

## TEACHERS TAMPLATE

### GOOD PRACTICE

#### TITLE

**Inclusive practices in the day care center „Help to Fit“**

#### BRIEF SUMMARY

Out of 378 people living in the Kirtimai Roma settlement in Vilnius, 48% are children less than 18 years old. Due to low self-esteem, lack of social skills, school failures, bullying that Roma kids experience at school, negative attitudes of teachers towards them and other problems, many of Roma students drop out from school during the first or second year of their education. Since 2009 a group of volunteers have been working with Roma children living in the Kirtimai settlement in order to prevent early drop-outs. Over six years, the group tried different work models. Finally they decided to open a small after-school day care center “Help to Fit”, in order to secure a stronger bond between the children and their schools. The center welcomes both Roma children from Kirtimai, and non-Roma children living in the Naujininkai district of Vilnius, where the center is situated.

Now, the day care center is regularly attended by 28 Roma children attending primary school, and 12 children from the Naujininkai district.

Volunteers in the center help Roma children with their homework and help them to acquire needed school supplies. After-school activities intended to develop social skills of children are arranged, too. A close communication with teachers and parents is maintained. According to the project initiators, children that attend the day care center, show better performance at school, nevertheless, the risk of the early school drop-out remains high as the day care center is not able to solve structural issues influencing school attendance, such as housing conditions and extreme poverty of families.

People working in the center “Help to Fit” while trying to solve various educational problems, encourage communication and collaboration between children, parents, teachers, social workers, Roma NGOs, and different municipal and state institutions, in one or another way involved in educational issues. The staff of day care center “Help to Fit” communicates with children, parents and other social partners in a professional way.

Seeking to implement a successful inclusion of Roma children, the staff makes a holistic observation of children’s well-being, behavior, emotions and feelings, their achievements in different areas of development.

The staff members also constantly make individual reflections and reflections in groups, involving all the specialists, parents and children. The staff members seek to get to know every child’s situation at home, her or his abilities. They take that knowledge into account in order to implement inclusive education. The uniqueness of every child is perceived as a possibility, not a problem. Content of education, material, methods, assignments are adopted for every child according to her/his needs and their developmental speed.

## USED MATERIALS

- POWERPOINT (51 slides) (ETHOS\_CASE STUDY TWO\_PRESENTATION)

## DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

In 2009, a Lithuanian Young Falcon Union started initiative to work with Roma children living in the Kirtimai Roma settlement. Over six years, the group tried different work models. When considering how to secure a stronger bond between a child and a school, it was decided to set up an integrated after school day care center "Help to Fit", which could be attended not only by Roma children, but also by non-Roma kids from the Naujininkai neighborhood where the Center is situated. The purpose of the Center is to establish cooperation between Roma and non-Roma children, based on mutual understanding and friendship; and thus to increase motivation and potential of Roma children for a successful integration into school, reducing mutual negative attitudes and expanding capabilities for Roma inclusion.

The educational process in the Center is based on mutual respect, tolerance, freedom and responsibility.

Currently, the day care center is regularly attended by 28 Roma children attending primary school and 12 children from the Naujininkai district. The Center employs social worker, educators and volunteers. In order to get to know children's needs better, employees constantly make holistic observation of children in different environment and different situations, they talk to their students, interact with their families. It is observed that basic needs of Roma children are not met; due to poor education, parents are not able to help their kids with homework, they distrust the education system, and are aware of negative attitudes towards Roma and their children; Roma kids have a low self-esteem, they lack social skills. During the first year of education children experience school failures, suffer from bullying caused by cultural, social and linguistic differences; all these reasons lead to the loss of motivation for studying and early school drop-out.

Roma children's needs revealed by observation are discussed and evaluated by the staff members and volunteers, and a plan to respond to these needs better is anticipated. A constant trustful relationship between children, staff members and volunteers is established in the Center. The Center initiated a solidarity network, which encourages children, parents, teachers, social workers, community, non-governmental institutions, and public authorities to communicate and cooperate in various fields.

The main activities of the day center "Help to Fit":

1. Getting to know the child (talking about their day, art therapy, discussions, writing a book about themselves, games);
2. Language education (learning languages, language club, games);
3. Development of social skills (educational excursions, discussions, events, summer camp, hygiene classes, games);
4. Development of other skills (creativity, tolerance, logical thinking, concentration);
5. Making homework.

All activities are focused on the educational needs of children.

In order to achieve the best results, the staff members and volunteers of the day care center apply the following means of education: promotion of regular attendance of the day care center; usage of social and cultural environments outside the Center (museums, excursions, summer camps, etc.); creation of a safe multicultural environment in the Center; development of clear rules by staff and children and compliance with them; upholding a clear agenda.

The staff and volunteers pay a lot of attention to emotional well-being of children: they try to know every child as much as they can; they try to develop children's emotional intelligence. The children are included in the planning and development of educational process: they provide their ideas and discuss the plans. The staff appreciates children's efforts, rejoices at their achievements, always supports them and helps to overcome difficulties.

#### **EXPLANATION of used words/terms**

The Roma – an ethnic group of Northern Indian origin; it is Europe's largest ethnic minority, of an estimated 10-12 million in the whole of Europe, some six million live in the EU, most of them EU citizens. Many Roma in the EU are victims of prejudice and social exclusion, despite the fact that EU countries have banned discrimination.

#### **POSSIBLE LESSONPLAN - ORFS**

1) Read the slide No 24. Make several groups and discuss in the groups the described situation. Answer the following questions:

- Why did the boy start to cry?
- How would you evaluate the behavior of the volunteer in the described situation?
- Do you think, the social worker was right, allowing Roma girls to clean everything, while the boy was sitting and just watching?
- What do you think would happen, if the boy was forced to clean the floor?
- Should the cultural differences be accepted unconditionally, without questioning the impact of various social norms and values on a child?
- Do you think, the issue of gender equality should be addressed in the day care center? If so, how would you do that?

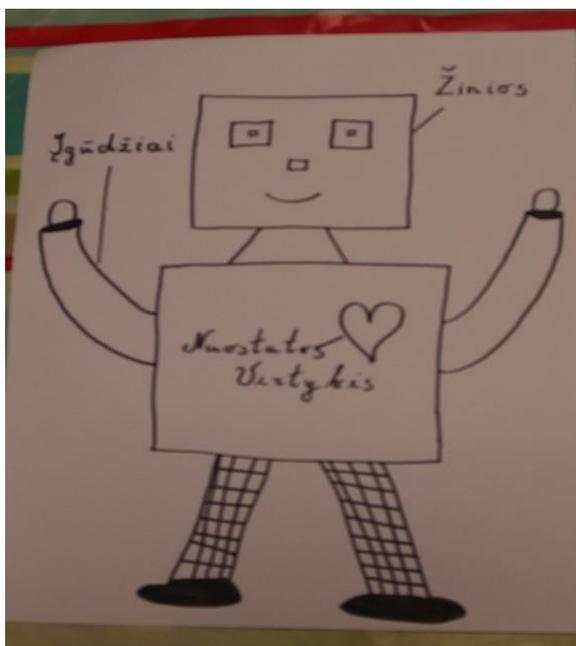
Present your considerations to the students from other groups.

After students' presentations a teacher may tell how the conflict situation was solved in the day care center and ask students' opinion about this way of conflict solving:

The other day the staff asked children to play a game, a so called role play. The game repeated the same situation, although this time only boys were sitting around the table, so some of them had to take girls' role, while one of the boys was sitting and watching his friends cleaning the floor. When the game was over, everybody sat at the round table for a discussion. Staff members asked children how they felt cleaning or sitting and doing nothing. How girls were feeling this time, when boys started to clean the floor, etc. Those questions prompted some reflections of children on gender roles.

2) Make several groups and discuss what elements are the most important for a good inclusive teacher – knowledge (about the impact of culture on a child,

knowledge of different cultures), skills (individualization of teaching methods, adaptation of learning material, etc.) or value attitudes? Draw a figure of a teacher on a piece of paper representing visually those parts of the teacher competence that you consider the most important (paint them bigger in comparison with other parts). Head can represent knowledge, hands – skills, heart – value attitudes. Present and explain your drawing to other students and a teacher.



3) Read the slides, look at the photos. Pay attention at the 6 aspects of inclusive education:

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Reflection
- Holistic observation
- Ethos
- Adaptations

Make 6 groups of students and choose one aspect of inclusive education to discuss in the group. Find how the chosen aspect of inclusive education is implemented in the described case. Give your arguments.

Reflection: Discuss in the group and answer the questions posed in the part 6. Make your conclusions. Evaluate the chosen key component of inclusive education in the case; explain positive and negative aspects of its implementation. Discuss the aspects of inclusive education that need improvement.

Feedback: Present your findings. Answer the questions of other students and teacher.

Suggestions (adaptations): write down your suggestions how to improve process of inclusion in the analyzed case.

**6. CAN THE STUDENTS FIND THE 6 KEY COMPONENTS IN THIS EXAMPLE?**

You write down where you find the keywords in the case study

<b>Key</b>	<b>Where do you find it? Explain</b>	<b>Comment? Questions you can ask students to observe more focused?</b>
<b>Collaboration</b>		Which partners are involved in the support of a Roma children? What would you propose for improvement of collaboration between all the partners?
<b>Reflection</b>		Does reflection take place in the educational process? What are the indications of reflection presented in the case? Do all the participants of the educational process make their reflections? What aspects of the educational process are reflected upon?
<b>Holistic observation</b>		What is the way you can recognize the holistic approach while observing a child? What do you think about the well-being of a child in the Center? Where do you learn that from? What domains of children development mentioned in the case show the holistic approach? Evaluate.
<b>Ethos</b>	<b>Slide No 24</b> – Represents the case raising a series of questions regarding the ethos of educational practice: Should an educator/teacher be aware of cultural differences in order to make adequate decisions in the process of education? Should a teacher know about cultural/social background of a child? Should the cultural differences be	How can you describe the ethos of the Center? Is the equal participation of all children provided in the educational process? By what means? Is the staff prepared to work with such culturally and socially different children as Roma kids are? Give your

	<p>accepted unconditionally, without questioning the impact of various social norms and values on a child? Should an ethnic and cultural identity of a child be always respected? What could be the consequences of disrespect? Do universal human values exist, or is it just a Western concept, created to make an excuse for “cultural imperialism” of the West? Education influences identities of a child – in what way? What is more important in the process of education – child’s interests or preservation of cultural uniqueness? Who will decide what child’s interests are? What, if child’s parents expect other results from education than a teacher do? Who should have more power – a teacher or parents - in such a case? etc.</p> <p><b>Slide No 6, 48, 49</b> - the Center declares as one of its aims to develop tolerance and friendship among children who come to the center having different ethnic and sociocultural background.</p> <p><b>Slide No 9, 10</b> – The rights of the children are written down and placed on the most visible place.</p> <p><b>Slide No 13</b> – The staff values child’s individuality, pays attention to their needs and achievements while planning educational activities.</p> <p><b>Slide No 18, 19</b> – The Center develops respect, acceptance, and tolerance for any kind of otherness.</p> <p><b>Slide No 25, 26</b> - All children are treated with respect and as equally important; also not less important than the staff.</p> <p><b>Slide No 47</b> – Children learn not only about Lithuanian culture, but also their own culture is respected and represented in educational activities.</p>	<p>arguments and some examples.</p>
<p><b>Adaptation</b></p>		<p>Are the teaching content, material, methods, assignments adopted for every child according to her/his developmental speed? Is the environment adopted to children’s needs? How? Does a child receive a special pedagogical assistance, if it is</p>

		needed? What kind of assistance? Is it sufficient enough?
<b>Communication</b>		How would you describe communication between the staff, staff and children, staff and parents, staff and other stakeholders? Give your arguments.

**7. ADAPTATION:** How can the good practice example become a best practice?  
What can you add?

<b>Key</b>	<b>How can the good practice be improved to best practice?</b>
<b>Collaboration</b>	
<b>Reflection</b>	
<b>Holistic observation</b>	
<b>Ethos</b>	
<b>Adaptation</b>	
<b>Communication</b>	

Further comment