

CAS PROJECT JOURNAL

Raising awareness about ecology in younger generations

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Time: 10.3.2019. – 14.4.2019.

Place: OŠ Vladimira Nazora, OŠ Remete

Partner: Dora Strmečki

Summary: The harmful effects of human carelessness on our beautiful home, the Earth, have recently been discussed more than ever in media. There is a growing consciousness among people who took time to research and investigate the problem all of us knew existed, but few took seriously. The consciousness that if we do not take initiative, if we do not speak up, if we do not partake in the change, it will be too late. As our courageous peers have filled the streets and participated in marches hoping to awaken consciousness in older generations and politicians, my partner Dora Strmečki and I were motivated to take a different approach in hopes of contributing to the common goal. We decided to spread the word among younger generations; the students of elementary schools. We decided to teach them about the crucial importance of protecting the Earth, about the basic principles of ecology, and about the ways in which they can partake in the change themselves. Our workshops were held in two different elementary schools, and consisted of educational PowerPoint presentations, drawing, poster making, and other creative activities. We centered the themes of workshops around the two events which were current during the time of our project: Earth Day and World Water Day.

10.3.2019. Sunday

Dora and I started brainstorming about our future CAS project. We decided to partner up because, besides our work ethic, we share an interest in educating others, which is evident in our CAS activities; both of us volunteer at primary schools, she at OŠ Remete with 3rd graders, and I at OŠ Vladimira Nazora with 1st graders. We also have a shared interest in environmental problems that face the Earth and would love to inform the younger generations about them, in hopes that our interest will be shared and perhaps some day new solutions and discoveries will arise, helping the Earth.

11.3.2019. Monday

We have continued our planning and through discussion concluded that it would be a great opportunity to celebrate the upcoming World Water Day and Earth Day by holding educational workshops at the schools we are volunteering at, promoting the importance of nature and water, while including ideas that could help the cause (such as recycling and saving water). This idea seemed excellent for our CAS project, since it combined our interests and passions, but also enabled us to make a change and an impact. We decided that our audience will be the classes we already visit, since we are familiar to them and therefore class discussions will be more open and less frightening.

12.3.2019. Tuesday

Today we were discussing in more detail how our education workshops should be held and organized. We decided that it should be held over 4 weeks' time (those 4 weeks are perfectly timed, since they cover both days we are centering our project on), where 2 weeks will be dedicated to each of the days (2 for Earth Day, 2 for World Water Day). Of those two weeks, the first one will be educational, and second one will be creative, while using the knowledge gained from week 1. During the first week, each of us will hold a Power Point presentation, first one with Earth Day theme, second one with Water Day theme. After the presentation is done, Dora will distribute worksheets checking the students' knowledge, while at my class, I will present the students with a drawing assignment (my audience is younger and therefore this is a more appropriate way of reviewing ideas). During the second week, we will present a creative assignment, such as group work poster making (both), making boxes for paper recycling (Dora), and group presentations and discussions (I).

13.3.2019. Wednesday

Today we presented our idea to our CAS coordinator. She was very encouraging about it which made us very happy. We asked her for advice on how we should organize it with the schools, and she said that we should ask the teacher in the classes we are planning to hold the workshops at and that they will likely send us to the principal or to "tajništvo" to inform the school officially, and check if additional steps are to be made, such as sending permission slips to the parents. We decided to go to the schools today, which was perfect timing since every Wednesday I volunteer there. I asked the teacher and she was very supportive and liked the idea a lot. Luckily, the classroom I volunteer in has just recently received a projector, so I will be able to present without looking for another classroom. The teacher said that she is more than fine with the project, but that I should also ask the "pedagoginja" about it (which I expected). I went to do so right away. The "pedagoginja" was extremely nice and helpful. She was also fond of the idea, and said that the only thing I need to give is a signed "zamolba" issued by my school, which she would forward to the principal. She also described to me what the "zamolba" should look like and explained all the logistics behind the project that I should consider. As for permission slips, she said she will call me by Friday (15.3.) to inform me if they are needed. It was a very helpful talk and I was satisfied with the successful day.

14.3.2019. Thursday

I was further brainstorming the finer details for tasks to be given at the workshops. I decided that I should in detail plan the poster assignments. I contacted the teacher in whose class I volunteer and talked to her about the level of the kids' abilities. I did not recall doing posters at such a young age in school, so I wanted to check if the task would be too complicated for them, so I have time to think of an alternative. She said that it is completely fine, that they have made posters in the past, and that only condition is that I bring all the materials (posters, pictures, text...), since they are not that skilled in fine writing yet. The talk was very helpful since now I can prepare better and am more secure in my plan.

15.3.2019. Friday

The "pedagoginja" called today and informed me that parents are informed about the project and no permission slips are needed. I arranged us meeting Monday (18.3.) in order

to hand in the “zamolba”. Dora is still waiting for her call back, but I am sure it will happen soon enough. Today, we sealed the dates for our workshops (seen in calendar below).

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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

(red-me, purple-Dora)

We stayed true to our initial plan described in 12.3. entry about the topic of each week’s workshop.

16.3.2019. Saturday

I informed the teacher about the exact timing of the workshop, and she confirmed it. I also asked her for advice about grouping of students during work group; how many students should each group contain and how they will be organized space-wise. We have agreed on splitting the class in 5 groups and arranging the tables prior to each workshop to enable a more effective work of students.

17.3.2019. Sunday

Today I brainstormed about the content of the first informative presentation that I am going to do, themed around World Water Day. It is important to note that the kids I am going to be presenting to are still very young (6, 7, or 8 years old) and do not have very advanced reading skills. That is why the majority of the presentation is going to consist of pictures that are easy to understand and visually appealing to kids, with as little text as possible. All important information concerning the topic that I want them to learn I will have to say and explain out loud, since they are much better at listening than they are at reading. Also, the last slide on each presentation has to contain a creative task which they will have to follow. While volunteering in their class I have noticed that the topics they are covering in

humanities are best interpreted and revised through drawing, so I decided to ask them to draw, in a way that will enable them to use the knowledge they have gained and their unique thoughts and perception of the discussed situation. After the workshop, I will ask the teacher the permission to have their works of art displayed in the classroom to serve as a remainder of the important lessons learned during the project.

18.3.2017. Monday

Today I started working on my presentation. Overnight I got an excellent idea on how to best spread the message and knowledge through the project. I decided to center my presentation on the importance of water in our everyday lives (which is even bigger than we might realize), and then next week combine an educative presentation on ways we can save water with poster making workshop which will serve as a great way to review all the learned ideas. I used Microsoft Power Point to make the presentation and made sure that all the pictures used are free to use by using the website Pixabay, which was very important to me since a lot of pictures were added to the presentation. I decided to use original and cartoon-like pictures since I consider them more appropriate concerning the target audience.

19.3.2019. Tuesday

Today I finished my presentation about water and proof checked it for any mistakes to ensure that there are no mistakes. Following the advice of our CAS coordinator I added sources used on the last slide. I also added some animations and effects that make the presentation more amusing. I uploaded it onto my USB and also e-mailed it to myself just in case. Since the vast majority of the presentation is not on slides, I had to learn by heart everything that I wanted to say, so I practiced presenting a couple of times in front of my family as an audience. I am excited for the presentation tomorrow.

20.3.2019. Wednesday

Today I held the presentation in the class. Everything went on exactly as planned and there were no problems. I turned the presentation into a discussion because I wanted the kids to participate, since that way they can actively learn, listen to others' ideas, and remember the learned material better. I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that none of the kids were shy, on the contrary, everyone wanted to participate and had something to say. The discussion

was therefore very successful. We talked about the importance of water and its wide usage, which I knew would be a topic they will familiarize with and be able to talk about. At the end of the presentation and discussion, I gave them a task to illustrate one way of water usage. They did not have any problems with this task, and the teacher will display the best drawings on the display in the classroom to remind the kids of the material they have learned today. I was very happy with today's presentation. The teacher also complimented it and said it was great. I am already excited for the next week's presentation. Here are some pictures from today.





21.3.2019. Thursday

I already started preparing the materials for the next week's workshop. I am feeling very motivated because of the success I had yesterday. I consulted my partner and exchanged experiences with her, since she presented for the first time today. We were both very satisfied with the outcome. I started planning the next weeks presentation and deduced some basic plan for it. When consulting the teacher, we agreed that it would be optimal to split the class into 5 groups, with each group having 5-6 students (depending on how many students are present in class that day). I will arrange their tables in a way suitable for group work and give each group a task, explaining it detailly to them. Then I will give each group their poster, together with pictures and text that will be glued on it. To make it more interactive, I will give each group a task to connect the pictures with the suitable text and ask me if it's correct before they start gluing. Of course, some groups might need help with

this, which I am ready to provide. I will still have to think about the specific themes each group has, luckily, I have more than enough time to do so.

22.3.2019. Friday (Happy World Water Day!)

Today I continued brainstorming about the next week's workshop, specifically the themes of the posters. I want to make them as educational as possible, but the themes should also be appropriate for their age learning level. I need to think of 5 themes, find suitable pictures and think of the content. As I mentioned, the students their age do not do a lot of reading, so too much text on the poster will do more damage than good: they will be discouraged to read it because of its length, and therefore they will not learn the material. Therefore, I intend to keep the text minimal, get straight to the point, and use simple wording and phrases/words well known to them. Additionally, each message will be accompanied by a suitable picture, which not only explains and illustrates the point of the message, but it also encourages the students to read the text on the poster and pay attention to it, since pictures are more visually appealing than text, especially to students their age. As for the themes, I definitely want one poster to be themed around what we did last week, that is the ways we use water in our daily lives. This will be a great revision. I also want to include a poster about ways how they can save water, in hopes that they will be motivated to start implementing some of the ways in their daily lives and therefore make a difference. The next three topics I want to be educational as well, and I will try to think of the most appropriate ones over the course of the following weekend.

23.3.2019. Saturday

Today I went and bought posters for the poster making workshops that I will do (2 workshops in total). I went to a stationary store near me that has a lot of different posters. I wanted to buy the ones made of higher quality paper, that is very thick and sturdy, so that the posters do not look wrinkly and so they last longer. However, the posters made of this kind of paper are quite large, and having each group working on such a large poster would be unpractical later when they are to be displayed: the walls of the classroom are covered with letters of the alphabet, displays with drawings, and storage spaces, so there would be no room for posters of this size. That is why I decided to split each poster into two, so that each group works on a half of the poster, which is a perfect size for the posters I planned

for the class to create. I bought 5 posters in total, since I will need 10 for all workshops (there will be 5 groups in both of them), and I will have 10 after I cut all the posters in half. I decided to make use of the wide color range and buy posters in colors that go with the theme. For Water Day posters I bought a dark blue and a light blue poster, and for Earth Day I bought a light green and a dark green poster. I needed one more which will go with both themes, so I chose orange since it matches the classroom the best.

24.3.2019. Sunday

Today I continued brainstorming about ideas for the posters. I finally thought of the last three. Firstly, I decided to include posters themed around animals, because I noticed that a lot of kids really like animals and would like to learn more about them. I actually noticed it when I was presenting. For the task of drawing a way we use water, many students drew water animals, their pets using water, their turtles, etc. This motivated me to teach them more about animals which depend on water as their primary habitat. I decided to split them into two groups, sweet water animals and sea water animals. I will include as many examples as I can and provide a photo for each of them. This will widen their knowledge of animals and further illustrate the importance of water for so many living creatures. As the last topic, I decided to cover some of the most important waters in Croatia (such as Plitvice lakes, the Adriatic Sea, etc.), since it is a part of common culture and a great thing to learn at a young age in order to appreciate the beauty of nature more, and therefore appreciate the nature itself more, helping it and saving it from negative influences. It will be a great learning experience since they will have to connect the picture of each place with its name, thereby learning what it looks like and recognizing it in everyday communication or when traveling with their parents.

25.3.2019. Monday

Today I started preparing the material for the workshop. I had to decide on the information I will include on each poster, and also find suitable pictures for each line/message I will include on the poster. I again looked for fair use images on Pixabay to include on the poster, and included their information for the list of sources I will tell the students to glue on the back side of their posters. For texts and titles I decided to use colorful letters and an easy-to-read font, again in order to encourage the students to pay attention to the posters and read

the information on them. I managed to prepare the material for all of the posters. I did this in Microsoft Word: I created a document for each group, wrote down the title of the poster and all the text I wanted it to contain, edited the text by changing the font, size, and color, and then lastly added the pictures together with a box with sources. Tomorrow I will print all of this and organize the material together according to the group it belongs to. That way I can give it to the groups when I will be explaining their tasks to them, while staying organized.

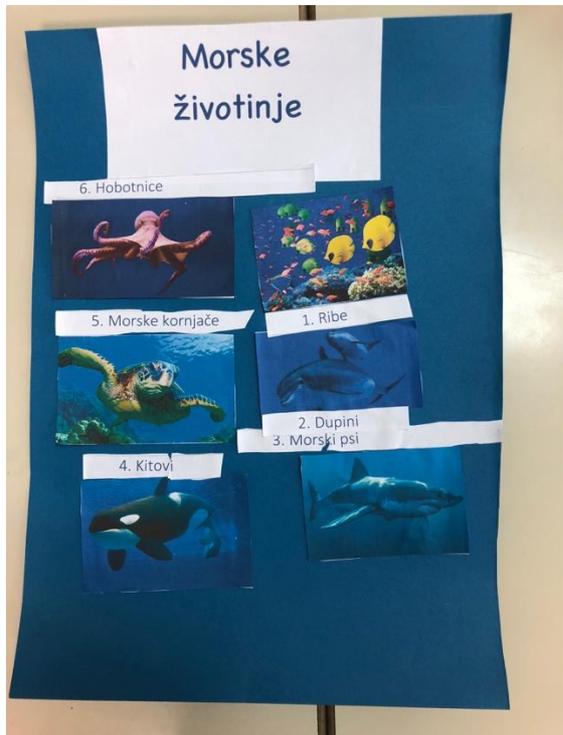
26.3.2019.

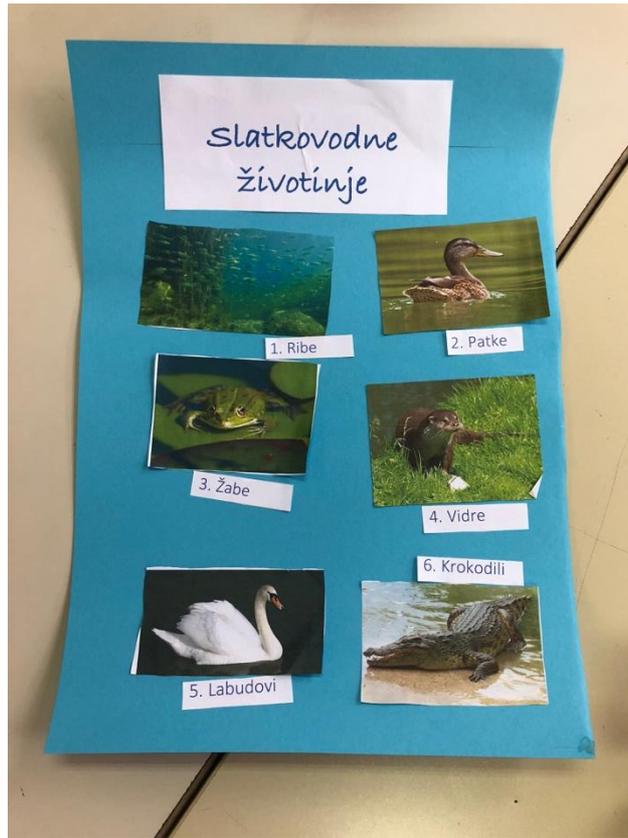
Today I printed out the documents I created yesterday. Before that, I spellchecked everything just to make sure it is ready for tomorrow. I am very excited for tomorrow's workshop and I am hoping it will go without any problems. I packed extra glue sticks and scissors with me in case some groups will not have them (although the teacher told me that all of them should have both of them, I have noticed while volunteering that many students forget them, so I wanted to be prepared). I cut the posters in half and prepared them for tomorrow.

27.3.2019.

Today went great. I held the poster making workshop and everything went as planned. Splitting the class into groups went smoothly and was much quicker than I thought it will be. The students were genuinely excited about the task which made me happy because that means it was an enjoyable learning experience. A small problem we encountered was that not all kids were skilled at cutting out the pictures/text for the posters, resulting in some of them looking a bit messy. I tried to help as many as I could, so the end result was fine, but since the task is about learning and not about cutting, I decided to cut out the materials myself for the next poster making workshop. Some kids needed help with connecting pictures to their titles, which is what I expected and was prepared for, since that is the way they will learn the best: by thinking and asking questions. After all groups were done, they one by one went in front of the class and presented the content from their poster, while the rest of the class listened to them. Later, the posters were displayed on the board, so all student could take a closer look on the posters from other groups. All in all, the workshop

was very enjoyable and educational, and I am more than satisfied with how it went. Lastly, here are some pictures from today.







28.3.2019. Thursday

Today the teacher sent me a photo of the best drawings from my first presentation (20.3.), which she displayed in the classroom.



I am so happy to see that they are displayed so beautifully in the classroom. They will serve as a reminder for the students about what they have learned.

29.3.2019. Friday

Today I started brainstorming for the next week's presentation centered around Earth day. I am less nervous than I was before my first presentation because now I know what to expect out of the experience and how the students react to presentations such as this one. I know that a discussion would be the best way to teach the topic, and I know how to organize it. I again will do the presentation in Power Point and it will have a similar structure, with information at the beginning, then discussion, and then a creative task. I really want to connect this topic with the ideas on how to protect the Earth and nature, and encourage the students to be environmentally conscious.

30.3.2019. Saturday

Today I got an idea on what the creative task for this week will be; drawing the Earth as imaginatively as possible, as they see it. It can have a cute face, it can be filled with flowers and animals, it can be as creatively decorated as they want. This is a great way to celebrate its beauty and strengthen the wish to protect it from threats we are worried about. The task should be done using colored pencils, but I will encourage them to make a sketch with a pencil first since I know that drawing a "perfect circle" can be tricky from the first try. The students are already required to bring colored pencils to school, so this will not be an issue.

31.3.2019. Sunday

I started working on my presentation. I again used Pixabay when searching for images to make sure they are free to use. I decided to start with some general information about Earth day, and then continue with tips on how to protect the Earth. I will make sure to include solely the tips they can use in their everyday lives, so that an impact is made. I will end the presentation with a creative task, as planned. Same as before, I will not include a lot of text on the slides, since the students still find reading difficult. I will communicate ideas verbally and through pictures, and all the text used will be short, simple, and easy to understand.

1.4.2019. Monday

Today I continued working on the presentation. I thought of the ways the students could participate in saving the Earth. First and obvious idea was recycling. It is so easy to do, especially now that recycling containers are more common than ever, and it truly helps a lot. In their classroom there is already a special container for paper present, so I will additionally encourage them to use it each time they are throwing away paper (which is quite often). I know that not all of them might be familiar with the meaning of different colors of recycling containers, so I decided to teach them how to use them and which color represents what. The next tip that came to mind is reminding them not to litter under any circumstances. It is not only horribly rude, but it is also completely and easily avoidable. If they implement any of the tips into their lives, I hope it is at least this one. The next tip that came to mind was teaching them about endangered plants and instructing them not to pick them if they find them during their trips, but also encourage them against picking plants in general. During the presentation I will only introduce them to some endangered plants, I will cover more of

them during the following week's group work. The final tip I decided to link with the last weeks' topic and that is to save water every chance they get. I will use this moment of presentation for revision time and check if they still remember the ways of saving water we have covered previously (and I expect they will). Again, I will end the presentation with the creative assignment, which I already described in the previous entry.

2.4.2019. Tuesday

Today I finished the presentation by decorating it with appropriate photos and adding the list of sources at the end. I have prepared what I want to say and am very excited for tomorrow. I hope that everything will go well, but I am less nervous than last time. I again emailed the presentation to myself just in case, but I am sure that the USB will work just as fine as the last time. I also contacted the teacher to remind her and she said that everything was all right.

3.4.2019. Wednesday

The presentation went excellently. The class behaved great. We had a good discussion and they were excited to learn more about the new topics (for example, the endangered plants). They were very active which made me happy because it shows that they listened to the presentation and learned from it. the creative task was also enjoyed and resulted in many beautiful drawings which are later going to be exhibited in the classroom. All in all, everything went even better than expected and I am extremely happy with the result. Here are some photos from today.







4.4.2019. Thursday

Today the teacher sent to me the display that the students made composed of drawings done yesterday. I am very impressed with how it looks. The teacher also complimented my presentation and said she is very happy with how this project is turning out, which was great to hear. Here is the photo.



5.4.2019. Friday

I have already started brainstorming for the next and final workshop, which will be group-work poster making. The class will again be split into 5 groups, with each group making a different poster with the materials I bring, and then at the end every group will present what they have learned to the rest of the class. I have been thinking about the topics that would be age appropriate but still informative and interesting. I already know that I want one of the posters to be about recycling, showing what each container is used for. I already mentioned that I want to do endangered plants, and I decided to do endangered animals too. The rest of the topics I will try to come up with during the weekend.

6.4.2019. Saturday

Today I came up with the rest of the topics. The first idea came to me when I was watching a documentary about Amazonian forests, and that is the importance of forests. I think this is an interesting topic and has a lot to offer. I decided that the last topic should be national parks in Croatia. This does not only connect nicely to the main topic of Earth day, but will

also help them a lot in future education, since it is one of the topics they will have to learn sooner or later, so this pre-knowledge will come in great use.

7.4.2019. Sunday

Today I looked for images that will be glued onto the posters. To make sure they are free to use, I again looked them up on Pixabay. After I found all the images, I printed them out. I also printed out the titles of all the images, so that the students could connect them to the image, making the experience more interactive and fun. I do not expect them to do this all by themselves, and I am ready to help them when they will need me to. Lastly, I compiled the list of sources used and printed it out, it will be later glued on the back side of each poster. To make it even more fun, I printed out some coloring images which the students will have to color before gluing them onto the poster.

8.4.2019. Monday

I made sure to print out all the materials early so that I have time to cut them out, which is something I said I will do because the students are not very skilled in that field yet and I do not want to exhaust them with that. So, today I was cutting out all images and titles and organizing them by groups. There was a lot of them so I was not quite finished, but luckily I still have time to do so tomorrow. Because of this prepping, I believe that this group-work class will be even more successful than the last one.

9.4.2019. Tuesday

Today I cut out the remaining images and text, so everything is finally ready for tomorrow's workshop. I packed all the materials and reminded the teacher that I was coming over text messages. I am very excited for tomorrow, but also surprised at how quickly the last four weeks have gone by. I just hope that everything will go well tomorrow so that we can end on a good note.

10.4.2019. Wednesday

It was the final workshop today. Everything went amazingly. The students were divided in groups and received their materials for posters, then they organized each other within the groups and made their posters. Some needed help with connecting the pictures to the titles, and I was happy to help them. When the posters were made, each group presented their poster to the class and shared what they have learned. At the end, the teacher and I attached the posters to the blackboard using magnets and encouraged the whole class to take a closer look at them, which was a great idea because some kids learn better by themselves than through presentation, and also a great way to revise all the topics mentioned that day. The posters will later be displayed in the classroom on the wall where they can stay for a longer time than on a blackboard. I am very satisfied with the outcome of this project. I have talked to the students at the end about their thoughts, and their comments were overwhelmingly positive. They said that the workshops were fun and that they have learned a lot of new things, which made me very happy. The teacher was satisfied as well and complimented the project very much. I am very proud of it and happy that I managed to fulfill my goal and complete the project successfully. Lastly, here are some photos from today.





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Kockavica



Zimzelena medvjетка



Velebitska degenija



Vodeni kozlac

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Paklenica



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