Title of the Project | When Thoughts Grow, the World Changes
---|---
Name of project leader | Oh young hee
Email address | mndkidz@naver.com
School or institution | Korea National Ministry of Defense Kindergarten
Names of others on the project team (if any) |
National OMEP committee | OMEP Korea
Signature of the National OMEP Committee president | [Signature]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project participants</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children (include age)</td>
<td>36 (3-year-olds) 42 (4-year-olds) 43 (5-year-olds)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher education students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ABSTRACT, including project aims and outcomes (max. 250 words)

Realizing sustainable development requires knowledge and capabilities that cannot be achieved in a single moment. Therefore, it is crucial to provide children with education from an early age so that they can grow into mature citizens who can interact and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds. To this end, our kindergarten has implemented the ‘When Thoughts Grow, the World Changes’ program, which is an education strategy that envisions the future through children’s collaborative efforts in the process of reasonably resolving collective process while respecting each other’s opinions: a way to find and practice better shared values.
When Thoughts Grow, the World Changes

Need and Purpose

“When People Change, Society Changes”

We are currently living in an era that aspires to establish a sustainable society. Our society confronts a plethora of challenges, including but not limited to environmental issues, economic imbalances, social dilemmas. Addressing these challenges requires more than mere problem-solving, as the solutions must be future-oriented. To find such solutions, it is essential to cultivate the knowledge and competencies that enable sustainable development. However, such knowledge and competencies cannot be acquired overnight. In order to help children mature into responsible citizens who are capable of interacting and collaborating with diverse individuals, it is imperative to start educating them for a young age.

A society is a community formed by individuals coming together. To live as a humane person, it is essential for one to possess the ability to interact and collaborate with others while also maintaining self-respect. The competence to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds within a community enables one to understand the world they belong to and fulfill their role as a member of various social groups, such as family or local communities. Ultimately, the acquisition of such competence is crucial for people to live a sustainable life in a more rewarding society. As people’s mindset shifts and more individuals begin to consider sustainability in their daily lives, society will inevitably progress towards sustainability.

In light of this, we have implemented ‘When Thoughts Grow, the World Changes’ program at our kindergarten to enable children to consider future together in the process of resolving common issues while respecting each other’s opinions, that is, to find and practice better shared values.

Program Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Children, teachers, and parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2022 - Present</td>
<td>- Recognizing the need for education and exploring related strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Exploration and Development of Educational Direction and Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Establishment and Planning of Education</td>
<td>- Parent survey and establishing the basic direction of the program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education of Parents and Teachers for Program Implementation</td>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>Teacher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Program Implementation</td>
<td>- Implementing the ‘When Thoughts Grow, the World Changes’ program</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Collaborative activities facilitated by engaging students’ family through sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Program Results

**Program Implementation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“I” Matters</th>
<th>“YOU” Matters</th>
<th>Let’s Do It “Together”</th>
<th>Practicing Shared Values Together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressing one’s own intentions</td>
<td>Making decisions together</td>
<td>Changed attitude in life after a rational decision-making process</td>
<td>Realizing the values of educational community for sustainable life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices of Education Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Learning Community (Mentor/Mentee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Participation (Parent Volunteering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Community (Plogging, Green Zone, Campaign)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program Duration:** April - December 2022 (5-year-olds)

### ‘I’ Matters Too: Your Space, My Space!

Yeong-gwang: “This is my play area, ask for permission before coming in.”

So-eun: “My space is as important as yours~”

A new school year begins. Is it because they found the environment unfamiliar? Many children wanted their own play area separate from the others’, rather than sharing the space. Teachers respected the children’s opinion and supported them in creating and playing in their own play area.

### ‘YOU’ Matter Too: Organizing A Space for Everyone

The children who were continuing their play in ‘Your Space, My Space!’ began to discuss the discomfort of the classroom space at some point. They began to feel that ‘I need my own space, but I also need a space where I can be with my friends!’ As they felt the need for a place where they could play with others, the children wanted to gradually create a shared space. Now the children happily start their daily routine in a space for everyone where one can either play ‘alone’ or ‘together.’

### Let’s Do It ‘Together’: Our Space Where Everyone is Happy

“This is not just my space.” The children are learning about consideration and making promises for shared space through play every day. These experiences led the children to show thoughtfulness and reliability in public settings, such as art gallery visits. Despite encountering diverse conflicts stemming from differences in perspectives and opinions, the children were persevering in their learning of attitudes as society members and problem-solving skills as they navigate decision-making processes through errors and compromises with their peers.
Practicing Shared Values Together: Safe Space for Everyone (Traffic Safety Campaign)

“I can’t cross the road because of cars!”

Our children are learning the value of being ‘together,’ instead of ‘alone!’ Recently, they have become interested in cars parked on the crosswalk in front of our kindergarten. To resolve this issue, the parents’ committee, teachers, and children all came together, and participated in a traffic safety campaign to raise awareness of the danger of parking on the crosswalk. As a result, the number of cars parked on the crosswalk has decreased, and now the area has become a safer space for kids to move around.

The Joyful Lunchtime We Made

Program Duration: May - December 2022 (4-year-olds)


Despite the teacher’s desire to encourage the children to eat more healthy food and enjoy their meal, some picky eaters did not enjoy their lunchtime. “Okay! For now I will respect your choices. Even if it’s just a little, let’s try to eat and make it enjoyable.” After discussing with the children the teacher planned the activity ‘Eating According to My Preferences.’

The children shouted “Just a little of what I don’t like, and a lot of what I do like~.” “Eating According to My Preferences,” which was an activity that made compromises with the children to try at least 1-2 bites of the less preferred food, had better than expected results. It proved to be very helpful in shaping the children’s eating habits.

‘You’ Matter Too: How to Make a Joyful Lunchtime

Although the amount of leftovers significantly decreased with “Eating According to My Preferences,” our class still generated a lot of food waste compared to other classes. In light of this, the children discussed this issue together.

The solution the children came up with was the “Making a Joyful Lunchtime Project.” “If we have lunch in a joyful atmosphere, we won’t make any leftovers.” “The cook won’t be worried anymore either!” The children started to think about others beside themselves and looked for ways to reduce leftover food.

Let’s Do It “Together”: We are the Guardians of the Earth

The children’s concern for food waste led them to develop an interest in environmental issues. To reduce food waste, they created natural fertilizer using leftover food. They were also able to experience the joy of harvesting vegetables as well, cultivating vegetable gardens and growing crops.
Practicing Shared Values Together: Promotion of Eco-friendly Consumption and Charity Donations

The children sold vegetables that they grew and harvested themselves, while also promoting carbon reduction. Through these activities, the children and their families were able to experience environmentally friendly consumption habits that not only reduce carbon emissions, but also demonstrate care for the environment of the planet. Furthermore, to further reduce carbon emissions, they donated the proceeds from their vegetable sales to a local environmental foundation, demonstrating their commitment to sharing and giving back.

My Way DAY!

Program Duration: May - December 2022 (3-year-olds)

‘I’ Matters Too: ‘I Want to Play My Way’

“I want to play with my own toy and in my own way!”

In order to accommodate the children who preferred playing with their own toys at home instead of shared toys in the classroom, we organized and implemented ‘My Way DAY.’ This special day featured the toys that could be broken without worry and be played with together with one’s friends. Thanks to ‘My Way DAY,’ the children had a fun-filled day.

‘You’ Matter Too: From “I’ll Do It My Way” to “I Care about My Friends’ Feelings Too!”

Taekyung: One day of “My Way Day” felt too short.
Si-hyun: How about we take turns playing with the toys?

During the children’s discussion of the positive and regretful aspects of “My Way DAY,” they came up with a new game called “Let’s ANABADA(아나바다: save, share, trade, and reuse) Together!” Through this game, the children exchanged unused toys and played together, learning to respect not only their own feelings and thoughts but also those of others.

Let’s Do It “Together”: Shall We Send that Toy to Green Zone(Flee Market)?

As the children’s interest in playing gradually declined, one of them suggested exchanging toys with each other and
donating the items they no longer used to Green Zone (an unmanned flea market). They became aware that many toys they received as gifts on Children’s day end up as trash when thrown away, and were eager to participate in the activity. Additionally, they donated unused toys and items from home to the kindergarten, which were then shared through Green Zone every month. The children were able to gain a natural understanding of resource circulation by having a firsthand experience of the toys they did not play with at home, which could have someday turned into trash, becoming new gift-like playthings.

\[\text{Practicing Shared Values Together: Practicing Environmental Protection}\]

This kindergarten operates Green Zone (an unmanned flea market) every month by receiving donations of toys and other items that children no longer use at home, and shares environmental information to encourage children to practice environmental protection at home (e.g., recycling, using public transportation, etc.).

\[\text{Unmanned Flea Market}\]

\[\text{Support for Recycling-Related Play Materials at Home}\]

\[\text{Sharing Instances of the Children Practicing Environmental Protection at Home via `Kids Note (키즈노트)`}\]

\[\text{Program Evaluation}\]

To create a sustainable society, we have adopted ‘people must change first’ as our guiding principle, and put the program “When Thoughts Grow, the World Changes” into practice. This program has been evaluated as an educational method that provides a positive experience for children, teachers, and parents all alike. The specific details are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in the Children’s Perspective</th>
<th>Changes in the Parents’ Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They have taken their first step as mature citizens necessary for the future society. They made choices and decisions, understood the significance of rights and responsibilities associated with them, and put them into practice.</td>
<td>They became interested in social issues, such as the environment, social commitments, and rules. They were able to take the first step in education towards becoming mature citizens within the family. As the activities at the kindergarten became more closely integrated with the life of the children at home, the parents began to share and listen to their children’s opinions, resulting in a shift towards...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They interacted and collaborated with others to resolve problems in a rational manner. By expressing their own opinions, they learned the importance of self-respect, developed empathy and respect for others, and shared and discussed their thoughts and behaviors with each other.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
making household decisions together, even on minor matters,

- They were able to show interest and take action on various social issues with their children.
- They were able to adopt an attitude of asking for the children’s opinions and making decisions with them, even on small things in daily life, breaking free from the notion that the children’s decision-making rights are confined only to their playtime.
- It was the first step in exploring practical solutions that the children could experience in their daily lives.

### Changes in the Teachers’ Perspective

The teachers helped the children to become agents of their own choices and decisions by expanding the scope of their consideration from ‘me’ to ‘us,’ and even further to the natural environment and the local community. We were able to develop an interest in making efforts to ensure that these endeavors can realize better values in the lives of the children.

### The Program’s Significance and Future Tasks

1. **The broadening of the scope of children’s decision-making to include activities within the kindergarten and the local community**

   When children make choices and decisions not only in their classroom but also in various situations, and practice the roles and rights associated with those, our teachers will support children develop an interest in their society, make informed guesses about its problems, and become aware of significant phenomena occurring in their surrounding environment.

2. **Teachers’ continuous research initiatives, and further, the research for the integration between the program and the children’s families**

   During process of the program implementation, the teachers met every week to discuss their class’s play activities and concerns. We were indirectly exposed to various cases of reasonable problem-solving with the children and effective communications with them, which led us to recognize the need for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills through continuous research.

3. **Establishing channels of communications between families**

   Like the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child,” the interest and participation of families at home will extend to childcare institutions, continuing to serve as a driving force for sustaining more diverse sustainable programs in the future.