



## EPSC goes live for Schools for inclusion

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### Abstract

In this paper we aim to showcase the story of the participation of the 5th grade of the 9th Primary School of Komotini in the inspiring and inclusive “EPSC goes live for schools” and the art contest “Inspired By other Worlds”.

### 1. Introduction

The 9th Primary School of Komotini is an urban school located in the outskirts of the city which is in the region of East Macedonia and Thrace, in the north-eastern part of Greece. Almost half of the students come from marginalized settlements of the city and belong to the Muslim minority of Thrace. Their school attendance is irregular and results in the creation of gaps in their cognitive skills and to the gradual reduction of their self-expression, classroom participation, self-confidence and self-esteem. These are followed by their marginalization and alienation in the classroom and the school community and eventually often lead to school dropout.

### 2. Teaching Approach

Thus the aim of the school and the teacher of the 5th grade is to offer inclusive education which is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive and value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all [1].

### 3. Classroom Context

The classroom consisted of 13 5th graders, 9 boys and 4 girls. Three of the students were students with special needs. There is an assistant teacher in the classroom for one of the students while the other two also attend the special needs class of the school.

### 4. Procedure

The announcement of the participation of the 5th grade in “EPSC goes live for Schools” and the art contest “Inspired By other Worlds” was received with enthusiasm from the students and the parents. The presentation of the relative video excited them and intrigued their curiosity. In the classroom under the guidance of their teacher students posed questions, inquired and discussed about the importance of Scientific Congresses, Scientists and their Research and in specifically of Europlanet Science Congress and the value of opening its doors to schools and giving them the opportunity to take a glimpse of how contemporary science is done. The EPSC2020 web platform was presented and students navigated through it. The plan of the live events, the short description of the workshop and the introduction of the speakers were translated and printed from the “Handbook for (participating) teachers”. The Space Scoop platform which is a collection of the latest space news from astronomical organizations was used to get familiarized with the topic of each live event and

the relative terminology. Arrangements were made so that the class could stay at school after school's closing time in order to participate in the live events which exceeded the opening time of the school. Each live talk was anticipated with great excitement and rewarded by the welcoming and inspiring host and speakers who embraced and motivated the students with the inspirational presentations and the interaction between them. The students were engaged during the whole process. They would take notes, write down their questions and make sketches of what they saw. During the presentations their questions were posted in the chat box of the webinar or in the YouTube channel. When the first answers were posted they got so excited that they started to applaud. So even the shy and reluctant students started to ask questions and not only in the chat box but live in the last section of the event for questions in English and in Greek when the speaker was Greek. Very soon their questions did not only concern the topic but the speakers also whom the students saw as role models. After receiving their answers they started to perform little victory dances full of joy and enthusiasm and the rest of the class would applaud. The fact that when introducing themselves the speakers would also go back to their school ages and talk about their favorite subjects, their school performances, their favorite movies, comics and hobbies and their dreams and how they got to make them get true, made the students connect with them and feel honored. Furthermore, the positive climate and the multicultural and multilingual context of the events enhanced their self-esteem and self-confidence. After each live event the students created paintings and drawings in the classroom and collaboratively in the school's art workshop with the teacher of the classroom, the assistant teacher and the special needs teacher.

### **5. Creative outcome**

Four paintings were created collaboratively and twenty seven by the students themselves for the art contest "Inspired By Other Worlds". "EPSC goes live for Schools" inspired the 5th graders with our wonderful and diverse Universe which managed to include all the students and make them feel part of "Our Universe" which was the title they chose themselves.

### **6. Discussion**

"EPSC goes live for Schools" enhanced, empowered and inspired the young children of the 5th grade. Every live event was the talk of the School. Parents discussed about the excitement of their children. One mother told the teacher that her child's attitude toward physics (which is introduced as a subject in Greece in the 5th grade) changed positively after participating in the events. Finally, seeing their artworks in the relative gallery and being awarded the 3rd Prize in Public vote and a Special Recognition for excellent School Group in an excellent award ceremony was as they said an "unforgettable and amazing experience".

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the "EPSC goes live for Schools" and "Inspired By other Worlds" Teams.

### **References**

[1] UNESCO (2005b) Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring access to education for all Paris: UNESCO, p.13