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**CHILDREN WHO READ ARE THE FUTURE OF SMART SOCIETY: THE  
APPLICATION OF GOOD PRACTICES IN READING ADVOCACY**

Probably everyone knows the famous quote saying that children are our future. Well, seeking to ensure the future and the continuance of a smart society, it is necessary to cultivate children who read. It seems like today we have great conditions for children to read: contemporary books are written about the current issues, attractive characters are chosen along with colourful illustrations, interesting magazines, comics, electronic books are released, libraries are luring with interesting activities. Paradoxically, that is not enough for children to want to spend their free time with a book. The main reason is a high competition with other leisure activities: computer games, smart phones, robotics activities and other. Either there is no time for books at all or there is little time.

Children's non-reading is a relevant issue, which has to be solved not only by parents or teachers, but librarians as well. We have to cultivate the readers of the future, as the library activities, form of services and finally, the necessity of libraries depends on them. Today's librarians are very creative. They are able to offer the young readers various activities, sessions, excursions, camps and etc. It is very important to be able to adapt the activities in our workplace, those that are successfully implemented in libraries in other countries or areas. In other words, there is no need to invent a wheel.

In the year 2016, there was an opportunity to visit the Radovljica library in Slovenia, where children's reading incentives were introduced - book suitcases. To me, this activity seemed very appealing, innovative, easily implemented. When I came back to Kretinga, I decided to borrow this idea from the Slovenian library, to develop it, adapt it to our reading needs and to implement the "Traveling suitcases of books" project in Kretinga in 2017, which I want to introduce to you now.

The aim of the "Traveling suitcases of books" project - to develop pre-school age group children is reading motivation from a young age, revealing different, attractive methods of reading, to form their reading skills, develop creativity and imagination.

It was noticed that early teaching does not pay enough attention to text comprehension development, enrichment of vocabulary and the phonological understanding skills are rarely mentioned. The child has not to only hear the text, but to understand it as well. For the achievement of such goal, it is important that the children of such age would be educated by using the gameplay method. With this project it was sought to help pre-school age group children to become conscious, independent readers, text perceivers, their reading motivation was strengthened. The project provided a possibility to find new literature reading strategies that would arouse the desire to read.

Naturally, this project was very important to librarians and preschool education teachers as these specialists, excluding the parents, are the most important people forming the early reading skills of children. For this reason, the project was started from seminars for the librarians and preschool teachers. During the time of seminars, such lectures were given: "For a book to become the friend of a child" (psychologist Lina Kantautienė); lecture "Fairy-tale: the line between real and fictional" (Associate Professor, Doctor of Social Sciences Lina Kantautienė); lecture "Books for the

little ones: selection criteria and ways of presenting" (child literature critic Danguolė Šakavičiūtė), lecture "Fairy tales - like therapy" (lecturer psychologist G. Meslinienė).

Parents, teachers, and librarians were prepared and issued a publication, which included the methodical-recommendation reading development articles specially designed for the project (prepared by Associate Professor, Doctor of Social Sciences Nijolė Bražienė, psychologists Gintarė Meslinienė, Lina Cirtautienė, Lina Kantautienė, Jurgita Kadagienė).

The main element of the project - six "Traveling suitcases of fairy tales" illustrating different fairy tales while they include glove theatre puppets, a paper book, musical record with a fitting fairy-tale, matching educational colouring activities for the target group of the project, tools and etc. It was sought that the fairy tales and practical activities would be interesting, attractive to children, matching their social, cultural, cognitive and other interests.

The fairy-tale suitcase is chosen with respect to the projects addressee - preschool children's - interests and level of perception. The suitcases are prepared for these fairy tales: "Little Red Riding Hood", Puss in Boots, The sky is falling, The Cat and the Rooster, Turnip, Three piglets.

Before issuing the fairy-tale suitcases to home, to Kretinga library, branches of it, in Kretinga preschool education institutions theatre introductions of fairy-tale suitcases were prepared. In total a number of 18 theatre presentations were prepared, they were viewed by more than 700 children. These presentations were prepared and acted to the children by the professional actresses of Klaipėda puppet theatre.

Once the presentations finished, the fairy-tale suitcases could be brought home and played with, read, acted by all children from Kretinga area for a period of 1 month. The child is provided with the opportunity to additionally take different games or education tools that did not fit into the suitcase. Of course, the suitcases are issued to the child when arriving with the parents or one of them. The adults take up the financial responsibility of the suitcase and its content (by signing a lease agreement). The parents are also handed a folder with the methodological-recommendation material on children's reading. At this moment, another aim of the project emerges - to strengthen the relationships between the children and parents, to encourage them to spend time together. The provided methodological material highlights the very important role of the parents in the process of educational reading.

It is interesting to notice that the fairy-tale suitcases are popular for rent not only amongst children alone, but amongst teachers that rent them for their classes or kindergarten group pupils, as well as the librarians of Kretinga library branches. The rich fairy-tale suitcases are a great tool to diversify the educational process, to ensure the interesting free time of the children.

Until the end of April 2018, fairy-tale suitcases have been taken 60 times.

Even though the project "Traveling suitcases of fairy tales" is finite (the activities have ended at the end of the year 2017), the fairy-tale suitcases are successfully traveling around Kretinga children's home, schools and kindergartens. The popularity is so high that the content of the suitcases had to be changed due to normal wear and tear. During the period of project implementation and during the continuance of it today, we receive great reviews from teachers and parents along with encouragements to continue our activities.

The financial support was provided by the Lithuanian Commission of Culture - 3600 Eur, Kretinga District Municipality - 720 Eur. The total project budget is 4320 Eur. This is the first project of Kretinga library that received a financial aid of 100% of the amount asked for the implementation of the project.

After summarizing the results of the activities, taking into account the positive feedbacks, we can bravely state that the "Traveling suitcases of fairy tales" were and are great tools to encourage children's reading, not only bringing new readers into Kretinga library, but also creating the future readers in other areas.

We are glad that famous Lithuanian women contributed by supporting the project activities with their ideas, encouraged paying special attention to children's reading. Actress Kristina Savickytė-Dumanskienė wrote, "I think that reading to children, with children, helps to strengthen the connection, helps to fall in love with books and the process of reading, develops imagination, educates creativity, expands the outlook, arouses curiosity".

I want to finish my message with the observations of jeweller Jurga Lago: "Without a book, you are in the darkness like a mole. By reading, you can communicate with the most intelligent people on the planet. And the communication is so convenient: when you want to have tea - you go and have it, you can also simply stop reading and continue again when you feel like it... When reading you gather as much knowledge as the best minds of the planet can give, you learn how to smoothly express your thoughts, you develop your vocabulary..."

I hope that we will be able to increase the number of reading kids, youngsters, adults, the number of the entire intelligent society members.