

Project summary

Extramedia is a media education project, run by the Centro Zaffiria, which is intended for families living in Santarcangelo, Poggio Torriana and Verucchio (Emilia-Romagna, Italy). Families can take part in free activities, organized in the afternoons, from October to May. Workshops, meetings, screen-free weekends and other specific activities, identified together with the local governments involved in the project, are aimed at increasing the awareness of the relationship between technology, media and families.

Aims: Supporting families in educational activities related to media and technologies

Target group(s): Families with children aged from 0 to 10 years

Media: All

Methods: Workshops (for adults only or children and adults together), face-to-face instruction, study-actions on 'How do I use media and technologies?' with families with children aged three to six years.

Duration of project: A continuing project, it was begun five years ago and it has been run over nine months of each year.

Resources needed: The project involves workshop leaders who are skilled users of media and have a good knowledge of media education pedagogy and didactics, media educators and people serving as mediators for families (i.e. teachers or professionals involved in public services aimed at families, as librarians, social workers, educators). Extramedia permanently engages three media educators experienced in workshops, who often work in team with professionals in charge of the public services offered by the municipalities involved in the project as librarians, museum workers and teachers.

Project description

The project investigates how families can deal with media education to help children to use media in a more creative, personal and structured way, and to support adults in various ways. Special one-to-one training seminars have been organized to highlight specific aspects that parents might see as a source of possible problems and conflicts. Many workshops have also been organized for children and families to work together on 'rules', resulting in comparison between the different points of view of adults and children, as well as in mediation based on positive arguments pointed out by both. During 'screen-free weekends', Centro Zaffiria has promoted socialization activities for families focusing on media and on more constructive and creative ways of using media. The screen-free weekends are aimed at helping parents to better understand the potential of media education and to explore the relationship between family members and technology, rituals that became an integral part of daily life, consumption habits, and quality of use. The new version of the project also focuses on the size of the 'extended community' through a specific study-action titled 'How do I use media and technologies?' The study involves a nursery school with children aged three to five years and their families. The project includes different educational activities conceived and implemented together with school teachers as well as a number of educational activities carried out by parents at home. Regular exchanges elicit suggestions, questions and remarks made by the family members about the project itself or a specific activity. Each family receives a colored notebook with questions about the different activities, aimed at promoting analysis and development of a more conscious educational relationship with the media. On the other hand, school teachers are supported by Centro Zaffiria to organize workshops for children and discussion groups. The notebook is also a good tool for exchanging information between families and schools.

Method(s)

Centro Zaffiria uses the Bruno Munari® method, learned on a specific three-year training course. The method, developed by the artist and designer Bruno Munari, an expert in visual communication, provides:

- A detailed approach to the learning space
- A study of manual activities, techniques, surfaces and composition rules that are given to the child to independently create images and visual stories
- A study of innovative materials
- Tips on how to use tools from the world of crafts, visual communication and objects of daily use
- A first step of research and experimentation; a second step of planning images and visual compositions
- The acceptance of mistakes as a new creative opportunity
- The importance of limits and restrictions to creativity
- The production of wonder and discovery

The adult suggests a 'playing action' to start the workshop and every child starts using tools and materials to discover potentials and limits.

Exemplary description of one day/part of project

Teachers welcome children in the classroom. At 9:30 they begin with an educational activity called 'The Corner' – children have to sit in a circle and share their opinions about a short story or a specific topic introduced with a question. Centro Zaffiria has developed several stories – often supported by pictures – that teachers can read to the children. These stories are aimed at stimulating debate among children, helping them to express their ideas and opinions. Children are therefore invited to a space where they can work together with professionals from Centro Zaffiria to represent 'with their hands/in a manual and practical way' the ideas expressed in 'The Corner'. The experiences children have at school are backed up by home activities. Parents go through daily rituals and situations in which the family members use media that sometimes give rise to conflict (i.e. going to sleep, having lunch or dinner, coming home from school, waiting at a restaurant, enjoying free time at weekends). They have to try, on the one hand, to understand the role of the media for their children and to build a daily space for media usage, and on the other hand, to organize alternative activities.

What needs special attention?

An aspect we pay special attention to is the interaction between families, living spaces and local communities. The media provide a wider view than a family – which actually is at the heart of the project. The involvement of schools, libraries, museums and other (public) spaces allows the project to promote media education as a tool to support the creation of coherent communities.

Project implementation difficulties

We always have to choose among different positive and necessary actions, according to their importance, since the available resources are limited and it is not possible to finance all the activities at the same time.

What could be improved?

Access to the project by families who are in need of the educational support offered should be easier. Most of the families that take part in the activities are aware of the importance of media education, while those that are not too keen on participating often ignore the relationship between media and people – in some cases, these families have problems, live in difficult conditions or, simply, don't feel the need to undergo media education.

Information about the organization that runs the project

Initiator: Centro Zaffiria

Partner(s): Centro per le famiglie, Municipalities of Verucchio, Santarcangelo, Poggio Torriana

Contact person: Alessandra Falconi

Contact: zaffiria@comune.bellaria-igea-marina.rn.it

Link to website: www.zaffiria.it

Photos of the project!!!

Quotes of participants

"My daughters and I made a deal: every page they read in a book of their own choice gives them the right to spend one minute watching TV or using a computer. If they read 20 pages they can watch a cartoon for 20 minutes." – Parent

"It would be really great if Mom and Dad could stop using that computer or tablet for a while!" – Child

Information about the resource

Publisher: Evens Foundation

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