Make peace visible (non-formal meets formal)

Name of the organisation
Tallinna Haridusamet

Website of the organisation
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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work
• Array

Good practice category
Concrete tool

Good practice aim & purpose
Global instability and the war in Europe have increased the need for activities that support the mental wellbeing, active citizenship and social participation of European youth on a large scale. In the middle of the climate crisis and the aftermath of the pandemic, youth need an immediate, meaningful experience of agency: Changing the world together and the tools to do so.
"Make peace visible" activities are based on an awarded Finnish intervention method called Gutsy Go. The method combines media and pedagogy with peace work, and has been designed to prevent polarization and enhance social participation of youth in society. The main aims for this practice: enhancing participation through non-formal education, increasing well-being of youth through alternative way of participation and promoting peace education among young people.
The project offers a well timed chance to test out and make visible the potential of a new kind of collective, community-oriented approach to improve the positive mental health and experience of agency and social inclusion of youth.
The program's focus is on action, it offers a concrete experience of making a difference and it will increase capacity to solve challenges together.

Good practice description

"Make peace visible" starts off by coach training and then shaking up one school week. The intervention challenges all 14-year-olds to create solutions to problems in their own city. In collaboration with teachers and youth workers, legal officials, and community leaders youth design and implement unique solutions to promote solidarity and "social peace," thus preventing polarization and tensions within their own communities. The solutions are filmed and shared at local premieres, on social media, and across traditional news outlets. The videos can be used as inspiration to carry on with the work in schools or youth centers throughout the year.

The process we follow is structured as described:
1. Coach training – The aim of the coach training is to give participants the skills needed to act as a coach for youths' Gutsy Go teams. It includes learning about the method as well as practicing the skills needed by a coach.
The method promotes teamwork skills and other competencies needed for the future. It supports the in-depth learning and developing future skills of the youth such as team work, creativity, critical thinking, constructive consultation, recognizing personal and group strengths and using media in creating awareness and positive narrative. Previous feedback show that this project has potential to inspire many of youths to talk about topics which actually interest them, teachers/coaches find this project to be professionally useful e.g they got new tools to engage youth, brought to light new strengths in youth, helped them to identify character strengths in youth.

2. Gutsy Go action week – it begins with a collective intervention that interrupts the 8th-graders regular school schedule for a week. The entire age group is challenged to take on a grand mission: take bold action and contribute to positive interaction within their community. The special school week gives everyone a chance to redefine themselves and offers coaches an opportunity to come together with students and connect with them. The action week's purpose is to produce a communal, shared experience.
The youth work as teams, and the adults guide the activities together. The method aims to contribute to the well-being of school communities, to prevent dropping out and to strengthen youths' commitment to their education. Using media is a significant aspect of the pedagogy of Gutsy Go. It supports the coaches' work and makes the youths ideas, thoughts visible.

From 2021 Tallinn has implemented this program in 8 schools – Estonian and Russian speaking schools. In total approximately 350 youth has taken part of it. We've trained over 50 coaches who in everyday basis work as professional teachers and youth workers. We also had a local police force trained and they got to be coaches for youth group too. Among municipality, we do cooperate together with schools and education orientated ngo's and local media organisations to make it all happen.

See one example here: https://youtu.be/ObBYW1ibKf0

Good practice result & concrete effects

The results of this project are benefitting the participating youth, their coaches and the local community as well as the larger audience through mainstream and social media.

The local youth workers and teachers have gained valuable new skills and understanding of character strengths, building cohesion in a group, enhancing the social inclusion of youth and encouraging co-operation during the training and the intervention weeks.

These skills benefit and support them in their everyday work with youth. The training, together with the intervention week, form a powerful experience that has an impact beyond the activities of the projects. According to the feedback from the coaches in previous surveys, the change in their thinking of youth and their potential has dramatically changed.

The pedagogy behind Gutsy Go is designed so that it brings out the character strengths in youth too. These strengths are noticed and verbalized by peers and by every team's coach during the activities. This realization of one's own strengths and the impact of that on self-esteem supports the youth in further studies and life in general.

The project videos are shared to inspire people in their cities. The example youth give, raises hope and encourages people to act.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work