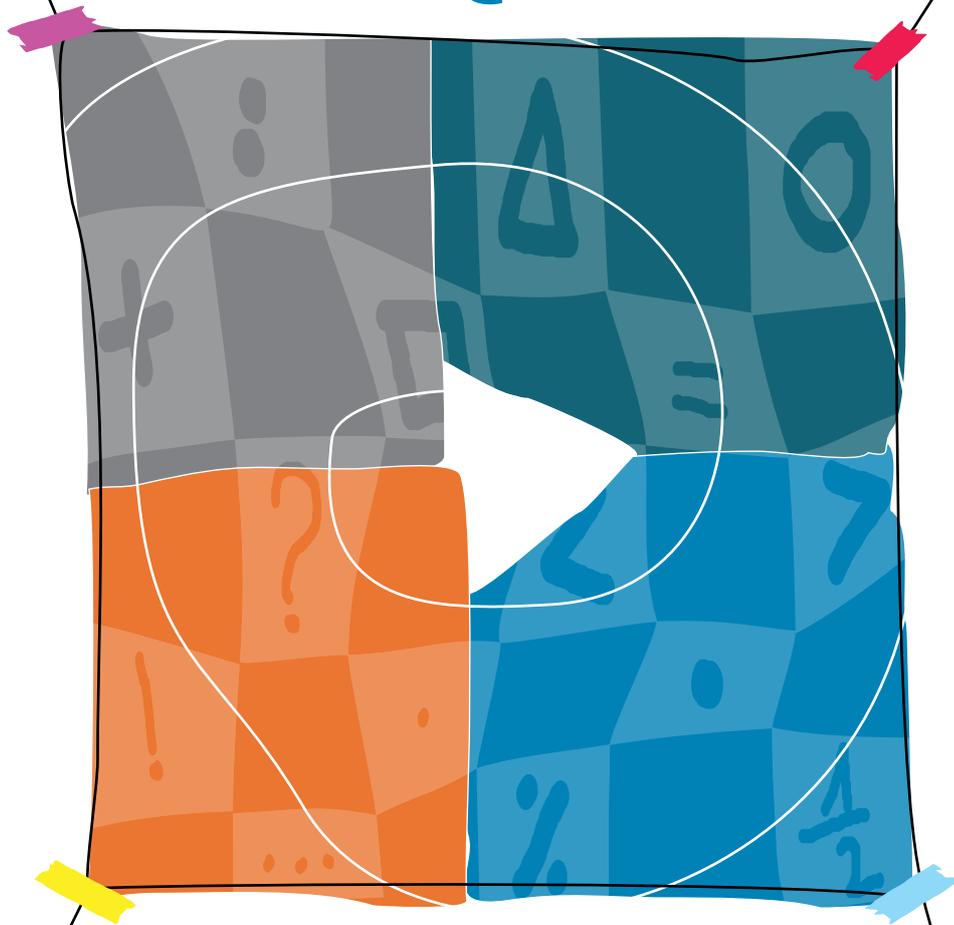


Breaking the poverty taboo



**Creative ideas for mitigating
the effects of poverty:
school-based activities**

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IMPRESSUM

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1. POVERTY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT: EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Research studies on the impact of poverty on child development and well-being are usually conducted by comparing the development of children who are growing up in poverty with the development of their peers coming from middle class families, or even the wealthier ones. The other method of researching the impact of poverty on child development is through the research of economic mobility, i.e. the consequences of a sudden income increase on child development and the possibilities of mitigating the consequences of poverty during early childhood development (Dearing, 2008). Unlike early poverty research that perceived poverty as a static phenomenon, recent poverty studies recognise the dynamic nature of poverty and take into account the **timing** and the **duration** of poverty when discussing its effects on child development (McLoyd, 1998). Concerning the duration of poverty, it was shown that persistent poverty has a more detrimental effect on early child development than transient poverty (Duncan et al. 1994). When it comes to the question of timing, i.e. the developmental period that is the most vulnerable for children who live in poverty, the results of the studies are not so consistent. Some studies show that the detrimental effects of poverty are most visible during the first few years of life, while others point out middle childhood as a particularly sensitive period (Dearing, 2008).

The results of different studies indicate a strong relationship between poverty and all aspects of child development: cognitive and socio-emotional development, school achievement, resilience and coping mechanisms, etc. The differences between poor children and their wealthier peers are especially salient when it comes to cognitive and language development. Some studies show that children living in poverty up to the age of four achieve a significantly lower performance on performance tests than children who did not live in poverty at that time (Dearing, 2008). Researches also show that the effect of poverty is more important to cognitive development than factors such as the parents' education or parents' cognitive abilities (Taylor, Dearing & McCartney, 2004). Poor and low socio-economic status (SES) children perform significantly worse than their middle class peers on many indicators of academic success such as test scores, grade retention, course failures, high school graduation rate, high school dropout rate and completed years of schooling (McLoyd, 1998). Children living in poverty have twelve times lower chances of finishing secondary school than other children (Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn & Smith, 1998).

Studies that dealt with the effects of poverty on social-emotional development showed that children growing up poor are more likely than middle-class children to display social-emotional problems in two broad areas: (1) externalising interpersonal problems, such as aggression, destructive behaviour, and hyperactivity, and (2) internalising intrapersonal problems, such as anxiety, depression, and fearfulness (Duncan, & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; McLoyd, 1998; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Taylor, Dearing & McCartney, 2004). They also display lower levels of social competence in their relationships with peers and adults (Dearing, 2008). The internalisation of problems is most often the outcome of persistent poverty and this is explained by the effects of chronic adversity on children's neurobiological stress systems and the fact that youth living in poverty are more likely to exhibit neuroendocrine markers of chronic stress than youth who are not poor (Dearing, 2008).

However, it has to be noted that the relationship between internalisation and poverty is not linear: children from the wealthier families are also vulnerable and susceptible to different socio-emotional problems (maybe because parents do not have time and they are not emotionally responsive enough for the needs of their children). On the other hand, the externalisation of problems is most often the outcome of transient poverty, since it brings changes, inconsistency and unpredictability into the lives of children and the usual reactions to that are behavioural problems such as aggression or hyperactivity (Dearing, 2008).

▶ **POVERTY AND FAMILY: The relationship between a family's economic well-being and children's psychological well-being**

Theorists and researchers dealing with the effects of poverty agree that the most common features of physical surroundings and psychosocial experiences of children in poverty are:

- 1) The lack of developmentally stimulating and supportive resources – it includes both a lack of material resources (books, toys, didactic materials etc.) and psychosocial resources, such as either parent time or shared family activities (Foster, 2002).
- 2) The large number of discrete and chronic stressors that affect children's well-being both directly and indirectly - developmental psychologists emphasise the relationship between poverty and parents' stress that might limit positive parenting behaviours such as warmth and responsiveness and increase unresponsive, harsh or inconsistent care. (Elder & Caspi, 1998). Studies show that parents living in poverty tend to be more punitive with their children and less responsive to their needs than other parents (Bradley et. al., 2001). Besides that, children in poverty are exposed to chaotic surroundings inside and outside their home that have a negative effect on their resilience and constructive stress coping mechanisms (Dearing 2008). Poor children are usually enrolled in low-performing schools. They are bullied more often than other peers are, they do not have support and positive interactions with their peers and they also have less positive interactions with teachers (Pianta et. al., 2002).

▶ **POVERTY AND EDUCATION: The impact on child development and educational outcomes**

Education has a crucial role in breaking the circle of poverty. The importance of education is emphasised both through human rights' documents and through studies on economic and social development. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1984), education shall be free and compulsory (article 26). Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) underlines that education should be available to all children without discrimination (article 28) and that it should be of great quality (article 29). Studies on economic development demonstrate that education is a major determinant of an individual's income - each year of schooling resulting in a 10% increase in earnings (Burnett, 2008). Studies on social development have demonstrated that education has a positive effect on all aspects

of child development and well-being. In order for education to fulfil the goals and develop every child's potential to the fullest, it has to be of high quality. However, in many countries marginalised students:

- face poor quality of teaching and learning;
- are in overcrowded classes;
- lack learning materials;
- have insufficient instructional time;
- face gender biases;
- are taught by inadequately trained teachers.

Although the quality of education depends on many aspects of educational policies, teachers still have the role that mostly determines the final result of the educational process. They proved to be the most critical influence on learning since their attitudes, as well as teaching practices, significantly influence student achievement. Studies indicate that from the pre-school age and further, teachers tend to perceive poor students less positively (non-mature, low self-regulation skills, dependant). They also have lower achievement expectations from poor children based on some non-cognitive factors (speech pattern and clothes). Teachers with these attitudes pay less positive attention to poor children, provide less learning opportunities for them as well not reinforcing their good performances (McLoyd, 1998).

There are a few factors that might affect teaching and learning practices:

1. **Beliefs in deficit theory** – Deficit theory was a dominant way of explaining why students from disadvantaged groups show a high failure rate in school. It includes beliefs that some groups/students are more prone to academic success than other groups/students. Children from marginalised groups usually do not fit the teachers' image of the perfect student and teachers are inclined to think about those students in terms of their weaknesses rather than their strengths and to have lower expectations of their ability to achieve (Gorski, 2008). The danger of deficit theory lies in a well-known fact about the effect of teacher expectation on the students' performances – the effect known as *self-fulfilling prophecies* or *Pygmalion effect* (Rosental & Jacobson, 1968). The process of the creation of self-fulfilling prophecies develops as follows: a) an individual or entire group is *labelled* (for example, a teacher labels disadvantaged students as less competent and less motivated than other students), b) a teacher begins to behave in accordance with the label that was attributed. That behaviour could be very *explicit* in relation to the label (for example, a teacher pays less attention to students from disadvantaged groups, delivers instruction of a lower quality and gives them fewer explanations than to the other students, addresses them less often and criticizes them more etc.), or *implicit* (for example, a teacher attempts to "help" them by giving them less complicated assignments/tasks than his/her current knowledge and skills require and c) the individual/group that was labelled begins to behave in accordance with the label (students that are

labelled as less competent and/or motivated achieve less than other students, lose their motivation for learning, drop out of school, etc.), thus justifying the label they have been given.

2. **Beliefs in the culture of poverty** – The “culture of poverty” myth is the idea that poor people share more or less monolithic and predictable beliefs, values, and behaviours which are responsible for their underprivileged status (they are lazy, they do not value education, they are not motivated to learn etc.). The myth of the “culture of poverty” distracts us from a dangerous culture that does exist - the culture of classism and it diverts attention away from what people in poverty *do* have in common: inequitable access to basic human rights (Gorski, 2008). The mechanism associated with the “culture of poverty” myth that serves to justify prejudices toward poor people and maintains the system of oppression is well known as “blaming the victim” (Ryan, 1976). According to the “blame the victim” mechanism, the roots of social problems are placed in the characteristics of groups suffering from these problems, instead of placing them within a system that is oppressive in various ways and that creates unequal opportunities and possibilities for different groups. By applying this mechanism, we attempt to solve social problems without changing the conditions that really create them.

The “blame the victim” mechanism unwinds through the following four steps:

- a) The problem and the population stricken by it are defined (for example *Roma children perform poorly in school, and are highly likely to drop out*),
- b) The value systems, culture and typical behaviours of the population with the problem and the one without it are compared, usually through stereotyping (for example *Roma value freedom, they are unaccustomed to work, they do not value education, they are socially deprived...*),
- c) The cause of the problem is placed within the differences between the population with problem and the one without it (*Roma children have the problem because their parents do not value education* – while neglecting the fact that these parents are illiterate themselves, they do not see the purpose of educating children with no chances of finding employment, they have no money for clothing and school supplies, and other reasons)
- d) The implementation of actions aimed at changing the “problematic” population (for example: change family relations, exclude their language and culture, change their traditions, or train them to adopt behaviours typical to the groups without the problem – enrol Roma children in special schools to “make it easier”, pressure parents to enrol children in school but neglect the fact that children do not speak the language or have no prerequisite skills to successfully attend school, etc.). The “blame the victim” mechanism actually serves to reinforce the prejudices and rationalise discrimination, i.e. unequal treatment of different groups. This mechanism is often the very essence of many interventions aimed at vulnerable groups, such as actions aimed at changing the characteristics of at-risk groups rather than changing the circumstances causing these groups to be vulnerable and treated unequally. It is very much connected with *competitive individualism*, the view that is based on the belief that everyone is responsible for his/her own success or failure in life, and that everyone holds an equal

chance to fail or succeed. This view ignores the role of race, sex, social class, or any other aspect of a person’s social identity. It also neglects the fact that not everyone is born with an equal starting point, and some individuals are privileged from the very beginning, thus, more likely to succeed than others without privileges are.

▶ Interventions to Improve Children’s Development and Educational Outcomes

Programmes and policies that might alleviate the negative effects of poverty on children’s development depend on the understanding of the nature of poverty as well as the main causes of poverty (together with the strategies for poverty escape). If poverty is defined in economic terms based on income measures, programmes and policies would focus on increasing income either through job opportunities, or welfare schemes. On the other hand, if it is perceived as a broader social disadvantage, i.e. lacking not only material assets but also capabilities, such as social belonging, cultural identity, respect and dignity, information and education, then programmes and policies would focus on changing the whole social context that denies the equal rights and opportunities and encourages oppression, inequity and injustice (Engle & Black, 2008).

Concerning the causes of poverty, some researchers and policymakers attribute them to individuals, their capacities, abilities, competencies, value system, motivation, level of aspiration/educational aspirations, etc. In that sense, the interventions they chose to deal with poverty focus on changing the individuals’ mindset, increasing their motivation and level of aspiration, improving their capacities through education and support programmes. The main goal of these programmes is to improve the capacities of poor individuals or groups so that they are able to take purposeful actions and exercise their agency (Narayan & Petesch, 2007). The problem with this approach is that it might reinforce stereotypes/prejudices towards poor people (blaming them for the poverty and marginalisation) and support oppressive mechanisms that maintain the system of inequity (by trying to change individuals instead of changing the unjust system).

The other approach some researchers and policymakers undertake includes the whole social context and social exclusion factors that prevent groups or categories of people from moving out of poverty. Programmes that target change of social context try to develop and sustain support mechanisms that would enable equity and social justice. This means changes in the *opportunity structure*, consisting of the dominant institutional climate and social structures within which disadvantaged actors must work to meet their needs and interests (Narayan & Petesch, 2007). As also concluded in the Estonian analytical report, based on Estonian policies and on the in-country study visit conducted within the BRAVEdu project, one overarching condition to reduce the gap in achievement between socio-economic statuses is the introduction of universal measures, either regarding direct education policies, or when it comes to social and health policies aimed at supporting student well-being: “Most of the social care measures are universal and aimed at providing equal study opportunities for all children, regardless of their background characteristics such as a free lunch and study books for all” (Mlekuž et. al., 2018).

Strategies for reducing poverty can be divided into three categories (Dearing, 2008; Engle & Black, 2008):

1. Strategies that focus on reducing family poverty by **increasing the income** of poor families and thereby improving a child's psychological well-being

Evidence from the studies of family economic mobility indicates that family income *per se* influences family investments in children, family stress processes, and, in turn, children's psychological development, and that improving the economic well-being of poor families translates into improved psychological well-being for poor children. In the USA income supplementation and residential relocation programmes (moving children from high-poverty to low-poverty neighbourhoods) showcased the improvement in children's academic achievement and well-being, however, longer term evaluations indicate the complexity and variability of the effects of those programmes (Engle & Black, 2008).

2. Strategies that are focused on poverty prevention and the "investment in the future" and highlight the importance of education, such as increasing learning stimulation through high-quality early education, improving the parents' ability to support early learning, building teachers' professional capacities etc.

- a) Improving school readiness: The impact of high-quality preschool programmes

The evaluation of the effects of improvement of school readiness through high-quality preschool programmes in both developed and developing countries indicate that high-quality preschool experiences (combined with parent involvement and improvement of health status) can have significant effects on children's language and cognitive skills by the age of five (Engle & Black, 2008). Longitudinal studies of intensive early intervention programmes such as the Perry Preschool Project (Schweinhart et al., 2005) and the Abecedarian Project (Campbell et al., 2002) show that children in the intervention were more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, have fulltime employment, and be enrolled in health insurance, are less likely to be involved in criminal behaviour or have symptoms of depression (Reynolds et al., 2007).

- b) Comprehensive strategies that improve children's development prior to school entry.

The aim of comprehensive strategies is to tackle the multiple effects of disadvantage in improving children's development and educational outcomes. The Early Head Start programme is a great example of an early intervention programme designed to promote school readiness and prevent the negative effects of poverty on educational attainment among children prior to the age of three. A recent evaluation of a randomised trial among 3,001 families showed that by the age of 3, children who participated in Early Head Start were better prepared for preschool than the control children, as defined by their cognitive and language development, the emotional engagement of the parent, the sustained attention with toys, and the low rates of aggressive behaviour (Love et al., 2005, p. 50). In addition, the parents of the children who received the intervention were more emotionally supportive, more verbal, spent more time reading to their children, and were less likely to spank their children, compared

to the control parents. These findings highlight the importance of involving parents in the intervention and measuring the impact of the intervention on their behaviour and parenting (Engle & Black, 2008, p. 250).

- c) Improving family capacity to support children's development and academic achievement: parent education and support programmes

The aim of parenting education and support programmes is to ameliorate the negative effects of poverty on family characteristics in order to improve child well-being. These programmes have a variety of delivery mechanisms, including a health centre or system, home visits by a trained worker, combining counselling with growth monitoring, providing group sessions for parents, and media outreach (Engle & Black, 2008, p. 249). A number of studies indicate the connection between changes in parents' attitudes and parenting practices and children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Sweet & Appelbaum, 2004). However, the issue of the cost-benefit of home-visiting programmes aiming at education and support of parents became important since it was shown that the side effects of those programmes could not justify the cost. Likewise, some other studies indicate home-visiting programmes and other parenting interventions are not sufficient when it comes to families who have the least resources, and that a more comprehensive approach is needed. (Gomby, Culross & Behrman, 1998).

Interventions in some developing countries that proved to be effective used activity-based learning (being able to practice activities with children rather than just doing them), and demonstrations rather than just discussions, either through home visits or caregiver group sessions (Engle & Black, 2008).

- d) Empowering teachers through building their professional capacities for dealing with inequalities in education.

Teachers' professional development programmes focus on education for social justice and the strategies teachers might use to create a bias-free and oppression-free educational context. Paul Gorski (2013) introduces the concept of the equity-literate teacher who has knowledge, skills and values important to deal with diversity in a way to enable all students to develop their potentials to its fullest. The equity-literate teacher must have the ability to *recognise* different biases and mechanisms (implicit or explicit) that perpetuate the system of inequality, both at the classroom/school level, educational policy level and at the level of society as a whole. A competent teacher needs to recognise biases and oppressive practices in the school curriculum, including teaching materials, teaching methods, textbooks, methods of evaluation of students etc. The equity-literate teacher, according to Gorski, needs to have the ability to *respond* to biases and inequities in a way to help students and other colleagues to recognise different biases and oppressive practices and to engage them in a dialogue of how those practices are being manifested through teaching materials and textbooks, classroom interactions and school policies. The ability to *redress* biases and inequities in the longer term and to prevent their re-appearance in classrooms and schools is also an important teacher competence. Teachers need to be able to advocate for equitable and just school practices, they need to use a variety of approaches in teaching

students about different “isms” and they also need to constantly reflect and evaluate their own practice and its impact on students. The ability to *create and sustain a bias-free and equitable learning environment* for all students that fosters social interaction and the active participation in the learning process is not an easy task, especially when one bears in mind that biases and the limited notion of identity are embedded in cognitive, social and emotional functioning, and that societies in which we live reinforce competitiveness and perpetuate the idea of inequality at many different levels (Vranješević, 2012). The ability to establish a participatory, inclusive and safe learning environment means that teachers express high expectations for all students through higher-order pedagogies and curricula; understanding that students have different levels of access to resources and cultivate a classroom environment in which students feel free to express themselves openly and honestly (Gorski, 2013).

3. Strategies that focus on challenging the oppressive institutional practices and empowerment of the poor

According to some researchers and policymakers, neither education nor economic growth alone is a sufficient strategy when it comes to the reduction of poverty. In order for a strategy to be effective, a more comprehensive approach must be undertaken and it must include the empowerment of poor people so that they can “participate in economic growth which requires investments in health, in education, and in social protection as well as the building of institutions that enable them to participate in decisions that shape their lives” (Stern, 2003 according to Engle and Black, 2008). Comprehensive intervention would have to challenge oppressive institutional practices that deny opportunities for the participation of marginalised groups and requires more open opportunity structures that would enhance individual and collective agency (Engle & Black, 2008). Comprehensive intervention should also address moderated, mediated and transactional processes that link poverty and child development. According to Fullan (1991), in order for change to be created we need both reculturation, i.e. changes of dominant attitudes, values and perspectives, and restructuring, i.e. changing the system that would support a change in attitudes and make them sustainable. This means that we need to work thoroughly and systematically on challenging institutional oppressive practices both in education and in society in order to create conditions for children/people who are at the risk of poverty to take a more active role in the decisions that affect their lives.

▶ 2. TACKLING SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AT SCHOOL

The job of an educator is to teach students to see the vitality in themselves.

Joseph Campbell

The research mentioned in the previous chapter has shown the detrimental effect of poverty on students’ socio-emotional development, as well as school achievement.

The school plays a major role in the context of the socio-emotional development of youth - especially for youth with risk factors. Students’ educational attainment depends on how they feel in school - research indicates that social environment additionally contributes to the educational attainment on top of education itself (Prosser 1999, according to Vuković Vidačić, 2016).

Will the school be a **factor of risk** – the place where children and youth are isolated, discriminated, where they develop new and additional behavioural problems, behave aggressively, or withdraw and become passive and depressed? Or it will be a **safe space**, a place where children and youth are supported to develop their competencies, learn how to manage emotions, get to know themselves, build self-confidence and self-esteem, personal responsibility, learn to communicate assertively, express and realise themselves creatively (Pavlović et al., 2017)? It depends on the common values, beliefs, habits, behaviours shared by all stakeholders (school employees, students and parents) who will work together in developing a positive school climate that directly influences a student’s well-being.

World happiness and well-being report (Helliwell et al., 2015, according to Pavlović et al., 2017) has shown that schools which prioritise a student’s well-being have the potential to become more efficient, their students have better educational attainments, and better life achievements. “The happiness, well-being and engagement of children and youth depend on leadership, the support and understanding of adults. In the context of school, democratic government based on respecting differences, interculturality, human rights, the empowerment and engagement of students, personnel and other stakeholders in bringing important roles into school, makes foundations for the quality of work-oriented for the benefit of each individual (not just students, but educational workers, parents and consequently on the local community)” (Pavlović et al., 2017).

► **Is it necessary to wait for school reforms, better financial circumstances, or can schools begin with creating a positive school climate today?**

Although educational systems in different countries do not share the same prerequisites necessary for the work of schools, research conducted in Estonia has confirmed that the prerequisites necessary for a positive school climate are universal and free of charge and that they depend on collaboration between all stakeholders in a school's life, with a special emphasis on the students.

Evidence from Estonia indicates that **cooperation** between school leaders, teachers, parents and students should be regarded as a value. Teachers in Estonia are actively working to get to know the students' families, especially at the beginning of the students' educational journeys. They believe that the relationship between the students and the school staff is very important. Additionally, parents are involved in the school through meetings where they discuss the general plans for the school's future, and this is very important for low SES students because this lowers early school leaving (School Education Gateway, 2015). Finally, in case the students have problems, support staff, social workers, teachers and leaders of the studies work together to solve students' issues.

When talking about mutual collaboration among all the stakeholders, it is important to give students the voice to express their ideas and wishes regarding the life and rules in the school, which can be achieved through engagement in **school governance**. In the case of Tallinn schools, the student union has a huge influence and is an important stakeholder in decision-making. For example, they had to put a "veto" on a school's development document that did not envisage a vegetarian menu in the school's canteen. Additionally, students can support teachers in teaching, and use and build their competencies in different fields. Young people who perceive themselves as having agency may feel they have the ability to change something about themselves or their environment for a valued goal; this may increase their resilience and adaptability to life challenges (Sharp, 2014). Moreover, this feeling may help students towards increasing their engagement with their own development and their community (Welzel & Inglehart, 2010), which can increase well-being (Seligman, 2011).

Students can contribute to school life and create a positive school climate by participating in various **extracurricular activities** (hereinafter ECA). Such activities should be proposed by students, according to their interests. In the case of volunteering activities, they should address the problems identified by the students, and activities should be suggested by students as well. In the case of Estonia, the importance of extracurricular activities has been recognised so that each school has a full-time professional leisure time manager.

Numerous research studies have shown that the participation of students in extracurricular activities can have many positive outcomes, such as higher student self-esteem, higher student resiliency, and lower rates of depression (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006), lower dropout rate, lower delinquency and less frequent substance use (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Participation in extracurricular activities is linked to better academic outcomes, higher grades, test scores, school engagement and educational aspirations (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Zaff et al. (2003) argued that by participating in structured ECA, young people can explore what they are good at

and thus increase their feeling of self-worth and are also able to build significant mentoring relationships with caring adults thus altogether providing an environment for growth. Feldman & Matjasko (2005) argue that ECA participation might be the one micro-system that young people choose on their own because it matches their needs and talents and that this good match can be particularly valuable when young people's needs are not met in other micro-systems. This is particularly important for low SES students who are at higher risk for dropping out of school, and their participation in ECA is perhaps the only part of the school context where they can feel competent.

Extracurricular activities help create or maintain a positive school climate because they open possibilities for the collaboration between stakeholders, creating warm and supportive relationships and the mutual development of school identity, values, attitudes and behaviour.

The following text provides insights into good practice examples from schools taking part in the BRAVEdu project, as well as from other schools who nurture a positive school climate through similar projects.¹ These schools have conducted activities that enabled students to become active subjects whose opinions are relevant, and diversities are accepted and cooperation is supported. Additionally, these schools recognise the importance of including parents, and the whole community in its work. Teachers, students and parents become partners who mutually contribute to the development of a happy school, where students achieve better academic and life achievements.

These examples are not labelling certain students as students with low socio-economic background, but by implementing these activities with all students, low SES students also receive help in terms of feeling accepted, recognising and developing their competencies and have the opportunities to help others.

Estonian school representatives have pointed out that they do not have special strategies to work with low SES students, but maintain a supportive school climate – in which the voice of each student counts, where students are supported to recognise and develop their competencies, know themselves, develop self-esteem, help each other and learn from each other i.e. develop circumstances which contribute to the development of the full potential and better academic achievement for all students.

¹ <https://startthechange.net/>

▶ 2.1. CLASSROOM AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

> The Dane Krapčev Elementary School <

▶ *Healthy food for a healthy future*

The Dane Krapčev Elementary School is located near the SOS Children's Village in Skopje and the majority of the children from the SOS Children's Village attend this school. Bearing in mind that this school is attended by students of different religious, ethnic and social backgrounds the school has in the past organised many activities that intended to improve the interpersonal relations among the students, raise awareness about the similarities between students and to enhance the collaboration between the parents and the school. One of the actions conducted in the previous months was to explore the topic of healthy food. This topic was selected because it is relevant to all the children in the school, regardless of our background we all need to have the same understanding of healthy food and healthy eating habits among children.

After all the relevant parties (Ministry, the school principal, parents) were informed and consulted the journey began. In order to get the process bottom-up or how we get our food from the fields to the table students had the chance to visit an agricultural field and the Faculty of Agricultural Science and Food where experts introduced students to the methods of healthy food production. Furthermore, students visited a factory for healthy food in Skopje and a nearby market in order to complete the cycle of food production and placement.

Teachers and students obtained food and food donations and together prepared healthy snacks in the school. In order to become acquainted with the living environment of their peers, all students went to the SOS Children's Village and had a meal together. The activity was called "Guests at the house of our friends". All the students and teachers wore the same T-shirts outlining that regardless of where we live or what our background is, we all have similar needs and aspirations, among which the most important are to learn, to socialise with friends, to be accepted and to be happy.

As a follow-up to this activity, the teachers reported increased socialising between the students in the school. Going to a friend's house, preparing a project together, doing homework and celebrating different occasions became more frequent among all the students. Additionally, a good indicator of the impact of this activity is the fact that students were constantly initiating and asking to participate in similar activities.

To encourage better relationships between students coming from different social backgrounds, teachers have chosen topics and activities in which many students can be involved regardless of their class, interests or education achievement. In such a way they contributed toward the creation of better social relationships between students, as well as students and teachers which is relevant for a caring and supportive school environment.

SOS Children's Village hosts students without parental care and families at risk – a diversity which students are aware and which is often a source of prejudice. However, through these activities students have had the opportunity to learn about mutual differences, as well as becoming aware of the mutual characteristics that are important in creating everyday school life.



> The Tišina Elementary School <

The Slovenian elementary school Tišina has been working on establishing an atmosphere of support, the exchange of knowledge and skills among students of different ages, and their teachers.

▶ Peer to peer mediation

This school recognised mediation as an applicable method for conflict resolution between students and an opportunity for students to learn about accepting mutual differences, opinions and relationships. In this way, they can take responsibility for conflict resolutions, without the intervention of an adult person who might conclude a *verdict* about somebody's *fault*.

Once the teachers underwent the education in mediation, they presented the contents of the seminar to their colleagues. After that, the contents of the seminar were presented to the students, their parents, and some students became young mediators whom their colleagues can address in the case of a problem. Teachers are particularly proud because students do not use mediation solely for conflict resolution, but use its techniques, such as active listening, recognising emotions and needs, finding common solutions in everyday life. Students know that a mediator can help them to solve the problem, however, they have learnt to solve the problem by themselves without the intervention of a third party. *"It seems interesting to solve the fight in a peaceful way"*, and *"I am not tolerant enough"* – are just some of the students' comments indicating a desire for change and taking on the initiative in conflict resolution.



The implementation of peer mediation in schools reduces violence, vandalism and exclusion, contributes to development of the children's and youth positive social attitudes and behaviour. Students accept more easily school as a place where their identity and self-esteem is developed, and learn to be independent outside of their family.

Considering that research show that growing up in poverty affects the development of socio-emotional problems such as aggressiveness and destructive behaviour (McLoyd, 1998; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Taylor, Dearing & McCartney, 2004), communication about non-violent conflict resolution and the development of mediation skills can help a low SES student and all students to develop better relationships, communicate better, and understand themselves better, their emotions and their relationships with other.

▶ Take my little hand and be my friend

This project was created so that young students feel comfortable in school, and that older students provide company, advice and help in learning which would lead to a better adaptation to a new environment. The first step was to find students who were able to either offer certain help or who needed it and who were willing to accept help from others. The following step was to organise and make pairs of students. Teachers assisted in pairing students according to their needs. For example students good at a particular school subject could be paired with ones who needed help, while students from higher grades who were not excellent or very good in a subject could help younger students from lower grades with less complex content. This project helped develop relationships between students of different ages, while at the same time older students had the chance to help others irrespective of their school achievements. This enables students to develop their competencies, self-esteem and to not value themselves solely on the basis of their school successes.

Activities such as these help to create a caring and supportive school environment which showed its strongest positive relationship with student achievements in the high-poverty schools (Battistich et al., 1995)

A great deal of research shows that a student's potential for academic success increases when a student is supported for collaboration in learning, group connectedness, respect and mutual trust (Vuković Vidačić, 2016).

▶ Give and take a book

The give and take a book corner was established in school. In this corner students are able to exchange books, take a book they need or donate one that they no longer need. Thanks to this, students have learned to recycle and reuse old things – and even more than that - *Students were happy with their "new" books and they felt satisfied because they have done something to make others feel good*, explained the teacher – project leader.



Projects such as these open possibilities for providing help to low SES students who do not have adequate material resources. Through these activities, they are not focussed upon as someone who needs help, and are not exposed to additional stress. All students can bring or take something, everybody feels like a part of the group whose members exchange materials without consideration about who took or left something.

A similar activity is conducted in Tallin 32nd Highschool. in Estonia. Teachers donate their festive clothes (dresses or suits) that students can borrow and so they do not need to buy gala clothes for their prom. Dresses are gladly borrowed by all students and focus is not put solely on low SES students.

In the Vinko Žganec Elementary School students manufacture different things and sell them at exhibitions. This money is used to buy various equipment (materials) needed for working in class (coloured pencils, scissors, notebooks...). Materials are common, students borrow them and return them after the class. In this way different materials are available to all students, which is particularly important for low socioeconomic students.

> The Dr Vinko Žganec Elementary School <

In this Croatian elementary school, students and teachers collaboratively devise different activities and projects, and also use every opportunity to engage with the parents and the local community. As this school is attended by Roma pupils, many projects put into focus are learning about Roma culture and dealing with prejudice.

▶ Ethno picture book of our classroom

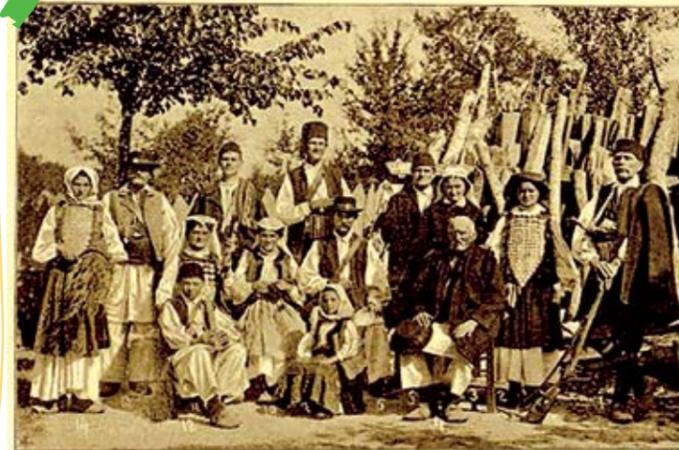
Ethno picture book of our classroom was made by students and their teachers. Its aim is to help students develop a curiosity for meeting other cultures and learn about holiday feasts among families of different religions, to get to know each other better and to get to know their families and the families of their peers. Parents were invited to contribute to the creation of the picture book by donating family photographs, the descriptions of holiday feasts were noted by the students, a questionnaire with the necessary data for the making of the picture book was filled in. Materials were gathered in the picture book which was presented at the school's exhibition, and all the students took it home as a present and a reminder of a pleasant learning process and socialisation.

In order for parents to come to the school, socialise with students and teachers as well as to get to know each other better, they were invited to the school day to show some games from their childhood, play a traditional music instrument, or to present or rehearse with students a traditional song... *"The most important thing is to establish good cooperation with parents, explain everything in detail and break down the fear and shame in some parents"*, said the teacher who led the activities.

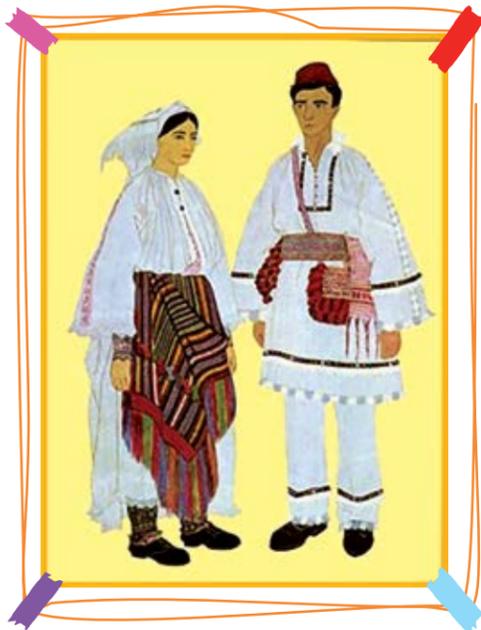
The making of this picture book has made many people smile: students, parents, grandmothers and grandfathers were working together while gathering materials for the picture book, the students were proud of their parents and their contribution; parents said this project has returned them to their childhood, and during the presentation of the picture book they were evidently happy with seeing the result of something they worked on hard! Students have got to know their colleagues and their parents better, plus they were especially joyful because they had recognised diversity in the classroom as a value that needs to be cherished.

Through this activity, parents felt welcomed in the school, thus making it more likely that they would come more often to school and be part of their children's school life. This contributes to the building of a sense of caring, a supportive and responsive school climate based on the cooperation of all stakeholders which is particularly important for students from the low socio-economic background (Battistich et al., 1995).

Parent involvement reduces students' early school leaving which is more frequent among low SES students (School Education Gateway, 2015).



Из наших крајева: Срби из Вањке, у Хрватској.



▶ Parents learn to read and write

At individual meetings, a couple of Roma national minority mothers had said they would like to learn to read and write so they could help their children with their learning. Teachers were instantly engaged. After the principal's approval, a parent's meeting was organised where other parents were asked if they are interested to join in. Afterwards, all the interested parents were asked for written consent and the search for teachers who would help the parents on a voluntary basis began. The long-term goal is to include children who would together with their parents practise reading and writing, and learn together and socialise.

It is often believed that some parents are not interested in the education of their children (Gorski, 2008), but it is necessary to be aware that not all parents have had the same chance for education and do not feel welcome in schools or cannot help their children with their learning because they cannot read or write themselves.

▶ Project day – learning the Roma language

Since prejudice towards Roma children is widespread, the teachers from this school have tried to find a way that all students become familiarised with the Roma culture and language. Hence, one school day was dedicated to learning about Roma culture, and Roma students took the role of the teachers. "It was important to introduce all the children's parents with the planned activity and get their consent", she said. "Unfortunately, some parents do not have an understanding of such a method of work, and need an additional explanation as to why you want to implement such a project day", she added.

This activity included Roma parents who helped in the planning the contents of that day and thinking of sentences in the Roma language. This activity helped including parents in school activities, and the teacher said that being in the role of teacher made Roma students self-confident for further socialising and work, they were joyful and proud of their culture and language, and they became aware that they were also able to share some knowledge. "Children have become aware that their Roma peers speak two languages, some students understood why Roma students find it difficult to speak the Croatian language – to them the Croatian language is a foreign language, just like English", said the teacher. The day dedicated to the Roma culture ended with a Roma song that can be viewed on the following link <https://youtu.be/NIM7-P4UYoI>

As Gorski (2008) argues, students from marginalised groups usually do not fit the teachers' image of the perfect student and teachers are inclined to think about those students in terms of their weaknesses and have lower expectations in their ability to achieve.

Find a way to use the students as experts, especially students from marginalised groups, because in this way students feel that they can contribute and influence their environment and this feeling may help students towards increasing their engagement with their own development.

> Motovun Elementary School <

Motovun Elementary School finds it important to teach students how to be active citizens from an early age.

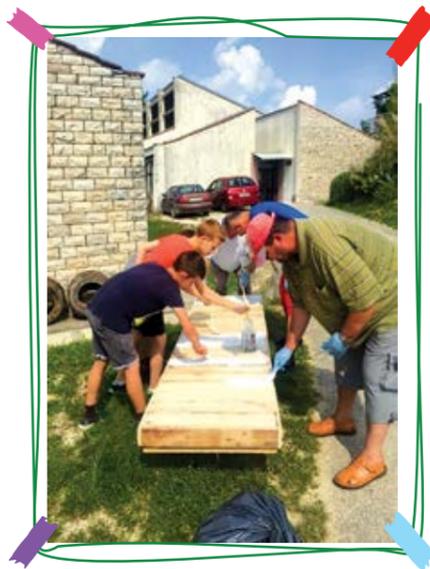
▶ *Be my friend*

This project was created in cooperation with the *Motovun Adult's Home* that is based in the area of Motovun municipality, and its main service is to care for adults with mental health issues.

As the name of the project states, it was created with the goal to develop friendship among students and beneficiaries of the *Motovun Adult's Home* through activities which will contribute to the improvement in the quality of life on both sides.

Through various workshops students spent their time together with the beneficiaries of the home doing useful activities for the whole community. The activities included: raking the leaves and landscaping around the home, preparing desserts together, decorating the home for the upcoming Christmas holidays, making cards and decorations, helping with landscaping and gardening in spring, helping with the care for animals, and walking and spending time together. The workshops which were held in the school included all of its students, and one more activity gathered everyone together in the constructing of a couch and table out of wooden pallets, painting tyres, outdoor games ("school" games and Twister), setting up swings and other adequate equipment in the schoolyard and spending time together. The students developed a sense of action and commitment to improve their local community, to contribute to the feeling of acceptance and self-respect of the people who are often not accepted due to ignorance and prejudice.

It is hoped that these students will be change-makers in their local communities, those who will break stereotypes, and show by example how to act in order to be initiators of positive changes in the local community, country and even the world.



Several surveys have shown that the participation of students in extracurricular activities can have many positive impacts, such as greater student self-esteem, better student resiliency, and lower rates of depression (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccels, 2006; Mahoney at Stattin, 2000), a lower dropout rate, lower delinquency and less frequent substance use (Mahoney & Carins, 1997; Youniss et al., 1997). Participation in extracurricular activities is linked to better academic outcomes, higher grades, test scores, school engagement and educational aspirations (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

Volunteering helps acquire the experience and competencies needed and useful for active engagement in society, personal development and well-being. Volunteering increases self-confidence, academic skills, and the orientation regarding employment becomes clearer (Roth, Pavlović and Morić, 2015). It also increases the feeling of happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, the feeling of control over one's life, physical health and depression (Thoits and Hewitt, 2001).

These outcomes are particularly important among low SES students. When the above-mentioned developmental aspects are put into focus, low SES students do not start school with the same starting positions as their middle class peers, and often they do not receive the needed support during classes.

In this way, low SES students might also have the chance to help others, not just being the receiver of help, and they will be more inclined to engage in their communities.

> The Trpinja Elementary School <

The Trpinja Elementary School proudly highlights its motto – “We accept individual differences and all students according to their abilities” - and is constantly working with students to follow this motto and behave in this way towards each other.

▶ Peer learning support

Although peer support in studying is always welcome and developed in many schools; it is often mistakenly considered to be led solely by excellent students. Trpinja Elementary School was guided by the idea that every pupil can help younger students in studying. Thus, senior students with lower grades in mathematics helped the youngest students in their school with the mathematics’ exercises. The younger students received the necessary help, and older students increased their self-esteem and gained more motivation to study. Is there a better way of studying and correcting grades than this? Frequently placed labels are also removed in this way – that someone is not good in a subject – which often demotivates students in their further growth and progress.



Low SES students need additional support in learning because poverty affects their school success. However, it is also important to give the opportunity to students who need help to provide help as well. Perhaps they can help students from lower grades in studying, or you can create different opportunities for volunteering in your school or local community for these students. This is important for their self-confidence, resiliency, school engagement and educational aspirations, as well as the other mentioned ECA benefits.

▶ *Small, and still big – big, and still small*

The school developed another project called *Small, and Still Big – Big, and Still Small*. As they explain it, the students were the “small” ones, while the elderly in the local community were the “big” ones. The goal of this workshop was a non-formal gathering with the exchange of the skills and knowledge. The elderly remembered their school days and shared various anecdotes with the students. They also showed the students how to sew and introduced games from their youth. On the other hand, the students showed the elderly how to use mobile phones, tablets and personal computers. Comments by the teacher reflect how much this gathering brought joy to both students and elderly: *It was not visible who was “big”, and who was “small” because of the playful smiles on the faces of our guests.*

Students develop interwoven knowledge, skills and attitudes in the domain of civic education, personal and social development when they learn about active citizenship through direct participation in local volunteering actions. They also develop better interpersonal reactions, a feeling of belonging to the school and are empowered in the belief of starting change in their own and other people’s lives (Pavlović et al., 2017).

“Students labelled as ‘problematic’, have been the most active and responsible in volunteering actions. They were given the chance to show their potentials and virtues outside of educational process.”

Teacher, Start the Change project, 2013 - 2015

> Pula Grammar School <

In this Croatian school through activities within the *Start the Change* project, students said that they wanted to raise awareness about the socio-economic differences among students as well as to reflect on the need for mutual respect, regardless of someone's material status.

▶ *I see a human*

The school implemented a project called “*I see a human*” with the goal of directing and empowering teachers to talk to students about economic differences, as well as to solve problems that arise from those differences. The project team states that among other things, they wanted to encourage the students to raise awareness of the prejudice and stereotypes that arise from distinct differences, as well as to increase a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour. The aim was to provide the students and the teachers with the knowledge about the existence, causes and consequences of poverty around the world and in Croatia, as well as in their own local community. The students that attended the elective classes of the Civil Education and the Debate Club were involved in the project for the entire second semester and dedicated it to the topic of poverty.

The students conducted research in groups on the concept of poverty and its various aspects. Afterwards, each student group chose one topic from the many identified: the causes and spread of poverty, economic migration, social mobility, poverty in Croatia and the EU, the link between poverty and education, growing-up, health, violence, etc. They worked on the chosen topic and then presented their findings to other students. Third graders listened to the presentations of their peers in their sociology lectures, and the fourth graders in their politics and economics lectures. Their reactions were excellent as the presentations enabled the students to get involved and exchange their thinking and experiences relating to these topics.

Their goal is to continue to talk about the topics recognised by the students as important, and which usually do not get enough attention due to the overloaded curriculum.

Encourage students to think about poverty and help them become experts in this topic. Apart from the positive outcomes from using students as experts, students can become aware of different beliefs about poverty, such as the beliefs in the culture of poverty and deficit theory. These activities can help low SES students, their peers and teachers to better understand the background of poverty which is usually considered only as a lack of financial resources which low SES people are blamed for. Hence, it is important to recognise the personal role and responsibility in tackling socio-economic inequalities in everyday life and in school life.

> The Vittorio Emanuele II High School <

Project activities in this Italian school began with a problem analysis made by the students and teachers about their personal environment. Ultimately, everyone arrived at similar problems in the end, regardless of the ages or grades of the students. The problems identified were the lack of communication between students from different classes and between students and the staff.

They came up with the idea to look for an area that could be a meeting point and which would provide space for communicating, spending free time and socialising. They found it very important that the room is a space managed by the students and that it gave them the chance to think creatively about using the space in the best possible way and it gave them a sense of responsibility.

The second grade wanted to focus on the stimulation of dialogue. They found their place in the common room by designing one part of the wall where students could write topics for discussion which they are interested in. The students decorated the wall with paintings and posters and made a “communication wall”.

The students of the first grade were responsible for equipping the common room with furniture that would provide space for activities such as seminars, workshops, peer tutoring, screenings and readings.

This project has increased the communication between students from different classes and gave the students the opportunities to share their passions and interests. By doing so, this project aimed to make the school a more familiar and welcoming place in which students can actively contribute. It also gave students the chance to share their opinion with the school management.

It has been an interesting experience because we worked together and discussed the concerns and issues such as discrimination. I feel I am learning what it means to be part of the community and talk to the people.” One student commented.

“We also improved our relationship with the teacher, we now feel we have a more reciprocal relationship in which we have room to say what we deem as important.” Commented a student.





It is important to listen to the students' voice – their desires regarding life and rules in school. If they have a feeling that they can affect their life in school, this may increase their well-being.

For low SES students, such activities are particularly important because as Sharp (2014) claims, these activities lead to the feeling that students have the ability to change something about themselves or their environment for a valued goal, it may increase their resilience and adaptability to life challenges.

Many empirical studies (Brophy & Good, 1986; Solomon & Kendall, 1979) have shown that warm and supportive relations with teachers are particularly beneficial and motivating for low SES students.

▶ 2.2 WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND PARENTS

The workshops described in this section can be used in work with students, teachers and parents.

These activities can be of help in the better understanding of personal and social development and the importance of one's own role in the school and the local community, and include topics such as self-reflection, positive self-perception, recognition of personal talents, defining one's own goals, encouraging aspirations, empathy, togetherness...

The introduction of these topics develops knowledge, skills and attitude that distinguish children and youth as active participants in their community, encourage the roles and responsibilities of all students in creation of their environment, making decisions that shape their world, and are empowered for a better understanding of themselves, and expressing themselves and their identity as well as connecting with others.

By including all students in these workshops, you help low SES students in the development of personal and social competencies without excluding them as the ones who need additional support in this field, creating at the same time an opportunity for students to get to know each other better, and providing the opportunity for teachers to develop better relationships with students. In this way, you help to create the feeling of belonging to a group, and a positive school climate. This is particularly important for low SES students who are often exposed to bullying, and who have less frequent positive interactions with peers and teachers due to prejudice.

If implemented with teachers and/or parents, these workshops can help adults to better understand and deliberate about the mentioned topics and thus provide better support to students. By strengthening collaboration and support between parents and teachers, there is a better chance for students to achieve higher social-emotional and cognitive development and consequently better academic success.

Some workshops were created originally for students and some for parents, however, each workshop is marked for which age and group it applies. However, the experts implementing workshops need to decide what workshops are most appropriate for their individual groups.

Some topics might need additional time for quality implementation. Due to their specificity and scope they might require additional preparations, and the people who will implement these activities are advised to additionally study these topics thoroughly, as well as to partake in professional development in these areas.

The implementation of *Psychological Resilience* and *Over the Line* workshops is advised to those who already have the knowledge and experience in implementing workshops of similar content.

1. Activity: *This is me*

Necessary materials:

- *This is me worksheet*
- *Pencils, crayons*
- *Blank paper*

Activity for:

- Teachers*
- Parents*
- Students (12 – 18)*

Preparation:

The classroom should be prepared for group work. This is a great activity if you work with a new group of people (for an introduction) but also if you want an existing group of people to get to know each other better.

Activity:

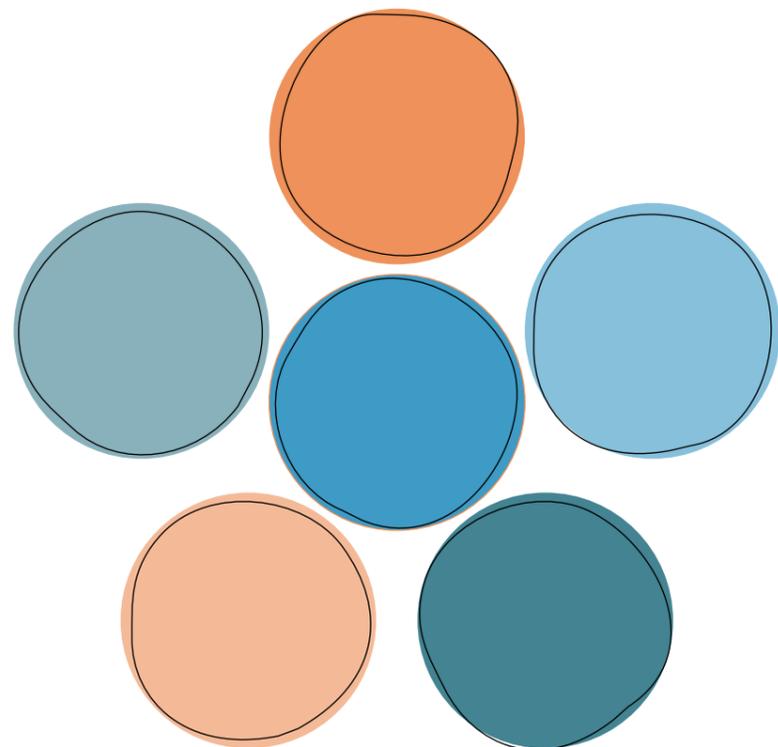
1. In the beginning, the students should be given the following instruction: *Think about yourself and describe yourself in 10 words on a piece of paper.*
2. After a few minutes, ask the students: *What did you think of first?*
3. Write down some of the answers and group them with your students. Did they talk about their appearance, personality traits, where they come from...?
4. Explain to the students: *Today, we will explore the concept of identity and start to understand how your identity was created and what it consists of. We will see whether it is static or changeable, and to what extent you are able to shape it. Your sense of self will be of great importance in your life and it will influence how you feel about yourself and your personality, as well as your self-respect and self-acceptance.*
5. Give the *This is me* worksheet to the students, they need to write down the things they consider most important about their identity.
6. After the students have finished, discuss it in the group and check which traits, characteristics and roles they have used.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *What did you list as your main personality traits (also called “pillars” of identity)?*
- *Have you ever faced stereotyping, or discrimination because of an aspect of your identity? Which one? What do you think about people who treat people badly because of their background/culture/ethnicity or other aspects of identity?*
- *What are your favourite parts of your identity?*
- *Which aspects of your identity do you take for granted and do not think about?*
- *Explain the connection between social networks and identities.*

Idea +:

- *Explore the term “multiple identities” – different identities within a person which are sometimes in conflict with each other – and discuss it with students.*



► **What does identity consist of?**

Our identity is greatly shaped by how we see ourselves. This image develops throughout our lives, particularly during childhood and adolescence. It consists of experiences, relationships, character traits and how we interpret these things. Some of the 'pillars', i.e. identity features, are listed here, and how important they are varies throughout our lives.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Age | School you attend | Personality traits |
| Sex | What you do | Behaviour and decisions |
| First and last name | Your neighbourhood | Hobbies, interests, lifestyle |
| Appearance: physical characteristics (height, weight, hair colour and style...), what we wear | Financial status | Values and goals (what is really important to you and what you are working towards) |
| Origin: your family, nationality, religion, language | Friendships | Historical and geographical context of the place you live in |
| Social networks | Relationships (boyfriend/girlfriend, partnerships) | |
| | Health and physical condition... | |

2. Activity: My collage

Necessary materials:

- Plenty of colourful magazines for the collage
- Scissors and glue
- Large format posters

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (10 – 18)

Preparation:

You will need scissors for each student, they can share glue and magazines. Be aware that in many magazines you cannot find different groups, such as national minorities, low SES people... Use that for discussion with students.

Activity:

1. Start with an introduction: *Each person is unique. We are different from everybody else and we also change with time. Today we are going to be creative and each person is going to make a poster depicting themselves. Show us who you are, what you love, what is important to you, what you like, and what your goals are. Use papers, magazines, share them. Use images and words. Name your poster. Finally, sign your name at the back.*

Depending on your students' age, you can show them examples of artists who focus on the topic of identity in their art (you can use the example from the worksheet).

2. Ask students to pair up and show their poster to their partner. Make an exhibition and give students enough time to look at their classmates' posters and to ask each other questions if they wish.

+ Idea +:

- You can also start with introducing questions from three categories to guide the self-representation of the students: *what do you like to do, what frightens you (symbols) and how you would want your future to look like.*
- You can display posters in a visible place in the classroom, and after some time make them all over again.
- Encourage the students to create the class collage.
- You can use this activity to better introduce parents and teachers to each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *How did you feel making the poster? What did you like the most?*
- *How do you feel now? Do you like your poster?*
- *How did you make it? Did you automatically recognise images and words that you relate to, or did you think of a concept first and then started looking for images?*
- *Did you find it difficult to find images to represent your identity? What did you do then?*
- *Was it important for you to see what others are doing and to make something similar to their poster?*



▶ **Author:** Greg Gossel, <http://www.greggossel.com/>

▶ **Source:** <http://gabrielaizcorbe.blogspot.hr/2008/08/greg-gossel-retro-comics-americanos.html>

Greg Gossel is a designer born in 1982 in Wisconsin. He lives in Minneapolis and his works are exhibited throughout the USA and Europe, for example in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Milan and London.

Note: _____

3. Activity: My element

Necessary materials:

- Discover your element worksheet
- Holland's Hexagram worksheet

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (10 – 18)

Preparation:

When you start with the activity be aware that some students may think they do not have any talent - be supportive and tell them that it is perfectly normal to still be searching for talent at their age.

Activity:

1. Start with lead-in discussion: *Today we are going to talk about your talents! Do you think all of you have some talents?*
Why? How did you figure out what you are good at and what interests you? Did you figure it out? Is there somebody among you with an active interest outside school? Tell us more about it.
2. Introduce your students to the Discover your element worksheet and ask them to complete the exercise in pairs.
3. After the discussion, introduce your students to *Holland's career typology* (or a similar concept related to talents/professions) and talk to them about it. Complete the exercise 'Holland's Hexagram'. Emphasise the fact that in most contemporary professions it is important to have skills in several areas. If you wish, tell them about your path, i.e. your story about how you chose your career or developed a skill that you have.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How easily did you find your element? Do you have more than one?
- If you had to choose between what you are good at and what you love, which would you pick?
- How many of you would choose a career purely because of easier employment or a better salary?
- Will you follow your parents' advice or your own interests and why?
- Which careers exist today that your parents have not heard of?
- Where could your skills and talents lie?
- How would you group people's activities and careers?

WORKSHEET 1: Discover your element!

The concept of 'element' is based on the book *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything* by Sir Ken Robinson (2010).

The element is the point at which natural talent meets personal passion. It is here that people

Write a few things in each column (things you love, things you are good at, things you are keen on doing and things you have support for), and find out where they overlap. What appears in the most columns might be your element!

| I love | I am good at | I am keen on | They help me with... I have an opportunity to... |
|--------|--------------|--------------|---|
| | | | |

> How can we help young people find their 'spark' or calling in life?

By:

1. recognising and appreciating their 'spark';
2. creating possibilities for trying out different activities;
3. listening carefully when they are talking about what interests them;
4. showing support;
5. acting as a role-model and sharing our interests and 'sparks' and
6. including these activities in the curriculum.

(William Damon: *The Path to Purpose: Helping Our Children Find Their Calling in Life*. 2008)

WORKSHEET 2: Holland's career typology

Realistic

working with tools, products, food, mechanical objects, technical drawings, plants, animals, have physical skills

Investigative

understanding and solving scientific and mathematical problems

Artistic

theatre, painting, dance, music, writing, handicrafts

Social

helping others, teaching, caregiving, providing information

Enterprising

managing, persuading, selling ideas and products

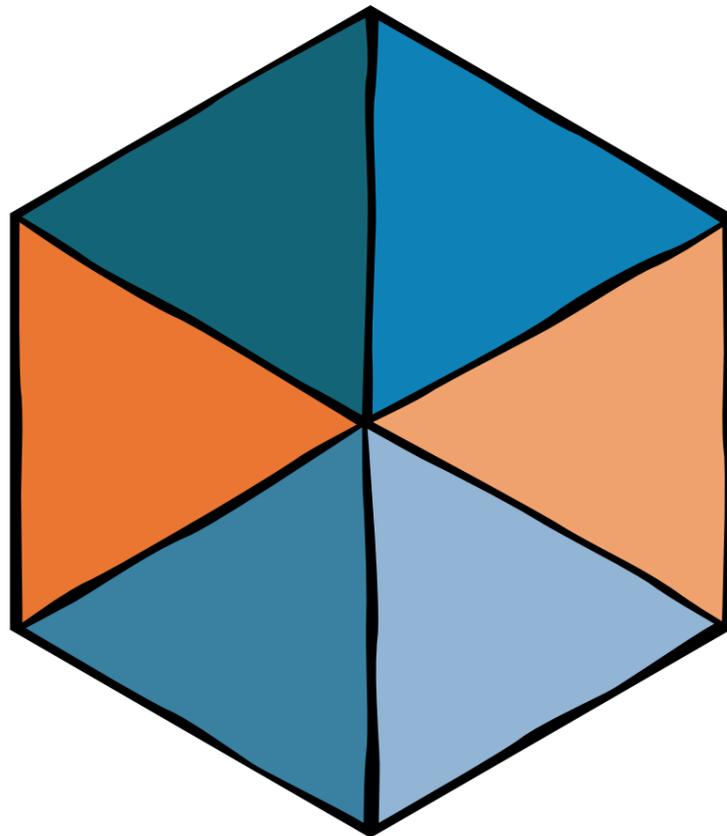
Conventional

working with numbers, data, organisation and editing

WORKSHEET 3: Holland's Hexagram

> In each part of the hexagram write down the skills and experiences you have in that area:

- ▶ **1. Realistic/Doers:** what are you skilful at?
- ▶ **2. Investigative/Thinkers:** what kind of problems do you like solving?
- ▶ **3. Artistic:** what do you like creating and how do you express yourself creatively?
- ▶ **4. Social:** who and how do you like helping?
- ▶ **5. Enterprising:** which things do you start on your own, and others follow you?
- ▶ **6. Conventional/Organisers:** In what ways are you tidy and well organised?



Take into consideration how important each of these activities is to you and how much you like it. Then try to choose up to three areas you feel are your strong trait.

Which career would enable you to express all of your qualities?

The Holland Hexagram is widely used to help people understand themselves and guide their choice of career. It was developed by American psychologist John L. Holland (1959).

4. Activity: Feel the flow

Necessary materials:

- A4 papers
- Pencils
- Crayons

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (10 – 18)

Preparation:

Investigate the flow concept (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)

The concept of the flow was taken from the theory of flow experiences by Csikszentmihalyi (1996). It is characterised by the complete absorption in what one does, and the resulting loss in one's sense of space and time. A flow described like this is taken as being important for total well-being by psychologists.

Activity:

1. Tell the students what your favourite activity is and describe how you felt the last time you were doing it. It can be anything you are completely committed to while you are doing it, and ideally, it should be something that helps you grow as a person. Try to describe the feelings that this activity inspires in you and, if possible, show them something related to it (an object you made or a skill you have) and encourage them to ask questions.
2. Encourage your students to think about which activity absorbs them and which they enjoy doing (explain that this activity should be something we actively do, and not being passive such as watching TV, sleeping, eating or doing similar things). Give them a few minutes. If they want, they can write down their answers. Encourage students to share their conclusions with others.
(Psychologists call these experiences 'the flow' and they consider them to be very important for our psychological well-being and happiness.)
3. Then give paper to the students – they need to draw how they feel while they are absorbed with this activity. Motivate them: *Remember where you are, what you are doing, who you are with and what is best about it.* Explain to students that their drawing skills are not crucial, the most important thing is what the drawings represent to them.
4. Students should present their 'flow' activities to each other in smaller groups.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Is there an activity you have in common, which many of you enjoy?
- Do you experience the 'flow'? What do you think? Why are these experiences important?
- What happens if a person feels they do not have something like that in their life? What activities can they dedicate themselves to and what are the consequences?
- Do you sometimes feel like this in school – as though you are completely absorbed with what you are doing?
- What should a class with more 'flow' look like, according to you?

5. Activity: From inspiration to action

Necessary materials:

- Inspiration interview and My wishes and goals worksheet
- Pencils

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (14 – 18)



Activity:

Part 1: The moment

Divide students into pairs and ask them to remember one great moment they had that year. It can be something they have achieved, they are proud of, or that they have worked on. It can also be something that made them very happy and that is important to them. Their task is to describe that moment to their classmate with as many details as they can, and their partner must listen to them carefully. Some students can share afterwards what it was like working together and what they have learned.

Then tell the students you will be dealing with personal planning, and the setting and realising of goals which is an important life skill. Ask them why they think you are doing The moment activity. Emphasise that the activity can reveal a lot about the things we value and which matter to us and that it is the foundation for setting important life goals, because we set goals for ourselves, not because of others.

Part 2: Inspiration interview

Continue working in pairs and give students a new task. Each student will set a goal, and their classmate will use the method of interview to help them plan in detail. If a student is indecisive about their goal, their partner can ask them some questions to find out what their focus is and what area they would like to work in. It can be something the student likes or cares about, or something they feel they lack and would like to do better/do more of. It is important that there is motivation and that students feel strongly about their goal. Then, each pair proceeds with the interview, using four questions from the following page.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How did you like working in pairs?
- What was it like asking questions, and what was it like answering them and talking about yourself?
- What did you realise and learn?
- Do you think it is important to plan or just let things run their course? When is it desirable to do something one way, and when the other?
- What can you do when you are not good at something and you have problems reaching your goal?



Idea +:

- Another way to start this workshop (depending on the amount of time you have) is the activity called *The river of learning*. This is a creative activity where students draw and colour a river which represents their life from birth until the present time on a large sheet of paper. Then, students use symbols, illustrations or words to mark the important the knowledge or skills that they have acquired, the crucial moments and people they learned the most from.



WORKSHEET 1 Inspiration interview

INSPIRATION INTERVIEW

Work in pairs. Find out as much as you can about your partner and ask questions to help her/him define their goal and plan. Follow the four sections:

GOAL

What is the goal you would like to work on right now?

(If your partner has problems defining their goal, ask them one of the following questions: What do you enjoy the most? What makes you happy and what do you find interesting? Is there something you completely lose yourself in while you are doing it? When do you feel you are exactly where you should be? What are you best at? What do others think is your strong trait? What do you think your goal is now?)

VISION

Imagine your ideal future where you have achieved your goals completely! What does it look like? What are you doing, what do you look like, who is there? What is next?

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Now make a plan – what is the most important thing to do to achieve your goal? What do you need to learn, do and practice to accomplish it? Which skills should you develop? What is your path and how do you really see yourself achieving your goal?

FIRST STEPS

And now - let's start! Think of the first steps you should take. What will you do first? Who can help you? Whom should you talk to first? And then what? How much time will you need? What might be a challenge now, and what later? How will you resolve this?

Then, switch roles!

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was pioneered in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, two professors at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. It is a model that seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change. The authors wanted to emphasise that the problem-solving approach is not always the best approach but that we need more positive ways to research ideas for development.

WORKSHEET 2 My wishes and goals

MY WISHES AND GOALS

Think about you and your life in the next five years. Study individual parts of your life and define several goals for each part! You can write in petals or in your 'secret' notebook. Feel free to add extra petals (ideas: What I want to experience, see; how and where I want to live...)

instructions for designing a flower with six petals, and in each petal is written

- 1. MY FUTURE** – what would I like to achieve
- 2. ME** – my identity; what kind of person I want to become
- 3. GREAT AT...** – what I want to learn and improve
- 4. VOLUNTEERING** – in what way I want to contribute to the community
- 5. APPEARANCE AND HEALTH** – what can I do for my body and my appearance
- 6. RELATIONSHIPS** – what kind of person I want to be

 **Note:** _____

6. Activity: The happiness box

Necessary materials:

- Box
- Pencils, coloured pencils/felt tip pens/pastels
- Worksheet

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (8–18)

 **Preparation:**

You need to prepare box labelled Happiness – enter the classroom with it and surprise the students.

 **Activity:**

1. Show students a box and tell them happiness is inside the box. If you have younger students ask them: *What is happiness? What does happiness look like? What colour is happiness? How big is happiness?* Adapt the questions if you have older students.
2. Ask your students to think about what would they do with a happiness box if they got one as a present (who would they share it with, where they would take it, where they would keep it, to whom would they show it, etc.). They can write or draw their ideas on the paper. If your students are very young, this activity can be oral.
3. Ask students to read out their answers. You can praise all students with applause at the end.
4. Ask your students: *If you could create a happiness box what would you put inside?*

Let students draw their own version of THE HAPPINESS BOX

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (for younger students):

- *When you are sad, what can make you feel better – a hug or candy?*
- *What would you prefer having – lots of toys or lots of friends?*
- *When were you the happiest?*

 **Idea +:**

- You can make a book from the collected answers and then display it.
- With older students, you can watch and comment on a video *What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness* (https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness/transcript?language=hr#t-4074)
- Find information about the study on happiness and well-being in your country and the world.
- For students' birthdays, give them a happiness box made by their classmates.

7. Activity: Me in the mirror

Necessary materials:

- A large sheet of paper
- Coloured pencils/felt tip pens/pastels

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (8–18)

Preparation:

Bear in mind that students do not need to think about big changes. Explain to them that small steps and changes mean a change for the better in their own or other people's lives.

Activity:

1. At the beginning of the lesson, ask students “Can we change the world?”
2. Then divide them into groups of five (students can also work on their own). Each group needs a writable flip chart where they will first draw the outline of a mirror and then their reflection in situations where they are changing something in their environment and the world. They should prepare a presentation of themselves in the mirror as a good example for other people. You can display their works in a prominent place in the classroom.
3. After all the students finish with their presentations, they can start thinking about a plan or first step that will turn the reflection in the mirror into reality and thus encourage others to start the change too.

Idea +:

- Instead of drawing, students can express through a video, a photograph, a new song that they can perform as a rap song...
- Introduce students to Mahatma Gandhi's quotation: “Be the change you want to see in the world”. What does this quotation mean? How can they relate it to the activity they took part in during the class?
- Introduce volunteering to your students as a way to start positive changes in their own and other people's lives.
- Use this activity at the school council meetings, when gathering and making plans.

8. Activity: Recipe for a happy school

Necessary materials:

- Poster for displaying happy school recipe
- Pencils, coloured pencils/felt tip pens/pastels
- Happy school and happy school recipe worksheet

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (8–18)

Preparation:

Learn more about the happy school project in the manual *Start the Change*²

Activity:

1. Tell the students your topic is happiness, particularly happiness in school. Ask them why happiness is important in life, whether they know a recipe or formula for happiness and how they would define it. Write down their ideas, comment together and then introduce them to the theoretical model of happiness and ask them what they think about it. Talk about why happiness in school is important and what happens to people who are not happy, how they behave and what the consequences are. Likewise, ask them what they think the difference is between a happy and an unhappy school and write down their ideas.
2. Afterwards divide the students into smaller groups, hand out blank posters and markers or felt tips and suggest to each group that they write or draw their happy school recipe. They can then talk about their poster.
3. After the workshop, if you wish, the posters can be displayed in a prominent place in the school so that other teachers and students can see them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What would you say, is our school happy or unhappy and why? What could be better?
- Who determines whether a school is happy or not? Can you influence your school's happiness in any way?

Idea +:

- After they have built their model of a *happy school*, show them the UNESCO model. Did you know that there is a model, i.e. a kind of a “recipe” for a happy school?
- Organise this activity for students, parents and teachers - each group makes a recipe, and finally try to find a mutual recipe.

² <https://startthechange.net/library/>

| According to the UNESCO model, happy school criteria are: | There is a "recipe" for an unhappy school as well: |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. friendships and relationships in the school community; 2. teacher working conditions and well-being; 3. learner freedom, creativity and engagement; 4. teamwork and collaborative projects, e.g. sports etc. 5. positive teacher attitudes and attributes. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. peer violence; 2. work overload and student stress; 3. bad atmosphere and relationships in the school; 4. poor teacher working conditions and methodology; 5. teachers with negative attitudes towards the school and the students. |

WORKSHEET 1 *Happy school*

| A HAPPY SCHOOL IS | AN UNHAPPY SCHOOL IS |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| | |

WORKSHEET 2

| INGREDIENTS | METHOD |
|-------------|--------|
| | |

Happiness theory - according to contemporary happiness theories, in a psychological sense, happiness consists of fulfilling the needs all people have:

- 1) love and belonging,
- 2) ability and self-respect and
- 3) independence and self-reliance.

Note: _____

9. Activity: From needs to project ideas

Necessary materials:

- Worksheet
- A3 and A4 sheets
- Felt tip pens, pencils, coloured pencils

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (12–18)

Preparation:

This workshop aims at helping students to recognise the needs for activities or volunteer projects in their school or local community. This way, students take themselves as a starting point, their view of the school and local community. Through conversations about perceived problems, students are encouraged to be active in finding the solution. Their feeling of ownership over the idea can optimise the entire project and ensure their full involvement. Students should be divided into groups and led through the following steps.

Activity:

Step 1. All groups get a worksheet and a task to discuss what problems they notice in their school and what they would like to change. The answers should be written into different geometrical shapes around "SCHOOL". The following task for the groups is to map the main features of the local community where the school is located (names of neighbouring institutions, organisations, centres, parks, squares etc.) and talk about who in the local community might need their help and with whom they could cooperate.

Step 2. An A4 sheet with the school's name is pinned to the wall or blackboard with other A4 sheets placed around it where groups are instructed to write down problems perceived in the school. Also, the students should write the names of institutions, organisations, squares, etc. near the school. The entire process is done through a conversation – ask the students about the answers they have written. Try to include as many students as you can.

Step 3. Ask students to look at what is on the wall and to think about which issues they would like to address through their volunteer project and why. It is important to talk with the full appreciation of every contribution, feeling and attitude. Together with the group, mark the ideas (topics, users, problems) which currently seem the most important and valuable for the development of their project ideas.

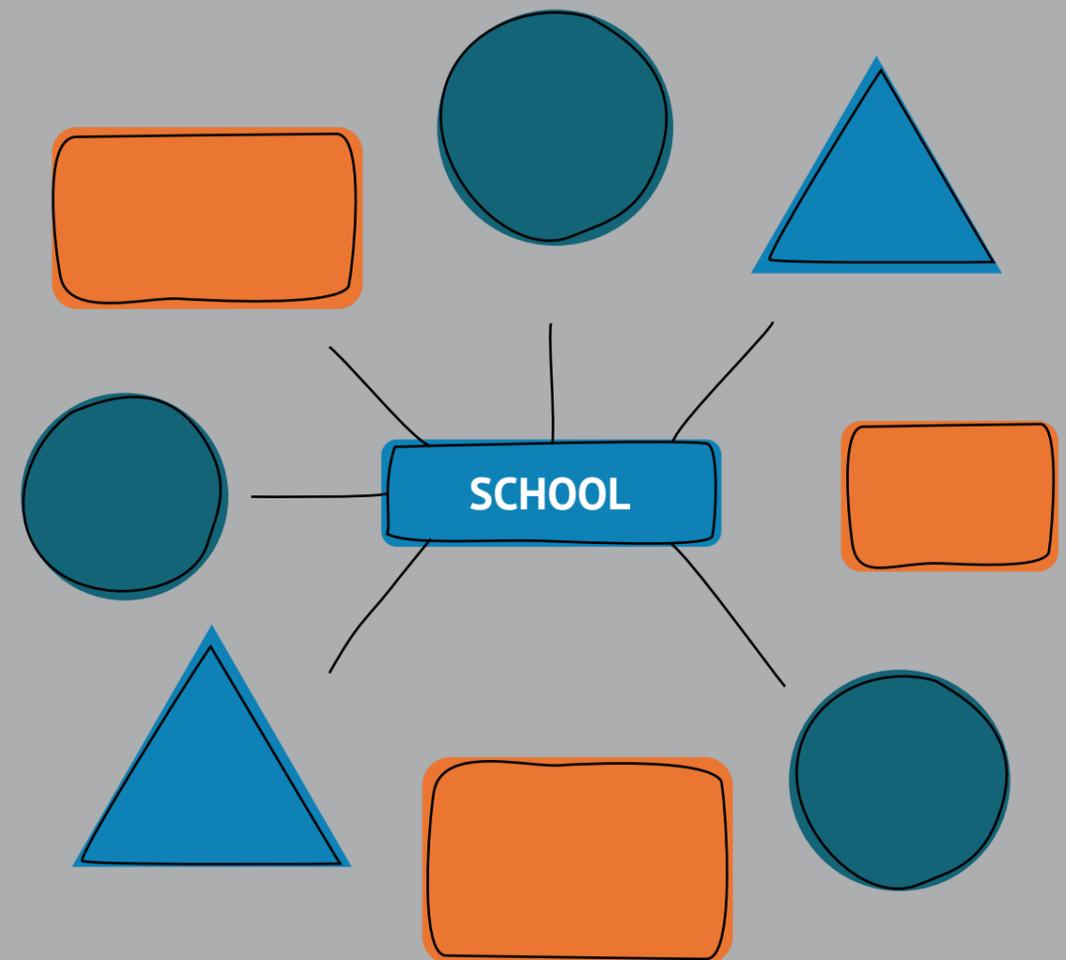
Step 4. The students are now grouped according to interest in various project ideas and each group elaborates their idea by answering the following questions: What is your personal gain in this project? Is the whole group interested in doing this project? What resources do you have? What do you need? Students should think about what potentials they have (what are their talents, skills, who could they include, etc.).

Step 5. With the teacher's support, the groups organise a presentation of their ideas to some school bodies (e.g. a student council) and plan the implementation further. It is important that the teacher writes down all the project ideas and supports them in each step.

Deciding on a project idea is not simple. Sometimes it takes multiple workshops and creating many project ideas to be able to choose one. The development, planning and implementation of a project idea can take a whole academic year.

WORKSHEET From needs to project ideas

Map the local community where your school is. First consider which problems you notice in your school (facilities, student-teacher relations, peer conflicts, etc.). Then think about which institutions and organisations there are near you, whether there are potential partners and locations that might be of interest to the children and young people.



Note: _____

10. Activity: Over the line³

Necessary materials:

- A wide open space, e.g., a classroom with all chairs and tables pushed back, an auditorium, or school back yard
- Chairs to form a circle for the debrief
- Painter's tape to make an initial line for participants
- Optional: tape or other materials to mark lines to indicate where to step back or forth

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students

Preparation:

Many people with certain privileges never notice them, because they are so woven into the mainstream that those who have them cannot see them. For parents/adults, understanding and acknowledging privileges is key to understanding why certain children do not perform in class as well as others despite given the equal opportunities to do so. The capacity for parents to objectively reflect on their interactions with the world will be invaluable. This exercise will allow participants to understand that having one privilege does not make up for another marginalisation and that every privilege or marginalisation exists on a different but intersecting plane from another. This focus will help to avoid having positive developments being derailed by debates over who is more oppressed. It also helps participants to understand that there are marginalised groups within the marginalised group. Privilege walks have previously been criticised for being most beneficial to the dominant (i.e. high SES), since it is supposed that they learn the most and that more marginalised participants are made to feel vulnerable. However, even though it is not a perfect exercise, the privilege walk is a less confrontational way to discuss privilege and promote reflection. It helps people to open up, literally, in steps instead of difficult to articulate words and relate to each other in a different way.

Activity:

1. Have participants line up in a straight line across the middle of the room with plenty of space to move forward and backward as the exercise proceeds.
2. Have participants hold hands or place one hand on the shoulder of the person to their left or right depending on space constraints. (Important: Make sure to ask participants if they are comfortable touching and being touched by others. If some are not, do not make them and do not make a big deal out of it.)
3. You may give an explanation about the activity, how it is intended to educate about privilege, and what exactly privilege is, or you can send participants into the activity with no such background.
4. Read the following to participants: "I will read some statements out loud. Please move if a statement applies to you. If you do not feel comfortable acknowledging a statement that applies to you, simply do not move when it is read. No one else will know whether it applies to you."

5. Begin reading statements aloud in a clear voice, pausing slightly after each one. The pause can be as long as appropriate.
6. When you have finished the statements, ask the participants to take note of where they are in the room in relation to others.
7. Have everyone gather into a circle for debriefing and discussion.

Privilege walk statements:

1. If you are right-handed, take one step forward.
2. If _____ is your first language, take one step forward.
3. If one or both of your parents have a college degree, take one step forward.
4. If you rely, or have relied, primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
5. If you have attended previous schools with people you felt were like yourself, take one step forward.
6. If you constantly feel unsafe walking alone at night, take one step back.
7. If your household employs help such as servants, gardeners, etc., take one step forward.
8. If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.
9. If you were ever made fun of or bullied for something you could not change or was beyond your control, take one step back.
10. If your family has ever left your homeland or entered another country not of its own free will, take one step back.
11. If you would never think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs, take one step forward.
12. If your family owns a computer, take one step forward.
13. If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food, take one step back.
14. If you feel respected for your academic performance, take one step forward.
15. If you have a physically visible disability, take one step back.
16. If you have an invisible illness or disability, take one step back.
17. If you were ever discouraged from an activity because of race, class, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation, take one step back.
18. If you have ever been profiled by someone else using stereotypes, take one step back.
19. If you feel good about how your identities are portrayed by the media, take one step forward.
20. If you were ever accepted for something you applied to because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.
21. If your family has health insurance take one step forward.
22. If someone has ever spoken for you when you did not want them to do so, take one step back.
23. If there was ever substance abuse in your household, take one step back.
24. If you come from a single-parent household, take one step back.
25. If you live in an area with crime and drug activity, take one step back.
26. If someone in your household suffered or suffers from mental illness, take one step back.
27. If you were ever uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, but felt unsafe to confront the situation, take one step back.
28. If you are ever asked to speak on behalf of a group of people who share an identity with you, take one step forward.
29. If you can make mistakes and not have people attribute your behaviour to flaws in your racial or gender group, take one step forward.
30. If you have always assumed you will go to college, take one step forward.
31. If you have more than fifty books in your household, take one step forward.
32. If your parents have told you that you can be anything you want to be, take one step forward.

³ Based on the activities developed by Rebecca Layne and Ryan Chiu for Dr. Arthur Romano's Conflict Resolution Pedagogy class at George Mason's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (2016).

▶ **Debrief Questions:**

During and after the privilege walk, participants might experience an array of intense feelings no matter their position at the front or the back. While the point of the privilege walk is indeed to promote the understanding and acknowledgment of privileges and marginalisation, it would be detrimental to end the activity with potentially traumatic or destructive emotions. The point of the debrief session is twofold. First, through the reflection provoking questions, help the participants to realise exactly what they were feeling and muster the courage to articulate it to each participant's acceptable level. This process will relieve possible negative emotions, preventing possible damage. Second, as negative emotions are relieved, the debrief will help participants realise that either privileges or marginalisations are integral to a person's being. Instead of casting off either privilege or marginalisation, participants can learn how to reconcile with themselves, and through the utilisation of newfound knowledge of the self, have a better relationship with themselves and others around them.

▶ **1. What did you feel like being at the front of the group? At the back? In the middle?**

At the end of the exercise, participants were asked to observe where they were in the room. This is a common question to use to lead into the discussion and allows people to reflect on what happened before starting to work with those ideas in possibly more abstract ways. It keeps the activity very experience-near and in the moment.

▶ **2. What were some factors that you have never thought of before?**

This asks participants to reflect in a broader sense about the experiences they might not think about in the way they were presented in this activity. It opens up a space to begin to discuss their perceptions of aspects of themselves and others that they might have never discussed before.

▶ **3. If you broke contact with the person beside you, how did you feel at that moment?**

This question focuses on the concrete experience of separation that can happen during the activity. For some participants a physical aspect like this can be quite powerful. There are many iterations of the privilege walk that do not involve physical contact, but this extra piece can add another layer of experience and be an opening for very rich student responses.

▶ **4. What question made you think the most? If you could add a question, what would it be?**

The first part of this question asks participants to reflect more on the activity and the thoughts behind it. The second part of this question is very important for creating knowledge. Participants might suggest a question about which instructors had not thought. Asking participants how they would change the activity and then working to incorporate those changes is an important part of collaborative learning.

▶ **5. What would you like people to know about one of the identities, situations, or disadvantages that caused you to take a step back?**

This question invites people who would like to share the ways they experience marginalization. It is a good question to ensure that this part of the conversation is had. That being said, it is also important to not expect or push certain participants to speak, since that would be marginalising them further and could cause them to feel unsafe. It is not a marginalised person's job to educate others on their marginality. If they would like to do so, listen. If they would not like to do so, respect their wishes.

▶ **6. How can your understanding of your privileges or marginalisations improve your existing relationship with yourself and others?**

This question is based on the idea that people can always use knowledge and awareness of the self to improve how one lives with oneself and those existing within one's life. It also invites participants to think about ways that this understanding can create positive change. This is not only for the most privileged participants but also for the marginalised participants to understand those in their group who may be experiencing other marginalisations. This can bring the discussion from the first question, which asks about how they are standing apart to this last question, which can ask how they can work to stand together.



Note: _____

11. Activity: *Passion for fashion*

Necessary materials:

- Used clothes (trousers, blouses, jackets)
- Scissors
- Needle and thread
- Glue
- ...

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (8–14)

Preparation:

Ask your students and their parents to share some old clothes. Explain to them that in the school there is a place marked the Fashion Corner for the donation of used clothes.

Additionally, ask them to join the Fashion Club that you are starting. Explain to them that all participants will work on the donated clothes in order to remodel them and make them more interesting and modern. Pay attention also to the parents who struggle with poverty to join this group, because this way they will contribute and they will develop a sense of belonging. However, this activity will also make parents from your class collaborate and to get to know each other. Many great ideas rise when we get to know each other, we know and respect our tradition, religion, customs, where we come from and what we deal with on a daily basis.

Activity:

Organise a regular weekly meeting with the Fashion Club. The task of club participants will be to work on the used clothes and to express themselves creatively trying to make interesting and modern pieces. Explain to all the participants that their final products will be brought back to the Fashion Corner and can be taken from there by students. With this activity you give another dimension to the donated clothes, it is no longer a charity action for the help of one group, but a creative process where all children can find something interesting. At the same time you make modern clothes available for students that struggle with poverty.

Idea +:

- When giving and taking becomes an established practice in your school you can start an action for the donating of school supplies, prom dresses, etc.

 Note: _____

12. Activity: *We are proud of our students*

Necessary materials:

- Flip chart paper
- Markers and crayons
- Scissors
- Glue
- Photographs

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (8–14)

Preparation:

Call or send an e-mail to all the parents of the children in your class asking for a photograph of their child (your student). Explain to them that you are preparing a poster for your classroom. Additionally find photographs of some of your former students (students who have become successful in their profession or famous in sports, music, theatre or film, etc.)

Activity:

You can do this activity as part of a workshop for both parents and students. The idea is to make a poster with photographs of all your former and current students. This poster should be placed in your classroom. You should share with the attendees the motivational life stories of your former students. Tell them where they started or what their struggles were. Having a photograph on the same poster as a successful football player (e.g. Luka Modrić) will encourage the less fortunate students to dream big and to work hard to fulfil their dreams. At the same time pay attention to incorporate photographs of former students who have a less celebrated profession such as a postman, cleaning person, nurse, etc. because students have to understand that each one of us contributes to society in a different but equally important way.

Idea +:

- If you are still in touch with some of your former students who made a successful career and struggled with poverty then invite them to make a motivational speech at some of your class events.

 Note: _____

13. Activity: Walk in someone else's shoes

Necessary materials:

- Paper
- Flip chart paper for each group
- Markers
- Pens

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students

Preparation:

Prepare a workshop for the parents of the children in your class. The classroom should be prepared for group work.

Schedule a time that is suitable for all parents (both employed and unemployed).

Prepare worksheets with case studies like the examples below:

Mario is 9 years old. He is being raised by a single parent. His mother works as a cleaning lady in one big office in the afternoons. She has troubles paying her bills and providing food. She is happy that she has a job, but she is not happy because she works in the afternoon because of this she spends little time with Mario and cannot help him with his homework.

Lile is 14. She is one of four children. She lives with her parents and grandparents in a two-room apartment. Since her father has been diagnosed with cancer her grandparents' pension goes entirely on his medicine. Her mother works, but is unable to provide enough for the bills and food.

Renata is 10. She goes in a public school where she is provided with one school uniform (the uniform is obligatory). All children in her class have bought at least three spare uniforms, but her parents cannot afford it. They are both unemployed. Her father worked as a waiter in a restaurant but unfortunately, the restaurant closed recently. He is trying to find another job but there is nothing available.

Milena and Maja are 10. They are twins living with their grandparents. Their parents were trying to find a job for a long time but could not find anything. They were borrowing money for a while to cover their monthly expenses. Having no job opportunity in the country they moved to Belgium to work as a cleaner in a shopping mall and as a construction worker. They work for minimal wages but manage to send some money to their parents to pay back their debts and a little money for Milena and Maja. The twins are unhappy to live separately from their parents.

Darko is 8. His father was hurt in a car accident. Until that moment, they were living a normal life. His father was working and providing for the family. His mother has decided to be a stay-home-mother and to raise Darko and his two brothers. After the accident, his father was unable to work and his mother struggled to find a job because she had been unemployed for more than 10 years.

Pay extra attention so that none of the examples resembles an exact situation you have in your class because some parents may feel uncomfortable.

Activity:

Ask the parents to work in groups. Each group will be given a worksheet with the same case studies. Their task is to read them, discuss them and to write the causes and effects of each situation on the flip chart paper.

For example:

| | Cause | Effect |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Mario | Parent working on a minimal wage, absence of father, high bills | Missing out on activities and time with the parent, lack of food, stress, etc. |
| Milena and Maja | Parental unemployment | Lack of clothing, lack of food, separation from parents, etc. |
| Darko | Unemployed mother, father is unwell after a car accident and unable to work | Shame, social isolation, lack of food, stress, etc. |

Pointing out the different causes of poverty will challenge parents to think about their biases and their prejudices. Poverty can strike anybody at any time!

After they complete the first part of the activity, tell them that the second part is done individually at home and is anonymous. Ask the parents in your class to share what they would do if they were in this position. What type of help would they accept? What would they do if they knew that someone in their children's class was in that situation? What type of help will they offer?

Ask them to leave the paper with their opinion in the marked box near the door in the following days when they drop off or pick up their children.

This activity will leave you with plenty of ideas of the actions that you can take in order to help a child or a family in need.

Note: _____

14. Activity: Classroom makeover

| | |
|--|---|
| Necessary materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paint• Painting tools | Activity for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teachers<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parents<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students (8 – 14) |
|--|---|

Preparation:

Saturday is a perfect day for this activity. In order to prepare for this activity ask all parents to bring from their house things that they do not use (blankets, pillows, bookshelves, etc.).

Activity:

Explain to the parents that you will all work to redecorate the classroom where their children are learning. Divide them into groups and each group will be given a different task: one group will work in the literacy corner, other in the mathematics corner, one group will repaint the door, and other will work on the curtains and window area. It is important that all of them get involved and the final look of the classroom to express each child and his/her parents' cultural background, their vision and interests. Incorporating the elements of children's home settings, such as the languages they speak at home, the kinds of routines they follow, objects from home that are important to them will create a sense of belonging. Both children and parents will feel they fit in when they can recognise themselves in the classroom.

By ensuring that every child feels welcome, the educator gives children the message that every individual is respected, that every child and family is an important part of the classroom community, and that every child has the opportunities to benefit from the shared community space and resources and to participate in maintaining them.

 Note: _____

15. Activity: Share and care

| | |
|--|---|
| Necessary materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everything that parents will bring | Activity for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teachers<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parents<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students (8 – 14) |
|--|---|

Preparation:

Choose one day in the month to be an open day named "Share and care day." Always choose a different parent to organise this open day with you. All other parents need to participate.

Activity:

Explain to the parents that this is not a day when grand gestures need to be made but a day when we teach our students the importance of thinking about someone else besides themselves. Parents can share a meal, clothes, school supplies or a story about how they took care of someone or someone took care of them. It is important to have an open conversation about the topic of giving and accepting a gift/donation. Your role is crucial. You need to be the first to share a story. Remember: the children in your school are not the only ones who benefit from the compassionate kindness inherent in the staff. The spirit of caring extends past individual students and touches everyone in the community. It is important to work with parents and students to understand the importance of sharing and caring. Work with parents and share advice about how they can teach their children to share and care. Always look for different opportunities to teach them how to care about animals, about nature, about their siblings, etc. You will be amazed by the actions they will do by themselves in order to share and care.

 Note: _____

Activity 16. Psychological Resilience

Necessary materials:

- Paper
- Coloured pencils/pens
- White board
- Markers

Activity for:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Students (12– 18)

Goals:

- Discover which channels of resilience we use;
- Discover which channels are underused and which we should develop for a more effective dealing with problems and the development of our own resilience.

Intro:

As an answer to stress, trauma, crisis, conflict, significant changes in life, people use different strategies, channels, to cope with difficult life situations for their own 'survival'. However, there are many resilience channels that are unused. This exercise aims to help participants explore different channels to deal with a tough situation.

Activity steps:

1. Creating a six-picture story
2. Drawing comics
3. Writing a short story based on the pictures
4. Discussing the stories in small groups
5. The re-enactment of the story

Method:

1. This technique is intended for older students or adults. Instruct the participants to draw or write a story using six drawn pictures or short descriptions/sentences. It is important to stress that it does not matter how well the drawings are drawn, that the drawing quality is not going to be assessed. It does not even matter if anybody understands their drawing because everyone will interpret the drawing for themselves.
2. Instruct the participants to divide the piece of paper into six parts, but do not cut it or tear it up. On the first part everybody needs to draw the main character, the hero of their story. It can be a character from a story, fairy tale, film, cartoon, video game or reality. It can be a human, an animal, an object or symbol, it's totally up to the

participant. On the second part everybody draws the assignment, the task or the event in the story of the main character. In each story the main character has to complete some kind of a task, to take some action. On the third part participants need to depict somebody who helps the main character (if it is possible to help them). On the fourth picture participants draw an obstacle or somebody who makes the completion of the task difficult or is a threat. On the fifth part everybody draws how the main character overcomes that obstacle or wins against whoever was making the completion of the task difficult. The final part should depict how the story ends, what happens to the main character.

3. Once everybody completes the drawing of their story, ask them to write their story on a piece of paper.
4. Once every participant writes down their story ask a couple of volunteers to share their story with the rest, while you (the facilitator) will categorise the story on the BASIC Ph model on the board.
5. Once the participants understand the principle of "evaluation" according to the BASIC Ph model, divide the participants into small groups where they will evaluate each other's stories according to the model, while you will be there to help out.
6. At the end of the exercise one story is selected to be acted out. If there is enough time, other stories can be acted out too, or this workshop can be repeated with other stories being acted out.

Important note: It is important to be mindful about the assignment of roles. The participant whose story is being enacted should be in the audience (not an actor). He/she should see the performance of his/her story through the eyes of a screenwriter, or a director. The roles are: the main character (hero), the helper(s), and the obstacle. The roles are given to those participants who had the least amount of channels of resilience as those present in the described hero, helper or obstacle. The rest of the participants are there to support the main character and helpers.

The behaviour of the child/participant while dealing with stress will be evident from every picture. For example, if the main character is a fairy (or another imaginary being), that signifies imagination/fantasy as a way to deal with stress. The goal in the story is connected to one's own beliefs and values. The help can be real or made up or maybe as a representation of some internal conviction. The obstacle can be societal, imaginary or very real which demands a concrete solution. The most important thing is to define what channels of resilience are being used and which are being neglected. This insight will help us work on the utilisation of less used resiliencies.

By analysing how many separate channels to counteract stress are used in the stories, we explore which are the most developed ones because those are the most frequently used.

The stories are evaluated according to the model, by using complete phrases or individual words (in cases when the individual words are a unit of their own). Each unit is marked with a tally but also with a minus sign if that word has a negative connotation.

► **Types of resiliencies:**

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| INSIGHT | The understanding and evaluating of our own mental processes, reactions and abilities – self-discovery. |
| INDEPENDENCE | Drawing a line between the person and the problem, developing a physical and emotional distance while also satisfying our personal needs. |
| RELATIONSHIPS | Maintaining close relationships with people who fulfil us, balancing between the awareness of our personal needs and wishes and others people's. |
| INITIATIVE | Taking responsibility for our problems, establishing control, having an inclination to cope with difficult moments (instead of avoiding). |
| CREATIVITY | Creating order, aesthetics and a goal in the chaos of existing problems, conflicts, broken communications and painful feelings. |
| HUMOUR | Seeking “comic relief” in what hurts us, surpassing negative feelings, indifference and helplessness using humour. |
| MORAL | Developing the consciousness that aside from fulfilling personal needs, actions towards assuring the greater good for the whole community are needed. |

BASIC Ph - Recognising the reactions and possibilities to help children exposed to serious stressful life situations

The **BASIC Ph** channel model helps us identify reactions and also to help children who have been exposed to stressful and traumatic experiences, various forms of abuse and unfavourable life conditions. The model's acronym spells out the basic aspects of developing children's resiliencies.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| B | Beliefs and values – which thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes, prejudice and misconceptions do children have? For example: if somebody is behaving badly – they deserve to be punished. Spanking/beating is the basic form of discipline. Love is a painful experience. Do not trust adults. Shut up and take it. If I were better this would not have happened. |
| A | Affects and emotions – which emotions dominate these children, how do they express them (verbally and nonverbally), do they accept them? Do they turn emotions against themselves through self-destructive behaviour or do they suppress them which causes interference (absence) in the channel? For example: fear, anger, guilt, helplessness, hesitation, shame or sadness. |
| S | Social dimension – socialising, roles, support groups, organisations. Which source of support does the child use: socialising with peers, family members, school clubs, a readiness to take over responsibilities? It is important to watch closely if a sense of estrangement, isolation and hostility appears which is typical when there is interference in the channel. |
| I | Imagination , intuition, humour. Does the child use creativity, fantasy and play (in a healthy way)? There is a problem in this channel (interference), when disturbing play/fantasies can be observed in child's behaviour. |
| C | Cognition and the concept of reality. What does the child know, how does he/she solve problems, how does he/she manage themselves, does he/she use internal dialogue, how are his/her thoughts organised, are their actions reasonable and logical. The interference in this channel is that the thinking is illogical and judgement is unrealistic/flawed. |
| Ph | Physical activity – is the child active, does he/she use sport, relaxation techniques, does he/she use his/her body to express themselves, is he/she involved in too many activities – movement, wondering, restlessness when sitting, over-eating etc. The interference in this channel means psychosomatic disorders and self-destructive behaviours. |

> **How can we help children to develop their coping channels positively?**

| | |
|-----------|---|
| B | Re-evaluating accepted beliefs, developing self-respect, positive self-image, abandoning the role of victim, changing the perceived “bad child” identity or “usual suspect”, sharing the responsibility with somebody else (teacher, psychologist, psychotherapist...). |
| A | Gaining insight into our own personal emotions: identifying and expressing them; accepting that there are no good and bad emotions, just pleasant and unpleasant; learning how to manage emotions; respecting the emotions of others. |
| S | Learning communication skills, giving and sharing with others, support, learning empathy, establishing a support structure in the family, friends, peers, clubs and groups the child might be a part of where the child feels loved, understood, appreciated, where the child’s sense of belonging can be nourished; developing self-help groups. |
| I | Using drawings, scribbles, clay modelling, role-playing, using dolls, books, films, stories and everything else where there are main characters, events and actions, the possibility to assume different roles, to develop the imagination and use humour. |
| C | Developing intellectual potentials, interests, talents and gifts; encouraging curiosity, expanding the quantum of knowledge, information, experiences, positive learning, self-esteem, hopefulness. |
| Ph | Developing space orientation, performing intentional movements, connecting thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Physical activity helps to alleviate tension and agitation, helps to structure the time and overcome disorder/chaos through relaxation techniques, sport, dance etc. |



Note: _____

▶ **2.3 CHARITABLE ACTS IN SCHOOL – WHAT TO BEAR IN MIND**

Various charitable acts sometimes seem the simplest and the most logical tool to develop a student’s empathy, desire to help and think about the problems that some groups face. Fundraising can help to solve part of the problems which emerge due to a lack of financial resources. Some forms of help for students of low socioeconomic status include buying books, gathering clothes, fundraising for various aids such as glasses or wheelchairs or for school trips. However, can such benevolent actions have negative side effects that we are unaware of? Can such acts solve smaller short-term problems, but cause other long-term problems? Is there a more suitable way to develop empathy, help others, to think about others and the surrounding world?

> **Bear in mind:**

1. Poverty influences a child’s socio-emotional and cognitive development, academic success, coping mechanisms, resilience... Charitable acts are mostly fundraising in their nature, where various products are bought (books, toys, didactic materials...). However, fundraising does not affect a child’s reduced psychological resources. Students that are being helped via charitable acts are singled out from others. Hence, everyone becomes familiar with those students’ problems whose low socioeconomic status is already a stressor. Such students are additionally exposed to others in the fundraising situations. If a charitable act is planned, it should not single out the low socioeconomic status students. It can be done by gathering a general budget for free school trips, place in the classroom where everyone can exchange some school materials, etc.

2. Public fundraising puts low SES children in the teachers and other students’ focus. McLoyd (1998) showed that teachers have lower expectations from low SES students, perceive them less positively, and provide them with less chances for positive learning outcomes. During such acts, the focus is on the student and the situation which is trying to be changed.

 The broader poverty context is barely spoken about with other children, the fact that people do not have the same starting positions, that it is not the student’s fault for being in their current position, and that injustice and inequality are systemic issues. Charitable fundraising activities can temporary reduce a student’s financial problems, but also enhance prejudice towards that student.

3. According to the self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) the majority of students’ emotional problems come from unsatisfied psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. If these three needs are satisfied, regardless of the students’ socioeconomic status, they will be happy, feel accepted and believe they can contribute to the community. While planning a following charitable act think about whether it is going to help or hinder students to feel free to have a choice, effect their own life or the life of others. Also, pay attention so that students feel they have a choice, autonomy, feel connected to the other students and teachers, and feel appreciated and worthy.

4. The same applies to charitable acts for children and adults outside of school, in different institutions, of various disabilities, in remote and poor countries... If you decide to collect resources (particularly for students in remote countries), talk to your students about the broader context, the equality of human beings, different starting positions, the system inequality at classroom/school level, the educational policy level and the level of society as a whole.

5. After gathering the resources for an organisation, people in need or an individual, make students meet the people they have decided to help. They can spend a day volunteering with them, learn from one another, and become aware that despite the differences there are many similarities between all of us. Considering that low socioeconomic status students cannot contribute to gathering financial aid, volunteering is a good way through which low socioeconomic students can contribute, help others, feel fulfilled and satisfied. Also, bear in mind that the beneficiaries of many organisations, institutions or individuals will value your time and interactions more than financial aid itself.

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