



INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) PROJECT

EXAMPLE OF IECE PROVISION: GREECE

1. Abstract

Our nursery Kantas and Co EE (trade name Paixnidi Kai Gnosi, Game and Knowledge) enrolls children from six months to five years old. There are five sections, infants, older infants, pre-pre-school, pre-school and kindergarten. The first two accept up to 8 children, the third up to 10 children and the two larger parts accept up to 16 children. The school accepts enrolments from the children of immigrants, people living in remote areas, children with disabilities and children whose parents have disabilities.

The school staff consists of teachers who hold a higher education degree in early childhood education, a psychologist, a specialist teacher and a speech therapist. It also co-operates with specialists such as doctors and occupational therapists.

The three classes for infants, older infants and pre-pre-school follow Bridging Diversity – An Early Childhood Curriculum. Under this curriculum, a training programme is planned, organised and implemented, aimed at development in the following fields: body, movement and health, social and cultural life, languages, written culture and media, artistic creativity, expression, theatre, music, basic mathematics, natural sciences and technology. The two older classes, pre-school and kindergarten, follow the Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten (DEPPS), under which interdisciplinary projects aimed at the all-round development of children (language, mathematics, natural and human environments, information technology, creation and expression) are implemented. Each class section uses scientific educational project assessment tools and evaluates children according to their individual development in different areas. Daily diaries are used to note down (by hand or with recordings, photographs, video recordings) critical events in the children's development process and the educational process is observed by the psychologist and the teachers themselves. Fortnightly teacher observations take place with interdisciplinary staff, the psychologist and specialist teacher and also with the other kindergarten nursery in the Kantas school group.

2. Inclusive features

The school is open to all children and by definition does not exclude any demographic. The school has a bus which can provide access for all children, even those who live in remote areas. The school also has a wheelchair-accessible ramped entrance. Children whose parents are immigrants or have a disability receive



support from school if they wish or request it (e.g. psychological support or counselling). Children who are bilingual are very important to our educational community as they enrich the educational process by bringing into class elements of their own culture (language, customs). These factors are all taken into account when developing the education programme. Additionally, children with disabilities have the opportunity of an inclusive education.

Special care for children who have developmental or learning difficulties, in any sector, is provided by the team of educators and interdisciplinary staff for early intervention, child and teacher empowerment. The teacher stays focused on how the child can participate equally in the education process. Support is provided by the specialist speech therapist, occupational therapist, specialist teacher and the parallel teaching method, both within the class framework and daily programme and, if it is needed or requested by parents, in person. Each teacher organises the programme based on the children's motivation. The programme is experiential and multisensory, and aims to allow the children to have options on how they want to participate. For example, a staff introduction at the beginning of the year was delivered through theatre, singing, painting and speaking. Children who are old enough also help to organise the projects. For younger age groups, the programme is organised by observing the children's interests.

The curriculum in each class is interdisciplinary, approaches knowledge as a whole, uses numerous didactic tools to meet needs and gives opportunity for child participation, therefore aiming for constant and all-round development. Educators systematically observe the skills acquired by the children and support their educational practice, always targeting the discovery and mastery of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Targets are set at individual and group level. Each child is assessed depending on their personal development history and not simply on average performance. Each child is encouraged to participate and be actively involved in subjects that are all about them. Even the kindergarten areas that are used during free time are full of children's ideas and creations. In addition to the chronological order of birth, a child is placed according to their needs, skills and development.

3. Inclusive highlight

Below is a case study in which a child was trying to participate in an inclusive education. The case study illustrates the school methodology. A three-year-old child in the pre-pre-school class was diagnosed last year with disability in several areas of development. Interdisciplinary staff met with the class tutor to discuss the child's needs and abilities at that time. Meetings were held with parents to obtain information about the child at home and the practices that were adopted by parents



and to come up with a joint decision on child support. After a meeting of administrative staff, which took into account the financial capacity of both the school and the parents, the following programme of parallel teaching was designed. The child received support within the department, with the specialist teacher acting as a second teacher who participated equally with the class teacher in the educational process but supervised the child without the child being stigmatised in class. For most of the year, speech therapy and occupational therapy were a part of the department's daily planned activities. When further individualised support was requested, it was given within the school environment either with the specialist teacher under instruction from the school's speech therapist, or by the speech therapist herself. The parents had weekly meetings with the multidisciplinary team and the teachers (class and specialist), discussing and evaluating the child's development in school and at home. The parents had time and space to express doubts, ideas and wishes. Moreover, the school provided individual parent counselling with the psychologist at no cost. The teachers were supported and supervised by other educators who provided knowledge both from their own experience with the child and their theoretical background.

4. Other evidence of quality IECE

The school collaborates periodically with the National University of Athens in research to promote literacy, the social and the emotional development of children and the training of educators in aspects of the educational process. The observations that are held in the school are designed to support the teachers when organising and implementing educational research, which is being presented to a conference and will be published. The aim is for educators and specialists to develop a team spirit, sharing practices and joint implementation programmes with other classes and other schools, such as sports competitions between different schools, an environmental education programme within the school and doctor and psychologist participation in a project about the body and emotions. There is also parental counselling, which aims to encourage families to participate in the educational process. Examples include participating in projects connected to their knowledge, for example, a parent who is a lawyer participated in a programme for children's rights and grandparents presented games from their childhood. This co-operation follows the Negotiating Model, involving family and teachers in making decisions about the child's education. At least three times a year, the teachers meet the parents in order to discuss their children's progress.

The school has an inclusive education philosophy because its staff members believe in the right of every child to participate equally in the educational process. The school tries to adopt inclusive practices, although it cannot be perfectly inclusive



because inclusion is also a political act and a process. The school wants to take part in this programme in order to share the practices it has adopted, as well as gaining feedback and ideas from other schools in order to achieve the school's philosophy.