



School Equity Best Practice

Title: THE FRIENDSHIP'S RESTAURANT

Equity dimension:

- Fairness Inclusion Access Opportunities
Personalised learning Personal and social development

Subject

School project. School environment

Target groups:

- Early Years Primary education Lower secondary education
Upper secondary education Vocational Training Other

Source:

Istituto Comprensivo "A. Casati" - Muggiò (MB) Italy
<http://www.ic-casati.gov.it>

"Alfonso Casati Comprehensive School" is a group of schools which includes two pre-primary, two primary and one lower-secondary school for a number of about 1200 totally enrolled pupils. Most parents work so services as school meals and afternoon clubs are highly demanded.

The significative participation of the different cultural associations in the area, together with a cooperation between school and local Authorities, allows the constitution of a relevant supporting net. Parents take part to the school life through the School board and a special Parents Committee too.

The school aim is to promote personal and cultural success of every single student by the development of child in all his/her different aspects, to help students get social and relational competences and finally to foster their cultural literacy.

Another main goal of our school is "achieving the students' well-being and inclusion" in order to prevent school dropouts through special activities as literacy for newcomers or personalized learning for special needs students.

Description:

The project responds to the need of pupils with autism to act in quiet spaces. This best practice of is intended to make lunch time comfortable and relaxing. The main objectives are sharing lunch in a peaceful environment; use cutlery properly; making food education; foster socialization and conversation among all the participants; reduce the level of stress and frustration arising from hypersensitivity to external stimuli.

Methodology:**INTRODUCTION**

The beginning of primary school represents for each pupil a strong change on many aspects: new requests are made; daily routines change; the number of stimuli and social contacts increase.

In the school context there are several situations which amplify the fragility of some pupils with special educational needs. Different skills are required in this environment, such as socialization, communication and flexibility in behavior, which need to be reinforced in subjects affected by autism spectrum disorder.

The growing number and complexity of the demands and the characteristics of children with autism, reveal attitudes of excessive frustration. This can lead to dysfunctional behaviors, either stereotyped or aggressive.

The nature of the school context intensifies the frequency of relational exchanges, increases the possibility of conflicts and the necessity of possessing adequate emotional-relational competences. It also multiplies the opportunities to be in crowded and noisy places.

The canteen is definitely one of these because it can concentrate most sound stimuli.

This environment is one of the spaces that causes particular discomfort in pupils with hypersensitivity to external stimuli.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT:

The educational project originates from the necessity of some pupils with autism to improve the moment of the school canteen where these children show irritation, unrest and intolerance to noises. Throughout a series of systematic observations it has been noticed that meal times can induce subjects with autism to implement different behaviors of rejection and withdrawal such as:

- the refusal to wash hands;
- agitation while leaving the classroom to go to the canteen;
- the difficulty of sitting in their seats
- rejecting sitting face to face at table
- the necessity to move compulsively around the tables

- the opposition to the teacher's attempts to correct dysfunctional behaviour

-rejection of most of the food

From a careful analysis of the various situations, the teachers have agreed on the necessity to think of an educational project that could be adapted to his needs but also shared by other children.

WHERE?

"The friendship's restaurant" is located in the educational space in the pupil's primary school. A table will be set up at lunch time, where Diego is going to have lunch far from the noise of the school canteen.

WHO?

A small group of classmates take turns consuming the meal along with SEN students. The pupils are accompanied by the support teacher and/or the municipal educator who support them during lunch time.

WHAT?

The pupils will clean and set the lunch table. Then they take their seats and wait for the meal to be served. Each student tastes all the types of food proposed, even what they dislike. After the first course, the pupils wait for the main one sitting in their places. To make waiting less boring, children make short group games (guess or find an object, find a word or a colour...). After lunch, pupils write down their names and the daily menu on a notebook. Then they evaluate the quality of the food they've just with stars or smileys. Finally, pupils will be the protagonists of an activity named "spick and span", where they help to clean up the room, thus giving their personal contribution.

WHY?

The Project's aim is to:

- share the moment of lunch time in a serene environment, far from the noises of the school canteen;
- remain seated while eating;
- grasp and use the cutlery properly;
- taste foods you don't like;
- lay and clear the table properly;
- foster socialization and conversation within a small group of classmates who take turns to eat with Diego
- use the toilets before and after the school canteen;
- help clean up the room.

HOW LONG?

The project lasts a year and can cover the whole school cycle.

RESOURCES:

The project involves a support teacher and an educator who ensure their presence from 12:30 to 2:30 pm; a person who is responsible to provide meals to the school and bring the food in the space used as a "restaurant". To realize this educational plan, you have to set up an educational space in a quiet and welcoming environment.

Outcomes:

Students who have benefited from the project have been shown to improve their socio-relational skills and to know how to use them in contexts other than the "restaurant". They have also been shown to understand the true meaning of inclusion and to be able to put into effect the conduct of mutual aid and acceptance of Diversity.

The student with autism, who refused to eat any food and talk with his companions in the cafeteria space, showed that he was able to feed himself with serenity trying to taste even the food not to his liking. In addition, the child appeared more prepared for relation and communication with peers.

Supporting documents:









Interview: *work in progress.*