

CULTURE AND HEALTH HAND IN HAND

During the pandemic we all came to the conclusion, that our health is the most important value and that we have to pay more attention to it. We have realized, that healthy lifestyle should be introduced and that we have to take care of our mental and physical health.

We had already thought about these aspects in 1993, when Primary School Bistrica ob Sotli was one of the first twelve schools, which joined The Health Promoting Schools in Slovenia. From the very beginning we include programmes into classes and other activities, with which we take care of physical, mental and social care of the pupils, school staff and parents.

We have carried out many workshops in the fields of science days, class hours and individual school subjects. With these workshops we made pupils aware, how important the physical and mental care are. They were informed of the healthy way of life and healthy diet. Healthy food was regularly on the school menu. The pupils were encouraged to spend their leisure time actively and practice sports. We didn't forget to include brain gym.

Because of these activities we also realized, that it is very important for the human health to get acquainted with culture, cultural activities and development of talents, they are associated with cultural and artistic activity. »Cultural food« is as important for health and development of our pupils as it is balanced diet. We offer many extracurricular non-obligatory activities with cultural content (for example: drama club, dance classes, school choir, social and cultural capital). They can choose an elective drama club, we also participate in the project called "Theatre" and we perform cultural days. In this way the pupils get the opportunity to cooperate and co-create cultural performance at school, in the municipality and its surroundings.



Dance group and children's choir performing at school

We wanted to upgrade the integration of culture and health, so we decided to connect the both fields. A few years ago we started to celebrate The School Day actively. This day was performed outdoors and it contained cultural activities. We included also the hike of three generations, where pupils, school staff, parents, grandparents and other citizens participated.



The School Day celebration

The 25th anniversary of Health Promoting School was marked in a very special way. The school staff and pupils had a goal to run 25 laps at the athletic field.



Running at Health Promoting School anniversary

Next year, in 2019, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the opening of the new school. On this occasion we also tried to connect the cultural and sports activities. Our goal this time was to run or walk 40 laps.

We also paid big attention to the connection of cultural activities of pupils and health of senior citizens. The pupils visited citizens in the old people's retirement home in Rogaška Slatina and older and lonely people in our village Bistrica ob Sotli. With their cultural programme they made the senior citizens very happy and they brightened their day.



Children, who made old and lonely people happy

The pandemic stopped the activities last year, but we are all sure that we will continue them as soon as possible and we will continue to cheer senior citizens and lonely people.

Healthy way of life, healthy environment and healthy diet are the topics that were included in the drama club plays. The topics were presented in a humorous way, because we all know the old saying "Laughter is half one's life".



Drama Club during the performance

In March 2020 the pandemic caused the closing of schools, so we changed the way of teaching and performing of all the other activities. The pupils learned from computers at home and they became the prisoners of the computer screen. To take care of the pupils and their health during the pandemic, we added many physical activities to the lessons and other activities. The instructions for physical activities we given through learning channels. We sent them the activity recordings, we talked to them using different applications, we did exercises with them and encouraged them. We also informed the students of cultural events, which they could watch online.

We paid big attention to realization of the cultural day, which was a substitution for The School Day. We called it "Along cultural heritage trails of our countryside". We informed the pupils and their parents, that despite the circumstances, we intend to realize the activities. The pupils prepared a short cultural programme for their parents or grandparents. They asked their parents or grandparents to talk about their school years. They went for a walk or on a hike with their parents in their surroundings. They visited some local sights, they talked about them and took some photos. Before they went for a walk, they had to prepare a healthy snack and some water. The aim of the cultural day was to connect the cultural and physical activities and to include all family members. So the activities could last the whole weekend or only one day.

The feedback from parents and pupils was positive. They were all satisfied with the suggested activities and they also performed them. Many pupils sent us photos of local sights and records of their performance.



Vid and his family during sightseeing

We have decided to continue with similar activities this school year, because pupils and their parents were so content. We expected that all the activities could be performed at school, but unfortunately that didn't happen. The teachers have been performing distance learning for almost four months.

In the time of the lockdown of the country, when we are restricted to the movement only inside our municipality, it is very important to offer the children a lot of movement. So they are not stuck in front of the computers, they are more motivated for learning, they develop solidarity skills and empathy and they stay healthy and strong personalities. We can enable this with the connection of the culture and healthy life habits.

Sabina Vračun, teacher at Primary School Bistrica ob Sotli, Slovenia, January 2021