

Workshop: „Can voluntary work be compulsory? School-based Youth Service Programme (SYSP)”

Date, Time: Thursday, 31.03.2011, 10:30 – 12:30 and 14:15 – 16:15

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Workshop content/theme

School-based Youth Service Programme (SYSP) helps to improve students' emotional development, social sensitivity and responsibility for the community.

Aims

The aim of SYSP is to give opportunities to the widest range of secondary school students to experience the good of community service, civic participation and voluntary work.

In several countries of the world community service is a compulsory requirement for secondary graduation. In Hungary you can find some forms of SYSP in more and more schools. In these institutions they have realised that this programme is actually an educational means which can encourage young people to be able and willing to help and work for their own good as well as for their environment and community, to become conscious and responsible citizens.

If we would like our children to become citizens who want and are able to act for the benefit of their own and their environment, then they need to have an education towards it in school as well. SYSP helps them not only to do something for the community, solve a problem and do something worthwhile, but the participants learn something new through experiential learning. They learn about cooperation, conflict management, empathy, creative thinking, project planning, decision making and (taking) responsibility.

School-based Youth Service Programme (SYSP) is an activity done in an organized way (as a class, group, grade, club, student council) for the good of the local community. There are several activities the students can accomplish, such as:

- painting the fence of the neighbouring kindergarten
- repairing their garden-toys
- cleaning up the local public park
- helping in old people's homes or orphanages
- doing a playhouse project in a children's hospital
- collecting Christmas presents for the needy
- helping in the maintenance of animal shelters
- walking their dogs

SYSP is a well accepted and appreciated element of several schools' life in Hungary today, although it appears under different names.

Common in all these models:

- social responsibility is consciously taken
- project-type working
- teacher or coordinator is taking part as a help, mentor, facilitator
- the school recognizes the work of the teacher/coordinator (financially)
- SYSP is included in the long-term Pedagogical Programme of the school
- working for complex development at least in the following competences: independence, critical thinking, conflict management, empathy, creative thinking, decision-making, responsibility-taking, social sensitivity, cooperation, project planning
- SYSP is a well prepared activity which is followed by processing, evaluation, celebration and recognition.

School-based Youth Service Programme of DIA (Foundation for Democratic Youth): DIA started its activities in 1999 with the aim of making youth service well understood and wide-spread both within and outside of the school system. The program started two years ago to bring youth service into the formal school system.

Method(s)/Approach

1. Warming up and an “introduce ourselves” game
2. Short presentation (ppt)
 - explained what School-based Youth Service Programme (SYSP) is;
 - introduced good practices in different schools (International Baccalaureate and Hungarian ones);
 - presented different types of activities by showing photos taken at SYSP;
 - talked about preparation and reflective lessons.
3. In 3 groups the participants had to plan a preparation lesson, a volunteer activity for a class, and the reflective lesson.
4. Everyone had to write down 4 skills that students should develop during SYSP. Then 4 people became a group and they had to agree on 4 skills. Then 8 and 8 people formed two groups and they had to agree on 4 skills. Finally the two groups sit opposite to each other and they had 2 min. to agree on the 4 skills.
This way the participants thought over the aims of such a programme and they also could experience the process of team decision making and their role in it.
5. Structured debate (Karl Popper) on the statement: Service should be compulsory in high school education.
6. Closing game

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

<http://english-dia.blogspot.com/>

Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

Everybody agrees about the importance of voluntary work. But whether schools should have a core subject called service is a very debatable question.



