



ISTITUTO COMPRENSIVO di FARA GERA D'ADDA
(Bergamo - Italy)

EXPERIENCING DEMOCRACY: THE PUPILS' TOWN COUNCIL

BARCELONA, 2 - 4 november 2006

Introduction

The themes of civil coexistence and active citizenship have always been faced in our institute both in the curriculum and in formal teachings (knowledge of the norms of the institute, canteen norms, specific rules in class).

In the last years pupils have been able to participate in many and various initiatives on the study and the safeguard of the environment: local history and natural river environment, invention of naturalistic paths in order to increase the value of the spots not well known, activity as “small guides” to lead a group of university teachers, participation in some initiatives promoted by the municipalities.

The project

393 pupils of 20 classes of 3 different lower secondary schools are involved in the project, together with their parents and 20 teachers.

The mayors of the municipalities, the councillors of culture and education and some technicians are also involved in the project.

The aims for pupils

- experiment the values of civil and democratic participation through concrete behaviours
- utilize knowledge through operative situations
- get to know rules and procedures
- know how to elaborate and realize a project

The aims for teachers

- reflect on the theme of active citizenship and on the idea of school as a community
- pick out the specific aims of education to civil coexistence grasping them from the national directions
- carry out the specific aims of learning for the civil coexistence at class level
- project the formative path to establish a pupils’ town council in every secondary school
- project, together with the municipalities, an organizational path to establish the pupils’ town council in every secondary school
- start a pupils’ town council in every secondary school

The aims for municipalities

- issue the regulations of the pupils’ town council
- project together with teachers an organizational path to establish the pupils’ town council in every secondary school
- listen to the proposals coming from the pupils’ town council
- realize the projects proposed by the pupils’ town council

The procedures

The project provides seven different steps:

1. THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – collection of information and documentation of similar experiences – contacts with the municipalities
2. THE PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT TO THE ADULTS – municipalities, teachers, school council, teachers' body, parents
3. TRAINING COURSES – a 9 hours course for teachers and municipalities in order to supply theoretical references and information on experiences, methodology and operative instruments to master the project
4. REALISATION OF LEARNING SPECIFIC AIMS – in class during the school year in which the pupils visit the offices of the municipality and have an interview with the mayor
5. PREPARATION OF THE PATH – in every lower secondary school they decide a particular path in order to:
 - pick out procedures, ways and times to establish the pupils' town council
 - pick out the competences of school and municipality
 - establish the duties of every person involved
 - prepare the next steps
6. PRESENTATION OF THE PUPILS' TOWN COUNCIL TO THE ASSEMBLY OF PUPILS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MAYOR
7. START OF THE PUPILS' TOWN COUNCIL – during the class assemblies pupils discuss the themes concerning the environment, prepare the list of candidates, carry out the electoral propaganda, participate in the elections of the pupils' town council.

The expectations

The pupils' town council is a school of citizenship, an educative opportunity to experience democracy and participation.

Pupils are expected to:

- confront and manage conflicts
- find solutions approved by the whole community
- express ideas, needs and wishes
- assert their own rights
- exercise their own duties
- be able to be collaborative, to participate, to be active, to listen to the others, to be able to understand the other people points of view and needs
- be called to give their own contribution in the context where they live

- be more conscious of the village where they live, pick out the problems, participate in the elaboration of a solution and in the discussion of various proposals

The monitoring and evaluation

The project is monitored and evaluated in all its steps by some referents at school level at least once a month, through:

- report of the referent of the project
- interviews and reports of school referents
- interviews to the members of the municipality
- questionnaire of perception addressed to all the pupils involved in the project
- questionnaire addressed to the pupils elected in the boy's town council
- questionnaire addressed to teachers

On the basis of the documentation produced, the staff evaluates the results of the project and makes a statement to the teachers' body and the school council.

Lino Ruggeri

November 2006