were happy to cooperate in this activity and help each other. In this way they have stability in their schedule and they feel safety since they know what has been done and what is going to follow.

Purpose - Goals:

To practice words from the English language. English as a second language - vocabulary

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Stations – children in groups moving from one station/activity to the other

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

The tables are arranged in a way that gives space to children to work around them. On each table there is a different activity-game. 1) Computer 2) Small Booklet 3) Bingo with colours 4) Dices 5) Memory game

Content of the Activity:

On each table there is a different activity for a group of children in regard to vocabulary that they have already been taught – e.g. the colours. On the floor there are arrows that show the course that the children need to follow. Each group works on a table and with the sound of the signal that the teacher gives, the groups move to the next table.

Teacher's role:

She observes the children and she makes sure that all the children participate. She also helps the children if they encounter any difficulties and encourages them.

Children's role:

The children need to follow the course of the activities so that 2 groups will not bump onto each other. This is a good chance for children to work together and communicate.

Additional comments-Highlights:

A good practice that helps children remember what they have learnt and helps the children evaluate children's learning.

Good Practice 27**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately
40 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class
(25 children)

Good Practice 28

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately
40 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class
(25 children)

Purpose - Goals:

Development of children's epistemological readiness – For children to be able to change their own conclusion when having new data.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

First in a circle and then work in groups - tables

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Big cardboards, magnets, things made of metal

Content of the Activity:

The teacher reminds to children the previous lesson when they arrived at the conclusion that magnets attract all metals and asks children if they are sure about this conclusion. She then presents the classrooms mascot that insists that the magnet doesn't attract his metal. The children are then divided into their groups and go to their groups' tables to experiment with the different metal that they have their, including the one of their mascot's. They realize that the mascot doesn't attract all metals after all.

Teacher's role:

She supports and encourages the children without giving ready answers. She also need to be aware of what is going in the class and everything that the children say and discuss in their groups to be able to guide them properly.

Children's role:

They need to understand the controversy and the need to experiment and come to the correct results. Only then they will be able to understand why they have to change their previous conclusion.

Purpose - Goals:

To collaborate together with their parents for modulating their schoolyard.

To create art by interfacing in their schoolyard

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

- Play
- Collaboration with parents
- Project: Our Schoolyard
- Curriculum Subject: Visual Art

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Tent, bags of plastic, natural materials, glue, water-paints, colour markers, magnetic board, photographs, glue-tapes, special paints for outside spaces.

Content of the Activity:

In the context of the project “Our Schoolyard” we invited the parents to reform together with the children and by using artistic activities the schoolyard.

Activities:

- Weaving with plastic bags on the schoolyards balusters.
- Experimentalism/games in the tent using the sense of touch on materials collected from our schoolyard.
- Paint our schoolyard on a big piece of cloth.
- Creating on the magnetic board or in the sandbox a small representation of our schoolyard the way we would like it to be.
- Paint our schoolyard staircase.
- Create a garden with fake flowers.
- Painting together with the parents something that characterizes our selves and placing it on our “School Identity Tree”.

Teacher’s role:

Coordinator, team player, collaborator.

Children’s role:

They had an active role, they played together with their parents, they were creative, and they used movements, expressed their feelings and co-decided together with their parents.

Good Practice 29**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

1 hour

Number of children involved:

The whole school
(two classes -49 children)

Good Practice 30

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good

practice:

1 hour

Number of children

involved:

The whole class
(25 children)

Purpose - Goals:

To collaborate with an artist.

- To experiment with innovate techniques of using a specific kind of paper.
- To collaborate for making a group creation.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Collaboration with the community (an artist) in the context of developing a project.

Project: Storybooks

Curriculum Subject: Visual Art

Theme: Paper

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Water-paints, paper, wax-pencils

Content of the Activity:

The children had already experimented with different kinds of paper as well as a variety of techniques in relation to paper. The artist Vaso Sergiou visited our school for one hour and worked with the children. In the beginning she brought and displayed to the children different kinds of paper followed by a brief discussion and game with the materials. Afterwards the artist laid down, together with the children, a large piece of paper that covered the entire length of schoolyard. The children with the artist generated a group creation.

Teacher's role:

The role of the preschool teacher was mainly as a coordinator but also participated in the game/artistic creation of the children, as a team player.

Children's role:

The children had an active role in the whole procedure. The interaction with the artist as well as with the educators and the children was continuous and freely.

Participation, movement, expression of feelings.

Purpose - Goals:

To teach the children about numbers and to count. To make the children aware of each other. To teach the children that even if two children have different numbers, the result can be quite different. To teach them to begin the meal with a little ritual and that there should be quiet before the meal can begin.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

A routine before an everyday activity is used to teach the children numbers and to count.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Glasses and plates.

Content of the Activity:

A group of children (class) is going to have a lunch break. In order to eat at the same time and have lunch together and to make sure that the children are ready, the pedagogue asks the children to be completely quiet.

The two children who have set the table with glasses and plates are called to say a number between 1 and 10, each of them. Jonas says 2 and Magda says 4. The pedagogue asks if any of the children knows how much $2 + 4$ is? 2 and 4 is shown with her fingers – 2 on one hand and 4 on the other hand. A few children put up their finger to show that they know the answer and one child is allowed to answer. Afterwards all of them count to 6 and the pedagogue says go ahead and eat. The meal can begin.

If the numbers are big that is 6 and 8, the pedagogue lends some fingers from a child sitting next to her.

Teacher's role:

The pedagogue is asking the questions, coordinating and making the process be like a flow. She is recognizing and encouraging the children to feel that the numbers they chose are good numbers. She is creating an expectation that it is exciting to add numbers. This expectation is due for the meal too.

Children's role:

All of the children are listening and waiting to hear which number is chosen and they have an opportunity to give an answer to the question. As it is a ritual every day the children know the "rules".

Additional comments-Highlights:

The children have contributed with a number individually and that number has an influence on the result = the common number: double contingency

Good Practice 31**Country of origin:**

Denmark

Duration of good

practice:

5 minutes

Number of children

involved:

Two children who set the table and afterwards the whole group

Good Practice 32

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good

practice:

45 minutes

Number of children

involved:

A whole group of children
(20 children)

Purpose - Goals:

To talk about themselves and their lives. Main theme for the activity: Where do you live. It includes the street, the town the island and country

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Trips to see where the children live. Taking photos of the child at the front door of his/her home. Display the photos in the kindergarten for a period of time (small insight in society).

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

PC, google street view, projector. Note! In the time where the project had been planned it rained a lot. It was hard for the children to find pleasure in doing the trips so their engagement was dropping seriously.

Content of the Activity:

The group had gathered together to put up the pictures from the previous days visit and to prepare next visit. Who was next in line. That involved a bus schedule, and after a meeting the day before the PC was on with the projector, so that the children could see the schedule on the wall. The children found it very amusing to see the schedule, so the social educator grabbed the situation and said that today they should visit everybody's. The children however agreed that that was not possible crazy, crazy Ylva (the social educator) But they could. Ylva presented the children for Google street view so the children could see their house projected up on the wall. That became the start of a new project where the children used the pc to see their house, street and country in quite a different way.

Teacher's role:

To initiate the activity, to help with the ICTs and to ask questions.

Children's role:

The children thought it was fantastic to see their house on the screen, they could enter the house and recognize their house and homely environment.

Purpose - Goals:

Close to ort kindergarten is a small forest around 2-3 hectares. We can get there without having to be in the traffic, and when we are in the forest, there is hardly any need for adult supervision, because it is a known area for the children, and they know the frames and rules for the activities, because we come there regularly. The goals of this activity are:

Contact with nature in different ways. Experience that the forest and the nature that surrounds it contains a lot of interesting things that can be explored, in many different ways.

Practicing in climbing (trees). Challenging the motor skills training in a free environment with lots of challenges.

Experience of success. Follow the season changes and the influence of the forest

Recreation for children and adults. Meta reflection: If you learn to care for the forest and surrounding nature, you are more motivated to care for it and possibly choose to live environmentally aware as an adult.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

“Learning by doing”. The child meets nature on own premises and gets time to become absorbed, because we come here every week. The child wonders at a higher level due to the routine the activity contains qua repetition, though children and adults experience new things every time. There is a wide possibility in following your own mode and in that way, inclusion of children with particular needs becomes easier. It is our experience that when there is more physical room, the mental room expands as well. Conflicts are rare and there are great possibilities in forming friendships.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Good outdoor clothes that are suitable for the season. Friendly parents with washing machines.

It is important that the children meet in good time.

Content of the Activity:

The children do always like to come to the forest. They are now so trained in dressing themselves that they don't think about it anymore. We quickly get out of the gate and over the field after the social educator that has the front position. You can run as fast as you can to the stone hill if you want, but you have to wait for the others at the stone hill. When the others have arrived you can run as fast as you can to the “boogie tree”, where you can hide and scare the others a little when they come. Everybody laughs. Inside the forest it is a bit darker than outside and in summer when the trees have leaves it is almost completely dark. In autumn there are chestnuts and hazelnuts. You should

Good Practice 33**Country of origin:**

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

A few hours

Number of children involved:

A whole group of children (17 children)

not touch the large nettles, but elderberries are good. There are large snails near the chestnuts. You can take them up if you want to, but you can't take them home - their home is in the forest. We once took some snails and wrote our names on their houses on their backs and then set them free again. The following Tuesday we met with Brian's snail again. In the dark pine forest there is a counting tree. There the children can sit on a row and be counted by the social educator, so they can see that everybody is there. Sometimes the social educator has brought apples or biscuits and when that's eaten it is time to go home.

Teacher's role:

Be at hand with answers when the child has questions. Tell about what we see, but allow and accept the child's way to explore. Wanting to be part of the activity in the forest.

Children's role:

To explore and investigate their environment.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The trip to the forest takes the whole week up a level. All the children groups have one weekday each, where they go to the forest and they get very upset if the activity for some reason gets cancelled.

Purpose - Goals:

To help the children learn language, rhymes and jingles, the sound of the letters.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

The pedagogue uses a Teddy Bear to motivate the children. The children are communicating with the Teddy Bear and not the pedagogue. The Teddy Bear talks and very soon the children show attention and they are involved by saying words and sentences in a wrong way, being foolish and asking questions.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

The Teddy Bear that is named Bruno. The classroom and a blackboard.

Content of the Activity:

The Teddy Bear Bruno talks about different ways of forming his mouth in order to pronounce the letters the children have learned. He makes the children rhyme.

Teacher's role:

The pedagogue "is" Bruno, asking questions and explaining things. The pedagogue must be able to act a bit and communicate with the children in a funny way.

Children's role:

They have to be involved, motivated and express themselves, answering the questions, suggesting answers and examples.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The children are following the act very intensely and they are helping the Teddy Bear. They are very concentrated and show attention.

Good Practice 34**Country of origin:**

Denmark

Duration of good**practice:**

Approximately
20 minutes.

Number of children**involved:**

The whole group
(17 children)

Good Practice 35

Country of origin:

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Standard practice throughout the year

Number of children involved:

The whole group

Purpose - Goals:

To support and enhance the child's well-being together with the parents, by utilizing different content areas language-interaction, emotions, cognitive skills, life skills.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

- Small group work
- Discussion in small groups
- Organizing opportunities to play
- Using every possible opportunity to exercise
- Researching at the inside and the outside environment
- Art: books, music, movies, doing by oneself

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Spaces, study room, benches, tables, napping room, beds, meeting benches, small room, gym, lobby, yard, neighborhood, painting/drawing equipment, modeling equipment, scissors, papers, crayons, books, workbooks, toys, exercise equipments, CDs, DVDs, natural materials, fabrics.

Content of the Activity:

Small groups: divided by age and need of special support. One adult stays with one group during the whole day if possible.

- Exercise and music can be used with your own group, for example at the napping room (no need to wait for the gym reservation).
- Doing the same activities/chores at different times also in a small group.
- Morning sessions sometimes together to overview the plan for the day and the week.
- Working in a small group will provide calmer working environment.
- Activities can be individualized.
- Plans need to be flexible enough so that the activities can be more child-centered - makes it easier to develop playing.

Teacher's role:

- To be actively present/available when needed.
- Creator of a safe environment: child learns and becomes more independent.
- Developmental partner with the parent.
- Executant of the child-centeredness: contact with each child during the day (supporter, encourager)

Children's role:

- Active student/participator.
- The planner and executant of their own activities.
- Good friend, member of a group.

Additional comments-Highlights:

We consider good interaction among the adults of the team especially important - it has a great influence also on the children, child group and parents. Openness and courage to bring up even tough subjects – very important and educational.

Purpose - Goals:

- Participating, working together
- Common experience of the songs
- Positive group experience to start the day off

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

- Singing
- Recognizing a song from a picture of a song card
- Interaction skills - working together
- Waiting for your own turn – choosing songs in turns

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

- Song cards
- Chair cushions
- Instruments (rhythmic instruments)
- Hand puppets
- Songs related to the theme or something similar

Content of the Activity:

Singing circuit. The song bag has pre-chosen songs in it, children pick them up → singing, playing instruments, playing around. Everybody gets a chance to choose a song, which is sang, played with instruments and played out together.

Gathers groups well together in the morning, a good exercise for the small ones to practice working in the group and waiting for their turn.

Teacher's role:

To instruct, to inspire by showing an example.

Children's role:

Singing, playing, recognizing a song from a picture of a song card.

Good Practice 36**Country of origin:**

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Approximately 20 minutes

Number of children involved:

5-10 children or in groups of threes

Good Practice 37

Country of origin:

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Approximately
45 minutes

Number of children involved:

A group of 15 children

Purpose - Goals:

To teach with the aid of a hand puppet various things to the children

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Bunny enjoys when it gets a chance to visit the children every once in a while. Children are eager to know when the bunny is coming to visit them.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

A hand puppet named Bunny, children's seats and various pictures about phases of the session.

Content of the Activity:

During the session: children are sitting on their own seats.

Bunny shows up from wherever whenever. Pictures about phases of the session reveal the children when the bunny is coming. Bunny is funny and likes to greet each child for example by tickling his/her cheek. Bunny may teach wrong things such as call a triangle a square.

Children will immediately correct it. Children remember bunny's teachings much better.

Teacher's role:

An adult moves the bunny and speaks with a bunny voice.

If children get too excited, bunny covers its ears and crumples up.

Children do not want to hurt/be mean to the bunny.

When the bunny's visit is coming to an end, children want to say bye-bye to the bunny.

Adult puts the bunny, for example, to a closet and can naturally continue the session as him/herself.

Children's role:

- To listen to the bunny
- To enjoy the bunny's visit
- Children like to tell things to the bunny
- They love the bunny
- Children get so involved with the bunny and its stories that they do not talk to the adult moving the bunny but the bunny itself
- Children are between the ages of 5 and 6 but nobody belittles the puppet/says that you are moving the bunny

Additional comments-Highlights:

Wonderful experiences to the children: touching, tickling, being silly, having fun, laughing

The adult can tell about a tough issue using the bunny
Children remember better the teachings of the bunny

Good Practice 38

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

25-30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Game „The Magic Bag”. To facilitate the verbal communication, checking the ability to pronounce correctly the sounds and words, and to form simple and complex sentences;

Additional goals: to name correctly the object pictured in the image pulled out from the bag; to form simple and complex sentences; to use grammatically correct structures;

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, brainstorming, explanation, exercise

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The magic bag, CD player, computer, cards displaying different objects. During this game the children are seated on the chairs arranged in a semicircle.

Content of the Activity:

The game task is that every child pulls out a card from the bag, names the object in the picture and forms a sentence with that word. The playing of the game is preceded by a trial stage – the testing of the game. The toddlers are divided into two teams, they take turns in pulling out cards from the bag, they name the object displayed on the card and form sentences with it. Each correct answer is rewarded with a white ball. The team that gathers the most balls is the winner.

As an extension to the game, the children are asked to say the number of the words in the sentence that they formed. When the activity is over, the evaluation is made by reference to the criteria set at the beginning of the game, the teacher assesses orally the way in which the children fulfilled the task and cooperated during the game.

Teacher's role:

The teacher explains to the toddlers the task, she plays the test game with one child as an example, she is the conductor of the game all throughout the activity. The teacher assures a climate of good fun and encourages the two teams to compete with each other and accumulate as more white balls as possible.

Children's role:

The children participate in the activity actively, they use game elements (clapping their hands), try to give as many correct answers as possible. The toddlers form simple and complex sentences, they use correct grammatical structures when they communicate their answers, and pronounce correctly the sounds specific to Romanian language.

Additional comments-Highlights:

When the activity is over, the evaluation is made on the basis of the previously set criteria, the teacher assesses orally the way in which the children fulfilled the task and cooperated during the game.

Good Practice 39

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

20-25 minutes.

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Practicing in speaking grammatically correct;

Consolidating the abilities of dividing words into syllables

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explanation, demonstration, exercise, problem-solving, pyramid.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Cards displaying different images for jobs, 2 four-layered pyramids, 2 envelopes with pictures of tools used for different jobs.

Content of the Activity:

The children are divided into two groups (teams).

As an extension to the game the interactive method of the pyramid is used. Each group receives an envelope. The envelope contains images that show tools used in the jobs they have learned about.

The teacher explains the rules of the game. The children pay attention to what they are told.

Teacher's role:

The teacher explains that the two teams have 5 minutes to sort the images and to place them on the pyramid according to the number of the syllables in each word (4, 3, 2, 1)

-She encourages the shy toddlers.

- She asks the children in the other team to clap their hands for each correct answer.

- She praises the way in which the children cooperate.

- She gives rewards to the children in the form of diplomas for their favourite job

Children's role:

The children in each team sort the pictures and decide together how to place the words on the pyramid correctly according to the number of the syllables in each word (at the basis there are words which are formed of four syllables, then the ones formed of three syllables, two syllables and one syllable). E.g. : centimetre, scissors, thread, pin, buttons, thimble, pot, spoon, ladle, whisk, robot, trencher etc

Additional comments-Highlights:

Using an interactive method (the pyramid method) activates all the children. They participate in the activity and develop their cooperation skills and team spirit.

In this activity the method was used to complicate the game and to ensure the reaching of the goal.

Purpose - Goals:

Developing the children's ability to correctly sing a song in a choir, in a group and individually staying in tune, following the melody, respecting the singing partners and to perform different movements suggested by the lyrics, developing the artistic sense, their love for music.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Exercise, conversation, observation, explanation, and demonstration.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Puppet (Spring Fairy), musical instrument (electronic organ), Power Point presentation of the song, a negative soundtrack, badges, pictures that represent the theme of the song.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher presents the materials as a surprise using the puppet. The Spring Fairy brings a basket that contains spring flowers (snow-drops, tulips, lily-of-the-valley) – observation. The teacher announces the theme of the activity: Today we will learn a song called "*The Voice of Flowers*".

The teacher presents some voice warming exercises through a set of breathing exercises such as:

- smell the flower (repeat three times);
- blow dandelions (repeat three times);
- mimic the sounds made by a goose (repeat three times)

In order to teach the new song the teacher will enhance the perceptive preparation of the melody by demonstrating a couple of fragments from the song. The children will do some vocal exercises to warm up the sound emission system. The teacher will use the musical instrument to produce some sounds that the toddlers have to sing.

Teacher's role:

The teacher coordinates the way in which the children perform the voice homogenization exercises. She provides general instructions (keep your back straight, push your chest forward, breathe deeply and fill your diaphragm with air).

The teacher sings the song that will be taught ("*The Voice of Flowers*") and then presents it in Power Point format. The teacher explains the unknown words.

Children's role:

The children talk about the spring flowers they received from the Spring Fairy - conversation. The children perform the voice homogenization exercises - exercise method. The toddlers are pleased with the spring flowers because at the end of the activity each child will receive the flower that he/she wants and that he has to take care of (the flowers are in pots).

Additional comments-Highlights:

The children liked the song that they learned because it gave them the opportunity to take part in the Spring Festival organized by the kindergarten, where they won the 3rd place.

Good Practice 40**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

30-35 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 41

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

25-30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Developing the ability to use verbal and non-verbal means to solve the given tasks; developing thinking and imagination by solving problem situations; educating the ability to relate with others.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Narration, conversation, explanation, stellar method.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Computer, a board representing the content of the story, a big star and five little stars for the Stellar Explosion method.

Content of the Activity:

After listening to the story ("The Story of an Autumn Leaf") that has been accompanied by images on the computer screen, the content of the story is being systematized by the use of the active method of stellar explosion. The children ask questions related to the content of the story using the questions related to this method ("What, Who, When, Where, Why?"). A big star is placed on a board and in each of its corners the teacher puts the five small stars, one by one, each containing one of the questions used by the method. The teacher points to each little star and the children make up questions using the question word in the star.

Teacher's role:

The teacher places, one by one, the little stars that bear questions in the corners of the big star and asks the children to make-up questions starting from the indicated little star. (What? Who? When? Where? Why?)

The teacher:

- helps the formulation of questions, aiding their flow of expression;
- encourages the children and praises them every time they ask the right questions;
- emphasizes the most interesting questions and praises team work;
- offers the children a star for each correctly formulated question.

Children's role:

The children formulate questions related to the content of the story.

What story have you listened?

What characters are part of the story?

What advice did the tree-king give to the leaves?

Who was guarding the passes?

Who stopped the little leaf?

When does the story take place?

When do the passers-by stop in the tree shadow?

When did the little leaf come back?

Where did the little leaf go?

Where do leaves sit once they fall off the tree?

Why do leaves fall ?

Why did the little leaf get scared?

Why did the tree remain upset?

Additional comments-Highlights:

Using the Stellar Explosion method activated the children, making them use their thinking and imagination in formulating the questions on the basis of the content of the story they have listened.

Good Practice 42

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class
(25 children)

Purpose - Goals:**TEACHING GAME - THE SYLLABLE GAME**

Developing the ability to specify what object is drawn on the token.

Developing the ability to break up words into syllables correctly.

Developing the ability to specify the numbers of syllables of the word correctly.

Developing the ability to place the token in the correct basket that corresponds to the number of the word syllables.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explication, the exercise, and demonstration.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The activity runs in a semicircle but is divided into two teams: the red team the blue team

Materials:

tokens with different images, objects, animals, fruit, vegetables, clothes; colored bowlines; colored magnets; 2 blackboards; white cardboard. The materials are well chosen, accessible to children, attractive and stimulating.

Content of the Activity:

The activity runs in a semicircle but is divided into two teams: the red team and the blue team.

The teacher announces the theme and the objectives that the children can understand what they must do to accomplish all the tasks that the teacher asks.

The tasks are:

One child named by the teacher from a team comes in front of the class where the table with the materials is arranged, takes one token, says what is drawn on the token, breaks the word into syllables, specifies the number of syllables and after that the child is going to put the token into a basket.

There are 5 baskets numbered with numbers from 1 to 5. The children must put the token into the basket that corresponds with the numbers of syllables. If all the tasks are made correctly the respective team will receive one point (a red or blue bowline).

After that is coming another child from the other one team named by the teacher.

If the respective child doesn't accomplish a task and needs help, one member of his team can help him. The winning team is the team that has more points.

Only the teacher names the children. If the tasks aren't made correctly the team doesn't receive any point. After the teaching game ends and the winning team is announced the children go to their tables to complete a worksheet where they have to break up word into syllables.

bles from the images drawn on the sheet and to write as many horizontally dashes as many syllables has the word. After that they can color the images and to circle the ones that start with the sound “c”. At the end of the activity the children are singing the song “IF YOU’RE HAPPY”.

Teacher’s role:

The teaching style and the teacher strategies and behaviors maintain a healthy balance in the interactions with the children.

The teacher tone of voice is calm, appropriate for the children, she directs the behaviors to prioritize the work and tasks accomplished, but also she adds some fun and competition to class, things that show a human and friendly side of the teacher. The teacher’s attitude is a positive one. The teachers also respect the rhythm of working of any child, making a balance between the general tasks and the individual particularities of the children. The tasks required by the teacher have a frequent appropriate comprehension and check to ensure no one is left behind. The teacher encourages all the children.

Children’s role:

The children perform the tasks required by the teacher manifesting interest and implication. The children have much knowledge, skills and abilities.

The skills of working in a team are very well developed because in many activities they work and study like this. They also live with big emotions the satisfaction of success and the perseverance of finding original and good solutions for achievements of the tasks required by the teacher.

Good Practice 43

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class
(25 children)

Purpose - Goals:

To learn and understand the environment and to stimulate the curiosity for its investigation. Additional objectives are: to choose and to group the autumn fruit after shape and color; to paint an apple and a grape using the adequate colors; to build boxes for the autumn fruit using big and small pieces of Lego and plastic cubes (combinations and assembly).

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explication, the exercise, and demonstration.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The activity is executed divided into three centers of interest: the science, arts and building areas.

The children are choosing the center of the interest according to a color. Red for science, blue for arts, and green for buildings. The required materials are: autumn fruit (natural and made of plastic); baskets; white sheets, watercolors, brushes, glasses with water, napkins, color palette; pieces of lego, and plastic cubes. The materials are well chosen, accessible to children, attractive and stimulating

Content of the Activity:

The activity is executed divided into three activity areas.

The teacher asks the children to choose a color bowline from a basket to find out at what center of interest they will work. After the children are choosing the colors they follow the symbol of the color that indicates the center of interest. The teacher announces the theme and the objectives that the children can understand what they must do to accomplish all the tasks that the teacher asks.

The tasks are:

SCIENCE: CHOOSE AND GROUP THE AUTUMN FRUIT AFTER SHAPE AND COLOR.

The children have to choose and to group the autumn fruits after them shape and color.

ARTS: PAINTING "THE APPLE AND THE GRAPE"

The children have to paint the appropriate appearance of the apple and the grape using the technique of painting and the adequate colors.

BUILDINGS: "CASKETS FOR THE AUTUMN FRUIT"

The children have to build (to combine and to assemble) small and big pieces of leggo and plastic cubes resulting casket for autumn fruit.

After the activity on the centers of interest end the teacher evaluates the work of the children and they are singing the song "NOW IS AUTUMN".

Teacher's role:

The teaching style and the teacher strategies and behaviors main-

tain a healthy balance in the interactions with the children. The teacher tone of voice is calm, appropriate for the children, she directs the behaviors to prioritize the work and tasks accomplished, but also she adds some fun and competition to class, things that show a human and friendly side of the teacher. The teacher's attitude is a positive one. The teachers also respect the rhythm of working of any child, making a balance between the general tasks and the individual particularities of the children. The teacher encourages all the children.

Children's role:

The children perform the tasks required by the teacher manifesting interest and implication. The skills of working in a team are very well developed because in many activities they work and study like this. They also live with big emotions the satisfaction of success and the perseverance of finding original and good solutions for achievements of the tasks required by the teacher.

Good Practice 44

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To strengthen the children's knowledge about the fairy tale "Queen Cards for stories; to develop creativity and expressiveness in written and oral language.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, demonstration, exercise, teamwork, and problem solving.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Sheets maze, maze game, dice, magnetic boards, magnetic letters and puzzle stories.

Content of the Activity:

Activity takes place in the activities areas. The theme of the group activity is "Queen Cards for stories". The hero of the activity a "Queen card" presents to the children the tour they will take each activity center.

The group starts at the library area where they play the game „magic letters write wonderful words” with magnetic letters. Then they stop at the Science area where they play the Maze. In this game various fiction characters help to reach the destination, drawing the right way. Next is the Table - Puzzle game : „We play with the stories” where the group assembles puzzle pieces with scenes from stories;

Children play in the areas in small groups. The educator supervises the children at each center helping those who are having difficulties. The time limit for the completion of the work will be announced by the sound of the bell. Afterwards the group goes to each center to assess its work.

Teacher's role:

Teacher ensures an enriched environment, close to the age, interests and possibilities of children; Stimulates children teamwork, encourage and help those who are doing difficult; Participate with children to achieve the objectives.

Children's role:

Perform the tasks given, showing interest and involvement; Children teamwork skills, their interventions are subordinate group rules; live the excitement satisfaction success.

Good Practice 45

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

A whole day

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Check strengthening and systematizing knowledge about spring season. Verbal creativity and communication by formulating answers. Develop the ability of children to describe images. Educating an oral expressions grammatically correct: phonetic, lexical and syntactic. Strengthen the specific practical skills development level motor, stimulate interactivity and cooperation. Verification of specific skills and abilities work (drawing, coloring, to assemble, to combine, practical skills-household).

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, observation and narrations. Explanation, working individually and in small groups

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Pens, crayons, pencils; Kit: For the housewife, natural flowers, Tiplic tinted flowers wrapped raffia; Kit: LEGO, ARCO, shapes; Panel, rewards, medallions, "surprise box" letter of spring, "magic wand" badges tulips and daffodils, envelopes tasks didactic game tokens with spring flowers, a panel and red dots; Colored circles in various colors - ALA II; White and colored cardboard, paper and corrugated glass, scissors, glue sticks (soda straw); Watercolor, brushes, towels, jars of water, drawing sheets.

Content of the Activity:

A. *ART*: We play the game "fingerprint / flowers sisters realize" that is a game of painting by pressing and fingerprinting. At this center you have to take a picture of flowers by fingerprinting and one sister pressed flowers - each as desired. When we print color flowers on a flower and then place it on the sheet and leave her mark. To make flower sheet half sisters doubt, paint a tulip, use different color on the right side of the sheet and then put the other side pressed. The completed works will be exhibited and will be our "gallery tour".

B. *CONSTRUCTION*: " Castle Spring " - construction of various materials.

- « Flower Garden Spring » of geometric

" The center will have to show how well you have learned to build the geometric garden with spring flower beds and her castle.

C. *ROLE PLAY* - " For the Floraresele "

The center will have to divide roles seller and buyer , to use the correct formulas of courtesy that is used in a store , ask your favorite flowers , wrap them nicely and pay correctly.

I supervise the activity , intervening only when necessary or if you have requested .

D. *LIBRARY* : "The Gifts of Spring "

On this sheet you name each picture, then separate words into syllables and plot them in boxes, drawing many lines then horizontal colored. Only files whose words have three syllables. For each task performed correctly. Each child will receive a red dot on sheet.

Teacher's role:

The teacher turns creativity in leadership activities, uses a warm tone, calm, close children creating an atmosphere favorable acquisition of knowledge and skills. Assessment of school performance is made with modern. In evaluating children are encouraged. The teacher respects strides of each child, making balance between the general and individual peculiarities of children. Relationships with children promotes a climate conducive to communication, both between teachers and children, and children among them

Children's role:

The children are called to engage in the activities. All children possess the necessary skills and knowledge.

Purpose - Goals:

Checking children's knowledge on trades, the letters and sounds of the alphabet and play by drawing specific tools trades

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

exposure, explanation, conversation, exercise, problem solving, game, teamwork, tour the gallery;

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

boards with theme specific images, charts, color pencils, boxes, envelopes chips, different objects of crafts, rewards;

Content of the Activity:

Today we will discuss various kinds of professions. We will play a game called „Treasures of letters and words” where we verify and enhance the knowledge about professions, forming words, writing them and separating syllables . We also compose sentences and then we draw objects of different trades.

The rules of the game are: A plastic tray is full of cards that represent various. Children are separated in small groups. One child from each group draws a card that depicts a specific profession. Then each group has to complete specific tasks, to separate the word of the profession into syllables , to formulate a sentence including this word, and to draw an object representative of this profession. This procedure is repeated three times. At the end each group has to present its work and explain to the other children about the professions they picked.

Teacher's role:

The teacher turns creativity in leadership activities, uses a warm tone, calm, close children creating an atmosphere favorable acquisition of knowledge and skills. Assessment of school performance is made with modern. In evaluating children are encouraged. The teacher respects strides of each child, making balance between the general and individual peculiarities of children. Relationships with children promote a climate conducive to communication, both between teachers and children, and children among them.

Children's role:

The children are called to engage in the activities. All children possess the necessary skills and knowledge.

Good Practice 46**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

45 minutes

Number of children involved:

Small groups

Good Practice 47

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good

practice:

30 minutes

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Forming the ability to paint using finger painting technique

Practicing technical abilities in rendering an artistic theme.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explanation, exercise, gallery touring.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Puppet "Father Tom", patterns of cardboard houses, tempera, colour palette, paper tissues, CD player, music CD.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher introduces the surprise prepared by "Father Tom" puppet. He brought a box that contains the patterns of the houses that the children will paint. The subject is being announced "Today we will paint the house using our fingers"

The teacher demonstrates how the children will work explaining that they will apply a large number of dots, close to each other, using their index finger, which has been previously dipped into the colour that they want to use.

Warm-up activities for the hands are done, using the following rhyme that accompanies the finger moves:

We move our fingers and clap our little hands, we wheel our little fists.

Bud – flower– When they say "bud" the children gather their fingers in a fist, when they say "flower" they spread their fingers. The children recite the poem "Fingers" moving one by one each finger named in the poem:

The thumb goes for a walk. The pointing finger carries the cane. The middle finger carries the coat. The ring finger carries the bags. The little finger, being so little, carries nothing.

The children work using the demonstrated technique (finger painting) and the teacher guides each one of them. As soon as the works are finished, the teacher places them on a board to organize a display. The children "visit" the display and choose their favourite paintings. "Father Tom" puppet rewards the children with smiley faces.

Teacher's role:

The teacher supervised the children while they work, stopping to give instructions and help the ones that require it. The teacher also provides general instructions:

"Be careful when you work with another colour to wipe your finger on the wet tissue!"

"Place the dots as close to each other as possible, we press, we lift (with the point of the index finger on the working surface)"

At the evaluation stage the teacher asks: *“Why do you like this painting?”* (problem solving situation)

Children’s role:

The children name the materials that they will work with

The children give reasons for why they like a certain painting:

“There are a lot of dots.” “The painting is not messy”. “He/She used a lot of red ”.

The children are pleased with the surprise they got from “Father Tom”.

Good Practice 48

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good

practice:

45 minutes

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

the application of skills regarding different painting techniques, by the correct handling of the specific working tools; the development of chromatic sensitiveness; the expressivity and creativity stimulation through painting, the experiences regarding visual or imaginary images concerning the given subject.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Conversation, explanation, the exercise, the gallery tour.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

The activity takes place in the class group arranged for painting. The necessary materials are: watercolors, stamps, sponge, patterns, paint rollers, site, toothbrushes, transparencies, carpets, frames and work-sheets. Also, silhouettes, panels for test posting, music-C.D.

Content of the Activity:

The pedagogue suggests children to visit Animal Palace. Also, she suggests to prepare in small groups in the class some gifts for the animals; carpets, picture frames, pictures, bibelots.

Children will be divided into teams by counter extraction with the symbol of carpet-workshop, frame, picture, bibelots. Specific criteria for the assessment of the gifts have been: originality, aesthetic appearance and proper use of various techniques.

Initial exercises to warm up hands are being executed: Move the fingers/We strongly clap our hands/Look the fist we rotate/ And off we go working.

The activity is unfolding under the company of a musical theme: Four Seasons by Vivaldi.

- Frame workshop: The frame is made by sprinkle technique.
- Carpet workshop: There are being made carpets by stamping technique.
- Pictures workshop: there are being realized images with animals by wax contour technique and stain colour expanse with rollers.
- Bibelot workshop: there are being made bibelots (animal silhouettes cut) by dropping techniques and colour fusion.

The criteria for assessing the gifts are reminded by the teacher and children are called to evaluate them. The pedagogue will make observations regarding the way activities develop, children participating. The class exit it is being made on a musical theme.

Teacher's role:

The pedagogue supports the expression of creativity as the activity unfolds, she encourages in a positive and calm way children to engage and work.

An appropriate atmosphere for the activity evolution;

Children's role:

Children are called to engage in the activity, try to express their creativity, and work in small groups. Finally they are called to practice their evaluation skills.

Purpose - Goals:

To practice the habit to degrade a number; to use in a proper way the working materials; to develop the ability to switch from individual work to teamwork within a specific task.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

exercise, conversation, explanation, play, the Gallery Tour.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Individual support files, penguin silhouettes, snow-flakes clouds, circles, paper squares, floating ice bank images, plastic little eyes for the penguins

Content of the Activity:

In a Pole set the children take their place on the little pillows in the free space. The governess asks them about the weather and the animals that live in polar areas. The children answer that the temperatures are very low in this area and that they know many animals that live here : the polar bear, the polar fox, the penguins. The children are asked if they notice anything on the clouds from the classroom background. They notice that the clouds are full of snow-flakes, then the children are asked to number the snow-flakes and to place the corresponding figure of the snow-flakes number.

Then children work individually with the penguin silhouettes. The educator asks the children to divide the group of 7 penguins in two subgroups, finding as many ways as possible. The children are doing dividing exercises.

The educator is thanking the children and as a reward for the mathematical activity they will have a little fun by contributing to the completing of the hall's set in making penguins. They go to the practical activity of folding the paper „Penguins”, by saying the lyrics : „ We are penguins and we play/ All day we have fun/ But when hunger is here/ Off into the ocean we go”.

The children are encouraged to discover what materials they have on the table. They discover the paper squares out of which they will make the penguins, using the ability to fold paper. The finalist penguins will be stucked on the floating-ice banks from the group hall. The children are invited to take a tour to see if the colleagues' works are properly executed and if they did follow the working techniques. There are individual and general appreciations being made regarding the development of the entire activity. The children exit the hall singing the song “At the North/South Pole”.

Teacher's role:

The teacher used ways and techniques to evaluate the results of the learning that were adapted to the scientific content. The children were encouraged systematically; the children were assigned with tasks

Good Practice 49**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good

practice:

30 minutes

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

(22 children)

according to each one's developmental level.

Children's role:

The children have specific knowledge according to the moment of the school year and that they also apply them in working tasks. The presented activity succeeds in turning on the interest of all children them all implying body and soul, giving answers and asking appropriate questions. The children's behavior shows their total implication in the activity and the emotion that they feel at every new working task.

Purpose - Goals:

To learn what recycling is and to understand its utility.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Experiential learning, dialogue, children hands on experience, cooperative learning.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Various kinds and colors of fabrics, temperas, glue, cardboards, fake hair, brushes, and color markers. Also various materials from recycling like plastic bottles, milk paper boxes, plastic caps from water bottles, etc.

Content of the Activity:

In the first phase of the activity the children collect from their houses the materials they are going to use in the construction of a miniature city model from recycled materials. In the second phase of the activity children are creating groups and they are planning the construction of the miniature city. In two learning activities throughout the day the groups construct the city model. One group of children creates the “ground” of the city. They highlight in the big white cardboard with grey markers the roads of the city. Another group paints the milk boxes and cuts holes in them to make them look like houses. A third group creates cars from the plastic bottles and the plastic caps as wheels. A group of children is responsible for the styling and decoration of the miniature recycled city. They paint the houses, they create paper trees and add the fake woolen hair for leafs and use the old fabrics for decoration of the city. When the construction of the city is finished, the children discuss with their teacher about the importance of recycling in the city. How they used the recycled materials they brought to the class and how the recycled materials are used in real life.

Teacher’s role:

The teacher encourages the children to actively participate in the collection of recycled materials. She implements cooperative teaching and supports children initiatives throughout the planning of the miniature city. During the construction of the city she intervenes only when necessary to scaffold children’s ideas and learning. Finally, she encourages children’s reflection about their activities and the content of their discussions.

Children’s role:

Children are called to work cooperatively, to experiment in the usage of the recycled materials and to discuss with their teacher about the value of recycling.

Good Practice 50**Country of origin:**

Greece

Duration of good practice:

First phase:

two days.

Second phase:

two learning activities

- 45 minutes each

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 51

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good

practice:

30-35 minutes

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To develop linguistic skills

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Experiential learning, hands on experience,

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Temperas, brushes, white paperboards.

Content of the Activity:

Children are called to draw a personal story from the summer. Something they did, experienced, played, visited, etc. After they finish, the teacher changes the classroom seating and places the chairs in a half cycle format. Then she explains to the children that they have to create a fairy tale. The children have to present their drawing and talk to the other children about their stories. Then they have to create a fairy tale based on their narrations for the summer. Together with the teacher they accompany the story with various child songs about the summer.

Teacher's role:

The teacher helps the children to express themselves and encourages them to talk about their drawings. Then she orchestrates the story building about the summer and she poses constructivist questions to help children think and talk more.

Children's role:

Draw a summer painting based on their experiences and the talk about it. Discuss with the other children and create a summer fairytale.

Purpose - Goals:

To empower children's reading literacy. To practice in oral fluency, in creating stories and in narrating stories.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Project method, cooperative learning.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

A wide variety of books, temperas, colored markers, fabrics, clothes for dramatic play.

Content of the Activity:

The project included a series of activities throughout the year. Children interviewed their parents about the books they are reading. In another activity, children read books and experienced the stories using their bodies and the space. Children chose various classic fairy tales and stories and experimented in changing their endings. Some activities focused in drawing the paintings and pictures of child literature. Some workshops made in the classroom focused in creating soft books and cloth books. Children practiced in creating stories with specific heroes and narrating their adventures to the other children. Every second week they chose to read a book with their parents and talk about them in class with the other children.

Teacher's role:

Support children to participate and experiment. Encourage cooperation and help them to love books and reading.

Children's role:

To discover, experiment and learn new things and new experiences.

Good Practice 52**Country of origin:**

Greece

Duration of good practice:

Throughout the year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 53

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good

practice:

Five days

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To practice the art of asking questions, to practice their oral skills.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Questions, dialogue, brainstorming.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

A computer, a digital camera.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher invites a journalist in the class to talk to the children. The children have prepared the previous day, after brainstorming and extended discussion what kind of questions they have. After the visit, the children propose that they play the journalists and that they direct interviews with each other. They decide to record the interviews with the digital camera of the class. They are organized in small groups to create the scenarios, the topics and the questions that will be asked. The next day they execute the interviews, and complete the recording of the interviews with the cameras. The fifth and final day the teacher asks the children to evaluate the whole procedure and discuss on what they learned and what they would improve if they could do it again.

Teacher's role:

To pose questions that promote children's creativity and critical thinking, to encourage creativity, experimentation and communication.

Children's role:

Active engagement, brainstorming, cooperation and experimentation.

5.4 INTERACTIONS

In early childhood settings, each moment that teachers and children interact with one another is an opportunity to develop positive relationships. Teachers can use a variety of strategies to build positive relationships with children. Teacher behaviors such as listening to children, making eye contact with them, and engaging in many one-to-one, face-to-face interactions with young children promote secure teacher-child relationships. Talking to children using pleasant, calm voices and simple language, and greeting children warmly when they arrive in the classroom with their parents or from the buses help establish secure relationships between teachers and children (CSEFEL, 2012).

Research has suggested that teacher-child relationships play a significant role in influencing young children's social and emotional development (Baker, 2006; Gregoriadis, & Grammatikopoulos, 2014; Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009). In studies of teacher-child relationships, children who had a secure relationship with their preschool and kindergarten teachers demonstrated good peer interactions and positive relationships with teachers and peers in elementary school. On the other hand, children who had insecure relationships with teachers had more difficulty interacting with peers and engaged in more conflict with their teachers. In addition, research has shown that teachers' interaction styles with children help children build positive and emotionally secure relationships with adults. For instance, teachers' smiling behaviors, affectionate words, and appropriate physical contact help promote children's positive responses toward teachers. Also, children whose teachers showed warmth and respect toward them (e.g., teachers who listened when children talked to them, made eye contact, treated children fairly) developed positive and competent peer relationships. Moreover, children who had secure relationships with their teachers demonstrated lower levels of challenging behaviors and higher levels of competence in school. Research has suggested that teacher-child relationships play a significant role in influencing young children's social and emotional development.

In addition, other studies have shown that the use of positive social skills with peers early on can lead to the development of positive peer relationships, acceptance, and friendships (e.g. Kupersmidt, & Dodge, 2004). Although many children develop these positive social skills naturally, some children do not. Children who are withdrawn as well as young children with mental retardation, autism, conduct problems, and emotional disturbances often have difficulty interacting appropriately with their peers and are thus at risk for later social problems. By teaching children appropriate social skills, providing them with willing and accepting peers to use the skills with, and creating opportunities for children to practice these skills, teachers can improve all children's social behaviors, potentially for a lifetime.

Systematically embedding additional planned social interactions

throughout the classroom day provides increased opportunities for learning positive social behaviors. It is important for teachers to use developmentally and individually appropriate strategies that take into consideration children's differing needs, interests, styles, and abilities. For example, with infants and toddlers, teachers respond to their cries or other signs of distress. Teachers let children know they care about them through warm, responsive, physical contact such as giving pats on the back, hugging, and holding young children in their laps. For pre-school children, teachers encourage mutual respect between children and adults by waiting until children finish asking questions before answering them, and by encouraging children to listen when others speak. In addition, teachers' use of positive guidance techniques (e.g., modeling and encouraging appropriate behavior, redirecting children to more acceptable activities, setting clear limits) helps children develop trusting relationships with their teachers.

In sum, the Early Change project strongly believes that the quality of teacher-child relationships is the cornerstone of a child's social and academic adjustment and success to school. The academic trajectory of a child can be completely different if this child forms a positive relationship with the teacher or if it doesn't. This is the reason that interactions occupy a discrete position on the good practices inventory form, in an effort to collect examples of positive classroom climates and warm and safe relationships.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote an articulated approach to different domains of personal and social development, to the area of expression and communication and knowledge about the world.

Using the story 'Rafa and the professions' as a resource we started a project on professions.

This activity was extended to the parents and hereby professions were introduced in a practical approach. The parents came to kindergarten to explain and give examples of what their work consisted of.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The parents came to kindergarten and brought with them what they thought was necessary to explain what their work consisted of.

The parents also brought tasks to complete with the children and interact with them, which was a way of them to meet their children's friends and the environment they spend their days in.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The book with the story used to start the project.

Material for explaining and showing examples about each profession.

For the pastry baker: flour, sugar, eggs, chocolate, bowl, electric mixer, baking tray

For the gardener: plants, flowers, fertilizer, hoe

For the journalist: computer/laptop and photo camera

For the carpenter: wood panels/boards, glue, hammer, nails

Content of the Activity:

After the theme was introduced with the help of a story, the parents were invited to come to the kindergarten and explain and –when ever possible- demonstrate what they do at work so that the children would understand this subject.

We had several parents coming to kindergarten. A pastry baker baked a cake with the children, a gardener helped with our small kitchen garden and gave us some advice on how to take care of it, a journalist who prepared a piece of news with the children and a carpenter who the children helped building a piece of furniture (a small cupboard) he then offered the kindergarten.

Before accomplishing their task, all the necessary materials were shown to the children and a short conversation was held about the advantages and disadvantages of the profession. This way, children understood what the different professions consisted of.

Teacher's role:

In this case the teacher worked as a moderator and actively participated in the activity also learning and discovering advantages and dis-

Good Practice 54**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One month (project)

Number of children involved:

50 children from two kindergarten classes

advantages of different professions.

Children's role:

The children actively enrolled in the activity helping the parents carry out the tasks and asking numerous questions. Afterwards the preferences of the children were noted as well as their concerns about the different professions.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This good practice was the manner the teacher considered the children would learn about different professions in a playful and dynamic way.

Children did not only get to know the names of the professions but also the materials required , if they are easy or difficult to learn and if they are lucrative.

Purpose - Goals:

To promote the collaboration with families.

To experience cultural practices such as “Mother’s Day Celebration”.

These goals were operationalized and made intentional in a comprehensive way, contributing to work the following areas: personal and social education, and expressions, especially in different areas of arts and literacy (to make a gift and a song for the mother) and also the knowledge of world.

In this activity some art work was developed by reusing materials.

Literacy was worked writing a song: language, phonological awareness, the concept of poetry, recognizing and learning letters, emergence of writing.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The following strategies were used:

- Sharing ideas; large, small group and individual work ;
- Writing a song;
- Making gifts for mothers.
- To go shopping;
- Baking biscuits;
- To work in the garden.

The teacher has the role of mediator and manages relationships and communication among children; summarizes children’s ideas, positively reinforce them, and boosts and facilitates the processes, making possible the implementation of children’s ideas.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Ingredients and utensils for baking cakes/biscuits.

Room preparation: reorganize the space; decorate tables with vases of carnations (painted with the colored water they consume) and postcards made by children; folded napkins with simple origami.

Containers for cakes and tea.

Carnations “painted” in the classroom.

Plants: cabbage, lettuce and courgette. Fertilizer and agricultural equipment

Content of the Activity:

Everyone was excited before the arrival of the mothers. Everything had been planned days before and the children gave signs that they knew what they had to do today.

In the meeting, teacher and children formed groups. The teacher recalled and explained to children - naming some of them – that in this morning only some of the mothers would be present, because some, given the constraints of working hours, would only come in the afternoon; the teacher explained that they would repeat everything that time.

In that classroom, children had already negotiated in organized groups, for this kind of situation; groups were recorded and displayed on the wall: “group of friends”; “group of the monsters”, “ group of friendship “ and “group of arrangers”.

Good Practice 55**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

Whole day

Whole day

Number of children involved:

The whole class

(23 children)

So, each group volunteered to each of the tasks, but all groups would try each of the activities, baking biscuits included. The group showed great autonomy and assertiveness in interactions. Adults walked around and supervised activities, needs and evoked joy and good mood. By late morning, the “honored figures” that were expected at that time, arrived and children received them. Their children had the leading role. Sons and daughters, with help of the educator, served their mother’s tea and cookies, and, between kisses, greetings and smiles, they talked.

Mothers had a place to sit. At some point the children, guided by a signal from the teacher, met at a specific place of the room and sang the *song of the Mother*, written on a poster decorated with flowers made of silk worms cocoons, and displayed in a central place where everyone could read it. After the song, children picked up their gift and gave them to their mothers. Emotion was evident. Before leaving, mothers were invited to go with their children to the “pedagogical vegetable garden” to plant lettuce, cabbage and *courgette*.

Then, wash hands and lunch, a little later today! The whole climate was of great familiarity and good relationship among all. This morning, and part of the afternoon for mothers who could not be there in the morning, was the conclusion of a small project designed to celebrate Mother’s Day.

Teacher’s role:

The teacher acted as a mediator giving children autonomy, supervising and intervening only when it was necessary.

Teacher shared with children things she has brought from home (beautiful tablecloths, as they asked, kettle and cups).

Teacher warmly received the mothers, blinked the “eyes” to the children, with a smile, and oriented the “ceremony” that the moment deserved.

Teacher’s good mood was constant. Teacher managed adequately different wishes and interests, and was actively involved in all activities with the children.

Children’s role:

The children did well throughout the process, helped each other and gave opinions to improve the presentation of the setting. Revealed implication, enthusiasm, and joy in “hosting mothers”. Revealed much autonomy in the management of activities throughout the process.

Children seemed happy, not only for themselves but for the others. This feeling was clear when a mother came late, and children organized themselves to sing to the “E.’s mother who arrived now”.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This “Good Practice” was the conclusion of an experience that allows the pre-school to be “a place of life”, “a meeting place” and “a place of opportunity”, developing abilities, constructing knowledge, in a comprehensive way, in relation to content areas included in the curriculum guidelines for preschool education.

Purpose - Goals:

This activity intends to promote self-esteem. As not every child has the opportunity to develop a positive self-esteem in his home, it is the teacher's role to encourage and help him to learn to value the positive features he has on his own/by himself. Developing this skill may be a protective factor/capacity that persists throughout life.

The specific goals of this activity are: helping children to learn how to value their characteristics and helping them to look for positive characteristics in others.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The methods used are dialogue, questions and problem solving.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Cardboard, transparent cellophane (or transparent adherent tape), colour pencils or markers to paint, scissors.

Content of the Activity:

Before this activity was implemented the teacher makes 'magical glasses' with the materials described above. Actually/In fact this session relies on children's imagination to be successful, which means that the 'magical glasses' are invisible (they do not exist). But to help children carry out this idea and to implement this activity, the teacher has to teach the children that with the help of 'magical glasses' we can see the positive and good things in others. Gradually, the children are supposed to learn to see positive things in others without need to use 'magical glasses'.

The teacher initiates the session telling the children: -Today, I have discovered something very important! I've discovered that I had a pair of magic glasses. And do you know why they are magical? Because they help me see the special things that I have and also the special things others have.... The teacher then puts the magical glasses on and looks at the children attentively. He subsequently starts naming positive features of each child. Afterwards he tells the children they all can have a pair of magical glasses and he suggests making them. He hands over the drawing of the glasses as well as markers, colour pencils and/or other materials to decorate them and make them even more magical. As soon as every child finished decorating the magical glasses, he puts children in pairs and asks them to observe their partner until they discover one (or more) positive features. Finally the children round up and sit in a circle and the teacher asks each child to point out what positive characteristics he has become aware of. He then asks the group if they agree and at the end they all clap. This procedure is repeated till every child took part. The activity should be repeated on other occasions and the pairs should be changed. It can also be done with the whole group at once. Throughout the year, children should be encour-

Good Practice 56**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One learning activity (approximately 45 min)

Number of children involved:

Small groups

aged to find positive traits in themselves and in others without the help of the 'magical glasses'.

Teacher's role:

The teacher participates in the activity motivating and encouraging the children to pay attention and to examine themselves and others and also helps the children to build the magical glasses.

Children's role:

In this activity, children can take part in smaller groups as well as in bigger ones and they can also participate individually, as they have to observe and mention the positive characteristics they have found in their peers individually. Additionally, they have also carried out a task individually, namely decorating their magical glasses according to their preferences. Later they could use their 'magical glasses' in free/unstructured activities if they wished to. Besides, this activity fostered expression, imagination, creativity and language.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This good practice is part of the pre-competence/skill program 'Nino and Nina' – how to promote self control, emotional differentiation, self esteem and social competences in pre-school children.

Purpose - Goals:

The goal of this activity was to promote the development of competences of emotional differentiation and to identify situations in which different emotional states occur. This activity was carried out within a program of social and emotional skills.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

The method used centered in verbal orientation/ guidance. As a strategy two rag dolls existent in the classroom were employed. These rag dolls are a reference in this program and the children display an intense relationship and interact with them. The teacher measured the children's dialogues and stimulated thinking by asking questions.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Rag dolls made in cooperation with the families (children and their families made different parts of the body or clothes of the rag dolls). Sheets of paper, copies of the contour of the doll's face, coloured pencils, markers.

Content of the Activity:

In class, children are encouraged to think about different feelings and emotions and to express themselves.

With the help of the rag dolls, children are challenged to identify different emotions (sadness, happiness, anger, fear) and the related facial expressions and body language/positions that stand for different emotions. When they start to talk about this, children are guided to identify a situation of happiness. These situations are shared within the group so that children can become aware of what this feeling represents (recognizing the feeling in themselves and others).

After talking about this theme, children are encouraged to register their facial expression when feeling happy.

These registrations - and what each child expressed verbally - are then showed in the activities room.

This activity was maintained with other situations, namely recording a situation in which they felt happy.

Teacher's role:

The teacher's role was to stimulate/promote thinking through questions and mediating dialogues to identify different emotions.

Children's role:

This activity was composed of moments when the entire group was present and moments when only a small group was participating. Children actively participated in the establishment of different situations when they experience happiness. They also carried out the registrations with enthusiasm in a joyful mood.

Good Practice 57**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

1-2 learning activities

Number of children involved:

Whole class

Additional comments-Highlights:

This good practice was noted/written down to be an example of the Early C. project. This good practice was part of a program to promote social and emotional skills and it was intensively experienced by the children in the activities room, helping them build up skills at this level. This was just one of many activities implemented and the children were highly motivated and engaged/ involved in it.

Purpose - Goals:

With the project “Partilha de saberes” (“Sharing knowledge”) we intended to promote positive relations between children, parents and teachers/educators and local entities involved in different cycles of formal education and to promote active involvement of families and community in the preschool activities.

We have done reading, writing and art activities, explored stories / tales, using developmentally appropriate books, according to children’s language skills.

We promoted teamwork and the exchange of experiences between all participants of the educational community (children, parents, teachers, teachers’ assistants and local entities), involving them in the learning process.

We fostered the curricular and pedagogical articulation between preschools and schools (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle schools).

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Records kept in the course of activities (paintings, children opinions written by the adults). Dialogues with children (What they liked the most, what they learned, what they liked the less)

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Paper, paperboard, sticker paper, pencils, markers, crayons, books, computer, radios, CD.

Content of the Activity:

With the project “Partilha de saberes” (“Sharing knowledge”) we planned and developed common activities that involved educators, teachers and their groups of children, parents, teachers’ assistants and local entities. This project was developed in preschools and o three cycles (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle schools), being a way to develop collaboration and mutual understanding. With activities such as modeling, painting, stamping, dancing, reading poems, singing, drama, cooking, informal conversations and interviews we worked within the different content areas mentioned in the national curriculum guidelines: personal and social education, language and communication, and knowledge of the world.

Teacher’s role:

Teachers, children, parents, teacher’s assistants and local entities participated in the activities, revealing enthusiastic and supportive attitudes.

Children’s role:

In this activity, there were moments of involvement in large and small groups as well as individual tasks.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity enabled the development of different content areas from the national curricular guidelines for preschool education: personal and social education; language and communication; and understanding of the world.

Good Practice 58**Country of origin:**

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 59

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

5-6 days

(including days for the preparation)

Number of children

involved:

Two classes

(in total 44 preschool children)

Purpose - Goals:

To promote family involvement and participation through an event: an *autumn fair*; To give parents the opportunity to share knowledge and traditions with their children.

With this activity the children had the opportunity to cook, they made jam and marmalade with products that parents sent (quinces, apples, pears, pumpkin, ...). In addition they developed concepts such as weight, quantity and money.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The strategies used were: verbal guidance, sharing of incoming goods and confection of jams and marmalade. Families offered the products from their own garden and the children, with the help of the preschool teacher, weighed and placed it in small bags with the label they made. It was the children who sold the products at the fair.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Vegetables and fruits parents sent to school, as well as the jam and marmalade children made with the teacher.

Schoolyard

Tables

Cardboard, markers, colored pencils

Scales for weighing

Cash register toy

Content of the Activity:

The autumn fair was held outside the kindergarten and the population actively participated buying the jelly and the marmalade that children made as well as the fruit and the vegetables.

After this activity with the community children made a poster with drawings and photographs about it.

Teacher's role:

The teacher participated in activities encouraging and motivating the children. She promoted creativity but also the development of responsibility.

Children's role:

In this activity there were moments of participation in large group, especially when they were cooking marmalade, jam and jellies. Children actively cut small pieces of quince and pumpkin. Older children weighed and counted the jam pots and marmalade cups. They developed mathematical concepts and cooking skills.

At the end each child made his own record of the activity.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity promoted the acquisition of different skills, which crossed all areas of the curriculum guidelines for preschool education

Purpose - Goals: With this action we intent to promote the participation of the whole community in the school. The proposal was to make Christmas handcrafts to send to project comenius partners. The subject was the “angel cradle”.

In this activity, we promote the development of arts, in a collaboration between parents and children at school.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*): All materials were in the tables in each classroom and children with parents or grandparents’ support were free to create what they want related with the subject.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*): Different materials were used: boxes, bottles, cardboard, markers, colored pencils, different kind of papers, special Christmas papers, glue, clothing buttons, different kinds of ink, ...

Content of the Activity: The workshop was held, within the Comenius Project “Lullabies, the universal language of love”. This workshop involved preparing cards and Christmas ornaments to send to the partners involved in the project. The whole preschool children took part in this activity. A big exhibition was prepared before sending some of the products to the partners.

Teacher’s role: The preschool teacher managed the activity, empowering parents and children in the development of each work, supporting and explaining some details about the specificity of this activity in the project.

Children’s role: In this activity children were involved actively, “advising” their parents about some materials they could use. They built incredible art pieces.

Good Practice 60

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One morning

Number of children involved:

Two classes

(45 children: 20 + 25)

and some parents and grandparents.

Good Practice 61

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

One school year

Number of children

involved:

A number of classes in cooperation with the preschool department.

Purpose - Goals:

This project started from the narrative of the story “The boy did not like soup” of Manuela Mota Ribeiro, teachers and children made a doll called “João”. “João” was experiencing different activities and projects in kindergartens. This project belongs to the preschool department of a group of kindergartens and schools.

The teachers want with this project to make a curricular articulation between departments, to articulate and make activities all together, to work the sharing and affective relationship, competences of the project “Growing up playing” (self-control, self-esteem,...), to work health and healthcare, in an interdisciplinary way.

The teachers work with children in various project, namely “João and sciences”, “João and friends”, “João and books”, “João and games”.

They want to fight the neglecting and indiscipline, to promote coordination and sequentially, to promote the participation of the families in school life, to articulate between cycles inter and intra departments, to improve educational outcomes, to interact with other children,...

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

During the school Year “João” visited all kindergartens and did what the children do inside their classrooms, being one more child between them. He passed from kindergarten to kindergarten and worked with all children of preschool department. The children worked with “João” in an interdisciplinary way, the sciences, books and shared affections, feelings and emotions with him.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Books, didactic games, team games, sciences materials, paintings, drawings, paints, scissors, glue, waste and recycle material, cardboard, plastic, tables, chairs, ...

Content of the Activity:

“João” started the activities and projects inside each kindergarten and grew up until the end of the year and now he was entered in primary school because he is 6 years old and he’s going to integrate the project “Growing up playing” that works the social competences in children and is a project supported by the city council.

He has a 3-year-old sister and she’s going to attend kindergarten since now.

In one of the kindergartens related to “João and friends” he worked with children the correspondence between kindergartens, he visited the post office and they worked the profession of postman and at the end he carried a suitcase where there are all the activities that were being made in each kindergarten.

In another kindergarten related to “João and games” the teacher and children made a snail race and studied the behavior of the snails.

The teachers made a blog called “Reguila” and have Facebook address related all the activities to this idea of a project.

Teacher’s role: The teachers thought that the only negative aspect was the transport, they don’t have enough money, time and bus to make the articulation that they want with “João” and make all the activities all together.

The positive aspects were the friendship established between children and teachers, the exchange of activities that lets work all the curricular areas, allows the joint curriculum because it encourages children to carry out different activities and projects and this project encouraged the articulation with special education and with the project “Live Science”.

Children’s role:

The children participated in all activities with enthusiasm, they made a friendship relation to “João” and they showed emotions and feelings.

They developed relations skills and shared experiences between them.

This project will continue with another friend “Joana” in kindergartens and “João” in Primary schools.

Additional comments-Highlights:

“Good practice” done to be an example to the project Early Change Project. Activity that has interdisciplinary and cross-curricular themes and that offer stimulation for a wide range of subjects. The children develop best when they have secure consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers. Practices that encourage children in social interaction and plays with others.

Good Practice 62

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

3 activities,
40 minutes each.

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To track those students that peers consider “star” of the class, the “black sheep” of the class, as well as children who are neither and are identified from peers as “neutral”.

To prevent negative attitudes towards children that are considered to be the “black sheep of the class” and help these children join the group as well as help the rest of the class to accept them. Identify “neutral” children and help them join the group.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Application of the sociometric method. The sociogram takes the form of an individual interview with each child individually

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

An A3 size paper glued on pictures of children all around, Voice recorder, markers of 2 different colors, computer for results’ analysis. The area used was the teachers’ office in order to have a personal interview with the child.

Content of the Activity:

I used an A3 paper where I glued pictures of all the children of the class (pic.) so that children could see their classmates and provide their answers. I also used a voice recorder to record the interviews. I then invited each child to the teachers’ office. Each child was requested to answer the following hypothetical questions: “If your mom wanted you to throw a party at your house and you can only invite 2 of your classmates, who would you invite?”. When children answered this question I used the blue marker to mark children’s answer on the A3 paper. The next question was “Are there any children that you wouldn’t want to invite if you could invite the whole class?” When children answered this question I used the red marker to mark children’s answer on the A3 paper.

Where the sympathy or antipathy was mutually recorded I used both blue and red.

With the completion of the interviews and the analysis of the data I extracted the results shown on the Photo below.

My assumption was that some children are considered to be more famous than others was true. What I did not expect was that a specific child would not get any positive voted and that 2 specific children would be defined as neutral.

The results were challenging and I started thinking of how I could these specific children ...

Teacher’s role:

I tried to address clear questions and ensure that all children understood the question, especially foreign children who knew little Greek.

During the children's answers I did not expressed my opinion in any way, I simply encouraged them to say their opinion.

Children's role:

The children most often answered the questions without any hesitation.

Some children did not want to give negative vote at all and I respected that.

Additional comments-Highlights:

I will briefly mention an idea that I applied to help the child that was identified as the less famous one – the black sheep of the class to become more accepted by the others. The following week we were planning to have elections in the classroom. I thought that if the specific child was part of the class committee he would push himself to behave more responsibly so that others would see that and change their perception about him. When recording the results of the election's voting (which we did in class with "polls" and lists where there were photos of all children) I confess that I did an electoral fraud and I added extra votes in the specific child's name so that he would be elected as a member of the committee. I believe that this action along with many others greatly helped the specific child. It would be better I did a second sociogram in the middle of second quarter and another one at the end of the school year. Although I was planning to do that I didn't manage to do so since the school where I work is on a quite big one and I didn't find the necessary time to do so because I had to do so many other things.

Good Practice 63

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

Morning 8-10 AM

Number of children involved:

A small group of children

Purpose - Goals:

To help a child feel comfortable with herself and assure good relations with adults and children. To prevent some children to be mad at one child because she was intruding their play and try to make the situation a learning process for all the children on how to solve problems and how to play.

To decide together with the children about the accepted regulations for playing. What are the possibilities to play and how to play together and to avoid having your play disturbed? The purpose is to stop a child from disturbing other children in a inclusive way so that the child learns how to be a part of other children's play and the other children are comfortable with the child.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Dialogue, communication and "hands on" guiding. The children argue for their solutions and needs. The pedagogues act as mediators, ask questions, explain rules, hold the one child's hands and are very close to prevent violence among the children.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

It is a daily routine in children's play.

Content of the Activity:

2 children have arranged 10-12 chairs in a circle so they can walk on them. They have great fun. Another child is interested and takes a chair away, so that the circle is broken and they cannot walk around in a circle. The other children tell her to stop doing that and one pedagogue is very close, watching the play and tells the child that she should let the chairs be as they are, so that the children don't fall. The child gets upset and keeps on taking the chairs away. A pedagogue takes her nice and calmly away from the group. In a little while the child is coming back to the chairs and 4 pedagogues come to the scene. The child walks like the other children on the chairs and the pedagogues say a lot of words like: "Everybody can play along" When one of the children says that the teasing child is stupid, the pedagogue says: "If you cannot say anything nice, then you shall not say anything".

The (teasing) child begins to walk backwards on the chairs and one of the teachers is away of the situation and says: "It looks dangerous so I will hold your hand". The child smiles and takes the hand. Shortly after this the pedagogue says to the children that everybody should out to play in the playground. The children ran to the wardrobe, but the pedagogue told them to clean up first. They came all back and all of them helped cleaning up. The pedagogue participated too.

Teacher's role: The pedagogues were asking questions to the child and reflecting with all the children about how the playing they had go-

ing. They were nice but firm and they used their hands (holding hands) to make sure no hard was done. Observing, close to the situation, and guiding, intervening.

Children's role:

The children were playing and were involved in the little crisis that was about to happen, and they were very much aware of the situation and discussing it in a very calm and competent way. They were engaged and they understood what the problem was about. The child in focus was also happy and would go on to the playground with the other children.

Reflecting, playing and arguing. They are upset and having an argument. But they take part and seem sure that the teachers will help them solve the problems.

Good Practice 64

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

10-15 minutes

Number of children involved:

A small group of children

Purpose - Goals:

Communication. Wait for turn and listen

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

The children are encouraged to communicate during lunch. They have a dialogue

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Sitting around the table

Content of the Activity:

Adult – child relation. Positive interaction where the children await their turn to tell their stories and everybody gets heard

Teacher's role:

The Social Educator has the overall view, answers the children when asked, shows understanding and asks into the children's stories

Children's role:

Listening to each other's stories and also telling stories.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The children were so engaged in the conversation and had great attention towards the other children's stories.

Purpose - Goals:

To make the children aware of social rules

Inspire the children's fantasy

Get a "friend" who is always funny and always tells stories, being good humored

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Drama play - dialogues with a doll (they only use this once in a while).

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

A hand puppet. Here is used an animal version, that none of the children have at home. When the puppet is not used they can see "her" all the time, because "Juliane" is sitting on top of a shelf.

Content of the Activity:

A group of children (a class) are going to have lunch. But before they start the pedagogue asks them if they can see who is visiting them. The children answer: "Juliane" and some of them says "Hej". The pedagogue takes Juliane down from the shelf and asks her how she is? Then Juliane asks the children how they are. The children answer and slowly the conversation will deal with how to take care for each other. The children are telling some nasty experiences they have had on the playground. Some have been beaten with a shovel, has got sand in their mouth, been kicked etc.

After the children have told about their experiences the conversation is turning to what to do? Juliane gives them a good advice. They can tell it to a pedagogue. Or they can say to the other child to stop by holding up the thumb = it is ok or down with the thumb = it is not ok.

They sing a song together and Juliane is leading the song. The conversation is turning again and they are talking about what to do in the following weekend. Many tell that they are going to the circus in town. At last the conversation is going back to Juliane who says thanks for today and tells the children that they are going outdoor to play.

The pedagogue is acting with the doll and making sure the words and gestures match each other. Making sure that there is a flow in the conversation between the questions and the answers the children gives. It is the pedagogue who is saying what Juliane is saying. She makes sure not to use the puppet too often because it must be special. It shall not be too instructive but more reflecting and positive.

The pedagogue is becoming another when she is Juliane.

Teacher's role:

To help children play out the dramatic play.

Children's role:

The children are involved in the dialog and they don't "see" that it is the pedagogue speaking. They play along very eagerly.

Additional comments-Highlights:

Some parents heard about Juliane and thought that she was a child.

Good Practice 65**Country of origin:**

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

10-15 minutes

Number of children involved:

20 children

Good Practice 66

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

5-10 minutes

Number of children involved:

4-6 children

Purpose - Goals:

To help the children to feel comfortable with each other and to make them experience water after rain. To help children to play together and learn together and to help them enjoy nature and water

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Dialogue. The children try to find their own solutions. The Social educator only act as mediator, asks question, to help them find their own rules and ways to play.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Water puddle on the playground. The playground where you can find grass, fruit trees, sand, all kinds of tools and on this day there was water because it has rained

Content of the Activity:

About 4 children is playing with a puddle on the playground. A pedagogue is standing close to the children and everybody is having a good time. Even though the puddle is very small all of the children are playing and having water. They have warm clothes on, it was not cold and not warm.

The pedagogues didn't (have to) say one negative word to the children which tell a story of a pedagogical culture where the children are sure that they can play and experience a lot of things. This time it is water and the playground is filled with possibilities for experience. Made by the pedagogues and the parents.

The pedagogue is with the children and near the children. She is not doing much, so we can see that the children are sure that they can investigate the water and get answers to questions they may have etc. She says: "Come over here" Is it a good idea" It has been raining a lot this night".

Teacher's role:

The pedagogue is together with the children. She is close to them and aware of them. They can easily speak with her and they do. She is making the children feel safe and in good hands.

Children's role:

The children can play and talk and reflect on what they experience. They are playing, happy and engaged.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The way the pedagogues act gives the children a good opportunity to learn a lot by their own experiences. Children can come and participate and leave again. The group is working so good together, is inclusive and the children get fresh air and learn about the weather, about water and about social rules and possibilities.

Purpose - Goals:

To increase a child's participation. To help a child feel comfortable with herself and assure good relations with adults and children

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

The method is to give the child an opportunity to feel good and do some of the things she likes to do. The pedagogues are using an everyday activity to help a child engage in the program.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*): -**Content of the Activity:**

The whole Kindergarten is having a profound cleaning up, so furniture, play toy and other things are put in a classroom where there are no children.

It is in the afternoon and two pedagogues think that they have an opportunity to take things back where they belong.

Tine is a girl who often leaves the group to visit our headmaster of the Kindergarten in her office just to talk or she goes to a room where there are no other children.

When one of the pedagogues goes to the other room to put things back Tine follows her.

The pedagogue says to Tina: "You can come with me. We are going to put things back after all the cleaning.

She would like that very much and she is doing a good job. She obviously feels good being together with the two pedagogues, talking and working. The pedagogues tells her how helpful she has been.

Teacher's role:

The teacher found a good solution, a good way of giving the child a good experience. She uses her position to let the child come along and she talks, listens and tell the child how happy she is for the help.

Children's role:

-

Additional comments-Highlights:

If the pedagogue had not acknowledged the child's needs for some time without noise and other children, the child might have had been called back to her classroom and been told that she had to stay in the classroom and not just leave the room.

Good Practice 67**Country of origin:**

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

1hour

Number of children involved:

One particular child

Good Practice 68

Country of origin:

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Throughout the school year

Number of children involved:

The whole group

Purpose - Goals:

- Instructs a child to independently choose a play that he/she likes.
- Instructs a child for a long-lasting play.
- Instructs detecting correspondence of numbers and learning numbers.
- Recognizing their own/friend's name.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

- Supporting interaction/friendships → learning to read
- Supporting long-lasting play → mathematics
- Anticipation

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Picture cards and number cards, as well as name cards.

Content of the Activity:

During the free activities children get to choose a play with their name cards if the number of children needed to play is available. The play is not changed during the same afternoon → long duration of the play, calming down to play. It provides the opportunity for plays to change (prevents from being stuck with the same play) because the name card needs to be put for a new play each day. They cannot always play with their best friend → getting to know each other.

Teacher's role:

- Preparing the materials
- Choosing the games and changing them periodically
- To explain the system to the children
- To help as needed and to support choosing the plays

Children's role:

- To think about and choose a play that he/she likes
- To accept that they cannot always play their favorite plays and/or with their best friend → tolerating disappointments, social skills, waiting for their own turn

Additional comments-Highlights:

- The child's participation in the activities and the process of planning them
- The child is able to anticipate his/her actions
- Making the child take responsibility of and commit to his/her actions in the group

Purpose - Goals:

To help children learn to play:

Some practice being a leader, collect courage to command others.

Some practice listening to the instructions of a play given by another child.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Adults instruct as needed, for example by reminding the children of who is leading the play.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The first player gets to choose the play. It can be, for example, an animal play including plastic animals, blocks and fabrics. The first player chooses the materials. There are no other players in the room so that the first player and his/her friend can take their time and space.

Content of the Activity:

The first player is "the boss" who chooses two players. The two chosen players cannot decline from playing. They play according to the directions of the "boss". They can suggest, for example "how about these two go to eat?" The boss can agree or order let's go "fishing". The playing session lasts a minimum of 30minutes. On average the first play lasts 45minutes. Each child of the group gets to be the first player and choose two friends to play with.

Teacher's role:

The adult is an observer who can expedite the play if needed. For some children it is hard when others are telling them what to do but in the first play they are being reminded about it. "Remember that Liisa is the first player now and gets to choose." After several plays, children understand the rules and remember that the "boss" rules. The adult can take his/her time and observe the children play and write notes on how the play goes. Children find it fun to hear after the play what the adult has written down, for instance children's sayings.

Children's role:

Children can take their time to play and enjoy being the first player, the two friends are usually glad that they are chosen to play. Children advance the play together although the first player gets to make the decisions. The two friends or "the boss" will have good suggestions. Children find it important to get to be the first player on their turn.

Additional comments-Highlights:

- Adults can take the time to observe the play
- Children enjoy being able to take their time to play
- Helps shy children to say out loud their opinions during the play
- The children who are always vocal and take the control of the play, learn to give other children space and an opportunity to advance the play the way the other child wants it

Good Practice 69**Country of origin:**

Finland

Duration of good

practice:

30-45 minutes

Number of children involved:

A group of children (approximately 15 children)

Good Practice 70

Country of origin:

Finland

Duration of good practice:

A couple of hours

Number of children involved:

The whole group

Purpose - Goals:

To help children's regulation of their own activities. Also to empower their planning and their commitment to the play/activities.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Outdoor play, playground activities.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Playground board in which there are different play options and children's own signs.

Content of the Activity:

After the morning round, children choose from the playground board a play and mark themselves with their own sign (clothespin) in to the concerned play. From the board one can also see how many children can participate in the concerned play.

Play can be switched only after the previous play has been cleaned off, the children have made sure there is room available in another play and they have changed their sign into the other game. Helps to commit to a play and decreases wondering around.

Teacher's role:

The teacher prepares plays and materials ready for the children. Instructs on the use of the playground board.

Children's role:

To participate in the plays.

Purpose - Goals:

To help children have consistent interactions in the early childhood center.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Teachers supervise children and interact with them to develop positive relationships.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

-

Content of the Activity:

The staff rotates with children (inside of own house) so that when a child's group changes, there is at least one familiar adult with the child. The less rotation there is with the staff it allows teachers to have a more in-depth knowledge of the child and the family.

Teacher's role:

Teachers are not assigned with the same group of children, but they rotate. We consider it good that nobody is "stuck" with one age group but all workers have the experience with different age children (from babies to preschoolers).

Children's role:

To interact with all the adults of the early childhood center.

Additional comments-Highlights:

In the Finnish early childhood system the children are not placed in a classroom, but they are allowed to move freely in all areas of the early childhood center. This way they don't have a specific teacher, but they interact with all the adults in the school.

Good Practice 71**Country of origin:**

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Daily practice

Number of children involved:

The whole group

Good Practice 72

Country of origin:

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Daily practice

Number of children involved:

Children in pairs

Purpose - Goals:

The goal is to provide children with more private spaces where they can play with their friends.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

A very large cardboard box. Glue and red wallpaper, black and white cardboards and pillows and a small stool.

Content of the Activity:

Obtained a very large cardboard box that a firm was about to recycle. The flaps of the box became a roof (a small hole was left where the adult can see in if needed). A door and windows, which could also be closed, were cut off on the sides of the box. Children helped to spread the paste when red wallpaper, which was leftover from a child's home, was placed around the house. The house was finished with white window frames, black tile roof (pieces of cardboard that the children cut off) and a mailbox. Pillows were placed inside as seating and a small stool as a table. The house became very popular place to play. Because it is made of such a strong cardboard, it has been good for already a year.

Teacher's role:

To guide the children into constructing the card board house for their private play and to explain to them how to use it.

Children's role:

To cooperate in the construction of the card board house and to listen to the teacher's directions.

Purpose - Goals:

- Enriching children's knowledge about the life of domestic animals, as well as some aspects related to the feeding and care of them; Deepening social behaviors and adapt to different situations.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Observation, conversation, explanation, demonstration, exercise.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Farm environment with all that it includes stables, yard and facilities necessary for such activities.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher has already prepared this activity talking to children about pets, life, food and the benefits derived from them. Children watched several videos, read files and have puzzles to consolidate knowledge about animals.

For the preparation of the visit the teacher has trained children how to behave at the farm (what to do and what not around animals), what is allowed and what is not in the farm. During the visit, the teacher spent the time among kids and they answered all the questions they addressed (except explanations farm representative):

- Whenever I feed daily?
- Where do I get the fan animal farm?
- What happens with sick animals? etc.

Some of the children observed where the bottles are being filled with milk, other observe milking cows and other were walking some pony horses. They visited all the places where livestock lives and after that kids started coloring sheets and about animals; they folded paper with origami-engineering making animals and poultry, sang and recited poems and songs animals for staff working on the farm. The day ended in an atmosphere of joy and the children were back in kindergarten more relaxed and with more experiences that relate to domestic animals.

Teacher's role:

Teacher proves creativity is close to children, creating an atmosphere conducive to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Children are encouraged and assisted in solving tasks, they respond with calm, explain in detail each child misunderstood things;

- In relation to children promotes a climate conducive to communication, both between teachers and children, and between them. Encourage the free expression of the interaction of children with both the teacher and among themselves and with the staff at the farm.

Children's role:

Children are relaxed around the teacher, manifest freely, naturally uninhibited. They have to show interest and perform the duties with pleasure. They have to observe and pose questions that are relevant to their field trip. Children are transmitted emotions and express them positively to animals visited. Children relate freely both between themselves and with the staff caring animals.

Good Practice 73**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

One day

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 74

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

20-30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

The objectives of this activity are: to name the presented materials; to use the previously used techniques (ripping, crumpling, glueing); to combine the given materials to fulfill the given task; to cooperate with the colleagues all throughout the activity; Also to build by joining and combining The Palace of Santa Claus; to cooperate in order to fulfill the task; to sort the images showing the wanted gift; to compose a letter to Santa;

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explanation, individual work, working in pairs, in small groups, gallery touring. *Art* "Decorations for the Christmas tree" cutting, ripping, crumpling, glueing. *Construction*: "The Palace of Santa Claus" – building by joining and combining. *Science*: "A Letter to Santa Claus" – sorting images with objects (gifts) that the children would like to receive from Santa

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The classroom is arranged on the basis of the two areas of interest, where children will perform their activity during the day. The materials that are being used are: cards representing different objects, coloured cards, scissors, glue, natural and synthetic materials, pictures with gifts for children.

Content of the Activity:

Singing the carol the children visit the sectors where they are shown the materials they are going to work with and are explained how to accomplish their tasks. In the *Science* area the children have to sort pictures of the gifts that they want and glue them in a letter to Santa. In the *Constructions* area they will put together the pieces to build the palace of Santa Claus. In the *Art* area the children will manufacture decorations for the Christmas tree. The teacher presents the materials in these areas, the children should name them. At the end of the activity the products in each area are evaluated, displays are organised in the classroom and the children are rewarded with surprises.

Teacher's role:

The teacher explains the work rules, she suggests the area where they will work. The teacher smiles, looks at the children, is warm and affectionate and encourages them using all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication

Children's role:

They explain in words the actions that they are doing, they make up sentences about how they built the castle. They also build Santa's sleigh and talk about other gifts they would like to receive from Santa

Additional comments-Highlights:

In each area the teacher evaluates the works and the children evaluate their own technique. The children get rewards.

Purpose - Goals:

Consolidating the abilities to use correctly the singular and the plural of nouns, as well as the ability to integrate them correctly in short or longer sentences, observing the concord between the subject and the predicate

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Conversation, explanation, demonstration, exercise, problem-solving, Venn diagram

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Cards with different pictures representing one or more objects, 2 boards with Venn diagram, 2 envelopes with images related to autumn and winter and cards with elements specific for each season.

Content of the Activity:

The children are divided into two groups.

As an extension to the game the interactive method of Venn diagram is used. Each group gets an envelope. In one of the envelopes the children can find a specific autumn image and cards displaying one or more elements attributable to this season, and in the other envelope cards displaying one or more elements attributable to winter as well as a specific winter image. The teacher explains the new rules and asks the children to place in the red circle the cards that signal the singular, and in the green circle the cards that signal the plural. At the junction the common element (two trees) is placed. Each group solves its task, then checking is performed, followed by an eventual correction and an evaluation of the fulfilment of the task. The children, helped by the teacher, perform the check.

Teacher's role:

The teacher praises the children when they correctly name the noun in the picture and its plural or singular form. She encourages the shy toddlers. She asks the children in the other team to clap their hands for each correct answer. The teacher evaluates the way in which the children have cooperated. She gives the children rewards, images with pictures that are specific for autumn.

Children's role:

The children in each team cooperate to solve the task. While they work, they name the picture and where it could be placed in the diagram. Some children place the cards without asking their colleagues. The children place in the red circle the cards that signal the singular, and in the green circle the ones that signal the plural. At the junction the common element is placed. At the junction of the two circles two trees are placed, common elements found for winter and for autumn as well.

Additional comments-Highlights:

Using an interactive method engages all children, they participate actively in the activity, and strengthens the cooperation between toddlers.

The interactive method has also complicated the game and ensured a good memorization.

Good Practice 75**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

20-25 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 76

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

25-30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Developing the ability to interact with other children and adults in order to gain new knowledge, abilities and behaviours.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explanation, game.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Biscuits, milk, Turkish delight, rum flavor, tin foil, plates, glasses, lemons, honey, aprons, caps.

Content of the Activity:

Symbolic game with everyday life theme “ Being Bakers”.

The participants are wearing specific clothes: gowns, caps, aprons, gloves. The teacher asks the children to name the materials they will work with to be “little bakers”. The children are grouped into three teams. One team breaks the biscuits and mixes them with milk, another team cuts the delicacy and packs the biscuit salami. The third team prepares the lemonade.

Teacher’s role:

Encourages perseverance, teamwork and provides positive reinforcement for the children’s efforts.

Children’s role:

During the activity the children talk using specific expressions. They encounter all sorts of problems that they try to solve (the milk is too hot, the biscuits are too crisp or the lemons are not ripe enough and they cannot be easily squeezed). During the activity the children switch roles.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This type of activity has a great impact on the children because it puts them in familiar situations that they experience at home as well. A lot of the children help their mothers in the kitchen. The toddlers were proud of the results and at the end of the day we organized a mock fair with their products. Thus, the children realized that their work could be priced.

Purpose - Goals:

To work cooperatively. Instructing the children in handling correctly simple natural or synthetic materials.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Traditional methods: Conversation, explanation, demonstration, briefing and exercise. Modern methods: brainstorming and gallery touring.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Individual demonstrative materials:

- Coloured cardboards
- Coloured seeds
- Coloured pastes of different shapes and sizes
- Mohair threads
- Crepe paper

Content of the Activity:

For the organizational stage, the teacher takes special care in arranging the furniture so that the children can work in teams, thus enforcing the learning through cooperation and the team spirit.

Capturing the children's attention stage is a special moment in the development of the lesson as the teacher, using the brainstorming, encourages the children to put forth their emotional and artistic sense. They are challenged to make various comparisons between what they notice in nature and the emotions they feel, e.g *How do you perceive the sun? The sun is yellow and bright, it is like joy. The green grass is like hope etc.* At this stage the teacher consolidates the children's information about spring.

In a calm and patient manner the teacher explains to the toddlers the working technique and the way of utilizing the working instruments. At the children's additional questions the teacher reiterates the explanations and demonstrates the working technique, presenting some model works. The toddlers are asked to repeat the working rules in order to consolidate the information about them.

While the children are working, the teacher repeats the explanations and helps the toddlers who are experiencing difficulties.

After the finalization of the works the teacher makes individual and collective assessments.

Teacher's role:

Explains and consolidates the working rules.

Coordinates and manages the entire activity.

Helps the children in realizing their works, whenever they experience difficulties.

Develops the children's creativity and their artistic and affective

Good Practice 77**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

25-30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

manifestations.

Encourages learning by cooperation.

Children's role:

Active involvement of the children during the activity.

Concentration and attention all throughout the activity.

Helping colleagues who experience difficulties in realizing their works.

Objective verbal assessments on the works realized by other colleagues.

Purpose - Goals:

Solving the conflicts that appear during the activity and developing positive feelings in toddlers.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Explanation and collective discussion.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

-

Content of the Activity:

During individually chosen activities of the daily schedule, at the art centre area in the classroom, a conflict arose between the children that were painting: one of the toddlers took another colleague's painting brush without asking for it first. The latter, in a fit, spilled the water he was using on the former's painting. A row emerged.

On this occasion, the teacher intervened calmly and patiently: she helped the child whose painting and table was wet to clean them up and asked all the children to take a short break and join a collective discussion on what has just happened.

The teacher asked the children to imagine what would have happened if the incident had not taken place (all the children would have finished their works, a display would have been organized in the hallway where everybody could have admired them, the parents could have bought these works and the money thus raised would have been donated to the needy children). Emphasizing all these positive aspects and events that could have taken place if the incident had not degenerated, the children learn that this kind of reactions are to be avoided and the two toddlers involved in the conflict evaluate for themselves their own behaviour without being reprimanded and apologise to each other.

Teacher's role:

Coordinates and manages the collective discussion. Encourages the children to express their opinion on the incident that occurred. Develops the children's positive attitudes and behaviour towards the others. Makes the children feel responsible for their own actions.

Children's role:

Participate actively in the discussion. Express their opinion on the situation that arose. Manifest empathy.

Good Practice 78**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

10-15 minutes.

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 79

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Meeting the children when they arrive at the kindergarten in a welcoming, affectionate manner.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

-

Content of the Activity:

When each child arrives at the kindergarten the teacher shows a warm, welcoming attitude, displaying patience towards the toddlers as well as their parents.

The toddlers are greeted warmly; they are asked if they feel well, if everything is all right, what they would like to do that day in class, they are told that there are special activities prepared for them. Each parent is also asked if everything is alright, if there has been any issue that could affect the child when performing the daily activities, if the child has any special needs for that day.

Teacher's role:

Displaying a warm, welcoming attitude when greeting the children and parents at kindergarten. Identifying possible problems or needs that could affect the children. Motivating the toddlers for the activities that will be performed that day.

Children's role:

Participating actively in the discussion. Expressing ideas and wishes for the daily schedule. Mentioning the possible needs or problems for the respective day.

Purpose - Goals:

The development of positive friendship relations among children and using of nature as a calendar.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Explanation, conversation.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Badges with pole animals, nature calendar, toy train.

Content of the Activity:

Greeting: When children arrive at kindergarten each of them receive a badge with pole animals: polar bear, walrus, polar rabbit. Using interactive methods Interior circle, exterior circle and Mix, froze, form pairs, children will say "hello" to each other. Two circles are being formed one inside the other. The pedagogue together with children will say these verse:

The morning came/All children arrived

In circle to be together

And nice say "HELLO "

It begins a new day/Good morning,children!

On their turn,children from the interior circle will come back and they will say hello those on their back from the exterior circle. The next greeting will happen through Mix, froze, form pairs method. At the teacher's sign "Mix", children walk free at the sign "Froze"they stop, they are motionless, and at the signal "Form pairs" they will form pairs with the closest child, which they will say "hello" by shaking hands. The game repeats three times in order to give children the possibility to say hello to many classmates. In order to seat children in semicircle will sing together the song "Big and beautiful circle".

Nature's calendar:

I will tell children that we will complete nature's calendar on the toy train because today will make a trip. Children will complete nature's calendar.

-What season we are in?

- How is the weather today?

- What is the name of the month we are in?

After being complete the calendar will be read by all children.

Teacher's role:

The pedagogue guides the action, showing calm behaviour and attitude. She encourages children by face express and guide game unfolding using questions.

Children's role:

Children are prepared in the unfolding activity by giving answers at pedagogue's questions. They show team spirit and their reactions show the joy experienced.

Good Practice 80**Country of origin:**

Romania

Duration of good practice:

15-20 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 81

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

30 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

The development of the socializing capacity through cooperation, free and creative communication with the members of the group; The cultivation of the self-confidence feelings by expressing own thoughts and feelings within the group.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The conversation, explanation, issuing, exercise, playing, learning by cooperation (“interior circle-exterior circle” and “mix-freeze-form pairs”).

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Nature’s Calendar” panel, tokens, badges with the children’s names, little balloons with the children’s names, little pillows.

Content of the Activity:

P.D.A.-Morning meeting.

THE MOMENTS OF THE MEETING. Saying hi between children is accomplished through the strategy of learning by cooperation „interior circle, exterior circle”, combined with the method, mix, freeze, form pairs”. The educator salutes the children: Good morning, fairy-tale characters!”, then they form two concentri circles accordingly to the colour on their hand.

At the teacher’s sign “mix” the children totate in circle singing: “The morning came/All children arrived/Come let’s gather in circle/every-one to salute ourselves!”. At the signal “freeze” they stop, and at the signal “form pairs” the interior circle children turn their faces to the exterior circle ones, form pairs to the ones in front of them, saying hi and sharing their feelings. The commands are repeated again, giving the chance to form as many pairs and children say hi between them as possible.

THE PRESENCE: At the arrival the children searched for their badges and placed on the table the little “balloons” with the picture. They will list the absent ones. There will be appointed two children in order to count the boys and girls on the presence table.

NATURE’S CALENDAR: The children will recite the lyrics: „Good morning we salute/ And pretty we sit/ In a big pretty circle/ To listen to the child who/ Today wants to tell us/ And to amaze us/ The weather to study/ And in the calendar to note/ If it is sunny, if it rains/ So that we can go for a walk!”

They fill in the “Nature’s Calendar” panel: “Today is..., yesterday it was..., tomorrow it will be...”, date, year, how is the weather outside.

THE GROUP ACTIVITY. The game Answer/Throw/Ask “Fairy-tales characters” will take place. The evolution of the game: the child who throws the ball asks a question, the one who catches it answers and throws the ball to another child asking a question. For example:„Who

is the Little Red Riding Hood? Answer: She is the character from the story...; Who is Snow White?, etc.”

Teacher’s role:

creates to the children a stimulating playing environment, favorable to express the necessities, feelings and emotions; facilitates communication between children; creates occasions for dialogue between children.

Children’s role:

Children share their ideas trustfully, clearly, fluently; They sit one next to the other, they interact; They discuss with pleasure each moment of the morning’s meeting.

Good Practice 82

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good

practice:

1 hour

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To practice their oral language skills through play.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Experiment, use of ICTs, dialogue

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

A computer, a speech recognition software, a microphone.

Content of the Activity:

This activity simulates the role of the journalist in a playful way. Children are called to talk-narrate a personal experience from their summer vacations. The narration occurs in front of the microphone in order to record the children's voice. When every child is recorded they playback the recordings. They listen to their voices and they discuss about the content of their stories.

Teacher's role:

The teacher has the role of the animator and guides the children's participation by creating a positive atmosphere.

Children's role:

Children are playing the journalists and participate in the use of the ICTs and the discussion about their stories.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity captures the interest of all the children and especially of the children that usually do not talk a lot in front of the others.

Good Practice 83

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good

practice:

Two months

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals: To practice specific communications skills and cooperative skills. Also to develop positive attitudes and increase the respect for the environment.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used): Cooperative teaching

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Various seeds, flowerpots, soil, small shovels, and watering cans.

Content of the Activity: During April the teacher proposed to the children to transform the “shop area” to a flower shop. Originally the children proposed to bring flowers. A child offered to bring a flower in a flowerpot in order to preserve the flower longer. The children discussed and decided to bring flowerpots instead. So the next ten days they started bringing flowerpots with flowers and also they started planting seeds in small flowerpots. Each day there was a rotation system for the children who were in charge for watering the pots. During the first two weeks the children also “rehearsed” the roles of shopkeeper and clients. They created dialogues and played dramatic plays inside the flower shop. They also started creating and writing down with the help of their teacher fiction characters of the customers that visited the shop.

After the first ten days the children proposed to create a flowerbed-parterre in the schoolyard. The teacher brought bags of soil and the necessary tools and the children started creating the flowerbed. They organized the space, planted the seeds and watered the flowers. The teacher invited an agronomist and a gardener to advice the children how to organize their garden. The children did brainstorming and prepared the questions they wanted to ask to them. The experts helped the children decide to plant seeds from local varieties like basil, oregano, thyme etc.

At the end of the project the children organized a bazaar where they transferred the flowers to small flowerpots and invite the local community to participate. They printed flyers with the help of their teacher and scanned their drawings and advertised the bazaar. The money that was collected from the bazaar was donated to a children’s charity institute. This decision was also taken from the children after the end of the bazaar, when they reflected on what they did these two months and discussed how they could use the money.

Teacher’s role: The teacher promotes critical thinking and encourages the children to express themselves, to brainstorm, to cooperate. In a discrete way, the teacher helps the children with questions to think further and to extend their thinking and their actions. Throughout the project the teacher promotes the scaffolding of knowledge and at the end focuses on children’s reflection.

Children’s role: Cooperate in groups, brainstorm, develop creative thinking, take initiatives and decisions on various issues, and interact in a wide range of situations and circumstances.

5.5 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management is the first professional activity to be developed at the

beginning of a teaching career, and represents the most significant difficulty that a teacher has to face when he/she begins to teach. But even experienced teachers describe that controlling the classroom remains a major concern throughout their career. To make matters even worse, various reports and studies acknowledge the fact that the last decades children's disruptive behavior displays increasing rates and that teachers are facing the behavior problems that they used to meet in older children, in younger children as well.

Some scholars attribute the increase of behavior problems to younger children to the visual and digital literacy that has conquered children's daily routines and time, to the decreased time parents spend with their children and to the various changes the institution of family is going through (Postman, 1994).

The term classroom management refers to the procedures, strategies, and instructional techniques teachers use to manage student behavior and learning activities. Effective classroom management creates an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Ineffective classroom management often creates chaos. Effective classroom management is the most important -- and the most difficult -- skill a new teacher has to master. Even veteran teachers often find themselves faced with a student -- or an entire class -- who challenges their established management skills and forces them to find new ways of dealing with classroom situations.

Teaching children social and emotional skills during the early childhood years is critical for later success in school and in life. Proper early childhood classroom management techniques allow teachers to provide quality instruction in an environment that is fun, safe and healthy. Learning centers and engaging lessons that hold a child's interest lead to active learners. Effective transitions from one activity to another help young children stay focused and reduce behavior problems.

Research substantiates that healthy social emotional development is an essential ingredient for future academic success. To teach children social and emotional skills, most teachers use one of two approaches to classroom management or a combination of them both: 1) discouraging children's misbehavior with consequences and punishments such as time out or Stoplight systems, or 2) proactively teaching children how to manage their relationships and environments by teaching social and emotional skills.

Other studies have documented that schedules and routines influence children's emotional, cognitive, and social development. For example, predictable and consistent schedules in preschool classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable. Also, schedules and routines help children understand the expectations of the environment and reduce the frequency of behavior problems, such as tantrums and

acts of aggression. Activity schedules that give children choices, balanced and planned activities (small vs. large groups, quiet times vs. active times, teacher directed vs. child directed, indoor vs. outdoor), and individualized activities result in a high rate of child engagement. In addition, the duration of the play period can affect children's social and cognitive forms of play (Ostrosky, Jung, Hemmeter, & Thomas, 2008).

The Early Change project highlights the importance of effective classroom management for the development of a positive classroom climate and attempts to present some examples of effective classroom management techniques as the educators themselves experience them.

Good Practice 84

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good

practice:

One school year

Number of children

involved:

The whole class
(20 children)

Purpose - Goals:

To manage children's interests.

To gather the contributions of children to the different curriculum areas, make them intentional and plan them through the "Carpete das Novidades" ("Carpet of news"), in an integrated way, according to the content areas of the national curriculum guidelines.

This pedagogical strategy, daily present in this group, allows organizing and managing the different content areas, addressing quality to the installed routines. At the same time it promotes the possibility of using an emergent curriculum and integrates the different content areas, based on the interests of the children expressed in the many different objects they bring to the classroom.

A work plan is developed around the objects and/or reports, in accordance to these children's interests. Being so, the work plan promotes the involvement and the development of activities, in the context of personal and social education, and the oral and written language and mathematics.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Individual presentation of an object.

Questioning (by peers).

Handling, sharing, and verbal mediation by the teacher with the approach to curriculum contents, in order to extend the children cognitive maps.

Questions were asked in order to explore each one of the "objects" (books, stones, leaves, empty containers, seeds, snails, socks, musical instruments, drawings made at home). Some of these were brought to the center of the curriculum, instigating new activities. A daily plan was made taking into account some of these contributions.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Classroom carpet.

Paper and inks. Objects brought by the children:

- Story book "A mancha e o moncho".
- Socks.
- Empty containers (for a project with family and friends)
- Musical instruments.
- Ball.
- Seeds.

Content of the Activity:

At the moment of their arrival in the morning, each child puts in the classroom *carpet* their little "news" to share with friends. Children sat around the carpet with the teacher (circle time). After the morning greetings, the teacher asked who wanted to start talking about what he/she brought to share or to show. Each child talked about what they

had brought, and some children made questions about it. Some of the questions were: why did you bring that? Where will we put it? What will you do with that? Can I play with you? Can I help?

The teacher helped in the formulation of the questions, as well as in the correction of language.

As each object was being analyzed by the group, it was put aside and a new object was shared/discussed.

- Stones. The stones were placed in the “corner of scientists”, after discussing issues such as the kingdom they belong, if they were precious or not, and if the owner wanted to put them there or use them for any project of his/her imagination.
- Leaves. Same procedure was used with the leaves. Leaves raised a rich talk about the seasons, the kingdom of plants, the comparison according to size and shapes. Because they would not be used for art activities, they were put in a herbarium the group was building in the corner of the scientists.
- Snails. The snails, once observed, and explored with the hands of those who wanted to do it, were put in the classroom’s “snailarium”. In this setting, the children sang the *snail song*, which was already part of their repertoire. The educator, using the instruments that were available at the carpet, encouraged the children to accompany the song playing the instruments - small drum, tambourine; children also grabbed other instruments available at a small closet at their back. Thus, they sang/played that song again, with more instruments.
- Drawings. Some drawings were brought by children to be offered to their peers, and so they were distributed by the author, who added *that tomorrow would bring drawings for children who did not receive any*. This offer was placed in the child’s portfolio, in the chapter “Friends”.
- Empty packages/containers and some seeds. Children who brought them shared the materials and at the time for free-choice activities constructed maracas together with other children, under the supervision of the teacher. Some seeds were stored for germination, in accordance with the intention of the child who brought them.
- Socks. After hearing opinions and ideas for their use, its “owner” decided to make a puppet, giving another sock to a friend who also made a puppet. The puppets would be finished in the afternoon.

At the end of the “reading” at the carpet, the teacher invited the children to do the plan/schedule for that day (this practice was common in the group, as part of the daily routine). In an A4 sheet, the educator pointed to the calendar, previously built by the group, and together with children, said and wrote “today is -- of April 2013”. Children talked about what they would like to do, according to a routine already known and to a weekly calendar previously built. They had to negotiate the plan. (see the example below)

PLAN 23-4-2013
Around the Carpet (circle time) (we greet each other, read the carpet, fill in the presences table)
Personal hygiene – wash hands
Snack
Free-choice activities – (who wants to help A. and B. with the pup- pets; who wants to help Af. and M. building maracas)
Play at the big playground – play with H.’s ball (was in the carpet)
Wash hands – Return to the classroom
Read F.’s book “ <i>História da mancha [ink stain] e do moncho</i> ” (This hour was previously negotiated with the group)
LUNCH TIME
Hygiene (hands and teeth)
Listen to music to relax
Restart the story – Surprise (paint stains – symmetric ink blots) – small groups – an experience
Free-choice activities – finish works
Tidying the room
Evaluation meeting of the day: what we did, what we love most, what we did not finish

(Handwritten plan)

I learned afterwards that the surprise of the evening was that children would make ink stains and then the teacher would invite them to make the blur symmetric (as in the story they read); in the next day they would “read” or interpret the spots.

Teacher’s role:

The teacher acted as a mediator in a proactive, provocative manner, challenging children to give more complete and creative answers. At the same time teacher was very democratic (everything was negotiated and voted up for decisions, such as to decide when something would take place, when writing the plan for that day).

Teacher’s good mood was constant; teacher managed adequately different wishes and interests, and was actively involved in all activities with the children.

Children’s role:

Children were very involved in the “reading carpet”; they collaborated, questioned, gave their opinions, actively participated and showed autonomy in the management of the classroom routines. They were free to make their choices and choose with whom and how they wanted to play, as well as the materials they would use.

Throughout the day each child played with peers or individually, and was encouraged to play in the group.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The “Good Practice” registered here loses some of its richness in narrative writing. In fact, from that carpet emerged some challenges that are transversal to all content areas of the curriculum guidelines for preschool education, and the teacher adequately captured them.

It is a place of great children’s spontaneity that the teacher receives with great competence.

Good Practice 85

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good**practice:**

Approximately

10 minutes

Number of children**involved:**

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To prepare the children for the lesson that is going to take place.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Individual presentation of an object.

Questioning (by peers).

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

A black hat with stars (a witch's hat)

A box (decorated with fairies, dragon, trees, castle, princess and prince)

Content of the Activity:

This is a routine used by the teacher in the beginning of every storybook lesson. The children anticipate the little Fofo witch to bring them a story to read.

The teacher says to the children to close their eyes and she begins to sing to then a short lullaby. While she is singing she goes around the circle and touches the children on the heads. When she finishes the lullaby she appears the witch's hat and places it on the head of one child (each time the teacher picks a different child). That child becomes the little Fofo witch. Then, the child comes in the middle of the circle where the "magic" box is placed and recites a poem (if a child is shy then the rest of the class assists the child into saying the poem's words). After the child finishes the poem he/she then takes the box and goes around the circle saying a short rhyme all together with the rest of the class. When he/she finishes the rhyme the witch gives the box to another child to open and reveals what storybook the witch has brought to the class.

Teacher's role:

The teacher places a storybook in the "magic" box before the children enter the class.

After all the children have sat down the teacher's role is to sing to the children a short lullaby so that they calm down after their break and prepare them for their lesson. She/he then chooses a child for the role of the little witch and if the child is shy she/he assists the child by encouraging him/her and allowing to the rest of the class to help their friend.

Children's role:

The child takes upon the role of the little witch Fofo and by saying a specific poem he/she brings by "magic" a storybook. The child seems to enjoy it and is very pleased to take upon the specific role.

Additional comments-Highlights:

As soon as the teacher told the children to close their eyes they immediately did it and they relaxed on their chairs awaited for their teacher to touch their head.

All the children wanted to be the little witch and when their friend hesitated to say the poem they all started to recite the poem with him/her and the child instantly became more secured and recited the words.

Good Practice 86

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good

practice:

Approximately

30 minutes

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To have breakfast in a friendly, pleasant and healthy environment.

To make breakfast a time when children can socialize.

To help children acquire healthy and proper behavior habits during eating breakfast.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

-

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Tables, chairs, plates, glasses, napkins, small vases with flowers on the tables, music.

Content of the Activity:

After washing their hands children go to their bags and get their breakfast and they then take their chair to a table to sit. The children also help to set the table by taking the vase with the flowers– the school assistant brings the plates, the glasses, the napkins and some water. The children sit with their friends and the teacher puts on soft music on the background. The children and the teacher act like being in a restaurant. Sit on the chair properly, eat without throwing the food outside the plate, talk with our friends but without making noise and disturbing others and when the children need something they raise their hand to call the waitress- teacher instead of walking around the classroom-restaurant.

When a child finished its breakfast it then waits for the rest of the children on the same table to finish as well and then they all clean the table together, take their chairs back to the circle and go outside for break time.

Teacher's role:

The teacher needs to encourage children to talk to each other during breakfast, initiates conversations and helps them to eat correctly – use the plates and the cutlery in a correct manner. The teacher also encourages the children to eat healthy and acts as an example for children.

Children's role:

The children need to bring their breakfast with them and they need to make healthy choices for their breakfast. They are responsible for themselves-wash their hands, bring their breakfast, their chairs and their table and they should act like a group when eating and when cleaning the table. They need to remember and follow the routine, something that comes normally after applying the routine a couple of times.

Additional comments-Highlights:

It is assumed that all children have occasionally been to a restaurant so it's easy for them to act like they are in a restaurant especially when they do this in a form of "lay". They also find the whole procedure amusing and they enjoy it (the flowers, the music etc). It is also a good chance for the teacher to put different kind of songs during this time or a song-music that the teacher might want to use later during a structured activity or lesson.

Good Practice 87

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately
40 minutes

**Number of children
involved:**

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

For children to acquire a positive attitude towards exploration, investigation and conduction of experiments (through role play).

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Role Playing, Drama play,
Group work

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

The white robe of a scientist

Content of the Activity:

Every time that we have a Science lesson the children and I pretend to be young scientist. We wear our white robes and we need to solve a problem, help someone etc., and this comes through experimentations and investigation. The white robe helps children to get in the role of the scientist, which means that they need to think and act like a scientist. At the beginning of the year we also watched some videos to see how scientists usually are and how they work (work in groups etc).

Teacher's role:

To think of a proper beginning for the lesson e.g. with an initial problem that will lead to the investigation. To give specific instructions for the experiment and to help children work in groups. To encourage children to solve the problem and find the results and to give to children enough space for experimentation and autonomy.

Children's role:

To work with seriousness and responsibility, to work with their classmates and share responsibilities in the groups and to follow the teacher's instructions.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The nature of this lesson might lead to a small upheaval in the class – the use of this role play technique can help children to work correct.

Purpose - Goals:

To improve the classroom management and organization

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

This is a daily routine.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

CD player, relaxing music, fast music (for tiding up)

Content of the Activity:

At the end of the morning activities the teacher sang a song that signified that it was time to tidy up the classroom. This was very helpful since the children knew that as soon as they heard the specific song they had to start tiding up. They all worked together and quite quick because they had to finish tiding up before the completion of the song.

After the end of the break and before starting the lesson the teacher gave 2-3 minutes to the children to relax and calm down. To accomplish this she used a relaxing song and children sat on their chairs and had their eyes closed while she was walking around touching the children's hair to help them relax.

Once the kindergarten teacher noticed that children were losing their focus to the lesson she sat in her chair, lifted her hands at a shoulder height (where and kept them for a while) and banged them sharply on her feet. The children were trying to copy this which had as a result to get their attention back and also help them relax for a bit. After repeating this a few time the teachers then continued her lesson as normal.

The children were divided in groups as shown in the pictures below. A happy or a sad face was put next to each child's name according to his/her daily behavior. These groups were also used in cases where the teacher wanted to work in groups during the lesson. She just had to say "Go to your groups" and the children knew where to go and who to group with. In addition, the picture of the little mans next to some names shows the group leader who changes frequently. Different pictures are also put next to each group which indicate the group's responsibility for the specific day e.g. tide the crayons, set clean the tables etc.

Teacher's role:

To help the children follow the days' program, relax when necessary and focus on the lesson as much as possible.

Teacher's comment: It's good for the kids have responsibilities and even better to observe them when doing that. The poster showing the groups was posted somewhere permanently in the classroom, so that the children could easily see it if they needed to remember something.

Children's role:

To follow the narration and the picture rotation. To answer questions and observe the content of the pictures.

Good Practice 88**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately
35 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class



Good Practice 89

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good**practice:**

Every day routine

Number of children**involved:**

Two children each day

Purpose - Goals:

For the children to participate actively in an effective classroom functioning and management.

For the children to take upon responsibilities in the daily schedule of their school, to cooperate and assist each other and other children.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Cooperative learning

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

A list with the names of the children

2 marks for checking/marking

Content of the Activity:

There is a displayed catalogue with the names of the children. Two children every day, with turn as it is written in their catalogue, become the "Helpers" of the preschool teacher and are in charge in and out of the classroom. For instance they are in charge to lead all the children of their class outside during break time, to supervise the washing up of the other children together with the school-assistant, to display the suitable card that represents the daily schedule at each particular time ext.

Teacher's role:

To organize this particular routine, to guide the children to help and cooperate, to set boundaries in children's behavior when they do not follow their classroom rules.

Children's role:

To place marks in the order of the children that follow in the catalogue, to take charge and cooperate in regard to the responsibilities that they have as "helpers" of the day, to feel satisfaction for their participation

Purpose - Goals:

When a child feels tired or anxious he/she can visit the relaxing corner to calm down, rest and feel better. The child can lie down when needed, share a common space and calm down.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Cooperativeness, Relaxing, Calming, Thinking

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Pillows, carpets, curtains, books, fairytales, beds

Content of the Activity:

This specific good practice is a routine that is followed by all the teachers and the children at our school. When a child is tensed during the day (e.g. fight with other children, tired, anxious, aggressive etc) then the child goes to the relaxing corner to relax and calm down. The children, many times, go there by themselves without needing the teacher to say so.

Teacher's role:

The teacher is the one that creates the corner in the first place, with assistance from the children, explaining the use of the corner. The children are the ones that will choose what kind of things they want to put there (e.g. pillows, carpet, etc). During the day, the teacher encourages those children that feel anxious or tired to visit the specific corner to relax.

Children's role:

When the child feels tired or upset it is encouraged to visit the specific corner to relax and think.

Good Practice 90**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

During the day

Number of children involved:

1-2 children

Good Practice 91

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good

practice:

10 minutes

Number of children

involved:

A group of 4-5 children

Purpose - Goals:

Limits and classroom discipline, Rules and routines, Purpose: For children to observe the rules and routines in the classroom

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Drama play

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The classroom's space without specific material. Just the classroom's mascot.

Content of the Activity:

During the morning playtime at the construction play corner a boy (let's call him John) was destroying another boy's constructions (let's call the second boy Nick). Then John starts laughing and Nick starts crying. The teacher approaches the two children and she takes with her the classroom's mascot. The teachers talk to the teacher through the mascot:

Teacher (talking to John): I am very sad for what you did to John.

Teacher (talking to Nick): Nick can you explain to John how you feel at the moment?

Nick: I feel very sad because John destroyed what I did.

Teacher: What can we do when we made someone feel bad?

Nick: We can give them a kiss... or a hug...

The teacher uses the mascot to give a hug and a kiss to Nick. Then she helps the boys tidy up the construction material.

Teacher's role:

Counseling, guiding, promotes positive behavior

Children's role:

Act according to the classroom's rules.

Purpose - Goals:

The children

- will pick up, clean after play time.
 - develop cooperative skills –working in pairs
 - promote self confidence by taking responsibilities
 - develop organizational skills
 - recognize names and words in an everyday situation(reading skills)
- Class management-Making pick up time a calm and peaceful time
- Crisis prevention activity

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Daily routine - cleaning time

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

- children's name tags
- 12 cards. One card in each area, corner or table with area's picture and velcro under picture so name tags can be tagged and later be removed.
- calendar

Content of the Activity:

Organizing pick up, clean up time after play time.

This practice was organized by a teacher that I worked with, last year in a class of 24 children. She organized pick up-clean up time by assigning work to pairs of children, a pair for each corner, area or table. She described how she initiated the practice.

On the first opportunity she was given, she organized a group time lesson, to address the problem: messy class, complains by children that others do not help during pick-up, clean up time etc. She let the children to talk about how they felt about this routine and how they can make it better so that every child will help. Children came up with a number of ideas. They decided on assigning each child a job. They counted the areas and they came up with the number of 12. There was now a new problem: only 12-13 children will tidy up the class. The teacher asked again for solutions and they came up with a plan of working in twos in each area. All children chose different areas, with the promise that every two weeks they can choose a new area to clean- tidy (noted on the calendar).

Teacher's role:

The teacher organized a group time lesson to address the problem and work out the solution with the children.

The teacher organized the environment-all materials needed. Cards were constructed and placed in each area. Cards had the picture of the area involved and two name tags (names of children assigned). Name tags were made to be removed, so they could be changed every two

Good Practice 92**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Approximately
10 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class in pairs

weeks.

The teacher kept up with the plan. She helped children to find where their working area was.

The teacher gave the signal for pick up, clean up time.

The teacher reminded the children and helped to make cooperation work and promote organizational skills –“How can you do this better”-“let’s plan ahead for tomorrow”.

The teacher praised good work done.

Children’s role:

- By hearing the signal (in this case a pick up song) children had to finish what they were doing and go to their assigned areas. Along with their partner they pick up and clean the corner or table (put away toys, tidy up books, take away paints to the helper’s room, clean up a table or the floor etc). When everything was in order they would come to circle time.
- Children were also responsible to bring whatever is needed to do their job, like a sponge , a broom etc.
- Children have to work together and plan ahead-“What do we need for tomorrow in order to clean up better”.

Purpose - Goals:

To help the children relax and be able to concentrate for the next activity. It's usually applied 1) after break time 2) after an activity that is more energetic and 3) before an activity that will last for a while and demands concentration.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

-

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The children sit in a semi circle, in the same way they sit during lesson time. A CD player and soft music. If a CD player is not available then the teacher can sing a soft relaxing song.

Content of the Activity:

The children are sitting and the teacher puts on some relaxing music and she touches children softly on the head one by one. Each child that she touches reacts by tilting its head to the side and pretends sleeping. The children stay like this for a couple of minutes and relax. They "wake up" only when the teacher makes a specific sound e.g. the cockroach.

After "waking up" the children sing a song that will lead to the next activity.

When the children become familiar with the procedure they can take the teacher's role from time to time

Teacher's role:

The teachers give the instruction with a very soft tone in her voice. She touches their heads with tender and love. When they have their eyes closed she doesn't speak, unless necessary.

She then needs to introduce the new activity.

Children's role:

The children, after a physical activity might feel tired and they need time to relax and be able to concentrate for the next activity.

The sound of the music helps them relax, they need to close their eyes and pretend to be sleeping, they try to remember something that makes them relax and they try to enjoy the music and the relaxation while they know that they need to get ready for another activity soon.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The above activity, is simple but also very effective. It gives enough time to children to relax and rest after a physical or a difficult activity, but it mainly helps them prepare for the next activity which usually demands concentration and use of cognitive abilities.

Good Practice 93**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

5 minutes

daily routine

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 94

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

5 minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Divide children into groups without wasting time and without fights. Increase children's confidence and their ability to be in charge.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Groups – Cooperative method

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Laminated cards with the children's name on them and a small picture or a photo of the specific child to be able to identify their name easily.

Content of the Activity:

There are many times when during the day we require children to work in groups, for different kinds of activities. Dividing children into groups can be done casually or deliberately. This is a good practice that can help dividing children into groups based on specific criteria that will help the group work better.

The teacher, depending on the nature of the group activity, divides the laminated cards in advance by putting the member of one group of children in one envelope, or by marking each card with the a group's color (e.g. five groups – five different colors). She also decided the space at which each group will work and marks them as well. She then determines a child-leader for each group (the leader changes in rotation). If necessary she can also give different responsibilities to each child. The teacher can use the classroom's mascot to explain to children how the groups will be formed and that they will change from time to time, or even every day.

When the children will become familiar with the above procedure, the teacher can then put the cards directly to the space that she wants the children to go for the group work (e.g. on the table). The children will need to quickly move around the class to find their name and their group.

Teacher's role:

The teacher will have to divide children's cards into groups before the beginning of the lesson and based on the nature of the group activity. She will also have to decide where each groups will be working and preparing the classroom as needed.

At the beginning of the lesson she will have to give clear and specific instructions. She also needs to encourage children to identify the card with their name on and help children during the whole procedure, especially the first few times that they will apply this procedure. She might also have to decide a group leader and explain to each child his/her responsibilities in the group. She might also needs to remind the classroom rules and then continue with the group activity.

Children's role:

The children might feel that this whole procedure is like a game – a challenge. They will have to identify the card with their name on, then the mark on their card and then find out where to go based on that information. They might feel like young investigators solving a problem which makes them feel happy and that is why their reaction to the whole procedure is positive.

Additional comments-Highlights:

Dividing children into groups like this also helps in avoiding fights and time consuming discussions.

Good Practice 95

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

One school year

Number of children involved:

The whole group

Purpose - Goals:

The children should learn how to care for each other. They are going to learn to comfort another child, helping another child, without help from a pedagogue or teacher. The children should learn to show respect for each other in spite of differences.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

The method is that the classroom teacher talks to the children about the humanity that is involved in helping another human being. In this situation a child has to put on a patch on another child who is hurt. The method is dialog among the children organized by the teacher.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

In the classroom the teacher have placed an old medicine cabinet on the wall. On the cabinet is written: "Friendship". (In Danish there is a pun because Cabinet and friendship have the same spelling (venSK-AB and medicinSKAB)

A little key hangs in a string on the cabinet and the children can open it themselves. In the cabinet they will find patch, dressing, handkerchiefs, wipes and biscuits.

Content of the Activity:

In the medicine cabinet there is also a little drawer, where the teacher now and then puts small notes from newspapers or other magazines about helping each other, friendship and love. It might be a larger subject, such as a snowstorm, when the teacher can sense that the children are preoccupied with. She will then talk about it and discuss how to help other people in a snowstorm.

The "Friendship" (Cabinet for friendship) is used a lot by the children during the breaks. If a child is hurt, a classmate will follow him or her to the Cabinet and help clean the wound and put a patch on it. And then the reward to both of them – the biscuit. There is always a biscuit in the Cabinet of Friendship" and the children can take one.

Teacher's role:

The teacher's role is to make sure that the Cabinet is always ready for use. She makes furthermore sure that there will be a letter or clippings in the drawer. She asks questions to the children about friendship, well-being and care and she shows respect for the often very different answers from the children.

She gives some ideas too and suggests kinds of solutions if the children don't know what to do. Especially for the children who might have difficulties expressing themselves.

Children's role:

The children are preoccupied with the cabinet of friendship and are very eager to help each other when they can use the cabinet. They communicate with great motivation about the subjects the teacher brings up, and they will suggest how you can be happy again, if you are sad.

Additional comments-Highlights:

The Cabinet of Friendship is only in one classroom, but the symbolism must be that a friendship will grow among the children the following years. The Cabinet of Friendship has been help for the children many times making friends and taking care for each other.

Good Practice 96

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

10-15 minutes

Number of children involved:

A small group of 5 children

Purpose - Goals:

To find common regulations for a snowball fight. Where are the boundaries for where you can be, where are you safe. To agree through dialogue

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Dialogue. The children try to find their own solutions. The Social educator only act as mediator, asks questions, to help them find their own rules and ways to play.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

The football field. Snow and the fence which becomes the boundary.

Content of the Activity:

The Social Educator asks the children what they think is fair in a snowball fight and supports the children in finding their own solutions.



Teacher's role:

Observing and guiding. Engaged and calm

Children's role:

Conversation. Calm and engaged

Additional comments-Highlights:

The children found common rules for the snowball fight and had a good game.

Purpose - Goals:

Wanted to change the unwanted behavior. Ei-toivottuun käyttäytymiseen haluttiin muutosta.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Short drama session.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Children have "wondercards"

Props that fit for adults' drama e.g. toys

Content of the Activity:

(As Lilli and Lalli)

Adults pretended to be children and represented small daily interaction situations using drama

For example, first "Lilli and Lalli" were arguing about toys – then they reconsidered the situation = make it positive with the children and the situation was acted out again. Also "queuing" and apologizing skills were practiced.

Children enjoyed the performance and could participate by suggesting and discussing things.

Teacher's role:

- Adults performed (2 adults)
- One of the adults was leading the conversation with the children.

Children's role:

Participating in the discussion – decision making.

Good Practice 97**Country of origin:**

Finland

Duration of good practice:

10-15 minutes

Number of children involved:

10-15 children

Good Practice 98

Country of origin:

Finland

Duration of good**practice:**

Daily practice

Number of children**involved:**

The whole group

Purpose - Goals:

To establish simple classroom management techniques for task allocation and activities distribution.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Instructions and dialogue.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Colors, cards of the school spaces and the activities areas, laminated photos of each child.

Content of the Activity:

Color coding the spaces that children are using; napping room yellow, lobby red, group space blue, etc. The color is presented in the room so that it is easy to see.

We have placed the play-choosing-board at children's height and in the board there is a row where each color is presented.

Photos of each child have been taken and laminated. The photos are attached with blue tack to the wall from where it is easy for the children to take them.

When children arrive to the board to choose the play, they take their own photo and decide where they want to go to play and place their photo on the corresponding color area.

If some room is so popular that no more child can fit there, an adult places an X-card on the board so the children understand that there is no more space.

Teacher's role:

The teacher explains to children the way the color coding of the school areas works and how they have to place their photos every time they select an area or an activity. They supervise and assist children to implement the system.

Children's role:

When children arrive to the board to choose the play, they take their own photo and decide where they want to go to play and place their photo on the corresponding color area.

Purpose - Goals:

The goal is to increase children's thinking, understanding and learning how to solve problem situations, for example a child takes a toy from another and the other child pushes him/her.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Story narration, drama play and dialogue to increase empathy.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

A large white board or a large paper for drawing the story.

Content of the Activity:

An argument starts. An adult goes through the situation with the child

The teacher draws the specific event on a paper (two children are angry and pushing each other). The discussion focuses on what happened before the drawing.

Like a cartoon, what the child tells is drawn to the square before the first one. It is thought through how one should have acted in the situation without harming the other.

A picture is drawn on the right side of the fight, where children act as they should. The conflict is resolved by apologizing and by explaining their actions. Great drawing skills are not necessary. Even stick figures are enough.

Cartoon like drawing can also be used to anticipate situations. For example, what is going to happen at the field trip, what kind of behavior is expected or, for instance, what are possible problems in structuring an individual child's day?

Teacher's role:

The teacher draws the story, and asks questions to empower children's empathy.

Children's role:

They respond to the teacher's prompts about their feelings and their actions.

Good Practice 99**Country of origin:**

Finland

Duration of good practice:

Daily practice

Number of children involved:

The whole group

Good Practice 100

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good practice:

Ten minutes

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To remind to children the rules they have decided together in the beginning of the year and the behaviors that are accepted in the class.

Teaching methods - Practices (*if any are used*):

Story narration, Drama play, Guided teaching.

Materials (*equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.*):

Music cds, hand puppets.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher has a specific hand puppet that appears in the class when there are behavior problems. The puppet sings specific songs that they have learned in the classroom, different for each transition in a different phase of the daily program or for different classroom rules. The systematic implementation and reminder of the rules are being done with songs and with the support of the puppet.

Teacher's role:

The teacher uses the dramatic play with the puppet and the songs to maintain a positive classroom climate.

Children's role:

Active engagement of the children.

Purpose - Goals:

To help children realize the consequences of their behaviors and to empower their self-regulation.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Dialogue, instructions, emotional support.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

-

Content of the Activity:

Every time a child displays a disruptive or a not accepted behavior the teacher explains to the child that it has two options. To go to the “thinking area” and continue the negative behavior or to realize the consequences of his/her actions and return to the group. The teacher also explains to the child that the other children and the teacher want the child to be with them, but only if he/she behaves properly. Finally the teacher reminds the children the rules that they have created together in the beginning of the year.

Teacher’s role:

Support emotionally the children, create positive relationships with them, make the child feel safe and accepted but also realize that he/she has to follow the rules.

Children’s role:

To respect the other children and follow the rules.

Good Practice 101**Country of origin:**

Greece

Duration of good practice:

5 minutes

Number of children involved:

One child each time, but in concerns the whole class.

Good Practice 102

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good practice:

A yearly routine

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To improve classroom management, to teach children to solve problems on their own.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Dialogue, questions, positive reinforcements, and cooperative method.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

A set of green, yellow and red cards.

Content of the Activity:

When working in small groups (most time of the day), each group has to use three colored cards. A green card that shows everything is ok, a yellow card that shows initial difficulty and set back and a red card that requires the assistance of the teacher. This system discourages the children to seek immediate help from the teacher and instead to be more autonomous and self-reliant. When a group of children is working it places the green card in front of it. If they are facing difficulties they place the yellow card on the table but continue to try to solve their problem. The teacher supervises each group and tries to limit his/her intervention in the procedure. Only when a group cannot find a solution it is allowed to place the red card in front of it in order to require assistance. When the teacher notices the red card he/she intervenes and tries to provide further stimuli and questions that will allow the group to continue working. The teacher restrains from providing the solution or the answers to the problem.

Teacher's role:

To observe from a distance, to allow children's expression and initiatives, to provide positive reinforcements and assistance for critical thinking.

Children's role:

To cooperate in small groups, to display concentration and persistence.

5.6 DIVERSITY/ INCLUSION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) have stated that children have a right to receive education, and Early Childhood Education (ECE) is included in it. ECE is of great value to all children and should be available to all. It provides a sound basis for learning and contributes to the development of social skills, personal competence, confidence and a sense of social responsibility. Hence, every child, including those from deprived socio-economic backgrounds and other underprivileged groups, should have access to early education services of good quality (Urban, 2009).

The development of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) profession is an evolving process that has started to focus great attention the last years. One of the first tasks in defining a profession is agreeing shared values. What do Early Childhood professionals stand for? What competences are needed in the many roles undertaken by those working with children? The early childhood workforce and the quality of early childhood practice is shaped by many factors including the competences of all those involved in the profession. One of the key competences needed in ECEC is linked to the goal of achieving social justice through actively addressing diversity, equality and social inclusion. work of achieving social justice for all children, families and communities (Saiz et al., 2014).

Acceptance of diversity is a comprehensive phrase used to describe curricular practices within Early Childhood Education (ECE) settings that acknowledge and promote tolerance in children toward diverse people and perspectives. Acceptance of diversity can encompass all aspects of difference, including language, gender, ability, age, racial and ethnic/cultural, and socioeconomic. Language is also included as an aspect of cultural diversity since it can be an expression of cultural belonging. Acceptance of diversity is a component of positive environments for young children, particularly in early childhood classrooms with relatively high poverty levels where there is ethnic and linguistic diversity (Sanders, & Downer, 2012).

Diversity or multicultural education is, a continuous approach to working with children, parents, families and colleagues every day (Wardle, 2003a). In an attempt to contribute to this approach the Early Change project attempted to collect various examples of good practices regarding diversity and inclusion from six European countries. The main focus of these good practices was to describe the classroom contexts which acknowledging and accepting diversity typically occur.

Good Practice 103

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good**practice:**

Three weeks
(project)

Number of children**involved:**

Whole class
and families

Purpose - Goals:

Expand knowledge about African animals and about the African continent in general. Learn about other cultures. Involve parents in the activities of preschool.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Encouragement of children's independent research in books and computers (with supervision). Presentation of books and other visual media. Listening to African music.

Parental involvement in research – opening the institution to parents. Teacher's demonstration of some techniques (for example, showing how to make masks). Work in small groups.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Books, computer, music, CD player, paper, glue, clay, paints.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher took advantage of the interest expressed by a group of children about the jungle animals. She encouraged research in books and videos, in small groups, and encouraged children to share information within the large group. To expand the information, she presented several books and videos on the topic and invited children to bring from home some materials related to this subject.

Teacher oriented research (in books and on the Internet), in the classroom activities, and invited parents to participate in research, at home and in preschool.

The parents responded to the challenge, by bringing images and several records, which they have found when researching with their children. Thereafter, the group has been connecting and displaying the materials on a panel, and built the map of Africa. Children placed the animals in the corresponding habitat.

Children also modeled in clay their favorite animals, and made several paintings and drawings about the animals and about their habitat.

The research has been extended to the understanding of some aspects of African cultures (such as food, clothing, music, etc.).

From this research, and the exploration of several songs, they decided to make a presentation at carnival, building animal masks that they used in a dance.

Teacher's role:

The teacher encouraged children's questioning and their autonomous research, and acted as a proactive mediator, giving children autonomy. The teacher shared materials and information with the children. Maintained a warm and engaged attitude. Communicated directly with the parents in humorous way. Clarified doubts in the scope of emerging issues and used children's question to expand activities to

other fields of knowledge.

Children’s role:

The children actively participated in the whole process. They were involved in decision-making and built their sculptures, paintings or masks autonomously, although supported by the educator.

The children’s good-mood and happiness – showed when dancing and when exhibiting their work – revealed the quality of their engagement in the whole activity.

Additional comments-Highlights:

Although this activity gave a special focus to the “understanding of the world”, it also focused other areas included in the national curriculum guidelines for preschool education, and allowed children’s active participation in its planning, development and assessment.

It also allowed involving parents in the preschool activities.

Good Practice 104

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To promote the effective inclusion of a child with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as an element who belongs to a group as any other child.

Through the construction of a *table of activities*, all children were able to identify the several moments of their day and helped that particular child identify and understand his tasks and activities throughout the day.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

We built with all the children a table with photos of the several activities inside and outside the classroom. The pictures were displayed in order the child with ASD to build his routine, with the participation of others.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Cardboard, sticker paper, adhesive *velcro*. Photographs of children in various activities

Content of the Activity:

We built with all the children a table with photos of the several activities inside and outside the classroom; the presence of the child with ASD was always required. The pictures were displayed in order the child with ASD to build his routine. The child, with the help of friends and/or adults, placed in the table of the activities, located at the entrance of the room, the picture of the task/activity already done or that would be done next (for example: check the presence, group activity, toileting, snack time, play, play outdoors, constructions, arts, collages, modeling clay, reading, dramatic play, lunch, and others).

With this task the child continued to learn and make acquisitions in preschool, improved his ability to relate with peers, and was able to understand better the exact moment of each activity in his day. It also helped his adaptation to preschool and its routines. In addition to this task, we used other strategies, such as la-



being his place at the table and in the space for group time, in order to help him organize and carry out the activities to the end; there were always initiatives from the adult to counteract the repeated movements that do not appropriately promote the development.



Teacher’s role:

The teacher participated with the children in the activities, revealing enthusiasm and support, and challenging them to fully develop and participate.

Children’s role:

In this activity, there were moments of involvement in large and small groups as well as individual tasks.

The child with ASD was motivated and interested in the activities.

Additional comments-Highlights:

This activity enabled the development of different content areas from the national curricular guidelines for the preschool education: personal and social education; language and communication; and the understanding of the world.

Good Practice 105

Country of origin:

Portugal

Duration of good practice:

One week

Number of children involved:

Three classes
(65 children in total)

Purpose - Goals:

In this activity we intent to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classrooms, through the story “O pequeno trevo” (the little clover). The objective was that other children became aware of the difficulties experienced by people with disabilities. With this activity we want children to understand the story: its concepts, sequence and the identification of problems.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Strategies used:

PowerPoint presentation: “O Pequeno Trevo” (the little clover) with verbal guidance.

Some questions were asked about the story and hypotheses were verbalized for solving the problem. The preschool teacher proposed a song about this issue as well as different games.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Interactive board, cd player, wheelchair, blindfold, aromatic plants, small bags, pins.

Content of the Activity:

The story was exposed to the whole group. Teacher and children talked about the right to be different. During this period of time, teacher tried to understand if children realize the main issues, asking questions about the different events and giving some clues to identify the problem.

Later the children learned a song by João Portugal “Somos Iguais Diferentes” (Us Equal Different).

Children experienced some difficulties that people with disabilities have, through some games. They could feel like one of the children who moves in a wheelchair, in a school with a lot of stairs used every day, without lift or a platform lift. All of them could experience the wheelchair and face the difficulties of everyday life these people have to overcome.

Other disabilities could be felt with games such as vision, in which children were blindfolded to recognize objects or different smells.

Teacher’s role:

Teacher prepared everything in collaboration with the Special Teacher, showing an enthusiast attitude, supportive and challenging.





Children's role:

In this activity there were moments of participation in large group (eg. watching the PowerPoint presentation, and the following dialogues) and in small groups / individual (playing the games).

Children participated actively in all activities.

Good Practice 106

Country of origin:

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

A school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

Communicate with special educational needs (SEN) children or children whose second language is a different one from the one spoken at the school

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Use of symbols

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Laminated plastic cards with symbols

Content of the Activity:

Different laminated pictures with symbols are located at different places, depending on what we need to communicate with the children. For example, a child (with autism) always wanted to go into the garden. By using this approach we were able to limit our verbal instructions to a symbol. The child could then see if he did the first instruction, then the second would happen. So he had to tidy up first and then go into the garden.

Teacher's role:

Locate the problem or issue that needs attention and use the correct symbols to communicate with the children.

Children's role:

To try to participate.



Purpose - Goals:

For the children to
empathize with people with disabilities
become sensitive towards other people's disabilities
take care of another

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Dialogue, drama play, questioning, experiment.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

A teddy bear.

Content of the Activity:

The teacher enters the class holding a teddy bear. She explains that she found it in the street and that it is not like all other teddy bears because it is blind, deaf and cannot walk. She encourages the children to talk about the reasons the bear was thrown away and asks the children "What shall we do about this?". She discusses the children's feelings and the bear's feelings. She also discusses ways that feelings of comfort, understanding and love can be communicated without speech (the bear is deaf). She encourages each child to hold the bear gently and place it close to his/her heart. The children suggest that the bear stays with them in class. The teacher poses the problem "and what will happen to it when we all go home? I am sure it will feel very lonely and scared in an empty classroom". The children suggest the bear goes home with them. The teacher poses another problem "who will take it home every day? We all want to take good care of it but we cannot all take it home with us". The children propose they take turns. The teacher writes the name of each child (and her own name) on pieces of paper and places all names in a box. She shuffles the names and picks one. The child whose name is picked gets to take the bear home for that day and return it to school the next day. The child who takes the bear home is responsible for it and should take good care of it.

Teacher "and how shall we call our new friend? Everyone needs a name". The children say their ideas and they decide that the best name for the bear is Lovey Huggs (name and surname)

The teacher sends a letter to the parents letting them know about the scenario encouraging them to play along and treat the bear as a special guest whenever their child is picked to bring it home. She also explained to the parents that taking good care of Lovey was each child's responsibility and that they should give their child the initiative to do so.

Teacher's role: The teacher guides the children, explains the procedure, provides detailed directions and encourages children to participate actively.

Good Practice 107**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

A school year

Number of children involved:

The whole class
but taking turns.
Each child individually
is adopting
the teddy bear.

Children's role:

The children have to describe their experience and their feelings from their participation to the project.

Additional comments-Highlights:

All children responded positively towards Lovey Huggs. The first child who took the bear home returned it the next day with baby clothes. From then on when children took the bear home they would change its clothes. One month into the program the bear had a box full of clothes(which we would put on it according to the weather) and a comfortable bed in the classroom. The parent's response was also positive. They all participated in the program encouraging their child to take Lovey Huggs with when they had to go out or visit while having the bear at their home. Every morning all children would pass from Lovey's bed to say good morning and every afternoon to say goodbye. At the beginning of the program they would give instructions to the child taking him home reminding him/her to take good care of Lovey.

Lovey accompanied the children to field trips, school assembly, outings and school plays.

During the Christmas school play a child was afraid to get on stage and perform his act. The teacher had Lovey Huggs with her and used the bear as to encourage the child to hold it throughout the play. The child responded positively and held the bear with him- he got on stage and performed his role with no problem.

Purpose - Goals:

Help a child with SEN to actively participate in the lesson.

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Individualized teaching. Educate the teaching assistant to help the child when using technology.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

An individual tablet for the child, to be able to play the same games that the rest of the class plays on the interactive whiteboard we have in the classroom.

Content of the Activity:

When designing my lessons, I always think of ways to actively involve all the children of my class. The use of technology is very helpful in regard to this. However, when I use technology (e.g. the interactive whiteboard) to help the class consolidate a concept (e.g. geometrical shapes in math) the child with SEN cannot participate because he cannot walk or stand to use the interactive whiteboard. The idea to use a personal tablet came from a visitor that came to observe a lesson in my class. At the point that the rest of the class was using the interactive whiteboard, the guest gave his personal tablet to the child with SEN (with a similar activity). The child looked happy and excited at the same time. I then asked the guest specific information for educational preschool programs that can be used on the tablet and on the interactive whiteboard as well. With that information and with a research that I did I created a list of those programs.

The next step – finding a tablet- was easy. I took my son's tablet and I downloaded the programs that I needed. Now, when I use the interactive whiteboard, the teaching assistant helps the child with SEN to do the same activity on his tablet.

Teacher's role:

When the child with SEN uses the tablet I don't give him any special attention so that the rest of the class will not feel that I have specific interest for one child. The teaching assistant is with the child the whole time.

During play time (in the morning and before going home) I allow the rest of the class to play with the tablet as well, so that they can all feel equal in terms of being able to use the tablet.

Children's role: It's difficult to describe the child's excitement. Using the tablet helped him to improve his vocabulary. This technology provides a number of stimuli, which is also important for a foreign speaking child like this one.

Additional comments-Highlights: I informed the head teacher of my school for the need to purchase such equipment. Her first reaction was negative but when I explained that such a tablet would only cost € 69 she was convinced that it is worth buying it.

Good Practice 108**Country of origin:**

Cyprus

Duration of good practice:

Throughout the spring semester in math activities.

Number of children involved:

1 child with special educational needs

Good Practice 109

Country of origin:

Denmark

Duration of good practice:

15 minutes

Number of children involved:

One particular child and then the others follow.

Purpose - Goals:

To help a child that is not well adapted and feels different than the others. To help the child feel comfortable with himself and assure good relations with adults and children

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Using pictures – kind of pictogram to help communication and understanding

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Pictures, prints.

Content of the Activity:

We have a boy in our classroom. From the very first day in the Kindergarten he has had difficulties being in the group of children. They are all together 22-27 children. He does not like too much noise, and there will often be very noisy because there are so many children. He goes often away from the classroom and sometimes he has been hard to find again, because he has either hidden himself or he has visited one of the other classrooms in the Kindergarten. Every time we found him in another classroom the pedagogues asked if he had asked for permission of the pedagogues in his classroom and he said yes. We were all very irritated and frustrated about this and we felt sorry for him, because we got a little angry with him and then he was sad.

One of the pedagogues got a very good idea one day. She took some pictures of the classrooms in the Kindergarten – made a print of them and wrote on them, that he has been allowed to be in the room on the picture.

He got very happy when we showed him the pictures and explained to him how he could use them. Now every time he could like to visit another room he simply comes and ask for one of the pictures. He is very proud of the pictures and that they are his and several of the other children has asked him if they could borrow them.

Teacher's role:

The teacher found a good solution, a good way of handling a problem.

Children's role:

The child is acting and very eager to get things as he feels comfortable with. The child understands what the pedagogies try to do and reacts by showing happiness and proud.

Good Practice 110

Purpose - Goals:

To facilitate the integration of children with CES

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Conversation, explanation.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Power Point presentation, pictures

Content of the Activity:

The teacher introduces the activity called "I am a child just like you!"

For starters, the teacher presents a short film in which a child evinces language difficulties. In the film no other child wants to play with Alex. The toddlers will not play with him because they cannot understand what he is saying. For a whole week nobody played with him. One day Alex brought a toy many children wanted but could not afford. In this way the toddlers started to play with him and understood that Alex is a child, just like them.

After watching the film the children focused their attention on Anastasia who suffers from emotional disabilities (anxiety).

In the second part of the activity the children formed groups of three and sorted out pictures with children that displayed deficiencies. One of the groups also chose Anastasia.

Teacher's role:

The teacher evinces a warm attitude. She enforces support and cooperation from the colleagues, the building of a positive attitude from the part of the colleagues. She encourages the independent spirit, the personal autonomy. The teacher creates an emotional positive environment that will ensure optimal conditions for Anastasia's development without neglecting the other toddlers in her class. She intervenes in the conversation when it is necessary.

Children's role:

The children participate actively to the conversation. They express their opinions on what they have watched. The children have understood that not all people have a normal life, but we are equals all the same. The children have accepted Anastasia in their game, giving her strength, confidence and joy that there will be children who will accept her as she is.

Country of origin:

Romania

Duration of good practice:

Daily practice

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 111

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good practice:

Four days

Number of children involved:

The whole class
(16 children including
2 children with SEN)

Purpose - Goals:

To promote cooperation and develop social skills in every child with or without special educational needs.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Experiential learning, cooperative learning, project method.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Pastry materials and cooking pots, papers, markers, wrapping materials, music instruments, cd player.

Content of the Activity:

Children bring materials and cooking pots in order to prepare and bake cookies for the celebration of “mother’s day”. Children, including the children with SEN, are divided in groups and they write down the recipe and the necessary ingredients. The next day, after they collect all the materials, they execute the recipe with the help of parents who visit the class and the teacher’s assistance. After they finish the kneading of the cookies, they take them to the neighborhood’s bakery to bake them. The next day they prepare the packaging and the gift-wrap in order to offer them to their mothers. The last day of the project, children organize a mini reception where they invite their mothers, they offer them cards, drawings and the cookies they baked, and they sing various songs to them.

Teacher’s role:

To support, encourage and allow children to experiment and take initiatives.

Children’s role:

Active engagement, experiential learning, playful activities, cooperation in small groups, positive interactions with all children in the class.

Good Practice 112

Purpose - Goals:

To embrace diversity, to learn to respect and take care of each other.

Teaching methods - Practices (if any are used):

Dialogue, instructions.

Materials (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):

Bird seeds and a birdcage. A photographic camera, a pc and a printer.

Content of the Activity:

This activity was initiated when children discovered a wounded bird in the schoolyard. The bird had a broken wing and all the children decided to adopt the handicap bird. A veterinary doctor provided the necessary first aid and bandaged the broken wing. He also visited the class and gave specific instructions to the children how to take care of the bird. The children kept a diary of the vet doctors' instructions and also of the bird's progress. The children decided the name of the bird, rotated each day in the various chores that concerned taking care of the bird like cleaning the cage, refreshing the water and arranging the food. Throughout the procedure of nurturing and attending the bird the teacher always reminded the importance of helping each other and accepting everybody no matter how different they are from us. Children also kept a photographic diary of the bird's progress and at the end of the period of the bird's healing they created a digital album of their story. When the bird was completely healthy, the children together with the veterinary doctor liberated the bird allowing it to return to nature.

Teacher's role:

Support children in their actions, encourage cooperation and focus on their reflection on the importance of diversity.

Children's role:

To work in groups, to be responsible, to respect each other and to follow instructions.

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good practice:

Two months.

Number of children involved:

The whole class

Good Practice 113

Country of origin:

Greece

Duration of good

practice:

Five days

Number of children

involved:

The whole class

Purpose - Goals:

To acknowledge and accept diversity in the classroom

Teaching methods - Practices *(if any are used):*

Story telling, puppet play, dramatic play, teacher instructions.

Materials *(equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc.):*

Pictures portraying children from all over the world, books, puppets of different races, coloured temperas.

Content of the Activity:

A “diversity festival” is organized by the teacher that includes several activities such as: a) Activities where racial and cultural diversity of materials are portrayed in real and non-stereotypic ways, and b) Activities for children that acknowledge diversity in positive ways (e.g. story telling from the puppets aiming at increasing children’s empathy towards diversity).

Teacher’s role:

The ability of a teacher to discuss sensitive topics regarding difference with young children in an inclusive and supportive manner.

Children’s role:

Active engagement in the activities, respecting each other, expressing their feelings and their experiences.

6. Epilogue

Collecting good practices from so different sociocultural backgrounds and early childhood education systems is definitely a unique opportunity to see how teachers from six European countries perceive the notion of quality in early childhood education and the notion of good practice.

A careful examination of the good practices, the participating in the project early childhood teachers and caregivers collected shows various interpretations and approaches to learning and daily schedules. In some occasions, the good practices reveal individualized learning and play, while in other examples we get to see more systematic and organized by the teacher activities with specific goals. For example, good practices from Finland and Denmark seem to reflect a more flexible structure of the daily schedule with children spending the majority of their time in small groups, playing in children initiated activities and outdoors. On the other hand, good practices from the other countries seem to reflect a more organized structure with specific learning goals and with the interactions happening in several instances in the form of teacher- whole group interactions.

In this large pool of 113 good practices the reader will find activities that seem to be more teacher centered and others that can be described as child centered or child initiated. The teachers that selected the good practices contribute to the puzzle that constitutes the daily practices, the educational praxis of in service educators across European early childhood education environments helping us to understand the different approaches the curricula and the educational policies implement.

The six countries of the Early Change project are characterized by large differences among them when it comes to their national curricula. We have early childhood education systems where there isn't any national curriculum but only some goals and directions (e.g Denmark), we have curricula that have a semi-structured form like the Portuguese and we have the examples of national early childhood education curricula (e.g. Greece). In so different frameworks, the teachers selected good practices that reflect the different educational philosophies of the participating countries. For example, there are good practices that focus mostly on children's autonomy and self-regulation, while others pursue children's harmonic cooperation and interaction within the whole class.

In general, the good practices that were collected during the Early Change project provide a wide view of the cultural and educational differences that exist in the six early childhood education systems. They also highlight the common values and beliefs the European countries have for the education and development of young children and for what constitutes a qualitative early childhood education environment. Such knowledge can support the effort of educational policies to converge and agree on what is globally accepted as quality of early

childhood education environments. Recognizing the strengths and limitations of each educational system, and understanding the different perspectives practitioners have can help in empowering teachers, enhancing their professional development and supporting the effort to create more qualitative and effective environments for learning and play.

The words of one early childhood teacher that participated in the Early Change project seem as the ideal way to close this attempt to acquaint ourselves with the practitioners' perspectives, "*... the training in the ECERS-R helped me recognize daily behaviors and practices I did without realizing them and to improve them. I already incorporated some of the scale's content into my daily actions. The Good Practices on the other hand, allowed me to observe the practices of other colleagues and to reflect on mine, as well. It always helps to see what others are doing and to realize you are not alone. Talking with colleagues from my country but from the other countries as well was comforting and supporting in ways I couldn't imagine*".

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APPENDIX

Good Practice Categories

(check the category or categories of good practices described here)			
Health & Safety		Classroom Management	
Activities/Play		Diversity/Inclusion	
Interactions		Other	

Country:.....	Phase of the daily schedule:
Duration of good practice:.....	Number of children involved (whole class, one group, individuals, etc.):

<p style="text-align: center;">Purpose – goals (of the activity, behavior, action, incident)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Didactic – Teaching methods (if they are used any)</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Materials: (equipment, materials, devices, room arrangement etc. if they are used)</p>	
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<p>Good Practice Description (detailed description of dialogue, activity, lesson plan, behaviors, actions, etc. according to the type of good practice described here)</p>	
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<p>Teacher's role: (instruction, behavior, action, question, expression, emotion, attitude, etc.)</p>	
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<p>Children's role: (action, behavior, answer, intention, movement, expression, emotion, engagement, etc.)</p>	
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<p>Highlights-Additional Comments:</p>	
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GOOD PRACTICE KIT

EARLY CHANGE PROJECT
517999-LL9-1-2011-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP

Why Good Practices?

- Good practices in education are identified practices or interventions that are linked to specific outcomes and contribute to improved provision of education for all children.
- The notion of quality can be defined in multiple ways. This project will attempt to describe practices in child care and kindergarten classrooms that both educators and academic staff identify as exemplary.
- We aim to highlight and understand the varieties of teaching and learning practices which encompass high quality child care.
- Inform educators and caregivers in their decisions regarding approaches to curriculum development across all early learning environments
- Guide professional development activities and investments
- Contribute to literature for improving the quality of all early learning environments
- Theoretical background: constructivism, sociocultural theory.
- This project will be focused on good practices covering formal, non-formal and informal learning¹ (wherever possible).

1 **Formal learning:** learning that occurs within an organized and structured context (i.e. formal education institutions such as schools and universities), and follows a particular structured design. It typically leads to a formal recognition (diploma, certificate). **Non-formal learning:** learning which is embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as formal learning, but which contain an important learning element, such as vocational skills acquired on the playground; **Informal learning:** learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, leisure, free-time, etc. This type of learning is sometimes referred as experiential learning.

What/When/Where to look for:

Quality research-based pedagogy. That is pedagogy responsive to the learning, social and emotional needs of diverse students.

Constructivist views of learning. Development and learning proceed at varying rates from child to child, as well as at uneven rates across different areas of a child's individual functioning. All children are capable of learning. Teachers that scaffold between what children already know through their experiences and what they need to learn.

Sociocultural views of learning. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts. The way young children approach learning is influenced by their sociocultural environment as well as by individual temperament and gender. Children carry with them their influences from various cultural groups, but share similar developmental patterns.

Effective learning. All domains of development and learning –physical, social, emotional and cognitive- are important and are closely interrelated. Children's learning and development is a continuum. Therefore we are in search of integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum and programs.

Play. The most important vehicle for learning and developing self-regulation as well as for promoting language, cognition, and social competence. Play, in all its forms, must be the basic occupation of preschoolers.

Child-centered practices. Young children benefit most from meaningful hand-on experiences and nurturing interactions where the intrinsic joy of learning is emphasized and valued. Children are motivated and hence learn better, through play and the active exploration of their environment.

Social – emotional development. Children develop best when they have secure consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers.

If optimal learning is desirable what are quality practices and how should those environments or opportunities for children look like? Children learn in places where:

- Learning is a cooperative journey shared by many, not a competitive race between individuals.
- Knowledge is defined as mental constructs that are drawn out rather than information that is handed out.
- Diversity is celebrated and the talents and strengths of each child are recognized and nourished.
- Concrete materials, quality literature, technology, and a variety of resource materials are used.

Health & Safety

What/When/Where to look for:

Health: Practices for general cleanliness and for administration of medications. Practices for first aid support and allergies treatment.

Practices that relate to health and nutrition issues and promote physical well-being. Activities about table manners. Practices that aim at the acquisition of healthy eating habits and healthy food choices.

Activities that train children and establish personal hygiene routines (i.e hand washing, combing hair, dental hygiene). Activities that focus on keeping the class clean (i.e cleaning after lunch, putting away the materials, toys and equipment). Practices that demonstrate and teach behaviors to meet self-help physical needs, such as dressing, eating, toileting. Effectual instruction strategies for getting children to follow health and safety procedures and routines.

Activities that teach social behaviors, keeping the line, sharing materials etc. Light and ventilation practices. Activities that place in their epicenter of attention good physical health and motor development.

Safety: Practices to ensure constant supervision of children (i.e. in Greek kindergarten classrooms, there is only one teacher per class). Classroom arrangements that lack of hidden spots and ‘blind’ corners, that allow the educator to supervise all children efficiently. Practices for space and furnishing maintained and in good repair. Furniture and equipment that is child sized.

Practices for dealing with inadequate indoor or outdoor space for physical activity. Activities for ensuring safe circulation around “high traffic areas” in the classroom. Teacher actions to arrange an environment for ease of flow of traffic and minimized distractions.

Practicable steps that protect children from exposure to inappropriate material. Activities and practices that train children to use potentially hazardous materials for injury prevention. Practices for storing toys and other teaching materials in storage units. Provision only of toys and materials expected to be used during a specific session, organized activity.

Practices about facilities and equipment standards and playgrounds (i.e all rooms should have safety electrical outlets). Activities that promote safety routines and drills. Activities for travel and excursion safety procedures. Activities for learning, practicing and maintaining safety and health rules. Activities, games and dramatic plays with items of use in real areas of life, hard hats, life preservers, safety goggles, etc.

Curriculum-Program. Carefully structured daily schedule, balanced between adult-planned and child-planned or-initiated activities. Carefully structured daily schedule, balanced between organized and free play, indoor and outdoor activities.

Activities. Classroom routines that promote specific goals and are systematically taught, reinforced and monitored. Tasks that are adjusted to children needs and interests. Activities that have interdisciplinary and cross-curricular themes and that offer stimulation for a wide range of subjects. Activities' goals that focus on specific skills and competencies. Activities' goals that are adjusted for children's level and abilities.

Activities that include ICTs either as a content or as a mean. Activities that are based on various forms of play and that encourage large group, small group or individual engagement. Activities that offer and exploit various materials for best learning opportunities and provide opportunities to experiment with new materials. Practices that create multiple micro-environments and prepare various stimulation during free play (e.g. rotating different kind of equipment and materials for enriching free play choices).

Projects that incorporate various methodologies and achieve important goals. Innovative projects that include field visits, ICTs, discovery learning and open classrooms to society.

Practices that encourage children to construct their own knowledge and use critical thinking skills in conjunction with peer learning. Activities that allow for expressing self creatively through music, movement and art. Practices that encourage the child's natural inclination to ask questions, to wonder and to think of ways he/she might gain answers.

Activities that create a caring community of learners and a positive socio-emotional classroom climate. Practices that use various styles of learning including verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, visual/spatial and interpersonal. Activities that encourage children to engage in imaginative play and inventive thinking through interactions with people and the environment.

Teaching methods. Methods that mainly focus on active student-centered learning. Combined use and variation of teaching strategies within an activity or a project. Cooperative learning, critical problem solving, promotion of creativity. Methods that encourage children's participation, that allow taking initiatives and making mistakes and that acknowledge the effort and the engagement in a task and not only the final result. Teaching for all children and for every children separately. Teaching that respects individual differences in learning and different cultural origins and needs.

Interactions

What/When/Where to look for:

Social – emotional development. Children develop best when they have secure consistent relationships with responsive adults and opportunities for positive relationships with peers. Practices that show children they are equally loved and respected in the classroom environment. Educator invests in children demonstrating attachment, trust and autonomy. Interventions that attempt to promote a child’s social adjustment and competency.

Teaching style. Teacher strategies and behaviors that maintain a healthy balance in their interactions with children. Behaviors that prioritize getting the work accomplished, but also add some fun to class and that show a human and friendly side of the teacher. Offering repeated choice opportunities that allow children to build a sense of competence and may prevent challenging behaviors. Behaviors and practices to cope in an efficient way with dependent children. Practices that clearly express positive expectations for children’s abilities. Activities and interactions that stimulate engagement and cooperation. Interactions among a team of educators and children.

Instructions. Look for clear and easy to follow instructions. Practices that help children understand their teacher (e.g. tone of voice, visual aids assistance). Oral directions paired with pictures, icons or written words. Examples of corrective feedback provided promptly and positively. Practices that allow for a “wait-time” after asking a content question. Frequent appropriate comprehension tasks and checks to ensure no one is left behind.

Peer relations-Classroom climate. Practices that encourage children in social interaction and plays with others. Strategies that create a caring community of learners. Activities that target at promoting good manners, increasing individual’s empathy and solidarity among peers. Activities that engage children in social problem solving behavior and proper conflict resolution.

Teacher-family relationships. Practices that establish reciprocal relationships with families. A practice is not developmentally appropriate if the program limits “parent involvement” to arriving and departing meetings and short briefings about a child’s progress. Behaviors and practices that encourage parents to participate That make them feel as “partners” with early educators in their children’s development. Practices that establish and maintain a regular, frequent two-way communication with parents. Practices that promote ‘open classroom’ and convey the message that family members are welcome in the setting. Offering multiple opportunities for family participation. Practices that link families with a range of services, based on identified resources, priorities and concerns. Practices that encourage practitioners and parents to share information about the child (before program entry and on an ongoing basis).

What/When/Where to look for:

Creating Rules and Procedures. Practices that adopt few basic rules and minimize the number of rules. Practices that make sure that rules are systematically taught, reinforced and respected. Practices that involve student participation in establishing codes of conduct. Students should actively participate in the creation of guidelines governing classroom life. Practices that help in the creation of short and easy to understand rules. Practices that reconsider rules that don't work and in cooperation with children, they revise them.

Supporting positive behavior. Offer child-planned or-initiated activities in order to provide an environment in which children are most likely to behave positively. Comprehensive interventions that require a continuum of behavior support for children. Practices that seek to detect positive behaviors and efforts on behalf of children who face adjustment problems and to reinforce them. Activities that provide stimulating seatwork, offer variety and challenge. A child who is bored, is most likely to seek interest elsewhere, thus resulting in distractive behavior.

Transition from inappropriate to appropriate. Behaviors and practices to cope in an efficient way with distractive children. Practices that use cooperative learning structures to increase task engagement and acquaint children with the benefits of working together. Activities that focus on social behavior, prosocial skills, self-awareness and cooperation. Practices that help children to connect their level of effort and the academic or behavioral outcomes they experience. Educator strategies that maintain a brisk pace and transmit continuous activity signals (i.e. such as standing near inattentive students or directing questions to potentially disruptive children).

Consequences versus punishment. Activities that aim at internalizing the meaning of a rule and the consequence of specific behaviors. Practices that avoid "power struggles" between the teacher and the children. Behaviors that always offer a way out of a 'crisis' by accepting the teachers' suggestion and avoid creating "dead ends". Strategies that explain to children the consequences of an action or behavior. Practices where inappropriate behavior is followed by consequences rather than punishment. Practices where consequences are viewed as an appropriate outcome to an inappropriate act and where they are always alternative solutions with the support of the teacher available for correcting a behavior or an action.

Diversity/ Inclusion

What/When/Where to look for:

Culturally responsive pedagogy: Practices that are responsive to learning, emotional and social needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse children, children with disabilities, etc.

Activities that are not only restricted to the four “fs-food, folklore, fun and fashion”, but include simulation, pretend play and games where children participate in cross-cultural simulations to get first-hand experiences of sociocultural differences and power differentials. Activities that promote children’s empathy towards the different characteristics and needs of their peers. Instructional materials should be responsive to students’ values and cultural norms. Behaviors and practices that reveal sociocultural consciousness. That means understanding that one’s way of thinking and behaving is influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, language, gender, etc.

Inclusion responsive pedagogy: Strategies and practices that promote the three components of inclusive education, access, quality and community participation (i.e peers, educators, parents, community).

Activities or interventions that support placement, adjustment and attainment of children with disabilities. Educators’ actions and strategies that exploit or try to improve infrastructure, equipment, learning materials, textbooks and procedures. Activities that exploit ICTs to the benefit of children with disabilities. Behaviors that treat all children as equals, even when adjusting to their different abilities or needs (i.e disabilities). Activities that include child-centered instructional methodologies to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities.

What/When/Where to look for:

- Every educator has to observe or record minimum 2 'good practices' from any of the six categories.
- A good practice can extend to a wide range of actions. It can either be a specific incident, an action, a classroom management technique, the work of a group of children, a task children had to follow, an organized activity, a free play activity, a series of organized activities that compose a project, an intervention, etc.
- Good practices can be observed or recalled. Educators can record a good practice they observe, they have implemented themselves or have seen in the past.
- A good practice can "fall into" more than one category. For example, the description of an activity with cooperative learning in groups may include an incident of a conflict resolution that refers to classroom management.
- A good practice is not only limited to the period of organized activities that incorporate specific goals. Similar to the developmental continuum, is the educational procedure also. So various goals and pursuits on behalf of the teacher can be accomplished during the rest of the daily schedule. A good example can occur from the first moment a child arrives at the classroom (e.g. a welcoming behavior of the educator) until the last one when the child departs (e.g. an autonomy oriented behavior of the teacher for children to learn to pack their things and prepare themselves for home).
- Good practices must be delivered in the English language. Educators can either record them in their native language and then transcribe them or they can write it directly to English. In addition they should be preferably, typed and not handwritten.

