

Synthesis Report Based on Partner Submissions of Teacher Instructional Guide

The purpose of Output 4 was the development of a teacher friendly guide that describes the philosophy and research basis of the importance of social skill instruction as well as it provides examples of social skill lesson plans implemented in this project. Why is it important to teach socio-emotional skills? First, research evidence suggests that there is a close relationship between academics and behavior (Algozzine, Wang, & Olivette, 2011). Students, who tend to fail academically, also develop maladaptive behaviors during school life. Second, the Science of Behavior has taught us that punishment alone does not alter student behavior and students are not born with bad behaviors (Skinner, 1956). To learn new behaviors, students ought to be taught and receive frequent feedback for mastering new skills. By teaching directly and systematically social skills, teachers do not leave students guessing how they should behave across school areas. Teaching expected social skills means establishing common language among staff and students that allows efficient and positive interactions and clear communication among school members. Everyone knows what the expectations and behaviors should be and thus, all are committed to perform those. Knowing what the expected behavior are and how to perform those under certain circumstances enables students to increase their sense of competence and connectness, factors important for developing self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

All partners were asked to include the following in the teacher guide: terminology of academic and social skills, rationale for teaching social skills, the instructional model to teach social skills, and social skill assessment methods. The teacher guide was written in the native language of each partner because the focus was to disseminate the product to teachers involved in the project as well as to other educational stakeholders.

Social skills are behaviors students need to acquire and use in their daily interactions with peers and adults. The content of skill areas varies based on the students' developmental age. The lesson plans presented in this output focus on primary-age students. Interestingly, the Spanish guide differentiated the content of lesson plans per age group. That is, social skill lessons differed for students in Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, and Grades 5-6. All partner lesson plans were framed around schoolwide expectations such as respect, responsibility, safety, collaboration and included lesson objectives of the target skills.

All partners focused on direct social skill instruction model with basic elements of modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. Including students in group activities is important for providing additional opportunities for practice (e.g., The Netherlands). The lesson plan template varied across partners. For instance, the Cyprus lesson plans were scripted in order to control for teacher consistency in the implementation process of the case study. They described student and teacher behaviors per lesson activity. All partner lessons were accompanied with visual representations of the target skills. Visuals are posted around classrooms and non-classroom settings to allow for prompting and frequent practice. In the next pages, all five national reports are attached describing the output content, as developed and implemented in their country context.

References

Algozzine, B., Wang, C., & Violette, A.S. (2011). Reexamining the relationship between academic achievement and social behavior. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions, 13*, 3-16.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68-78.

Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. New York: Macmillan.