

High schoolers and Adolescents for Nurturing and Development Support

What is H.A.N.D.S about?

H.A.N.D.S is a competency development and educational program, where high school students (juniors) hold workshops for children living in orphanages. The action is done with the help of educators, special education teachers, sociologists, psychologists, and university students (mentors).

How does this work?

The workshops in the orphanages are preceded by the “preparation phase”:

1. General information about the program
2. Meeting the mentors, setting up the groups, theoretical overview of methodology, means and goals
3. Visit in the orphanage, preparation of the first workshop with the children

The preparation is followed by the “working phase”:

4. Workshops in the orphanage
5. Workshops outside of the orphanages
6. Attending “round-table talks”

General information on the structure of H.A.N.D.S

During the program juniors form groups of three-four students supervised by a mentor; the groups outline, plan, and hold the workshops together where the main role is of the juniors the mentors are only present as coordinators and aids. The program is divided into two semesters from September to December, and from January to May. H.A.N.D.S. is designed as a series of projects that provide a frame for the workshops. Each month has a “project topic”, juniors propose activities that elaborate each topic in detail, using different points of views. December and January are priority project-months, i.e. children’s works are shown to the public in an exhibition, where the community, the parents and everyone who is interested can see what they had been doing during the program.

H.A.N.D.S. is set up as a loose frame around the workshops; juniors are free to use their creativity and imagination. Some of the sessions are aided by invited experts to help the juniors with ideas, information, and to make the workshops more colorful.

Meeting the mentors, setting up the groups, theoretical overview

After receiving the general information of H.A.N.D.S. work-groups are formed. They learn how to manage a workshop at the orphanage, with special attention to a methodological overview, such as the various parts of a session (warmer, types of activities, coolers, how to provide continuity, etc.). Furthermore, the can and are expected to share ideas, brainstorm, show and try exercises, activities.

Visit at the orphanage

The juniors pay a visit to the orphanage with the guide of the director of the institution prior to the workshops they hold. They learn what they find and where, what are the possibilities, supplies they can use. This knowledge is essential for their future work in the orphanage. They also get to know the children they will work with later.

The workshops

Juniors hold the vast majority of the workshops in the orphanage, however there are some special occasions when the workshops are organized outside of the facility; such as museum visits, hikes.

Roundtable talks

High school volunteers take part in meeting on a monthly basis, these are called roundtable talks. During these meeting they have a chance to share the experience, ask for help, show their new ideas, brainstorm activities they would like to use in the future. Guest educators help their work by giving them further information in certain topics. These roundtable talks are accompanied by a psychologist who helps the juniors to overcome any problematic situation they have experienced during the program.

What are the responsibilities of the high school volunteers?

Preparation of the workshops: The workshops are held on a weekly basis, in the afternoon. Groups stay at the orphanage approximately for two-three hours, this is the time the volunteers spend on conducting developing, educational games and activities. The exact outline of the workshops is designed by the group with the coordination of the mentor.

Workshops: They are held either in the orphanage or outside of the orphanage, where every children is taken to a trip.

Preparation of certain programs: Juniors plan the trips, the activities.

Further duties:

Writing a diary: Juniors write a diary during the program, this provides them space to articulate their feelings, concerns, and success. Moreover, writing a diary helps them to organize their thoughts, they can reread the entries and are able to see the development. The diaries are written for themselves, they are not asked to be shown.

Survey: Volunteer fill in a survey at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the program, which measures the learning motivation, self-estimation and which serves statistical purposes.

Main aims of H.A.N.D.S.**Principles:**

- Skills development
- Widening, shaping social skills (cooperation, group work, building relationships, speaking and logic)
- Developing Motivation (setting goals, planning)
- Developing creativity (dexterity, written and oral skills)
- Putting the more theoretical knowledge of the school system into practice
- Age specific education:
 - a. 3-5 (before they start school)
 - b. 6-9
 - c. 10-13
 - d. 14-18 (high school)

Workshops are held for the latter group only by adults.

Objectives:

- Development of group and joint work
- Development of organizing skills
- Improvement of school performance
- Development of sense of responsibility
- Routine in various social situations (doing the shopping, planning, financial planning, filling in forms, maintaining a family, etc)
- Conflict management strategies
- Raising environmental awareness

Implementation:

- Drama
- Puppetry
- Reading bed-time stories
- Arts and crafts
- Organizing tutoring groups
- Foreign language skills