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**Preventing dropping out:**

**Methodological approaches to motivate students to continue studying**

**Example of good practice of ACADEMIA MERCURII for Erasmus+ project:**

**European Citizenship – Cultural heritage unites us**

**Project number: 2019-1-CZ01-KA229-061113**

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SCHOOLS - CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

**FOR STUDENTS, IMPROVING THEIR MOTIVATION**

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| **School:**Academia Mercurii | **Country:**Czech Republic |
| **Field:**Learning methodologies | **Title:****JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT COMPANIES** |
| **Summary/ description:**Junior Achievement is a world-wide organization dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in a global economy through programs which help them to develop their knowledge and skills in the areas of work readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy (more information at <http://www.ja.org> ).We use the program of Junior Achievement called JA Firm. This program enable our students (aged about 17 years) to set up their own business companies which are not fictive but real ones (within the net of Junior Achievement). The real activities enable the students to understand the issues of running a real company during the process of setting up, running and closing the company – all the steps are real and students use the real money and produce and sell a real product.As the products of the JA companies are real, they must be very well feasible. As examples of the JA companies products, we can mention e.g. a „cupkin“ (a cup situated in a car full of special napkins –a product which was really interesting for a famous car manufacturer) or calendars made for school classes or one-day trips to interesting places abroad offered by a „travel agency“.To improve motivation among students there is a national contest in the area of these JA student´s companies in Prague at the end of every school year where all JA companies have their own stands and can introduce their products to the public including possible investors (real companies). There are also organized real trade fairs where students can show their JA companies and share their entrepreneurial experience. JA companies are run by students of our branch of study of management of tourism - at school within the lessons of Applied Economics and this school subject is divided into two groups (two students ‘companies) and implies one lesson a week for each group.The role of the teacher is to help the students to find the answers of issues and to help them to organize their attendance at the fairs and national contest. This school subject is planned so that each JA company (which consists of about 10-15 students) could have their own lessons, not being disturbed by activities of other JA companies students.Our school must pay a very small fee (about 2 Euros per a student) to the Junior Achievement Organization per year. We cooperate with the local branch of JA called JA Czech Republic. This fee is really a symbolic one as our students get so much back: a JA consultant is available, JA provides the head masters of each JA company with workshops in presentations skills and fair skills and various materials are available. Teaching this project means a bridge between formal and informal education where students can practice real situations related to entrepreneurship, dealing with a real product and with real money. Students need to find funds and sponsors who can provide them with the capital necessary to start the production activities. Then the product promotion is needed to improve its feasibility and the product sale is also needed to recover the money invested. The running of this real company helps students to develop their entrepreneurial spirit by developing their skills in the area of creativity, business and presentation skills, cooperation and bring their theoretical knowledge into practise.**Phases of development:****Application and undersigning a contract**Before the beginning of all activities, a contract must be undersigned between a local JA organization and the school (represented by its head teacher). The contract is delivered to a school by the local JA organization after submitting an on-line application form (on the website of the local JA organization). The contract includes all the conditions of their cooperation.**Setting up of a JA company**1. **Creation of the company**

At first students must decide about the name of their JA company, the branch of their interest, the logo of the company and its legal form. After that they register their company with the local JA organization. Then the most important phase comes: brainstorming about the product (or more products) which they want to invent, create and sell. The students must be careful when deciding, as the products must be feasible (the project works with the real money)!!! Then the students must divide their work positions and responsibilities according to the following structure of their company:* Headquarters
* Trade and promotion department
* Production department
* Human resources and legal department
* Accounting department

**Running of a JA company**Students can start all the work with planning and producing their products, their promotion, and all the paperwork connected to the legal issues etc. They run the JA company during one school year themselves (under the supervision of their teacher). There are some workshops provided by the JA organization for the managing directors (group leading students) during the school year such as a workshop in presentation skills etc. At the end of the school year there is a national contest in Prague to choose the best JA companies.The students (with their teacher) also take part in trade fairs of JA companies where they can promote their company and get important experience for their future work life. The activities of JA companies during the school year include activities such as:* Manager training for the presidents
* Business plan making (marketing research, competition analyses)
* Plan making of each department
* Fundraising
* Development and production of the product
* Product promotion
* Product sale

**Closing of a JA company** Before the end of the school year, all the activities of the JA company must be finished and the JA company is closed no matter what the result of their economic activities is – if the student´s company is closed with a profit or a loss. The both possible results are of benefit to the student´s work experience. The activities of students before the JA company closing include activities such as:* Final personal interviews
* Financial statement
* Annual report

And on the base of all the real results (loss or profit; investors and customers interested or not, the quantity of remaining unsold products etc.), the students can see how feasible their company is. This should bring them such an important insight into a practical life! |
| **Problems to pay attention to when developing the different stages**There is a new fee charged - about 300 Euros, for the attendance at the Prague´s fair and the national contest. This fee has been introduced this year and may be the reason why our two companies will not participate in the national contest.We will observe what the situation with this new fee is like in the following years and we may have to adapt our project to continue without the attendance at the national contest.  |
| **Conclusions**Taking part in this very practical and creative work, students get self-confidence which is so important for their future work life. The students can see how a real company works, what steps are necessary to be taken during the process of setting up, running and closing a company and they can benefit of applying their theoretical knowledge of economics, law, marketing and management and other school subjects into practice. The cooperation between students is highly necessary. During this project students work and learn about the importance of cooperation, responsibility and team work. During the attendance at the trade fairs or the national contest, students can train their professional behaviour when promoting their real products among the visitors of their stand. But what more! Students can see if they behave professionally enough just at the phase of fundraising when they personally go to see various potential sponsors doing all the necessary fundraising activities! The feedback is so visible! If they do not promote their company and its products convincingly enough, they will not get enough financial resources from sponsors and then they must be creative in some other ways to fundraise the rest of the necessary financial resources!This practical experience of running of a real company (within the JA network) can help students to create their entrepreneurial spirit as with all the obtained experience, they have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to be able to run their own company in their future work life. |