



 Bezirksregierung Köln EU-Geschäftsstelle 	COURSE II DESCRIPTION	 Education and Culture DG Lifelong Learning Programme
Name of the course: EASE – Early Literacy in Transition from Preschool to Primary School: School-centered Staff Development.		Institutions: University of Western Macedonia:  Department of Early Childhood Education Department of Primary Education. Florina – Greece
Authors: Irene Sivropoulou, assistant professor Kalliope Vrinioti, lecturer		Contact hours: Training: 24 hours Implementation: 50 hours

In- service training – Implications

Course description

The transition from early childhood education to primary schools marks a significant change in the lives of children and their families. The goal of the course is to create a strong and equal partnership between preschool and primary school and to promote educational continuity and flexibility in early childhood education.

Aims:

To develop a common preschool and primary school, communicative-teaching approach in early literacy and language practice within a participatory approach.

To encourage language acquisition and early literacy approaches in both preschools and primary schools.

To assess children’s literacy learning and thus encourage them to reflect on their own learning processes at the beginning of lifelong learning.

To enable the participants to use the Learning –Stories method as a means of evaluation, in order to encourage language acquisition.

Participants:

The course has the status of *school- centered staff development*. The participating partnerships, tandems, including 3 preschool teachers and 2 primary school teachers are as follows:

1st tandem: The 3rd Kindergarten of Evosmos (feeder) and the 7th Primary School of Evosmos (receiver). Partners: Maria Kezou preschool teacher and Elpida Tokmakidou, primary school teacher.

2nd tandem: The 23rd Kindergarten of Evosmos (feeder) and the 13th Primary School of Evosmos (reiceiver). Partners: Efi Galani and Aristeia Katsari, preschool teachers and Anthi Kourtesioti, primary school teacher.

Other participants in the course: a research assistant, Jeny kopsacheili, and the course leaders, Irene Sivropoulou assistant professor, specialist in early literacy and Kalliope Vrinioti lecturer, specialist in transition matters.

Content and planning

The school-centered staff development of the five educators started in September 2009 and will have finished by March 2010. It includes 24 hours sessions for the development of four theoretical topics as well as 50 hours of practice in the educators' classrooms. The four theoretical topics are as follows:

- 1) Transition from preschool to primary school (children aged 4-6)
 - 2) Early literacy
 - 3) The Learning stories-approach (Carr, 2001)
 - 4) Evaluation. The Learning stories-approach as a tool to evaluate children's progress in language and early literacy (literacy indicators from Aarhus University)
- Trainees are also introduced to the concept of action research.

Implementation

Our EASE-project started on 09/09/09 (two days before the official beginning of the 2009-2010 school year), with an one-day conference organized jointly by the preschool and school advisors of the 17th and 60th Educational Districts, Western Thessaloniki, Evosmos. Almost sixty (60) preschool teachers και fifty (50) primary school teachers (teaching first grades during the 2009-2010 school year) took part in it. Both the lectures and workshops focused on afore mentioned 4 topics. During the works of this conference two tandems were selected to develop the EASE project with special emphasis on early literacy. The criterion for their selection consisted in the participants' interest in the project and their readiness to co-operate effectively in order to achieve the goals of the project.

Implementing the project in the classrooms and getting feedback from the participants

The school-centered staff development started a week after the selection of the two tandems and the goals of the EASE project were presented in detail to the five participants. Then, in the four sessions that followed, the participants discussed topics relevant to the implementation of the project and directly related to the four topics mentioned above, as well as the Swedish questionnaire. All five participants contributed significantly to adapting the project plan to the special conditions of each tandem.

To ensure continuity in getting feedback the five participants, the research assistant, and the 2 course leaders meet once a month in order to discuss, explain, analyze and reconsider both theoretical topics and organizational matters which come up during the implementation of the project.

Specifically, the participants were given a pre-test (literacy indicators from Aarhus University) to fill out while observing each and every child of their class. Upon completion of the pre-test, the process of implementing learning stories followed. It must be noted that the stories to be told were selected by the project group (the 5 participants, the research assistant, and the 2 course leaders), were related to early literacy and were told in the same order in both classes. However, the teachers that participate in the project seek to utilize the emergent childrens' learning stories.

The experimental group (1st tandem) consisted of 10 preschoolers and 10 first graders and the learning story approach was implemented by working in mixed subgroups that included both preschoolers and first graders.

The control group (2nd tandem) consists of 10 preschoolers and 10 first graders and the learning story approach is implemented by working in unmixed subgroups: subgroups of preschoolers and subgroups of first graders.

The process of telling a story is as follows:

- reading the story aloud
- what happened
- what will follow

Usually in the story to be told there is a problem that children are asked to solve with activities suggested by them i.e. dramatisation, constructions, musical shows, writing texts, painting etc. Classes are videotaped by the research assistant. Both preschool and primary school teachers keep journals following Carr (2001). In addition the participants:

- play a significant role in planning, reflecting upon, and eventually modifying their practices.
- adopt a common ideology and pedagogical practice in creating learning stories by using Carr's form to assess children learning that is relevant to literacy.

At the end of the project, the pre-test will be repeated in the form of a post-test and their results will be compared. Also, the journals kept by preschool and primary school teachers will be discussed along with the videotaped activities.

Certification:

The training institutions e.g. University of Western Macedonia, Department of Early Childhood Education will award a certificate to the five participants.

Bibliography

Main texts:

Carr, M. (2001). *Assessment in Early Childhood Settings: Learning stories*. London: Paul Chapman.

Roskos, K. & Christie (2007). *Play and literacy in early childhood research multiple perspectives*. New York, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Βρυνιώτη, Κ. (2008). Μετάβαση των νηπίων από το νηπιαγωγείο στο δημοτικό σχολείο. Στο: ΥΠΕΠΘ (ΕΥΕ. ΚΠΣ)(2008) *Οδηγός Ολοήμερου Νηπιαγωγείου*, σελ. 99-152. Αθήνα: Πατάκης.
[Vrinioti, K. (2008) Transition from preschool to primary school. In: Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (SMS.CSF) (Ed.)(2008) *Full day Kindergarten Guide*, pp. 95-152. Athens: Patakis Publications]

Κουτσοράκη, Σ. (2006). *Γραμματισμός και πρόωγη Ανάγνωση: Θεωρητικές και ερευνητικές προσεγγίσεις*. Αθήνα : Ταξιδευτής.

[Koutsouraki, S. (2006). *Early literacy and early Reading: Theoretical and research approaches*. Athens: Taxideftis]

