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## Volunteers Help Project-Based Learning in High School

By Dr. Lajos Pálvölgyi, PMP

Getting to know the world of work is an important goal for students, and is the foundation of good career choices. More people need to be involved in one-off tasks for companies that create unique results. These can be the development of a new product in the pharmaceutical industry or the automotive industry, the development of unique software or the transformation of the internal processes of a company. In addition, projects are playing an increasingly important role in repetitive activities.

The project approach does not appear to the required extent in secondary education in Hungary. Three project leaders volunteered to develop a practical approach to the project, taking into account the recommendations of the PMI Educational Foundation for secondary school students. Based on the curriculum, the first course was completed in the first semester of the 2018/2019 academic year at the Arany János Primary School and Grammar High School in Budapest, Hungary. The members of the teaching team implementing the project-based learning program included Dr. Lajos Pálvölgyi of the PMI Budapest, Hungarian Chapter.

The PROMISchool (PROject MindSet In Schools) "Project for Every School" program is designed to help students get to know the world of projects. In a modern project-oriented corporate organization, project management knowledge is not only important for a project leader, but a real value for all participants. Project management is also important for projects in life, such as buying a home, changing jobs and so forth. Therefore, most students can benefit in the long run from acquiring a project approach and de-

veloping some of the capabilities used in project management. These include soft skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation.

In the theoretical part of the program, the most important phases of the projects and the basic knowledge related to the phases, such as preparation, planning, implementation and closure, were worked out by the students. In the practical part, the department formed five project teams, each of which individually selected projects, operating as a project organization. It was a big dilemma whether the projects could be selected from a list suggested by the trainers or whether they would be completely independent. Afterward, it turned out that having student groups set their own goals for their projects was great motivation for most groups.

It is worth noting that several of the five projects encountered problems that occur in real life. There was a project that was completed by the deadline only after significantly reducing its scope, and there was a group that chose a topic that was too difficult (scheduling) and therefore had to choose a new topic on the fly.

As an important component, the trainers made certain that a significant part of the student-set goals brought real value to the school community. For example, one group launched a school newspaper and two other groups transformed a school corner into a smart resting place—a community "chill-out" corner of its own. There was a group that put up a financially calculated renovation plan for the gym, and another group produced



The first issue of the school newspaper.



The chill-out corner is ready.

a film that made its debut at the end of January 2019.

Several students indicated at the end of the semester that they had honed their cooperation skills, process vision and organizational skills. Perhaps the most striking thing was that after the project program was completed, one of the groups continued their work to improve their community space. On the basis of the positive feedback received, the teaching team believes it would be worthwhile to continue working with other secondary schools or higher education institutions.

Organizers welcome trainers and practitioners to exchange experiences or cooperate in project-based learning in secondary or higher education, or to participate in such projects. Please send an email to [kepzes@pmi.hu](mailto:kepzes@pmi.hu).