

Primary school Osnovna Skola Gradac, Croatia “Good School Mood” by Branka Peric, school psychologist

The Good School Mood projects have been conducted in **Primary School Gradac (Gradac, Croatia)** during the last nine years. All of them addressed prevention of violence and bullying. As a starting point, we implemented a programme for the prevention of peer violence and bullying which was conceived by UNICEF together with Croatian experts: **For a Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools - Stop Violence among Children**. We chose to join this programme because we recognized it as a good tool in fighting bullying and violence that we experienced in our school.

After completion of this project, we have continued to create and implement projects and activities which aim to improve wellbeing of our pupils and generally to create a positive and stimulating atmosphere in the school. The first one was **Our Rules** which aimed to develop nonviolent communication, tolerance, respect and appreciation of diversity. Through composing the anthem with lyrics based on the class rules and plays with situations from the class that related to the rules, pupils not only learned how to communicate in a nonviolent way, but also developed their creative potential and improved self-respect and self-confidence. Through another project, **Sport Heart**, we addressed inappropriate behavior at sport meetings. The project plan included interviews with our pupils – athletes, workshops for training pupils-judges, designing and making props, composing fan songs and organizing tournaments. We continued this project within the framework of the former Life Long Learning Programme, and in cooperation with six partner schools from European countries we created and implemented the project **Euroball**. Through the central task of making rules for new sport games, we again encouraged appropriate behavior on sport grounds and supported pupils for healthy lifestyles. The project **Let's Live Healthily and Grow up Happily** was oriented on raising awareness of the importance of proper nutrition and regular physical activity for growth and development of communication skills. All mentioned projects were continued through activities such as workshops, sport events and drama classes.

From our previous projects we learned that if we improve a sense of participation, encourage the working atmosphere and improve the functional and aesthetic appearance of the school and its surrounding, the rate of bullying and violence will lower.

This is a reason why we created the project **The School is my Sunny Home**. Since our school doesn't have a logo, a motto and a dress code, we decided to ask all pupils to give their proposals. With a help of volunteers from the local community we arranged a part of the school garden as Sunny Garden and organized Sunny Corner, a place in the school where pupils can have a rest, play games and socialize. (Our school celebrates the School Day on Day of Sun – 3rd May.) From pupils' responses we understood that there is still room not only for improving our school atmosphere and functional and aesthetic appearance but also to improve cooperation with the local community.

As a part of the project **The Good Mood School** we again arranged a part of the school garden – The Good Mood Garden with the reflexology path which is together with the choice of colours and scents of indigenous herbs in the function of relaxing its users. The municipality of Gradac financially supported

upgrading of the school sport fields. Our school decorated a bench on the Gradac waterfront by our school colours and the school logo. In this way we brought the school closer to our fellow citizens and guests.

After completion of each project we asked pupils to fill an evaluation form. Feedback was generally positive and violence and bullying rate was low. The main problem that we have experienced was the lack of motivation of some teachers, other staff in the school and some pupils, because any initiative besides the regular curriculum is considered as an extra burden. Sometimes the problem is finances which are not planned for such projects.

From our experience if we want to prevent violence and bullying, we do not need necessarily to deal only with this topic and prevention have to be included in the curriculum of all school subjects. Any achievement in improving pupils' confidence, self-respect and generally emotional status leads to lower rate of bullying and violence. This area also needs to be a part of teachers' studies education program. The continuity in projects implementation is also very important and every project has to take in consideration specifics of every school.