

## Distance Education with a Long-term Sick Roma Student

Trebnje Elementary School is one of the largest schools in Slovenia. We face different challenges in carrying out educational activities. One of these is also working with Roma students who, in our environment, represent a community with its own culture, language, and history. Often, students come from a less supportive social environment, which posed a particular challenge during distance education because of the epidemic situation with COVID-19. Through good planning, adaptation, and cooperation of all involved stakeholders, good examples of the practice of working with Roma students are also developed. In the following, we will present the implementation of the educational process with a long-term sick Roma student. Flexibility, cooperation, good interpersonal relationships, and family support are the conditions for successful work. In the analysis of the work, however, questions and challenges emerge which indicate that many weaknesses and problems also arise.

The Roma community in Slovenia is recognized as a minority community with its own ethnic and cultural characteristics (their language, culture, and history). It is a sensitive, vulnerable group of the population who are still in an unequal position with other citizens in some areas. They face the greatest challenges in the field of residential conditions, which is a consequence of the historical process of settling the Roma community in isolated areas separated from other settlements, in the field of poor social conditions and poverty, and in education, employment, and healthcare (Priloga k nacionalnemu programu ukrepov Vlade Republike Slovenije za Rome za obdobje 2017-2021, 2017, str. 6).

Because of the epidemiological situation regarding COVID-19, educational work with Roma students is an additional challenge for us. As an educationalist, in the school year 2020/21, I am also a provider of additional professional assistance to a Roma student who is defined as a long-term sick student. As a child with special needs, the student is entitled to 4 hours of additional professional assistance and an hour of counseling services per week. The student is taking the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the school year 2020/21 again and has been entitled to distance education since October 2020 because of a risky health condition. At school, the class teacher, the English teacher, and I, as the provider of additional professional help, designed a model of distance education. His parents and the student were also involved in making the plan. In achieving the basic contents, we took the principles of learning individualization and differentiation into account. We adapted the methods of work, the use of didactic aids, and the organization of work. The implementation of additional professional assistance has been adjusted in this direction so that we set a goal to explain the learning material and to check comprehension, to develop learning strategies, organize work, and carry out activities connected with mental health and physical exercises.

Because of the poor social situation of the family, the school provided the student with computer equipment. The class teacher and the English teacher prepared adapted learning content and materials weekly. The material consisted of worksheets, work with a textbook, and fulfilling tasks in a workbook. The learning content was presented to the student through video content recorded by both teachers. The student thus mastered the subject matter as part of hours of additional professional help while working independently and during consultations with the teacher. In the process, we also cooperated with the public institution the Center for Curricular and Extracurricular Activities which develops support mechanisms for acquiring knowledge

for members of the Roma community through the project Together for Knowledge. In this case, they helped the student to understand the subject matter and organize the work. Based on the Rules on the Assessment and Grading of Knowledge and Progress of Students in the Elementary School, we adjusted the methods and time of grading to the student and determined the minimum number of grades in an individual subject. The grading took place after the assessment of the student's knowledge in different ways: orally via videoconferencing, submission of written assignments, and submission of a product image. The class teacher and the English teacher conducted consultations with the student once a week or, if necessary, when the goal was to check the understanding of the subject matter and the evaluation of the work. Cooperation with the parents took place via videoconference at consultations.

Depending on the abilities, we also enabled the student to have contact with peers, which is even more important for the development of affiliation, social communication, and other skills during distance education. The student attended days of activities and outdoor sports. However, when the distance educational process was started for all students, he kept in touch with his peers via videoconferencing.

We recognize the conditions of successful work in good planning and ongoing evaluation of work which contributed to opening up opportunities for improvement. We are aware that such work requires a lot of flexibility and good cooperation of all stakeholders involved. It also represents a lot of extra work for everyone for which it is often necessary to find motivation in their mission. However, we recognize the key conditions for successful work in good mutual relationships which must be respectful and confidential and in the support of the family. Roma families are very different from each other in terms of knowledge evaluation. Therefore, we are aware that we would not be able to achieve the same goals with all Roma students as we did in this case.

Educationalist Marjanca Tomažin,  
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## SOURCES AND LITERATURE

*Priloga k nacionalnemu programu ukrepov Vlade Republike Slovenije za Rome za obdobje 2017-2021 (Annex to the National Program of Measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Roma for the period 2017-2021) (2017). Available at: [https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/UN/Dokumenti-Romi/aa0ac3214f/PRILOGA\\_NPUR\\_2017\\_2021.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/UN/Dokumenti-Romi/aa0ac3214f/PRILOGA_NPUR_2017_2021.pdf)*