

TEMPLATE for BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES - SOLVED TASK



1. Name of the task: MAGICAL PLANTS
2. Why did you choose this task? This activity was very suitable for preschoolers: they can plant, grow, take care of plants. Also they can observe the process and make conclusions about plant's growing.
3. Subjects covered from STEAM areas: As the project was implemented in a pre-school institution where there are no separate subjects, but integration is constantly taking place, we have successfully combined natural sciences, mathematics, technologies, and art subjects in the project "Magical Plants".
4. Target group (age range and size of the group): Preschool children (5-6 years), 20 pupils.
5. Duration of the activity: Project activities were held 1-2 times a week for about 45 minutes.
6. Key words: Science, mathematic, plant's growing, QR codes.
7. Key sentence describing context of the activity, followed by short description (200 words):
The project aims to help preschool children understand the unique importance of plants to our planet so that without them the planet could not "breathe". All project activities were organized through the experiences of the students and addressed real-life issues. During the project, the plants were planted and grown under different conditions what helped to improve children's skills in environmental knowledge, research, calculation, measurement, learning how to learn, and creativity.
8. Description of the activity environment, including the list of materials and tools needed:
The project activities were not limited to a group of the kindergarten: the activities took place in the yard of the kindergarten, where there is a greenhouse, we also went to Šiauliai Botanical Garden, and we virtually "moved" to a Pleurotus ostreatus farm in France. For activities need all materials for planting: soil, sand, sponges, water bubbles, wool, seeds, water, bowls and etc.
9. Step by step, detailed description of the activity, including teaching and learning strategies:
In the project "Magical Plants", preschool children were invited to return to nature and think about what a plant needs to grow healthy. All project activities were organized through the experiences of the students and addressed real-life issues: the children planted the plants, observed them, marked the growth results on the boards, and made conclusions. The children analysed what are the causes why some plants fail to grow, they wither and stop growing, and what causes exuberant and healthy plant growth. An innovative part of the project was that the children grew the plants not only in the soil but also using non-traditional means: cotton wool, sand, stones, dishwashing sponges, water bubbles "orbis". It is also unconventional that all the planted plants had their QR codes:

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children could always scan them and remember what plant and where was planted. Most activities were organized in teams when the children planted plants in groups. Interestingly, the children had to do research activities at home during the project: they marked on the worksheet how many centimetres of their chosen home plant grew per month. Finally, when they brought the worksheets to the group, we marked on a common board how many centimetres the children's plants had grown. The children were able to compare whose plant grew the most, whose the least, and on which it depends. The project was enriched with a meeting with volunteers working on a Pleurotus ostreatus farm in France who talked about sustainable ways to grow mushrooms in coffee sediment. The volunteers showed the children how to collect coffee sediment from local cafes, how to grow mushrooms in them, and explained the conditions needed for the growth of mushrooms.

The children visited the Šiauliai Botanical Garden either, where they talked about sustainable crop production and how to grow plants in containers made of peat, avoiding plastic pots.

10. Learning objectives/competencies: The project aims to help preschool children understand the unique importance of plants to our planet so that without them the planet could not "breathe". During the project, the plants were planted and grown under different conditions (in light and dark, in-ground and sand, soil and on dishwashing sponges, etc.) so that children would understand what the plant needed to grow it healthy and help the planet "breathe". Performing the activities of the project, we strengthened children's ability to know the environment, research, calculate, measure, learn how to learn, and creativity.
11. Evaluation/Assessment guidelines: The assessment was performed by filling in a circle thinking map where the children at the beginning of the project had to say what the plant needed for its growth, and then, throughout the project, there was kept writing in the circle map what the children had learned about the growing conditions of the plant. The circle map allows you to see what knowledge progress the children have made during the project.
Similarly, when the children were growing plants, they marked the growth results on the boards. During their home task, they marked the facts of the plant growth on the worksheets at home. After the home task, we did a comparative diagram on the board where the children could see whose plant grew the most, and whose ones the least.
12. Lessons learned: As the project was carried out exclusively through experiential activities, I think children will never forget how important plants are to our planet and how to grow them if we want to grow them healthy. I do not doubt that children will never forget the experience of attending a remote meeting with French mushroom growers and learning that mushrooms can be grown in coffee sediment and thus support the idea of sustainability. And it is very important that the children through project activities strengthened their skills in environmental knowledge, research, calculation, measurement, learning how to learn, and creativity.

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13. Additional information/Links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQdeFV4hzP4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LX0JKgsgWL0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XprKxIMOalw>

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