



RWL Case-Study – La cascina dei bambini

Country

Italy

Name of the programme

La cascina dei bambini (*A children's farm*)

Age of the children involved?

4-12. Children are divided in homogeneous age groups.

Teaser/Short Introduction

La cascina dei bambini is a program that during spring and summer offers children the opportunity to live an entire week in the Regional Park of Monza, every day from morning to evening. Children can sleep one night in a tent or do special activities during the night, such as cooking the evening meal together with their parents or watch stars and planets.

What is the frame?

The program gives the opportunity to experiment a week immersed in nature, eat healthy, organic and self cooked food, walk in the grassland, orient themselves in the wood, build what is necessary, rest and listen to a story, learn how to live with other children in harmony.

What are the goals of the programme?

- ☒ Be immersed in a natural setting, with a relaxed rhythm, and open to the needs of the group.
- ☒ Live a unique and special time in contact with nature and with other children.
- ☒ Learn how to cook food and other things.
- ☒ Raise curiosity for the world around us.
- ☒ Provoke respect for nature and care for the site of *Cascina*.
- ☒ Build trusty relationships between the participants.
- ☒ Learn from firsthand experiences.

What values are promoted in the programme?

According to the hand model, the values promoted were mainly related to respect for nature, equal opportunities and appreciation for the achievements of the past.

Which competences are promoted that empower learners to shape a sustainable future?

The program allows to develop responsibility and cooperation. Kids will develop a sense of responsibility and entrepreneurship and the ability to plan and to realize their ideas.

Kids will be able to recognize their relationship to nature. Having nature experiences of different kinds will encourage them to reflect on their relationship to nature.

Which of the specific scientific concepts does the programme relate to?



Cycles – Children learn from experience about the constant changes that happen in the natural environment.

Energy flows – Being a watermill present on site the energy theme was very much present in the programme.

Resilience – The programme takes place in an old farm with a working mill which faces the challenge of being put to a new use for future generations, from productive place to educational.

Which ecological problems are involved, if any, and how? (Refer to mindmaps of 9 planetary boundaries)

Biodiversity loss – Children learn first-hand about plants and animals in the park. They had a chance of being in contact with various wild and domestic animals such as squirrels, ducks, cat and different kinds of insects and learn about their needs and the problems related to biodiversity loss and ecosystem destruction.

Transferability: Which different areas of learning are included and how?

Related to the man-made environment – Children learnt about how life could have been in an old farm and watermill and about the changes man made to the park environment.

Encourage active transfer – The programme ended with a final activity during which the children shared their experience with friends and families.

Related to the learners themselves – Children had to pay attention to others and organize everyday tasks collaborating amongst themselves.

What educational strategies (learning models, methods, etc.) are used in your programme?

Educators play a facilitating role by accompanying kids through hands-on activities, research and reflection on how we act in everyday life.

Experience is not thought as a simple summing up of many facts and feelings: great attention is given to details, leaving the children free to experience at their own pace and select the stimuli they find more appropriate. All the experiences are thought of as part of a greater picture that constructs itself over the course of the week.

The farmhouse is an «open-air laboratory» that offers endless possibilities to experience sustainability issues while playing and developing new skills: the residential favours autonomy, self-discovery and an attitude at sharing with others all the extraordinary beauty and labours the natural world has to offer.

Great importance is given to the social, cultural and historical meaning of the park and the old farmhouse. The cultural and natural heritage is itself a place for unusual encounters and learning.

How is the programme evaluated? How do you know the programme achieved its educational goals?

The first day there is an activity to share expectations and wishes.


Every morning and evening there a special moment is dedicated to listening everybody's thoughts and reflections. Teachers and facilitators also discuss the results and plan the activity of the next day.

A questionnaire is given to the parents to fill a few days after the end of the week to collect their opinions about the program and the children experience.

Describe the programme

Every week has a special story or a central idea to develop. The story or the idea functions as a frame that gives to the participant stimuli and a recognisable map of the journey of the week.

The frame has the aim to build experiences that make sense to the participants and facilitate action.



The program is structured in phase:

- ☑ First days. In day 1 and 2 the kids familiarize with the site and their new friends. The site has to be explored very well so that the kids can feel it as their new “home”.
- ☑ Core days. Day 3 and 4 is when the group of children decide the activities (exploring, manual, artistic, etc...) according to the story or the central idea of the week.
- ☑ The closing phase. Day 5 and 6 are dedicated to stabilize what has been reached and to realize a special activity to share with families and friends: discoveries, abilities, what has been done for the site, the garden the bee hive, the wood, the vegetable garden, etc...

The atmosphere of the week has to be built accurately so that in the beginning (phase 1) there are more activities that respond to the objective of making children feel at home at the site and knowing the new friends, building confidence in each other and to experiencing collaboration. The second phase has to be emotionally strong, with the presence of activity that builds a relation with the natural environment of the park and allows the kids to live little adventures and to face challenges together. As a parabola in the last phase the kids prepare themselves to leave the site in a better way and to take home a piece of park with them to share with their parents.

Photos or videos, logos





Included resources / materials / tools.

<http://www.creda.it/idee-per-lestate-2014/#more-2599>

Is it happening to you?

*Anything can happen when a lot of boys and girls meet in a wood for a week....
It can happen that...
a river is completely cleaned up,
an old path created by our grandfathers is rediscovered and reverted to practicability,
It can happen that
we learn how to make fire, to make bread and jams with our old traditional flavours,
we share wishes and became friends
we discovery that we have ideas and hope to develop
that we know how to do many things
Anything can happen...
to fall in love with a land, a wood, a mountain that need your help now more than ever
Anything can happen...
Is it happening to you too?*