

Workshop: „School as a pleasant place”

Date, Time: 01.10.2009, 10.00 – 13.00 and
01.10.2009, 14.30 – 17.15 (workshop duration in both cases 2,5 hours)

Trainer: Radmila Radić Dudić, Civic Initiatives, Civic Education Program Coordinator and Team TRI trainer

Workshop content/theme

The workshop started with the introduction of the trainer and participants. The participants were invited to say their name, surname, country, town and school, and to tell the group their motivation to participate in this workshop. The majority of them stressed the need to work in a better atmosphere. The aim of the workshop was presented and a few ground rules were agreed on. After the short trainer's input on the relation between a school atmosphere and student achievements, the participants were divided into pairs. Their task was to exchange experience on the situation in their life when they were respected and felt well, and also when they were treated badly. The trainer stressed that they need to talk about something what they would like to share with another person. After ten minutes they were asked if somebody would like to share with the whole group his/her experience and how he/she felt in that moment. Several participants talked about their good and bad experiences and the feelings related to the situation. The trainer wrote down the list of bad feelings on the flip chart: angry, sad, disappointed, threatened, disrespected etc. These listed feelings and mentioned reactions were the starting point for the discussion on respect and disrespect. During the conversation on different kinds of respect, the trainer introduced the theory of human dignity and the scheme of three kinds of human dignity: Honor, Respect and Human Dignity.

After a coffee break, the workshop continued with short reminder of the essence of Human Dignity for school atmosphere, teaching, learning and students achievements. Then the participants were divided into four groups in order to analyze good and not so good relationships: 1.) between Teacher and Student, 2.) Student and Student, 3.) Teacher and Teacher and 4.) Teacher and Parent. After half an hour work in small groups participants gathered together and each group presented the findings, insights and conclusions. During this part of the workshop, the participants were also asked to think about the role of power in different kinds of relationship. This was an opportunity for all participants to talk about relationships inside the school, their own experiences and how they deal with them.

The final session was focused on the promotion of a good school atmosphere in their schools. Teachers and students gave examples of how they imagine good school atmosphere.

Aims

To get a deeper insight into the impact of dignified behaviour on a school atmosphere

Method(s)/Approach

For the purpose of this workshop several methods were used: brainstorming, pair work, group work, plenary discussion and trainer's input.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

<http://www.safehealthyschools.org/schoolclimate.htm>

By the end of the year, Civic Initiatives will have prepared a booklet "Guidelines for establishing and conducting student parliaments". Running student parliaments is a very complex process and students are not prepared for it, especially those who do not attend CE classes which provide them with opportunities to improve knowledge and skills concerning civic engagement: leadership, team work, active listening, understanding of official procedures in running parliaments, communication with peers, teachers and officials, lobbying, etc. There is no permanent institutional memory, students leave school once they graduate without successors who will continue their work. There is no clear definition of mechanisms and techniques for

transferring knowledge of parliament functioning. Because of the authors' experience from working in and with student parliaments and having in mind listed problems, Civic Initiatives decided to make this booklet. The booklet will be available on the Civic Initiatives website: www.gradjanske.org

This booklet will hopefully contribute to ensuring better atmosphere in schools throughout Serbia.

Questions for workshop reflection

Students:

Teachers:

There was no formal questionnaire for participants' feedback on the workshop. However, both teachers and students expressed their satisfaction with the workshop content and the personal benefit.

Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

A group of participants (morning and afternoon group) was formed by teachers and students. They were from different countries. The workshop lasted for 2,5 hours, and some participants spent free time talking with the trainer even during the breaks and after the workshops. Observing the correlation between the school's atmosphere and students' achievements was very useful for the future planning, development, engagement in different actions...

The atmosphere during the workshop was good and friendly. The participants were motivated to participate actively and to exchange ideas and experiences related to the topic.

From the very beginning it was obvious that both teachers and students struggle for better school atmosphere. Only one teacher from Serbia stressed that the atmosphere in his school is brilliant. "There is always need for further development", was his comment on the reason for his participation.

Both students and teachers concluded that school atmosphere is influenced by the behaviour of students, teachers, parents, the principal and other school staff. Therefore, they all should work on their mutual relations.