

Istituto Comprensivo “Alberico da Rosciate”
Via Codussi, 7 Bergamo - ITALY

Project: “Together is better”

The title of the project is “Together is better” and the aim of the project is to strengthen the educational relationship between school and local environment, within the several educational subjects which have contact with our students.

High cohesion within the educational representatives generates high performances of the educational process. Values like sociality, dialogue and citizenship are enhanced.

This project is supported by financial subsidies which the Lombardy region grants directly to the organisations of the territory which put their affords in supporting the families and allow the parents to be directly involved into the educational process.

School, parents, parochial churches, voluntary, cultural and sport associations (for example the libraries), join together for common social activities. Where you have adults which work together, there you have children that live together. The aim of the school is to conduct, to co-ordinate, to form a network which forges an alliance within the educational subjects.

Into the Institute there are more or less 900 (nine hundred) alumni:

- 100 (one hundred) infant school (between 3 and 5 year)
- 500 (five hundred) in the primary school (between 6 and 10 year)
- 300 (three hundred) in the secondary school (between 11 and 13 year)

Our school covers two sectors of the city of Bergamo and Bergamo is located 50 (fifty) kilometres east of Milan.

The school put together children of two antique sectors of the city (dated in the eighteen century) where you can find well restored houses owned by wealthy and well educated people (doctors, lawyers, private professionals) together with old houses rented to low wage families with a low level of education. There live immigrants that own a regular permission to stay and work in Italy since five or eight years. They have a stable family and children which attend the school since their infancy.

Furthermore there are irregular immigrants with precarious works, which families live in small flats. The family is, in general, in Italy since few years, with boys of different ages, several of them in conflict with the family, the school and the class fellows. Usually isolated adolescents who love spend their time with friends speaking the same language.

The foreign students represents between 25% (twenty five per cent) and 30% (thirty per cent) of the population of the school. They originate from the South-America (especially Bolivians), from Asia (China, Bangladesh and India), from Africa (Morocco, Burkina Faso), from East-Europe (Albania, Croatia, Romania).

The aim of the school is to accept everybody and work together to reach a good standard of knowledge. We work in such a way of not loosing the more wealthy family, which could opt for school managed by private people, and we are not allowed to cut-off the poor Italian and foreign families because the principle is that everybody is entitled to a good educational level.

It is a hard work and not always with a happy end.

The school ask to the teachers for:

- high professional skills: different curricula, diversified methods of teaching, sensibility to the personal relationship between students, ability to teach to foreign children;
- high organizational skills: first inceptions procedures, collection of information, organisational capabilities of the class-room;

But to be accepted by the school is not sufficient. It is necessary also the social integration. To reach a good understanding is necessary a mutual collaboration: a blend of collaboration between teachers and foreign parents, Italians and foreign parents, school organisation-parents and district representatives.

The foreign students, for the whole society, can be an:

For the teachers

Opportunity	Danger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learn new teaching methodologies and increase the collaboration and social sensibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fears of reduced standard of learning, increase of anxiety fatigue and reduced motivation

For the students

Opportunity	Danger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accept the cultural differences, experience the tolerance and the collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase of the conflicts, marginalisation and bullies attitudes

For the parents:

Opportunity	Danger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the openness, the dialogue, the collaboration within parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling of a sub-standard educational service, move to schools managed by private organisation

For the local district organisations:

Opportunity	Danger
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put together the efforts of different institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social exclusion, not care, impose local traditions

As examples, here are three subject of discussion linked to the use of funds:

1. The teachers often discuss and fight between to possible solutions: either use the funds of the school to finance projects to support the students with potentials (for example increase the knowledge of the English language as a tool of success, both in the school and for the future professional activity, or use the same funds to support the students with linguistic and learning handicaps;
2. Parents discuss whether utilize the funds, which they provide to the school, in order to buy books for the foreign students or, on the contrary, to buy didactical instruments to enrich the school, make it better;
3. The students, which organized their own party, discussed whether it was acceptable to allow the participation to the buffet to the students not paying the fixed fees.

How are we able to be, at the same time, equal and allow the solidarity?

Difficult to balance, it is a test of the values which guide the daily affords.

The project

We think that for better teaching the students how to live into the society, we have, first, to teach the parents and the grown-up.

Therefore our project is articulated in two folds:

- a) towards the parents, the representatives of the district, the teachers by means of learning activities performed together;
- b) towards the students which perform, within and outside the school, group-social activities under the supervision of dedicated persons.

For the case a) Activity for the grown-up:

a1) District Day: at the beginning and at the end of the scholastic year. All the people involved into the educational process stay together at the school in order to discuss and share a selected educational subject, which will be the “silver line” along the whole year. At the beginning, on September, this day represents the opening of the trials where the selected objectives are declared. On June, at the end of the year, each group (students, parents associations, parochial church, cultural and sport groups) organize their stands to illustrate the educational activities performed.

a2) Learning programs for the grown-up:

Teachers, parents and district representatives attend learning programs held by experts of the educational field, followed by group discussion.

a3) Projecting of activities:

Groups of adults define projects which will be later on realized by the students.

For the case b) Activities of the students:

b1) during the school time together with their teachers, the students elaborate and discuss the following subjects: autonomy/dependence, individuality/collaboration, legality/illegality, rules/transgression.

b2) after the school time, with the support of parents and voluntary associations' representatives, the students, within small groups, perform the homework. Furthermore activities of “operational laboratories” are projected and executed by the students as:

- organize a party for their school fellows;
- reshape the layout of a room to make it more efficient;
- take care of a dedicated green field external to the school;
- organize a cultural trip for the class-room, including the sponsorship for the project;

The project aims to obtain the following goals:

- 1) increase the number of people able to work together for a shared educational objective;
- 2) offer the students occasions to make social experiences through direct involvement being responsible of their own choices.

Anna Lucina Trapletti
headteacher

Bergamo the 2nd of November 2006