

LIBERA

Croatian Association for Education, Entrepreneurship and
International Cooperation

PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT FOR „WE EMPOWER CROATIAN CHILDREN TO OVERCOME FEARS“



Dear donors and supporters,

Thank you for your support of the project. Your trust gave us the strength to move on. Also, Ruta and Beni are joined us in our thanks.

We believe that these workshops of ours that aim to pay more attention to the children's health will also trigger an different approach towards children who have exaggerated fears.

Although the children are burdened with a large number of school activities, we managed to do a new workshop on fears. We tried to make it as interesting as possible for them, but still a small number of them came. However, Ruta was delighted with that fact, since **she had the opportunity to discuss their fears with each child individually.** Workshop was held in the Tin Ujević library, Zagreb. It is already our usual meeting place. The workshop was attended by children from the Elementary School Julija Klovića, Zagreb and this was our fourth workshop in a row.

During the lecture Ruta also explains that fear is a completely natural emotion like any other, and this time the students tried two self-calming/self-regulation technique. She also describes the technique of talking with one's own fear. Students write down their fear on a piece of paper and hold it in their hand.

"Imagine that Beni is your fear. Let's go talk to him." The technique of talking with fear is carried out by one or two students under the guidance of the leader. **It was really interesting to see what fears children have;** from being alone at home; from different insects; from failing at school; from bad grades and fear of the dark. After the workshop, everyone confirmed that their fear is much less and that they are no longer afraid.

Also, after the workshop we were happy because the children were extremely satisfied with everything they learned. We continued with informal socializing and we had a discussion on how to involve parents more in the whole project who, due to lack of time and a large number of obligations, are not very cooperative. However, **expected results of the workshop were achieved** especially in the part: awareness of one's own fears and fear regulation mechanisms, recognizing fears and sharing emotions with others, practicing techniques for dealing with fears and getting to know fears and connecting students and developing empathy towards others and towards dogs.

The realization of project activities in the previous period is in accordance with the set goals of the project, related to the following:

- socializing and workshop for 10 children with a therapy dog Beni and his mentor Ruta,
- implementation of the technique of talking with one's own fear,
- children's photo session to remember the wonderful socializing with friends and activities with the therapy dog and
- handing out gifts that included pens, crayons, papers and candy.

All those **activities will help prevent later severe forms of anxiety** and at the same time contribute to solving related specific social problems and proactively influence the development of the community as a whole.

The innovativeness of this type of workshop is reflected in the type of service provided to students. **Activities with a therapy dog are unique and not yet so frequent and well-established in the educational system,** despite numerous worldwide studies that show that the mere presence of a dog raises the mood, motivates activity and prolongs attention and concentration on the task. Considering the relaxing and stimulating role of therapy dogs for children's development, **this type of workshop represents an innovative activity for Croatian school students.**

Therefore, your support is invaluable for all of us especially for the children from Croatia. We also believe that the pictures in the attachment will cheer you up and that you will see that your donated funds are used for the right purpose.

With love and warmth,

The Libera Team



