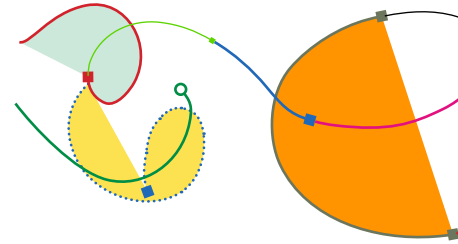


In Slovenia, Šoštanj Primary School Collaborates with Its Community



By Emmanuel Čerček, Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovenia

Šoštanj Primary School offers a learning process which can enrich traditional forms of schooling. It demonstrates how a school, including its infrastructure, can influence family life and the environment, creating new social patterns and a local identity. Pupils and teachers are involved in different thematic projects and programmes, together with parents and the wider community.

Slovenia's primary schools

At the beginning of the 2005/06 school year, the number of primary schools in Slovenia reached almost 800 (242 independent, 205 government-run and 350 subsidiary schools).

Financing for public preschool and primary school infrastructure is shared between local communities (municipalities) and the Ministry of Education and Sport, with government funding ranging from 10 to 70%. Local communities own both the buildings and equipment.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

One aim of Šoštanj Primary School's educational process is to teach pupils how to learn, thus providing them skills for lifelong learning. Moreover, Šoštanj Primary enhances pupils' awareness of individuals' integrity, their national identity, and general cultural and civic values. Pupils are educated in the spirit of equality, tolerance, and respect of personal differences and human rights. The school emphasises community and parental involvement in education, environmental protection, and personal health.

- **Learners:** Šoštanj Primary School has 731 pupils from age 6 to 15, all from middle-income Slovene families.
- **Facilitators:** The staff includes kindergarten and primary teachers, a librarian and psychologists. Parents and local community representatives participate in different school bodies and educational activities.
- **Content:** The primary school follows the compulsory curriculum and proposes various additional projects, workshops and other extra-curricular activities. The neighbourhood, the larger community and the school's physical environment are integrated into the learning process. Parents can attend their children's classes and take part in workshops. Teachers sometimes also organise pupil-parent meetings to discuss issues such as better learning methods, violence among pupils, drug abuse and eating disorders.

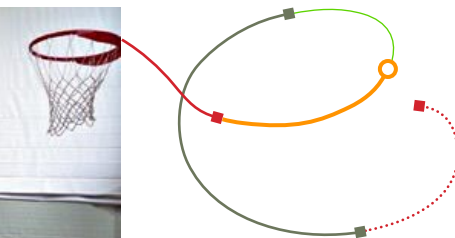
SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE



The Memorial Park in front of the school is dedicated to famous people who have lived or worked in the small town of Šoštanj (c. 8 000 inhabitants). Busts of visionaries, humanists, writers, poets, teachers, doctors and businessmen – all having shared affection for their town and a community spirit – remind the pupils of the town's history. The pupils, their older brothers and sisters, and the other community members respect the statues and have expressed pride in them. No vandalism has occurred since the school opened in 2005.

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The school has quality infrastructure which includes multipurpose spaces, a gymnasium and an outdoors sports field. The elevator, restrooms and special access are available for people with physical disabilities. The disabled pupils participate in the majority of the school's extra-curricular activities.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

Šoštanj Primary School organises projects to help teach pupils about the environment, at both global and local levels. In 2007/08, the following projects were undertaken:

1. Energy savings

This project, whose slogan is “Think globally, act locally”, helps pupils understand the importance of energy and teaches them how to save it. To give meaning to the project, these measurements have been adopted:

- At the end of each day, the last class turns off the classroom lights.
- Water taps are checked daily to ensure they are closed.
- Pupils are instructed to inform the housekeeper of leaks or damage to equipment.
- Classrooms are properly heated and the air regularly freshened by opening windows.
- All electric and electronic equipment are turned off immediately after use.

2. Eco package project

This project focuses on building awareness of how different types of packaging and other waste pollute the earth. Pupils learn to use less packaging, to sort waste, etc. Once a week they give the sorted waste to the local company Saubermacher.



3. Collection of old electric and electronic equipment

In March 2008, Šoštanj Primary organised a competition among pupils to collect old and broken electric and electronic equipment such as ovens, refrigerators, washing machines, electric heaters, freezers, televisions and computers. The project was sponsored by Slovene manufacturers and waste management companies and was well received by the community.

The classroom that collected the most equipment received a financial reward. Pupils collected a total of 5 730 kg of waste electrical and electronic equipment.

4. Healthy School – Clean School project

The school has established some simple guidelines to encourage students to maintain a healthy and clean learning environment, and punishes violators.

ANNUAL WORK PLAN WITH EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Teachers annually adopt a plan on which they base their work. The annual work plan specifies the content and schedule of extra-curricular activities, including those necessary for the healthy development of pupils. Parents and the local community participate in the extended curriculum and help contribute to a high standard of education. The school's facilities are used before and after school hours, when teachers offer activities such as additional lessons, study and homework time, and cultural, artistic and sports events.



The school places special emphasis on both arts and sports. It has four choirs and displays a permanent art exhibit called "Children's World of Art". Through the school's sports activities, teachers and pupils support the motto "It is important to participate and play fair".

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