

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS ON INSPIRING PRACTICES THAT PREVENT EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN EUROPE



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1. INTRODUCTION





1. INTRODUCTION

Aims of the Toolkit

The aim of this toolkit is to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with a number of research-related, as well as school and teacher generated practices, that can help prevent school disengagement and the early school leaving (ESL) of students in (primary) schools across Europe. The practices in the toolkit include activities, projects and programs that are meant to actively engage students and counteract ESL. These selected practices will help teachers become more effective agents of change in the prevention of school disengagement and early school leaving.

The practices described in the toolkit are real life practices that have demonstrated their use in partner schools' everyday work. These schools¹ participated in the Erasmus Plus funded project Strategic Partnership Projects for School Education: Promoting Inclusion to Combat Early School Leaving (PICESL).

More specifically, the toolkit intends to stimulate teachers to **1)** identify the practices that speak to them, **2)** diagnose their own teaching practices, **3)** analyse these in comparison to what they have read, **4)** reflect on how to use them, **5)** select those that appeal and can be reproduced in their own classroom, **6)** creatively test these out in their classrooms, and **7)** evaluate what they have learned from these practices for further use in their contexts.

There is no 'prescribed' way to interact with this toolkit. Instead, we leave how teachers engage with it up to them. This might also be influenced by the impact of COVID on schooling across Europe. However, some suggestions for the use of the toolkit are given below:

Choose practices that sound familiar to one's current activities and think about why what is being done may be working or not working? Choose practices that are very different from one's current activities and think about why what is being done may be working or not working?

Try out new practices in the toolkit and document both the experiences of using them out and student's experiences by asking simple questions such as:

For the teacher:

- Did I enjoy myself doing the activity?
- Did I see a difference in students' engagement/behaviour?
- Did I feel comfortable implementing the practice?
- How could I improve my comfort level doing the practice next time?
- What could I do to increase my students' engagement/participation next time?

For the students:

- In what ways is this activity similar to something I have done in the past? In what ways is it different?
- Did I have fun doing this activity? Would you want to do it again?
- How pleased was I when conducting this activity?
- I was pleased with the teacher
- I was pleased with my peers
- I was pleased with who I am, my family, my friends, my neighbourhood
- I felt pleased with my own abilities
- How would I run this activity if I was the teacher?

Through reflection, find similarities and differences in what is already being done in comparison to the suggested practices.

1. Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco de Porto, Portugal; CEIP Malala School in Seville, Spain; Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora in Zadar, Croatia; I.C.S. "Giovanni Falcone" School in Palermo, Italy



Talk about one of the practices with a colleague or a small group of teachers (before and after implementation) and focus on the following questions:

- What similarities do you see with your current practice?
- What differences do you see with your current practice?
- What surprised you when reading about the practice?
- What would you want to try from the practice?
- How successful do think your trial was and why?
- What surprised you about your trial?
- What would you do differently next time?

How was the Toolkit Created?

The International Association for Intercultural Education, as part of another project, conducted both an initial and extensive literature analysis of the main determinants of school disengagement and Early School Leaving (ESL)². The extensive literature review, entitled 'An in-depth review of the literature on 'best practices' for the prevention of early school leaving in schools with intercultural contexts', also identified established criteria to successfully tackle school

disengagement and ESL, as well as existing Best Practices. This extensive report can be [accessed here](#).

Based on the findings of the literature reviews, the authors (Martha Montero-Sieburth and Domiziana Turcatti) wrote large sections of this Toolkit³. They also approached the 4 partner schools in the project to identify the kinds of best practices that were taking place in their schools to combat school disengagement and ESL. Martha Montero-Sieburth and Domiziana Turcatti worked closely with the schools to write up these practices to arrive at the descriptions found in the Toolkit.

Content of the Toolkit

The toolkit consists of several separate yet interrelated parts. The two core parts are 12 effective ESL research-based prevention approaches that impact student achievement and inclusion at the classroom and school environment level and 8 inspiring practices gathered from the PICESL partner school. There are also short sections on:

- key concepts and definitions used in school disengagement and ESL;
- an overview of ESL trends, actions and challenges taking place in Europe.

2. The IAIE commissioned Martha Montero-Sieburth, Domiziana Turcatti and Rabiya Chaudhry to conduct both an initial and subsequent extensive literature review in 2020, resulting in two reports: https://iaie.org/downloads/PICESL_Best%20Practices%20Report_%2024%20June%202020.pdf and Montero-Sieburth, M. and Turcatti, D.(2020). A Practical Teacher's Guide on Inspiring Practices that Prevent Early School Leaving in Intercultural Educational Settings in Europe. Erasmus+ funded project Strategic Partnership Projects for School Education: Promoting Inclusion to Combat Early School Leaving (PICELS). Directed by Rosa M. Rodríguez-Izquierdo, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, España in partnership with the International Association of Intercultural Education (IAIE), p. 1-128.

3. Rabiya Chaudhry provided editorial assistance and statistical information on the countries.



2. SOME KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THE TOOLKIT





2. SOME KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THE TOOLKIT

Early School Leaving (ESL)

ESL: The European Commission defines early school leaving as leaving the formal school system before obtaining an upper secondary education degree for youth between the ages of 18-24. As such, ESL is applied to youth who have dropped out from compulsory education or who have completed but not gained upper secondary qualifications⁴.

ESL as a process: Early school leaving should be understood not just as the percentage of youth who have not attained secondary education degrees but also as a process that starts early when students who are still in school start to disengage with school. ESL factors are of two types: exogenous and endogenous⁵.

(Appendix A and Appendix B list various ESL factors in more detail)

Socio-emotional learning and instruction

Socio-emotional teaching and learning: Instructional programs which help students improve their ability to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour, particularly when dealing with stressful moments. In overcoming these, students become academically successful, and hence do not leave school.

Resilience: Students' ability to thrive and succeed despite having to face odds. It means developing the psychological coping mechanisms to face stressful moments of life successfully.

Belonging: refers to more than membership in a group, but to the reciprocal relationships that need to exist in being identified by others as belonging but also individually acknowledging they belong and are accepted, respected, included and supported by others.

Students' school engagement

The engagement of students in school depends on the extent to which students participate in school and classroom activities, enjoy these, and interact with their peers, teachers, and staff. Three critical dimensions of students' school engagement are: *behavioural engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement*⁶.

Emotional engagement: Kinds of affective bonds students create with their schools, teachers and peers. The emotional engagement of students can be looked at through the following key indicators⁷:

- Students' opinion of their teachers (pros and cons)
- Students' trust in the teacher figure
- Students' opinions of the school (pros and cons)
- Students' perception of teachers' emotional support
- Students' perception of discrimination, exclusion or labelling

4. See: Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes, P. (2019). Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving. European Commission. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/72f0303e-cf8e-11e9-b4bf-01aa75ed71a1>

5. See: Araújo, H. C., Macedo, E., Santos, S. A., & Doroftei, A. O. (2019). Tackling early school leaving: Principals' insights into Portuguese upper secondary schools. *European Journal of Education*, 54(1), 151-162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12328>

6. For this section, see: Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543074001059>

7. See: Tarabini, A., Curran, M., Montes, A., & Parcerisa, L. (2019). Can educational engagement prevent Early School Leaving? Unpacking the school's effect on educational success. *Educational Studies*, 45(2), 226-241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2018.1446327>

- Students' sense of school belonging
- Students' sense of peer belonging
- Students' feelings being school experiences

Cognitive engagement: Ways and extent to which students identify themselves as learners and are motivated to learn and become cognitively challenged and engaged in the classroom⁸:

- Motivation to learn
- Interest in learning activities
- Positive beliefs about the role and utility of schooling
- Positive self-perception as a student
- Positive self-regulation of behaviour and learning strategies
- Involvement in outside school learning activities

Behavioural engagement: The degree which students will actively participate in classroom and school activities. This can take place through the following key indicators⁹:

- Regular classroom assistance
- Positive classroom behaviour
- Active classroom involvement in activities
- Non-academic volunteering
- Regular completion of homework/school assignments

School culture, environment and ethos

School culture: Deeper level of basic assumptions, beliefs, values, and practices that are shared and enacted by the members of the schools¹⁰; **School climate:** Overall atmosphere and implicit climate of the school as a welcoming inclusive school which expresses respect and acceptance and is evident throughout the physical school environment (pictures of students, drawings, murals, etc); **School ethos:** Norms, values, and beliefs that the school officially supports and may have to do with school's code of conduct and some of its most prominent values¹¹.



8. See: Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543074001059>

9. See: Tarabini, A., Curran, M., Montes, A., & Parcerisa, L. (2019). Can educational engagement prevent Early School Leaving? Unpacking the school's effect on educational success. *Educational Studies*, 45(2), 226-241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2018.1446327>

10. See: Stoll, L. (1998). School Culture. School Improvement Network's Bulletin, 9. <http://www.educationaleaders.govt.nz/Culture/Understanding-school-cultures/School-culture>

11. See: Donnelly, C. (2000). In Pursuit of School Ethos. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 48(2). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1556001>



3. EUROPEAN EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING: TRENDS, ACTIONS, AND CHALLENGES





3. EUROPEAN EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING: TRENDS, ACTIONS, AND CHALLENGES

ESL trends in Europe

ESL has been a growing concern for Europe since the late 2000s. In 2011, the European Council of Ministers published its recommendations to reduce ESL in Europe to 10% by 2020. At the time the recommendations were being written, the ESL rate in Europe was 13.4%. The recommended policies included prevention, intervention, and compensation measures to reduce ESL¹². In 2019, the European Commission published a report assessing the implementation of the 2011 Eu-

ropean Council recommendations to reduce ESL in European countries. The 2019 report found that:

By 2018, the overall ESL rate in Europe had dropped to 10.6%, 2.8 percentage points below the ESL rate in 2011.

Even though many countries had ESL rates below 10% by 2018, other EU countries continued to have ESL rates above the 10% target (Figure 1), including Spain (17.9%) and Italy (14.5%) (Figure 1).

The students most likely to leave school early were children with a migrant background, ethnic and racial minorities (Figure 2), students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, with males being significantly more likely than females to leave school early (Figure 3).

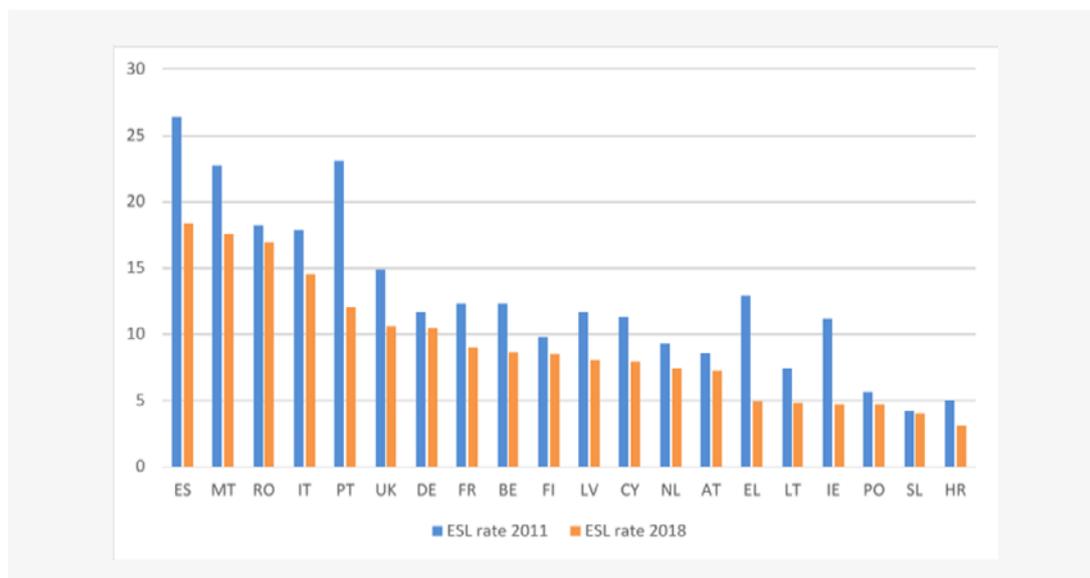


Figure 1. Progression of the ESL rate in EU Member States where ESL has decreased between 2011 and 2018. Retrieved from: Donlevy et al. (2019)¹³. Original Source: Eurostat

¹² See: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/72f0303e-cf8e-11e9-b4bf-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹³ Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M., Downes, P. (2019). *Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving*. European Commission. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/72f0303e-cf8e-11e9-b4bf-01aa75ed71a1>

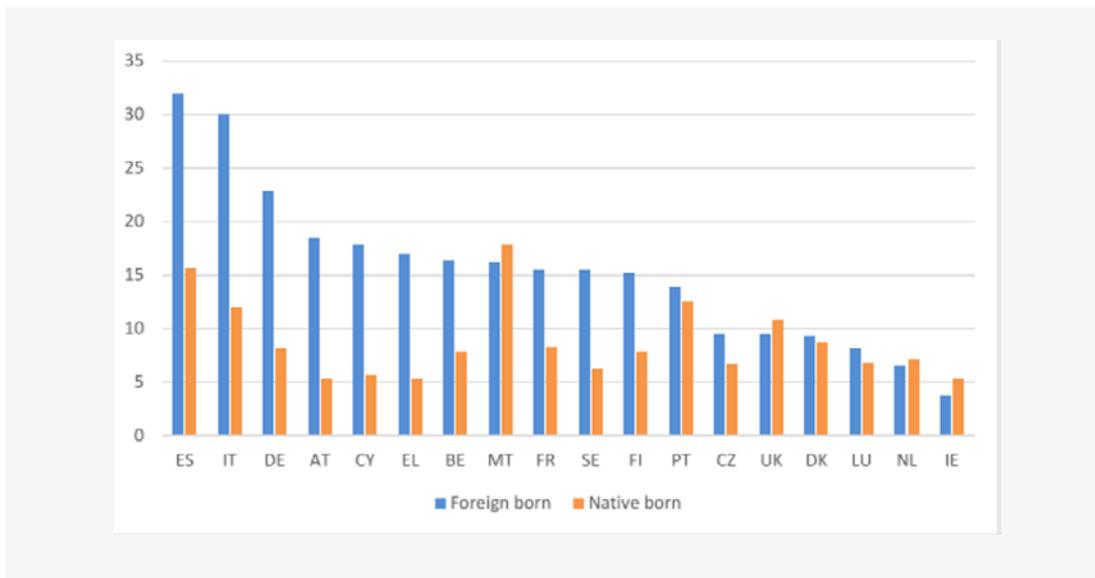


Figure 2. . ESL differences between native and foreign-born in the EU28 between 2011 and 2018. Retrieved from: Donlevy et al. (2019). Original Source: Eurostat

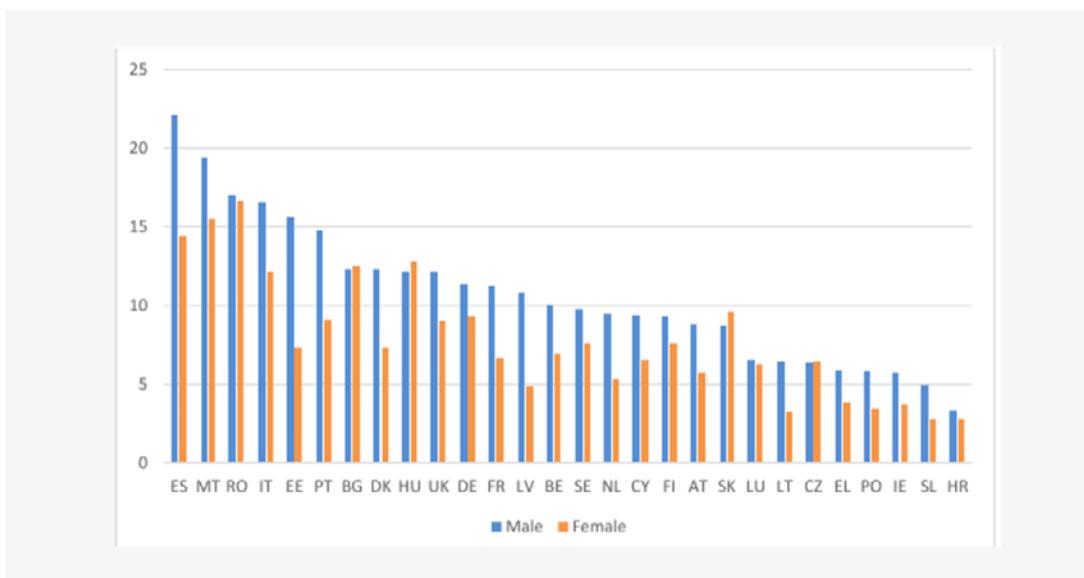


Figure 3. The early school leaving gender gap in the EU28 in 2011 and in 2018. Retrieved from: Donlevy et al. (2019). Original Source: Eurostat

Actions Needed in Localised Programs countering ESL

Based on the ESL trends in Europe, it is clear that school disengagement and ESL are complex phenomena closely tied to the broad implemented governmental policies but also the economic outlay of education in each

country. In other words, poorer countries who are already disadvantaged continue to disadvantage their students due to the lack of resources, while schools with better funding do better in preventing ESL. It has also become clear that the COVID pandemic has exacerbated already existing disadvantages.



**4. PRACTICES
PREVENTING
EARLY SCHOOL
LEAVING**





4. PRACTICES PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING¹⁴

The influence of ESL on students' achievement in education

The question of how early school leaving affects students' achievement in education and their future is complex. In the most basic sense, students who leave school early do not obtain a secondary school diploma, which later will affect their chances to find employment and access jobs that they may be interested in. However, when we reflect on the fact that ESL is not just the moment when students drop out of school, but it is often a gradual process of disengagement from the school, then we can appreciate the detrimental effects that ESL can have on students' achievement, in and outside of education.

What we do know are the multiple ways that ESL can diminish student's opportunities and chances to:¹⁵

- Learning how to learn, in other words, how to understand concepts and analyse issues. These are skills necessary not only in education but also in the labour market and one's personal life.
- Further develop themselves when think of education as lifelong learning.
- Integrate into the world of work.
- Manage and deal with stressful circumstances in their lives in a way that does not negatively affect their functioning in education, in the labour market, and in other spheres of life.
- Discover their talents, skills and potentials, ideally schools offer a place where

students can figure out who they are, what they want to be, and what they are good at. Students who start disengaging with schools may not benefit from this.

- Develop the core competencies for success, namely a positive sense of self, self-control, decision-making skills, moral system of belief, and prosocial connectedness.
- Refine social skills that allow students to network and connect with peers and adults and develop supporting networks which may include school mates, teachers, and adults who may be key in overcoming stressful circumstances, making decisions that foster students' life prospects, and accessing opportunities that may elevate students' learning.
- Organize student's potential for political decision making and to make their opinions heard. Ideally, schools are places that offer opportunities to practice political organizing in the forms of student representatives at the classroom and school level.
- Acquire, appreciate, and develop intercultural competences, which are a key for success in a globalized world and in intercultural education contexts.
- Clearly ESL does not only affect students' achievement in terms of obtaining a diploma but hinders finding employment afterwards. The next section introduces some of the most salient effective research-based practices to prevent ESL.

Effective practices to counteract ESL

This section presents 14 effective practices to address ESL. They are practically laid out to identify the existence of these practices in their original contexts in preventing early

14. The following practices were initially identified by Domiziana Turcatti and Martha Montero-Sieburth, with support from Rabiya Chaudhry in the report: "An in-depth review of the literature on 'best practices' for the prevention of early school leaving in schools with intercultural contexts" which was published on the International Association of Intercultural Education (IAIE) website on the 24th of June 2020. The report covers the research literature from the U. S. and Europe on early school leaving (ESL) that has been conducted over the past two decades and includes recent literature on the impact of the COVID pandemic on education that is being published in Europe.

15. Also see for instance:
<http://ftp.iza.org/dp7791.pdf>

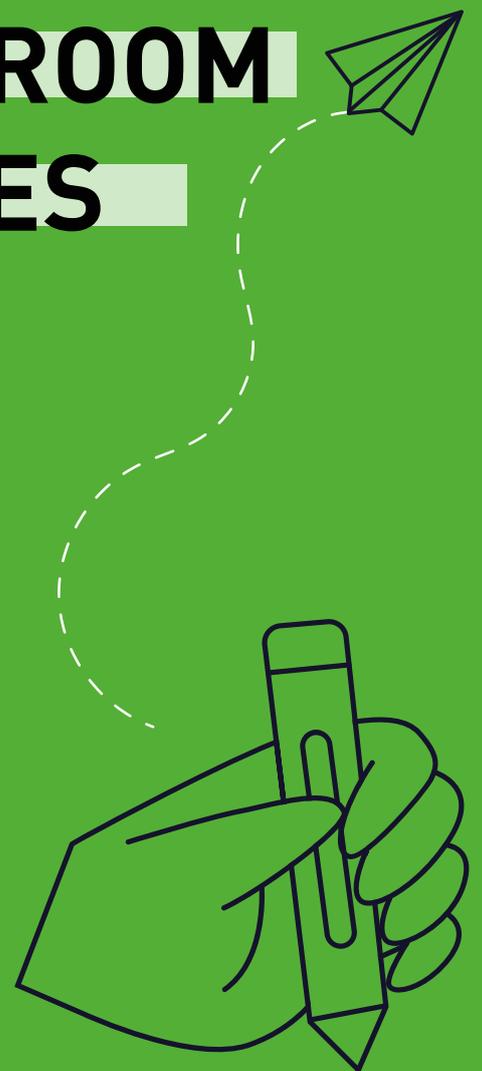
school leaving and to inspire teachers and educators to develop and adapt their own practices. Described are the meaning of each practice (*what is it about*), its essence (*how best understood*), its importance (*how relevant*), how it has been implemented (*how carried out*) and how it can be assessed or evaluated (*how effective is it*). In each definition, the criteria for the practice include the descriptors and the indicators which evaluate the performance of each.

The practices are clustered from the classroom level to the school wide level and are presented as follows:

- Part one deals with the set of practices that take place at the classroom level
- Part two deals with practices applied to the school environment
- Part three identifies school wide practices and policies that help to ensure that students do not disengage and subsequently leave school.



5. CLASSROOM PRACTICES





5. CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Establish a classroom environment that fosters a safe, empowering and enriching space for learning

What does it mean to establish a classroom environment that fosters learning and why is this important?

The ability to effectively manage a classroom environment is key to promoting socio-emotional and academic development. Ideally, developing ground rules, communication patterns and behavioural norms is done in cooperation with the students. This creates more engagement and a sense of owning the process. Students should also feel safe to be themselves, express their identities and share their opinions. Healthy classroom environments that foster learning motivate students to engage and stay in school and can consequently reduce school disengagement and ESL.

How can teachers establish a classroom environment that fosters learning?

Teachers can establish a classroom environment that fosters learning by:

- Co-creating clear ground rules, communication and behavioural norms from the first day in class, involving the students in this process. These should be positively (rewards that are broadly defined) rather than negatively phrased (talk about punishment).
- Avoiding personal attacks and insults. Identifying, together with the students, behaviours that are not acceptable in class and naming these. Restorative

Justice approaches have been found to work best when incidents take place.¹⁶

- Constantly reflecting on the classroom atmosphere and setting up mechanisms to assess the classroom atmosphere, and to improve the classroom atmosphere if needed.
- Communicating the ethos of the school if the school has an ethos of inclusion and/or human rights to students but also to the broader school community.
- Discussing with students (and also their families and if possible broader school community) issues related to exclusion and bullying. Clearly communicating the school's anti-bullying policies if they exist.
- Communicating with students about their responsibilities for developing a positive atmosphere in the classroom; discussing with them the process of how improvements can be made.
- Identifying misbehaviour and communicating about it immediately.
- Acting positively to re-establish the engagement of students.
- Rewarding positive behaviours that lead to learning, and cooperation and life skills.
- Keeping the focus on learning and not on disruptions or misconduct.

Sense of safety

Teachers should avoid practices that may lead to students feeling unsafe, unsupported and that might further isolate 'at risk' students further. Many so-called 'zero-tolerance' approaches do just that and should be avoided. They often target students that have 'special needs' (e.g. autism or ADHD) or have difficult home situations, thereby further marginalizing them. Also, authoritarian measures such as shouting, sending students to the principal's office to restore order in the classroom do not work well and can contribute to school disengagement

¹⁶. See e.g. <https://restorativejustice.org.uk/restorative-practice-education-0>



EXAMPLE:

Mapping school safety: students from each classroom (first as individuals and then as a class) indicate on a map of the school where the hot/red (unsafe) places are, yellow (moderately safe) places are, and green (safe) places are. Students and teachers discuss this in groups (classes) and present a road map forward to make unsafe spaces become more safe, and also make the school as a whole more safe.

and early school leaving. Expelling a disruptive student from class affects not only the expelled students' emotional and behavioural school engagement, but also other students' engagement. Students may perceive the school administration as arbitrary and unfair and may resent and fear school authorities, which can endanger their engagement and willingness to learn. Getting buy in from students with respect to the classroom atmosphere and decision-making processes can empower them and also teach them (learning by doing) about democratic decision-making.



EXAMPLE:

Teachers can create a measurement instrument called a thermometer of safety. Students are anonymously asked 5-6 'safety' questions at several points in the year such as: "I feel accepted by other students". The answers are translated into a visual thermometer that is hung up on the wall. The results are discussed with the students (and others in the school if all agree). The questions are asked 2-3 times during the school year to monitor progress.

Positive reinforcement has been shown to be a much more powerful tool than negative feedback.¹⁷ Teachers who provide constructive feedback that indicates to students what they have done well and what needs to be improved, encourage students and increase students' self-confidence. When students see that they are doing well and are made aware of what they need to improve, they are more likely to see themselves learning. In addition, students who are self-confident, and see themselves as actual learners, while being challenged by interesting and stimulating content, will try to meet whatever challenges there are and will learn. Provi-



EXAMPLE:

Students can be asked at the beginning of the year what their expectations are for the year (not only in terms of grades), how they think those expectations can be met and what role they can play in this process and what role they think the teacher can play. This can be sealed with an agreement or even a 'contract' that they draw up together. Teachers should then plan a follow-up. This process creates a communication pathway between teachers and their students.

ding students with cases in which they have to solve some moral or emotional issues is another step in a positive direction to social emotional learning. There are many well-established and comprehensive school-based socio-emotional programmes across Europe that have been shown to be effective.

17. See e.g.:
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42975454>

How can teachers evaluate the learning that is going on - in a broad sense?

Teachers need to be not only aware of the academic development of students (grades) but it is also important to focus on the socio-emotional competencies students demonstrate in working through issues in the classroom with teachers and peers. This awareness will help teachers address student engagement. Reflective student evaluations (e.g. using diaries) are also useful mechanisms that can be used throughout the year and may be represented through vignettes, case studies, or storytelling, etc. to eventually constitute evidence-based practices.

The Importance of High Teacher Expectations

Why is the communication and maintenance of high teacher expectations to students important?

Teachers who communicate and maintain high expectations of students, and design activities that challenge them to reach their full potential, help prevent and counteract school disengagement and early school leaving¹⁸. This is because low teacher expectations:

- Make students feel that there is not much to learn, the material is too easy and not challenging, and they become cognitively disengaged.
- Can lead to emotionally disengaged students, who might feel that their teacher discriminates against them and treats them as if they are dumb. Some students will feel insulted that teachers have such low expectations, while others 'escape' into the low expectations and do far less than they are capable of.

- Can lead to behaviourally disengaged students who actively stop participating in classroom activities, doing their homework, or coming to class.

How can teachers communicate and maintain high expectations for students?

Teachers can communicate and maintain high expectations by:

- Identifying and offering challenging instructional materials. Students can also be involved in such decisions, allowing them to 'own' the materials.
- Making internal attributions for success (you are smart, so you have the ability to do this) and external attributions for failure (you did not do well because of circumstances - you can change these influences).
- Giving all students a chance to express their ideas and show their abilities and knowledge.
- Working with students to identify goals that are challenging yet obtainable. Developing individual learning plans (ILP) for each student, with their input, is one way of accomplishing this.



EXAMPLE:

Cooperative, small group, learning methodologies such as the Jigsaw Method and Complex Instruction have been designed to allow all students to succeed. All students assume responsibilities for their own and their peers' learning in such methodologies. Group roles tend to rotate.

- Telling and showing students that they can do well, thereby building their confidence.
- Praising students for work well done but being genuine in such praise.

18. See for instance: Callingham, M. (2016). Engaging student input on student engagement in learning. *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 12(1), 3-22.

<https://doi.org/10.18546/IJSD.12.1.01>; Tarabini, A., Curran, M., Montes, A., & Parcerisa, L. (2019). Can educational engagement prevent Early School Leaving? Unpacking the school's effect on educational success. *Educational Studies*, 45(2), 226-241.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2018.1446327>



- Giving constructive and concrete feedback that show students what they have done well and what they can improve.

Student expectations of teachers

Less often the focus of interventions is student expectations of teachers. To truly create a positive and supportive atmosphere in the classroom, students need to believe that teachers are working in their best interest, that they ‘know what they are doing and talking about’, and that they can be trusted. Often students do not trust their teachers ‘to do the right thing’ when negative social behaviors such as bullying take place.¹⁹ They will then not be motivated to let teachers know there are problems with such negative, and partly or wholly invisible behaviors.

What are different ways to evaluate teacher expectations?

Identifying the types of expectations that teachers have can be evaluated by developing indexes of how individual students respond to such expectations and where they situate themselves in fulfilling such expectations. Introducing flexible and diverse evaluation measures means that students are not just evaluated on how well they do on tests and exams, but on an array of other measures that test their knowledge and competence and focus on their participation and behaviour in learning. Having flexible and diverse evaluation measures means teacher adapt their expectations to the specific needs and circumstances of each of their students and align their teaching to the learning of their students based on evidence of the ways they can best learn. Non-cognitive evaluations which demonstrate student’s social responses to such expectations can be used and may include theatrical performances, role plays, poetry writing and demonstrations. In

terms of academic progress, teachers can develop charts of their student’s progress based on meeting such expectations and use the results from tests and completion of projects as evidence. Students should also self-assess their development or lack of it.

Students, who consistently do not get good grades, tend to disengage from school, do not feel confident, and may start thinking that school is not for them, increasing the likelihood of school disengagement²⁰. Introducing flexible and diverse evaluation measures may allow students to feel they are understood by the school and need not fall behind.

EXAMPLE:

Teachers can introduce the use of portfolios of homework or other assignments which can be evaluated at the end of the year and represent the student’s best work. Teachers can explain, for instance, that the portfolio should contain at least 5 essays on 5 topics of choice covered during the semester and these can be graded accordingly by the student and the teacher. One step beyond this is to have students (especially secondary school) co-create their own curriculum and develop multiple projects around their main focus.

Exams and tests, the most common way of assessing students, rarely reflect students’ total learning. Some students may feel anxious and stressed about taking exams, which negatively affects their performance. Exams that are ‘language heavy’ disadvantage students whose home language is different from the main school language. Others might not be able to study and apprehend

19. See for instance: Smith P. K., Pepler D., Rigby K. (2004). *Bullying in schools: How successful can interventions be?* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ; De Luca, L., Nocentini, A., and Menesini, E. (2019). The Teacher’s Role in Preventing Bullying. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10:18-30. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01830

20. See e.g. <https://pedsinreview.aappublications.org/content/26/7/233>

concepts and content as they would in less stressful situations. Yet others may feel they need different approaches to understand the subject matter, and to respond effectively. As Howard Gardner (1993)²¹ has shown, we need to employ the so-called multiple intelligences of students and adapt our teaching and evaluation to meet their responses by providing a greater repertoire of evaluation measures.

While teachers can not altogether dismiss tests and exams, they can introduce other evaluation measures that are adapted to the learning styles of students:

- Pass and fail grades.
- Participation grades.
- Using so-called narrative evaluations, where no grades are given but strengths and room for improvement.
- Student-submitted portfolio evaluations.
- Homework using other different grading criteria such as percentages in calculating final grade.
- Averaging student own grading of self against the actual teacher grades.



EXAMPLE:

For many minority communities, affirmation of their language, history and culture, is critical, as is communicating high expectations. Scaffolding learning and positive communication channels with their communities may allow them to gain references of what is expected of them within a given school and its own cultural ethos. Establishing positive communication with parents will provide commitment to education

Teachers can also more explicitly introduce participation in their grading system determined by whether students contribute to the class, do their homework, and bring their school material to class.

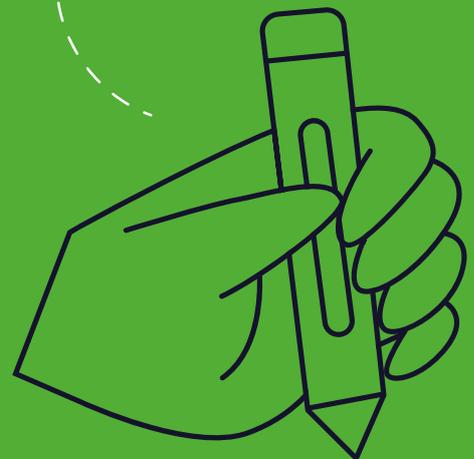
In schools where there is language diversity and students' first language may not be the same as the language of instruction, teachers might accept homework in the student's home language, especially if the teacher or others including interpreters at the school are fluent in that language. Students home languages should not be viewed as a deficit but as a resource. Students with diverse cultural backgrounds may also need coaching by teachers on how to address the national cultural expectations of the school, which are often found in the content of their textbooks but may not be shared by their own cultural norms. A bond of trust needs to be especially important between the teacher and such students.

How can the use of flexible and diverse evaluation measures be assessed?

Teachers will need to experiment with diverse evaluation measures which match student's learning, particularly students with specific learning styles and with different approaches to learning. Consideration of migrant students and exceptional students requires that teachers adjust the different measures to better assess these students. Such measures will need to reflect any grading criteria which is clearly understood and mastered by students, and also their families.

21. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/multiple-intelligences.html>
This site is in multiple languages

6. PRACTICES TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT





6. PRACTICES TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Develop a positive and inclusive environment in a school that promotes student success

What does it mean to develop a positive and inclusive environment that promotes student success and what are ways to accomplish this?

Developing a positive and inclusive environment requires two major conditions (1) that everyone in the school believes that students can do well and can achieve, irrespective of their backgrounds or characteristics; and (2) that opportunities for all students to be successful will be afforded so that students can recognise their potential.

This can be accomplished by:

- Celebrating students' successes within the school environment (e.g. posting their achievements, making them visible, creating school collages).
- Creating an inclusive and/or human rights-based ethos in the school that is clearly communicated to all stakeholders.
- Creating after school activities that engage students.
- Creating programs, both in and out of school (extra-curricular activities), to help students think about their future.
- Providing students with academic and career development opportunities within the school.
- Making sure student voices are heard and taken seriously, for instance through (elected) student councils.
- Closing the digital divide by assuring all students have the technological knowledge and equipment to succeed.



EXAMPLE:

The work of students can be exhibited on the classroom walls, school corridors and communal spaces. The school walls provide a school identity and pride in the school. This also gives some ownership of the school to the students. Different places in the school can be adorned with a variety of languages, confirming the school is 'language friendly'.

Schools can also have tutors, school graduates or cultural mediators share their stories and meet with students to discuss the challenges and rewards of transitioning to secondary school or transitioning to higher education.



EXAMPLE:

Students can participate in after school clubs or activities such as sports clubs, human rights clubs, environmental clubs or gay-straight alliances (GSAs). They can also have the opportunity to attend extra courses where students are motivated to learn more about topics not necessarily covered in class. Schools can also partner with community organisations that offer volunteering opportunities to students. By volunteering, students have the chance to learn new skills, develop social capital, find mentors and friends outside the school context, and develop a sense of responsibility towards society. Service Learning, becoming more common across Europe, offers an opportunity to connect to community organizations with the school context, and develop a sense of responsibility towards society.



How can a positive and inclusive environment be evaluated?

School-wide measures of the school's success in promoting inclusion and a positive atmosphere can be accomplished through reflective practice carried out by teachers and school staff with parents and students themselves. Revisiting the vision, mission and ethos of the school at regular times can help with reflection on whether inclusion goals are being met. Teacher retreats, seminar sessions, and conversations with student councils can also provide valuable feedback.

Promote core competences for the success of students in the school environment

What does it mean to promote core competences?

Some of the core competences that foster student inclusion and success have been identified as²²:

- Having a positive sense of self.
- Being able to communicate effectively with others.
- Self-reflection abilities.
- Having self-control.
- Decision-making skills.
- Having a moral belief system.
- Prosocial connectedness to others.
- Being resilient in the face of adversity.
- Being aware of others' needs and having the ability to take action to address those.
- Being able to resist peer pressure.
- Feeling comfortable with various kinds of diversity.
- Having a sense of belonging to the school.

- Being flexible in one's approach.

Promoting these core competencies for the success of students in schools means that the school, teachers and staff become aware of the role that these core competences can have in supporting students in reaching their full potential at the school level, can have in improving student - teacher interactions and can have in promoting an inclusive classroom environment. It also means that teachers and other stakeholders have the ability to nurture these competences among students. Such core competencies are directly and indirectly related to both students' academic success and to reducing school disengagement and early school leaving.

How can schools foster these core competencies?

Schools can foster, for instance, these core competencies²³, by:

- Developing structural opportunities for students to express their thoughts, opinions and feelings.
- Setting up spaces to discuss difficult issues.
- Using art and other creative methods to address problems and dilemmas.
- Using moral dilemmas as an educational tool.
- Developing pro-social situations with teachers.
- Developing pro-social partnering with buddies or peers.
- Encouraging students to take initiative.
- Setting up situations where students have the opportunity to help each other and the community.

Schools and teachers can help students by creating safe spaces for students to express themselves and share their dreams, goals

22. See: Bradshaw, C. P., O'Brennan, L. M., & McNeely, C. A. (2008). *Core competencies and the prevention of school failure and early school leaving*. In N. G. Guerra & C. P. Bradshaw (Eds.), *Core competencies to prevent problem behaviours and promote positive youth development*. (pp.19-32). Wiley.

23. See: Bradshaw, C. P., O'Brennan, L. M., & McNeely, C. A. (2008). *Core competencies and the prevention of school failure and early school leaving*. In N. G. Guerra & C. P. Bradshaw (Eds.), *Core competencies to prevent problem behaviours and promote positive youth development*. (pp.19-32). Wiley.



EXAMPLE:

The Ubuntu method, which originates in Africa, is a very effective approach that can be used for educators who wish to develop competences in diverse classrooms and who want to create an accepting school culture that can counter school disengagement. It focuses on the development of five core competences and is highly sensitive to cultural . At a first level, there is a focus on the individual: self- knowledge, self-confidence and resilience. On the second level there is more focus on relational skills such as empathy and service.

concerns and fears. School counsellors and psychologists can work closely with other staff and the student council to promote well-being throughout the school. Some schools have initiatives where selected students are given training in psychology and conflict resolution and then hold office hours. Students can find it less intimidating to talk with peers instead of their teachers. Buddy systems, where younger students are paired to older students can help both develop a sense of community. In such situations, older students mentor younger students and help them



EXAMPLE:

Teachers can work with students to develop projects around peer pressure. Students reflect (with other students) on times when they feel they have been pressured to act in ways that might be harmful to others. They then play this out through drama presentations to the class. The teachers and students can talk about how they can resist peer pressure in similar future situations.

deal with challenges they face at school. The older students feel a sense of purpose and efficacy. Also, teachers can post their office hours, let students know where to find them and invite them to talk.

How can these core competencies be evaluated?

The efforts to develop the competences above need to be known and owned by everyone in the school. Indicators of how each are achieved can be formulated into student observation checklists, and to student generated responses to surveys based on these competencies. Students can also self-evaluate their progress.

Train teachers in diversity and reflexivity

What is it meant by training teachers in diversity and reflexivity and why is this important?

European schools have become increasingly diverse. Training teachers in diversity and reflexivity means they are provided with the necessary support (theories, tools, and methods) to become confident in identifying the types of diversity (sometimes visible and sometimes invisible) in their classrooms and value diversity as a teaching and learning resource in their classrooms. Training in reflexivity requires that teachers utilize self/group reflective tools that help them identify how their teaching affects students, what they are doing well and what needs to be improved.

Training teachers in diversity helps teachers²⁴: (1) develop cultural awareness of themselves and their students, (2) better understand the students in their classrooms and why there might be processes that prevent students from reaching their full potential, (3) identify the types of learning which caters to

24. See e.g.: Ciuffetelli P. D. (2017). The impact of professional development on poverty, schooling, and literacy practices: Teacher narratives and reformation of mindset. *Cogent Education*, 4(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1279381>;

Tarabini, A., Curran, M., Montes, A., & Parcerisa, L. (2019). Can educational engagement prevent Early School Leaving? Unpacking the school's effect on educational success. *Educational Studies*, 45(2), 226–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2018.1446327>



the needs of a multicultural and ethnically diverse group of students and society. Teachers who are culturally aware of the background, challenges and strengths of their students tend to devise more inclusive teaching strategies. Students, their families and their communities can help teachers in this process. It also often means expanding the curriculum to make it more inclusive. Training teachers in reflexivity helps them become more competent in self-reflection and helps them ask themselves in what ways they promote or disadvantage their students, so that they can adjust their teaching accordingly.

Never before, due to the internet and the world wide web, has it been more possible to bring the outside world into the classroom and to connect students to the outside world. Guest speakers from all over the world and from a variety of cultural backgrounds can enter into dialogue with students. Students can develop projects with other students on the other side of the planet. Examples of this are so-called 'web quests'²⁵ and E-twinning initiatives²⁶. Students can visit museums from all over the world and even get virtual tours.

How can schools train teachers in diversity and reflexivity?

- Provide training that helps teachers effectively respond to the diversity among their students, and also the diversity encountered in society.
- Familiarizing teachers with multicultural and multilingual materials and training them how to use them effectively.
- Overcome biases and stereotypes, both among teachers and students, about often excluded students and their communities.
- Promote intercultural understanding and learning; seeing diversity as a positive resource.
- Provide self-reflection and reflexivity

training as a complementary step in diversity awareness.

- Provide reflective tools to teachers that help them assess their own functioning when identifying and addressing tensions, misunderstandings, exclusionary processes and bullying.

Training teachers, educators, and school staff in diversity and reflexivity helps them become more capable of taking advantage of the diversity found among the student body. It also makes teachers aware of the often subtle biases they harbour. These subtle biases can have long lasting negative effects on students and their functioning in school. Diversity training also prepares teachers to not only identify the cultural diversity in their classrooms, but helps them to design curriculum, projects and activities that are more inclusive of students' diversity.

Evaluating the training of teachers in diversity and reflexivity

Evaluating what has been learned about diversity and reflexivity, and subsequently implemented by teachers after teacher training should be evident in the school. Monitoring students' sense of belonging, and how teachers are promoting this among students from all backgrounds, will help identify where more work needs to be done.

EXAMPLE:

Schools can make conscious attempts to be more inclusive and respectful when discussing (religious) holidays, dietary habits, and to also use school-books where possible that are more culturally sensitive and do not contain (often hidden) biases.

²⁵ <https://webquest.org/>
Such webquests have involved schools from all over the world

²⁶ <https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm>
This initiative from the EU is available for schools across Europe.



EXAMPLE:

Teachers can sit together and use the so-called 'critical incident method' to identify occasions where cultural or religious differences have led to conflicts or misunderstandings. Teachers discuss what happened, different perspectives on what happened, who was involved, what strategies were used to solve the incident/conflict and what strategies would be effective in the future. Involving school social workers, school psychologists and cultural mediators in such discussions can be very beneficial.

Evaluations of teachers and their ability to manage diversity issues in the classroom and school can include.

- Teachers should be able to demonstrate facilitation skills, namely those skills that help educators interact with culturally diverse students and promote peer-to-peer interactions in ways that are respectful of diversity.
- Teachers need to develop the competences that allow them to effectively work with multicultural materials. Sensitivity to social justice issues should be apparent.
- Teachers' self-reflective activities and classroom-based activities should also show ample evidence of their training in reflexivity.
- Teachers can keep a diary during the school year, writing down their expectations and goals, but also their concerns, fears, feelings etc. At the end of the school year they go back and read through their diary.
- Retreats in which teachers come together and discuss their reflections add value to the school-wide process of reflexivity.

Foster positive relationships between students and teachers

What does it mean to foster positive relationships between students and teachers and why are they important²⁷?

Fostering positive relationships between students and teachers means that teacher-student interactions and relationships are characterized by respect, tolerance, empathy, care, and interest.

Positive student-teacher relationships and interactions act as one of the most important protective factors against school disengagement and ESL. They encourage the academic and emotional well-being of students. Students come to recognize that their teachers care about their progress and students gain confidence in their academic work. Teachers who celebrate and reinforce their student's abilities help to create a positive and 'can do' atmosphere in the classroom.

How can teachers foster positive relationships with their students?

Teachers can foster positive relationships with their students by:

- Knowing and pronouncing students' names correctly.
- Calling equitably on all students and avoiding having 'favourites'.
- Giving wait time and hints to help students answer questions.
- Involving students in decision making about activities in the classroom.
- Respecting the rights of students.
- Giving students responsibilities in class and in the school.
- Telling students that they have the ability to do well.

²⁷ See: Boyton, M., & Boyton, C. (2005). *Educator's guide to preventing and solving discipline problems*. ASCD.



- Correcting students in a constructive way.
- Showing care and interest in the students.
- Being genuine when giving praise (meaning it).
- Showing that they too are not perfect and make mistakes; apologizing where needed.
- Taking student complaints seriously.
- Being patient.
- Focusing on positive reinforcement rather than punishment.

How can positive relationships between teachers and students be evaluated?

The degree of engagement between teachers and students should be a marker of positive relationships, but how students refer to their teachers in their classes, with peers, and parents and how teachers discuss their students, with other teachers and administrators are signs of the mutual teacher and student respect and positive feelings they maintain. The fact that students stay motivated and in school is partly because they see their teacher's investment in their learning as a strong positive indicator. Anonymous surveys can be given to students to assess how safe they feel in school, how appreciated they feel they are, etc.

Support positive relationships between peers

What does it mean to support positive relationships between peers and why is this important?

Schools that foster positive relationships among peers deploy strategies that allow students to develop friendships, and supportive, trustworthy, healthy relationships. Peers play a fundamental role in promoting students' educational success, school en-

gagement, and school belonging. Children and youth often turn to their peers to do well at school and to find the support to cope effectively with emotionally and psychologically challenging moments and to boost their self-esteem. This is especially the case during adolescence.²⁸

How can schools support positive relationships between peers?

Schools can foster positive relationships between peers by:

- Creating opportunities where students can interact, collaborate and get to know each other; teachers can step back a bit (more and more) but should remain nearby to offer support and guidance.
- Developing a human rights culture in the school and classroom and involving the students in this process.
- Organizing after school and extra-curricular activities such as school clubs, field trips and summer camps.
- Promoting educational activities that require teamwork among students.
- Making sure that group activities are educational but also fun and making sure that all students are actively engaged in groupwork.
- Introducing peer education and peer tutoring programs.
- Helping students develop intercultural competence and reward progress in this area.
- Addressing and counteracting bullying, instead of ignoring it; setting ground rules together with the students around this behaviour.
- Avoiding so-called zero tolerance approaches. Though such approaches seem to make common sense they have been shown to be ineffective because they

28. See: Stanton-Salazar, R. D., & Spina, S. U. (2005). Adolescent peer networks as a context for social and emotional support. *Youth & Society*, 36(4), 379-417. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0044118X04267814>

shut down communication and tend to marginalize students who are already at risk of school disengagement and ESL.

To promote positive relationships between students, peer tutoring systems or study groups can be established. Older students can help younger students. They not only offer an additional opportunity for students to get to know each other, but also help students develop caring and cooperative relationships with each other, by virtue that they are supposed to help each other out in completing a task or preparing for a test.

The use of restorative justice practices²⁹



EXAMPLE:

In partnering with parents' businesses, schools can create liaisons to be made serving the community and the parents. For example, if a student's parents own a bakery, schools can ask them to provide the bread and cakes for school parties and celebrations. Also, schools can prioritize hiring people from the local community to strengthen community bonds.

can be effective in promoting positive peer relationships and counteracting bullying. Restorative justice practices are about restoring justice in a way that is fair to the 'victim' and that does not put down the 'perpetrator' but instead helps the person who caused harm to reconsider their action and put themselves in the shoes of the victim. In this case, restorative justice practices which are student-focused interventions that try to change the perspective of students who have misbehaved while repairing the harm to victims are effective practices

in dealing with students' misbehaviour and bullying. More significantly, the use of restorative justice practices helps improve the climate and ethos of the school by reinstating what is accepted in the school and what is not.

Finally, *intercultural educational compe-*



EXAMPLE:

Students tend to develop friendship circles based on interests, culture, language music preferences, etc. and often have trouble meeting and 'hanging out with others'. The famous 'geek' and 'nerd' subcultures are commonplace. In some schools they organize moments, several times a year, where students sit together with somebody they do not know at lunch and have a conversation. Such 'Mix it Up at Lunch Days' are structured events and have shown that students often extend their networks, or at least view 'others' more favourably afterwards.

tence among all students promotes positive relationships among students because it 1) allows students with diverse backgrounds to communicate and learn from each other, and 2) counteracts bullying and stereotyping, and helps form intercultural friendships (e.g. inter- class, inter-gender, inter-ethnic). Intercultural competence focuses on the intercultural attitudes of students, their preconceived ideas and attitudes towards others³⁰.

29 For example see the following videos:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgw7gY9fbz8>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf22JzXbXEI>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfiGiA2bpoY>

30 See: Deardorff, D. K. & Deardorff, D. L. (2000). OSEE tool. Presentation at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, N.C. Nurture parental/family/community engagement



How can positive relationships among peers in school be evaluated?

There are multiple ways to evaluate peer relationships, some of which are peer initiated and others which are initiated by teachers and school staff. Some of the teacher-initiated ways in which peer groups and their relationships can be evaluated is to be aware of where and with whom peers “hang out” (cafeteria, playground, activity rooms, sports groups, etc.) and to assess the types of relationships that persist. Peer-related evaluations focus on dialogue sessions with students (sometimes through student councils), which help to raise awareness of peer issues but also help develop honest talk and discussion of critical situations. Some of these discussions may include intercultural learning sessions and restorative justice dialogues.

Nurture parental/family/ community engagement

What is it meant by nurturing parental/family/community engagement and why is it important?

Fostering parental/family engagement means that schools and educators make an active, conscious effort in involving parents and families in the learning process of their children in school to create continuity between home and school.

Parental/familial and community engagement in students’ education is central to prevent school disengagement and to enhance students’ educational outcomes for multiple reasons³¹:

- Parents and families involved in the school feel welcomed, listened to, and respected by educators and acquire an

understanding and an appreciation of the educational system. Alternatively, when parents do not perceive the educational system benefits their children or they perceive it going against their own cultural values, they may discourage children to embrace education.

- Parents and families involved in the school and learning process of their children are more likely to create a home environment that fosters their children’s learning. Being aware of the curriculum, the homework or exams that their children are supposed to do or prepare for, enables parents to monitor their children, check if they do homework, regulate their children’s non-educational activities (e.g. how much time is spent to play video-games, watch TV, or with friends), and think about family educational activities (e.g. going to museums, going to the library).

How can schools and educators nurture parental/family/ community engagement?

Schools and educators can nurture parental/familial engagement by:

- Opening the school to parents and families.
- Inviting parents to presentations (e.g. music, plays, debates) by both teachers and students.
- Establishing an effective parents-teachers communication system. Where needed, bringing in interpreters from minority communities who might not fully understand school routines (such as disciplinary measures). Separate presentations to the parents from minority (language) communities can sometimes be necessary, also to create the safe space to talk about issues that affect their community.
- Supporting parents who have been in the country for longer to become translators and resource for other parents.

31. See: Flores, R. Q., Morgan, P., Rivera, L., & Clark, C. (2019). Latinx family engagement in schools and surrounding communities: Assessing the impact of parent (and other family member) development on improving student educational outcomes at gene ward elementary school. *Education Sciences*, 9(2), 149-159. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020149>

- Providing opportunities for parents to contribute to school activities and events, also extracurricular activities.
- Organising regular school gatherings where a range of educational topics to be explored with parents, also for instance an evaluation of the school year with the parents at the end of year.
- Turning the school into a resource for parents.
- Organize large community arts projects (murals, sculptures, historical monuments, etc.)
- Organizing coffee mornings for parents.
- Where possible, opening up the school after hours for parents to learn and take courses (e.g. language). This can especially promote among underserved communities that the school is there for them and their children, not an 'alien institution'.
- Setting up programs where parents and families' opinions and views about the school and learning process of their children is valued and addressed.

If parents or families do not have access to the Internet, schools and educators may have to think about alternative ways to communicate with parents.

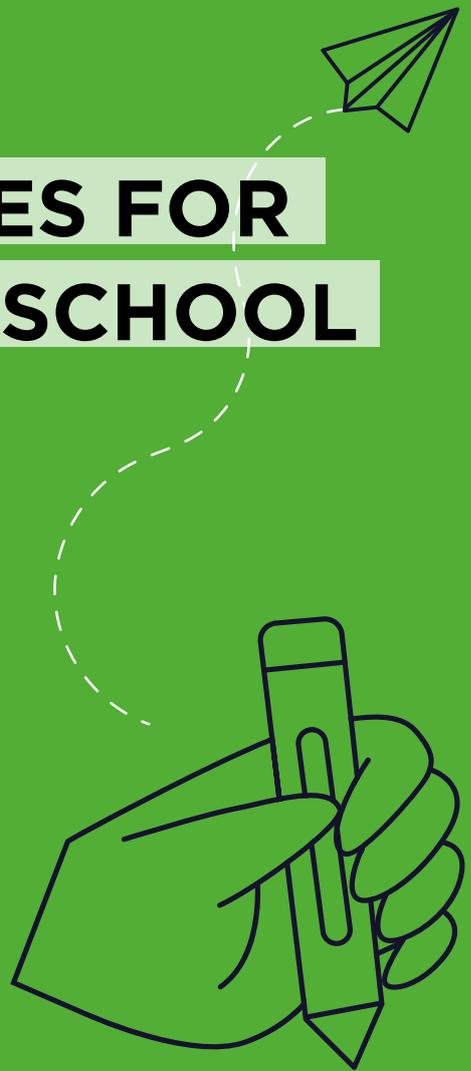
How can schools evaluate the engagement of parents/families?

Evaluation of parents' engagement can take place both within and outside of the school:

- Within the school, the number of parent groups, meetings, sessions and activities that are parent- initiated can be assessed through observation and in take forms. Parent organized activities and their frequency count in such evaluations.
- Some parents do not speak the language of the school. It is critical to find ways to include them in evaluations. This can be done, for instance, through google translate, or on-line translation programs, which are becoming much better.
- Teacher or tutor home visits are also ways in which parent engagement can be assessed, since parents will tend to detail their concerns about their children's education and the teachers can gather such data to better support parents.
- Phoning parents using WhatsApp, emailing parents or sending surveys to parents is still another means to engage parents singularly or in groups.



7. PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOL



7. PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Promote inclusion in the classroom and in learning

What does it mean to promote inclusion in the classroom and in learning and why is it important?

EXAMPLE:

Bon voyage!

A role-playing scenario for students in multicultural settings: this inclusive practice aims to raise student awareness about cultural diversity and features that different cultures share. Each student gets a passport. Students pretend to be a traveller, who goes to different places and during his or her journey becomes familiar with the local cuisine. Students interact as a team, expressing themselves in different ways: talking, body language, painting and acting. Students present their artifacts, drawings, paintings and writings, motivating their class mates to become familiar with different cultures. They also learn different recipes from around the world

Promoting inclusion in the classroom and in the learning implies that steps are taken to ensure as much as possible that all children are reaching their full potential. Instead of promoting the learning of the students who are already engaged in the classroom and who actively participate in the activities, teachers need to deploy strategies that engage students less engaged, who tend to be absent or do not participate in proposed ed-

ucational and extracurricular activities. Finding the reasons why students do not participate is essential in order to make sure they can be included. Often this entails gaining the student's trust to enter into a meaningful conversation.

How can schools and teachers promote inclusion in the classroom and in the school?

Schools and teachers can promote inclusion in the classroom and in the school³², for instance, by:

EXAMPLE:

Teachers can enhance inclusion and participation using collaborative learning which can take the form of:

- Using collaborative online documents
- Cooperative exams (students are asked to work together to complete an exam question)
- Gallery Walks (students respond to prompts and each other's comments)
- Jigsaw Method (students gain expertise in one aspect, then peer-teach and work cooperatively to complete a task)
- Think-Pair-Share (students think about a response to a question, discuss with partner, then share with the class)
- Group Investigation
- Complex Instruction
- Worksheets (in-class assignments)
- Wrappers (self-monitoring activities surrounding an assignment).

32. See e.g. Callingham, M. (2016). Engaging student input on student engagement in learning. *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 12(1), 3-22.



- Establishing ways of identifying exclusion processes and developing strategies to address these. This can imply receiving training or have teachers take courses focusing on this issue. Ideally, such courses are on-going in nature so that constant feedback moments are built in.
- Involving the school's psychologist or social worker, who can work with teachers on promoting socio-emotional learning in the school.
- Working with NGOs and others to implement effective anti-bullying and socio-emotional learning programs.
- Having a school ethos that mentions inclusion in its philosophy and mission.
- Rewarding behaviors among students who take initiative to include peers who tend to be excluded.
- Using project-based learning.

How can the inclusion of students in the classroom and learning be evaluated?

The evaluation of how inclusive a classroom and learning can, for instance, be conducted through observations (who is not participating), through anonymous questionnaires given to students about their sense of belonging. Giving students access to school psychologists and social workers, as well as encouraging students to talk with them once in a while (can be structured) can provide information on how inclusive a school is. The consequence might be changing policies, developing new projects that promote inclusion, seeking outside assistance (e.g. training), making small adjustments, or a sense of pride that all is going well.

Develop a school culture/ethos that knows students and families

What does it mean to develop a school culture/ethos that gets to know students and families, and why is it important?

Developing a school culture/ethos that gets to know students means all the people in the school are committed to understanding the composition and diversity of the student body, identifying the needs and values of students and their families, and knowing what they consider important. Clearly the socio-economic background of the students, their race/ethnicity, religion, gender, learning abilities, as well as their previous migration histories are important predictors of whether some students may be more at 'risk' than others to disengage and to eventually leave school early. Yet, knowing the composition of one's school's is not about labelling students as more at 'risk' than others, but rather devising strategies that allow all students to feel included and attended to in an effort to prevent and address exclusion.





EXAMPLE:

A key element of outreach too, and communication with, parents is to see them as a resource. Using positive role models from the community, especially those who overcame adversity (and might have even thought about leaving school), can inspire young people and also help them realize they can succeed.

The culture of the school should reflect the communities that it serves, and the representation of parents and students should be evident throughout the school in depictions, pictures, or statements that evoke the ethos of the school culture. If the school has done its job in knowing the parents, parent groups for decision making, organizing events, or simply helping out in classrooms should be common. Likewise, students and their ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be recognized through events, symbols, or celebrations at the school. Honouring the cultural mosaic that is created by the representation of all, including the teacher, student, administrators, staff, and parents within the school is a statement that the parents and students represent the culture/ethos of the school.

How can schools get to know their students and families?

Schools can get to know their students by:

- Gaining insight into the main characteristics of the student body and how this might be changing.
- Training teachers better identify the diverse needs of students.
- Fostering collaborations with professionals, both in the school and outside of the school, to devise strategies of inclusion and understanding students' diverse needs. Cooperation with counsellors, psychologists, cultural experts and interpreters, as experts, can help the school develop a fuller picture.
- Setting up meetings with (informal) community leaders.
- Monitoring students over time.
- Engaging their families in multiple ways: outreach, dialogue, meetings, etc.

Establishing an early warning system that detects those students who have started to dis-

engage with the schools helps monitor the progress of student to prevent early school leaving. Indicators of early school leaving can readily be identified from patterns of absenteeism, drops in grades, socio-emotional distress, and inappropriate behaviour.

How can the culture/ethos of a school that knows its parents and students be evaluated?

School staff can reflect at agreed upon intervals whether they are sufficiently aware of the dynamics taking place in the local community and whether the school is successfully taking advantage of the local cultures. Conversations with parents and (informal) local leaders can also lead to an assessment of whether the school is sufficiently addressing community needs and jointly strategies can be devised to make the school more inclusive.

Embed the culture of students in the ethos of the school

What does it mean to embed the culture of students in the school ethos and why is it important?³³

Welcoming and embedding the cultures, identities, and interests of students in the school means that students see themselves represented in the school in a variety of

33. See e.g. O'Gorman, E., Salmon, N., & Murphy, C. A. (2016) Schools as sanctuaries: A systematic review of contextual factors which contribute to student retention in alternative education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(5), 536-551. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1095251>



ways. Seeing one's culture represented in the curriculum of the school and in the activities that are shaped around students' interests and identities can motivate students from various backgrounds.

How can the culture of students be embedded in the ethos of the school?

- By using the school environment to connect with students' cultures.
- Making minor adjustments to the curriculum, for instance in the readings done in class. Including students' interests and cultures in the curriculum, even having students co-create curriculum. This is especially relevant in social studies, geography, history, civics, ethics, etc.
- By allowing students to speak their own language.
- Encouraging students to conduct research on their own cultural backgrounds when doing project-based work. This can include connecting online (and interviewing) to relatives and communities that their parents or grandparents came from.
- Explicitly reflecting the culture of students in the school's vision and mission.
- By representing the students' cultures in the school environment.
- By inviting parents or (informal) community leaders to co-teach specific lessons to connect home to school cultures.



EXAMPLE:

School's communal spaces can host students' performances in the form of theatre, slam poetry, or sports competitions. The digital school environment can be also used to incorporate videos or blogs made by students as part of the classroom activities or school's projects.

The school environment can be a medium to connect with students' cultures in that students can be asked to produce self-portraits, murals and exhibitions of their identities and cultures as part of the classroom



EXAMPLE:

Students' cultures and languages can be represented in the school by displaying quotes written in different languages and chosen by students and teachers in the classrooms, corridors, and communal spaces

Students' cultures and languages can be represented in the school by actively selecting, where possible, staff and teachers from diverse cultures, so that students see themselves reflected and represented not only in the school environment but also in the school staff.

and schools' activities and which, with their parent's approval, can be exhibited in the school's classrooms, walls, and corridors, and communal spaces.

To welcome students' cultures, students should be allowed to speak their home languages. In some schools this is still not allowed or even punished. Migrant children and youth with a migration background are faced with the pressure to speak only the language of the host country. When students are not allowed to speak their heritage language, migrant students receive the message that the school is not theirs, that they don't belong to the school unless they conform. Furthermore, when migrant children and youth are not allowed to speak their own language, other students miss out on the opportunity to learn about and appreciate other cultures and other languages.

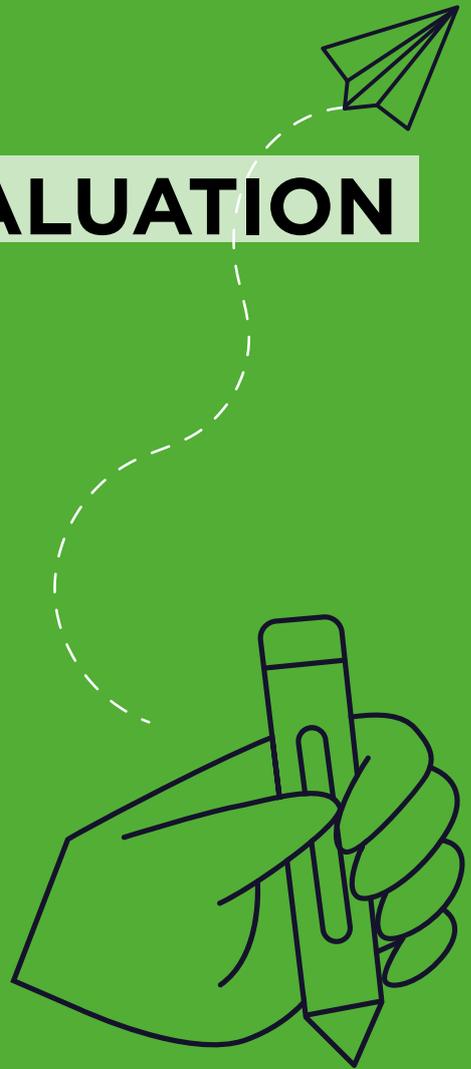
Shaping the curriculum around students' identities and interests is an effective measure to embed the culture of students in the ethos of the school. When students learn about topics that speak to their identity, background, culture and interests, they are more likely to feel included in the school, develop a sense of connectedness and belonging with the school, motivating them to continue their education. Even though teachers and schools often have little power to choose their own curriculum and need to comply with national guidelines, teachers can shape assignments, class activities, and projects that speak to students' knowledge and interests. They can also create short modules that add those sections to the curriculum.

How can embedding the culture of students in the school ethos be evaluated?

Observational tools, poetry readings, blogs, projects, after school activities or theatrical performances are all means to evaluate to what extent the culture of the students is being embedded in the school. The curriculum itself can be analysed to identify what elements of the students' culture is missing in the regular curriculum.



8. SELF EVALUATION





8. SELF EVALUATION

Conduct critical and realistic school self-evaluations

What does it mean to conduct critical and realistic school self-evaluation and why is it important?

Conducting critical and realistic evidence-based self-evaluation means that all members of schools attempt to address and understand, by using different strategies, the extent to which the school is causing and/or counteracting school disengagement and ESL. Such an evaluation is critical in that schools recognise what they can do better. Such an evaluation needs to be realistic so that the school and educators can explore what they can do to address and solve early school leaving, given the resources that are available.³⁴

Schools can set goals at the beginning of the school year relating to school disengagement and ESL and assess at the end of the year if the goals have been met.

How can schools conduct critical and realistic school self-evaluations?

Schools can conduct critical and realistic self-evaluations by:

- Conducting school wide research starting with classrooms.
- Fostering self-reflection among teachers, educators, and school staff.
- Including the voices of students.
- Listening to parents.
- Listening to the community.

Critical and realistic school self-evaluations ideally use quantitative and qualitative data. This can especially be the case for larger schools with hundreds of students. Often, math teachers or school psychologists (trained in statistics) can offer help with such data gathering and analysis.

Schools can also collect information to conduct critical and realistic self-evaluation by:

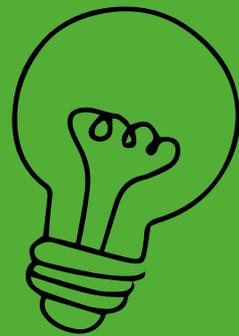
- Observing classroom practices followed by a structured discussion of what happened.
- Training teachers in for instance action research and having them present their own findings to colleagues.
- Promoting spaces where school staff, teachers, and principal can discuss the statistical evidence regarding test results, attendance registers or records of exclusion.
- On-going teacher training in how to conduct self-evaluation and how to use the results.

When conducting realistic and critical school self-evaluations, several voices, in addition to teachers and school staff, need to be understood:

- *Student voices and opinions.* Often student councils fulfil this role. Such councils do need to be taken seriously, since too often student councils exist but have no real agency.
- *Listening to parents* is equally important for schools. This can take place through surveys of individual parents or through parent organizations.
- Listening to the community. When activities such as Service Learning take place, the community becomes a key partner in student learning.

34. For a literature review on 21 instruments to measure school engagement and disengagement: See e.g. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED514996.pdf>

9. INSPIRING



CONCRETE INITIATIVES

DRAWN FROM PICESL

PARTNER SCHOOLS

9. INSPIRING CONCRETE INITIATIVES DRAWN FROM PICESL PARTNER SCHOOLS

The following eight concrete initiatives have been developed by the PICESL partner schools and each represents a different level of focus, as a school wide program, as in the case of service learning, as a classroom activity or as a summer or after school program or activity that enables students to be actively engaged.



The concrete initiatives from the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School in Palermo, Italy are presented, followed by CEIP Malala School in Seville, Spain, then initiatives from the Agrupamiento de Escolas do Cerco do Porto in Portugal and finally the initiatives from the Vladimira Nazora School in Zadar, Croatia. For each of these schools, a school wide program or initiative is presented followed by a more in-class or specifically based project.

It should be noted that contextual issues have to be seriously taken into account in order to assess the value of the initiative. In cases, where children are exposed to limi-

ted economic resources or have not had a chance to travel or experience a change of venue with a field trip, for example, having a summer camp becomes one of the highlights that reminds them they have much more to explore.

Educational Summer Camp: An Inspiring Initiative from the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School in Palermo, Italy

The following inspiring initiative was contributed by the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School in Palermo, Italy by teachers Maria Grazia Savarino and Rosaria Sconzo, who teach health and environmental issues to primary school children, ages 10 in the 5th grade, relating to the theme of ‘Relationships and Affective Education’.

What is the focus of this initiative?

Description This is an extra-curricular activity consisting of an educational holiday, the Campo Estivo (Summer Camp), where students get together for a week. A key aim is for them to manage their indoor and outdoor living spaces, facilitated by the school’s teachers. Students are expected to transfer the dynamics of the school environment to the out of school context. In addition to nurturing a relaxed atmosphere, where friendships can be built or strengthened, they are also expected to take responsibility for their actions and for the camp environment. This includes the importance of typical school routines, such as being on time. While teachers organize morning activities on the beach and sporting events, the evenings programs are run by an expert who organizes treasure hunts, DIY activities, art activities, and role plays to engage students. A film club program during the evening, after dinner, completes the day.



Main aim and objectives

The main aim of this initiative is to foster stronger student-teacher relationships.

Objectives:

- Students and teachers spend time together in a safe, yet educational environment. Students develop stronger relationships with peers.
- Students and teachers develop stronger relationships.
- Teachers observe and get to know students in a different context.
- Teachers develop ideas of how to engage and work with students from observing them in a different environment.
- Students develop more positive views and attitudes of teachers, and hopefully school and schoolwork.

Partnerships. The idea for this initiative was the national project, “E!State!Liberi”. The school collaborated with Associazione Libera for the summer camp. Associazione Libera is an association that was formed to promote democratic principles of social justice and combats illegal activities. This organization carries out projects and organizes activities on properties that have been confiscated from criminal organizations, and then get used as educational centers. Within this context, Associazione Libera provides a residential facility near a beach outside Palermo, where the Summer Camp takes place. Part of the symbolic message is to promote respect of legality in local contexts that have often been characterized by criminality. The Association also takes care of the cooking and cleaning. The Summer Camp has been free for students and the teachers who volunteer. The bus taking students and teachers to the residential facility is provided by the Army and is therefore also free.

Students targeted and teachers participating. In the past, the summer school has targeted students, based on their academic achievement during the school year, but

also on their commitment and potential for improvement in their learning. A total of 14 students (6 males and 8 females), some of whom had special needs, participated in the most recent camp. This is due to the limited number of financial and personnel resources (two teachers volunteered creating a 7:1 student to teacher ratio). Participants were expected to demonstrate a reasonable amount of autonomy and personal responsibility, due to the small number of tutors/educators available and the setting of the activities (seaside and woods). Families were welcome to visit for short periods of time.

Why is this initiative effective?



Summer breaks often mean that students detach themselves from their educational learning for several months. Summer educational programs, as conceived here, can fill a void in terms of learning and can connect learning content with enjoyment. Spending a week with a group of school peers and teachers can create a community of learning within a larger community, connect the informal to the formal and can help strengthen bonds. Teachers learn a lot about the students by observing students in an informal situation and are able to act on this knowledge during the school year. The school observed that students created stronger relationships with peers, helping them feel part of the school community. Teachers and students developed stronger relationships, which facilitated learning throughout the school year.

How can this initiative be evaluated?

In school settings, teachers can do the following to assess the success of this initiative:

- Assess student motivational and school engagement levels (as well as other socio-emotional measures) at the beginning of the school year through talks, written notes, questionnaires and other relevant exercises/activities, which are collected. The same assessment can be done for the summer camp participants

at the beginning of the next school year to see if gains have been made. Like, before and after measurements can be done in terms of academic achievement.

- Assess student motivation, attendance and engagement throughout the year prior to the camp and then in the year following the camp – see whether there is a difference between the camp group and other students who wanted to participate but were not able to attend for whatever reasons.
- Create a measure of student and teacher expectations before the summer camp and then if expectations have been met after the summer camp.
- Use a questionnaire to identify reported satisfaction levels of students and teachers.
- Have students present their experiences (both positive and negative) during the summer camp with other students and teachers after school year restarts.
- Organize teacher meetings to reflect, discuss, and implement strategies to include and encourage other teachers to participate in the summer camp the following year.

Parents who provide consent for the summer camp, can also give feedback:

- Parents provide structured feedback after camp visits.
- By observing if parents show increased school engagement after the summer camp.
- By having physical or online meetings with parents to get feedback about the summer camp (e.g. a focus group discussion).
- By requesting parents to provide feedback regarding any changes in the home behavior of their children. This can be done using a questionnaire, a focus group or other available method.

How can this initiative be used by other schools and teachers in Europe?

- This initiative can be used by any school that wishes to add extra-curricular activities that stretch into the summer, have sufficient resources, and have (moral and organizational) support from school leadership. Parents and teachers will need to trust the school to carry organize the camp.
- The initiative might require additional resources, such as government support. In some cases, parents will have the financial resources to help pay for the camp, in other cases their socio-economic situation will not allow this.
- The initiative needs to attract teachers who are available, interested, and committed to children's learning.
- Though not a requirement in all cases, it is useful if collaboration takes place with outside associations, NGOs or other supporting organizations.

What challenges need to be overcome when carrying out this initiative?

The need for financial and other resources (such a place to host a summer camp).

- School leadership support and teacher availability.
- Teachers or tutors who have expertise working with students with special needs or potentially disruptive behaviors, since some students who will benefit the most from a summer camp, as described above, might fall into these categories.
- The need to organize activities during free time in the summer camp.
- Encouraging families to entrust the school with the care of their children.
- Convincing all involved that the summer camp is not all about 'fun' only.
- If situations like lockdowns occur (e.g. COVID pandemic), the face-to-face sum-



mer camp will have to become virtual. This demands significant commitment from parents (since children will work from home) and school staff. Technology then becomes even more important.

- Working virtually requires significant technology skills on the part of all stakeholders.

Online Snack: An Inspiring Initiative from the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School in Palermo, Italy

The following inspiring initiative was contributed by the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School in Palermo, Italy by teachers Giuseppe Virone (who teaches Math) and Giovannella Trapani (who teaches Italian) to secondary school children, ages 11, 6th grade (“Scuola secondaria di I grado”, according to the Italian school system).

What is main focus of this initiative?

Description The “Online Snack” (Merenda Online) is an extra-curricular, eight-week initiative that was carried out during the COVID-19 lockdowns but can be useful for any comparable situation. In this initiative students are assigned to work with an older tutor (high school student) with whom they regularly meet online outside of their virtual classes. Students learn that in preparing a snack or dish, time is required, research of the needed ingredients and their nutrient values are needed, and that the dish to be prepared has cultural and historical meaning. In doing this, students refine their research skills and learn about the importance of healthy foods and the cultural connotations of food. Each week, students and their assigned tutors meet online collectively with other teachers to show their progress. Parents are welcomed to join the online meetings and help their children gather the ingredients needed to prepare the dish. The activities end with a face-to-face picnic at the end of any given lockdown, during which students can personally meet their tutors,

bring their dishes and consume these as they share their experiences with tutors, teachers and parents.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this initiative is to keep students engaged in the school community during school closures. Objectives:

- Students spend time together engaging with other students in non-academic work. Students contribute to an activity and there is a tangible result at the end.
- Students spend time online within the ‘framework’ of school but undertake a social and non-academic goal.
- All students benefit from a mentoring relationship.
- Students and teachers involve and collaborate with parents and family to achieve the final result. Students learn/impart organisational and culinary skills throughout the activity.
- Students learn/impart knowledge about food, nutrition and culture throughout the activity.

Partnerships and selection of tutors At the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School this initiative was created by teachers and tutors on a voluntary basis, not requiring financial resources. However, partnerships securing potential high school tutors to participate in this initiative were needed. The Online Snack was carried out in collaboration with the *Consulta Studentesca Provinciale*, which is the central school office managing the collective of students in Palermo province. The *Consulta Studentesca Provinciale* spread the call for tutors throughout Palermo’s high schools and tutors, ages 16-18.

About 45 students (aged 16-18) answered the call on a voluntary basis.

As a consequence of the state of emergency, the criteria used to select the high school students focused mainly on the soft skills needed: tutors had to be patient, perseverant, respected, balanced, and engaging.

Several other key characteristics to be taken into consideration were flexibility, reliability, and the ability to work with students of all skills levels, ICT skills, strong interpersonal skills and a genuine desire to assist younger students. Experience with various types of childcare was deemed useful, but not absolutely necessary.

Organisation

At the I.C.S. “Giovanni Falcone” School, this initiative was developed by a group of 2 teachers, 6 tutors, and 6 students from the 6th grade. While teachers and students participated voluntarily, six students’ families, who approved the participation of their children in the project, were contacted by teachers. As a result, 6 Italian children (2 males and 4 females), ages 10-11, from the same class, participated and showed great commitment to the distance learning activities carried out during the lockdown. Parents were also invited to participate in the online meetings of their children with the tutors and teachers. Since the lack of devices was one of the key challenges, the school provided 6th grade students with the technological devices needed.

The activity step-by-step

All of the participants (teachers, tutors, students) participated in a first online meeting. The teachers introduced the activity and assigned the tutors (following the above criteria): female tutors to female students and male tutors to male students.

During the brainstorming, each student chose a dish to prepare.

An alternative activity could be to introduce the topic with tutors showing students some images with different dishes (typical or international) and asking if they know their names.

Then each student could be assigned a dish to conduct research on.

During the 8-week activity, each student, hel-

ped by his/her tutor, made a detailed study about the chosen dish: historical and geographical origins, anecdotes, nutrient values, cultural meanings, and so on.

Tutor and tutee met online two times a week. At the end of the detailed study, a paper was created in order to show the research that was done.

Subsequently, each student prepared the assigned dish at home, helped and supervised by tutors (online) and parents. It is important to underline that in order to prepare the dish, students had to perform mathematical calculations (weights, quantities...), which is important when doing real world tasks.

At the end of the lockdown period, in June, a picnic was held in the city park, with teachers, tutors and students. The students brought their home-made dishes, presenting the assigned dish, while teachers assessed the whole task.

All students assessed the experience as highly positive.

Why is this initiative impactful?

This initiative is impactful because it:

- Keeps students engaged with school during lockdowns, while allowing students to refine their research skills and organizational skills required for the execution of the project.

- Allows the creation of positive relationships with older tutors who function as role models and can inspire students to remain in school and continue to high school and beyond.

- Strengthens the bonds between students and teachers, since teachers function as mediators, able to share and enjoy the meals associated with the initiative during the final face-to-face meeting.

- Establishes teacher-parent contact during lockdowns, which is when such con-



tacts may disintegrate, and it fosters teacher-parent collaboration.

Fosters parental engagement in students' activities, since parents are key to help students solve practical problems connected with accomplishing the task (e.g., helping to get groceries and assisting students during the cooking).

In what kinds of contexts this initiative be implemented?

Because this initiative is practical and tangible, it can be implemented in any school where young people show interest, especially during lockdowns or when COVID-19 or similar restrictions prevent extra-curricular activities from taking place. Students get the opportunity to explore and develop their own abilities to conduct research, carry out an initiative from beginning to end, and negotiate relationships with older peers, parents and teachers. Furthermore, what they learn from this initiative can be carried over into other projects in schools since students become inspired to continue and remain in school. This initiative can be implemented during regular class hours as well to foster mentoring relationships, responsibility among the older students, and perhaps as a transition from elementary to secondary school.

How can this initiative be evaluated?

- Teachers can do the following to assess the success of this initiative:
- Observe students' behaviour during the digital class times while the initiative is being carried out and record their level of participation.
- Observe student behaviour, attendance and homework during school closures and measure it against other students who were also interested in taking part in the activity but were not able to.
- Engage students in storytelling and sharing of their experiences, describing the Online Snack initiative within

classes to assess how they felt about the initiative.

- Have students engage in self-assessment (how they think they performed and if they could have done better, how they could improve next time)
- Organize a meeting with tutors and teachers where they can assess and discuss what went well and what could be improved.
- Organize teacher meetings to reflect, discuss, and implement strategies to include and stimulate other teachers to participate in the initiative the following year.
- Take daily attendance to see who is present and who is not.
- Use a questionnaire to identify reported satisfaction levels of students, teachers, tutors, and parents to retain the initiative for the next year.

Parents can also record their reactions to their children's experiences:

- By participating/observing their children during the virtual meetings with their tutors and during the final face-to-face meeting.
- By collecting phone messages, written messages or statements that show increased participation in school routines in their everyday lives.
- By having physical or online meetings with other parents whose children participated in the school that indicate there is a strengthening of the relationships between school and families.
- By reporting their satisfaction levels to witnessing changes in home behaviours with a checklist provided by the school and shared with teachers.

How can this initiative be used by other schools and teachers in Europe?

- This initiative can be used in other schools in order to actively engage students during lockdowns. The initiative can be replicated in any context because it is creative and engages students since the ini-

tiative has visible and tangible outcomes.

- This initiative can attract teachers who are willing and interested in getting to know the student's family and in creating a bridge between the school and them.
- This initiative requires that tutors be trained in understanding asymmetric relationships between tutor and tutee and to learn how to strengthen such relationships. Some of the key tutor characteristics include being a good and clear communicator, a good listener, have the ability to gain respect from the students, as well as being balanced, cheerful, and patient.
- Carrying out this initiative, in principle, does not require many resources and partnerships, except for recruiting secondary school tutors. However, having some resources that allow students who do not have the means to participate to do so (e.g. lacking digital devices or funds to purchase materials necessary to carry out the project) can be extremely beneficial.

What are the challenges to overcome when carrying out this initiative?

- Schools may lack the digital resources (e.g., lack of a webcam, lack of a good internet connection, lack of software, etc.) to carry out carry out this initiative. Students and their families may also lack digital resources. To overcome this, schools can provide laptops to students for the duration of the initiative and then have students return these to the school. Schools can also provide students with SIM Cards with the necessary data to carry out the initiative until its completion.
- Tutors were selected through online interviews and indirect knowledge. In or-

der to improve the selection, the school could ask their teachers for referrals (a letter of introduction, for example).

Further Possibilities

Food is a theme suitable for making comparisons between different nations and cultures, therefore it could foster the development of activities of international importance with peers from other nations. For example, school twinnings (collaboration between schools) could be organized, especially with those schools in the city with a high percentage of foreign students. The initiative could thus include exchanging recipes and lead to final in person picnic (this can be organized in one of the two schools, but also in the school garden, in the city park or in some other open space).

Service Learning Curriculum: An Inspiring School-Wide Initiative from the CEIP Malala School in Seville, Spain

The CEIP³⁵ Malala School is a school that has a Service Learning (SL) curriculum at its core. This approach impacts all phases of learning and all grade levels. A total of nine teachers, hired through government contract, compose the teaching staff, yet part time teachers have also been contracted to be trained in SL teaching³⁶.

What is the focus of Service Learning initiatives (at the Malala School)?

Service Learning is a methodology that goes beyond a traditional curriculum and includes service to the community. Students learn by providing a service to the community. At Malala School this methodology is the centre

35. CEIP refers to Pre-primary and Primary Educational Center and Malala is the name of the young Pakistani woman who has been hailed internationally for working to promote the rights of young women and all children's education.

36 The principles have been translated from Spanish by David Gonzales, a teacher at the CEIP Malala School, who teaches English at the second and third level of primary school. Service Learning is a methodology that goes beyond a traditional curriculum and includes service to the community. Students learn by providing a service to the community. At Malala School this methodology is the centre of the school's Educational Project. The various academic courses at the pre- primary and primary education level are constructed around this concept.



of the school's Educational Project. The various academic courses at the pre- primary and primary education level are constructed around this concept.

The school collaborates closely with community organizations and associations in order to advance student learning and help them gain specific competencies and skills. There is a strong focus on interculturality and a concern for social justice and sustainability of the planet.

Each year, starting from the 3rd year of Early Childhood Education (ECE) until the 6th grade of primary education, students are exposed to different year-long SL projects which afford them multiple experiences. These include:

- In the 3rd year of ECE: Project “Super mascots,” to fight against the abandonment of pets.
- In the 4th year of ECE: “Super vial,” a project to improve road safety education in our town.
- In the 5th year of ECE: “Super chef,” a project to improve nutrition and help people experiencing food shortages.
- In Primary grade 1: “Other worlds,” a project to help impoverished communities in other parts of the world.
- In Primary grade 2: “Uncertain trip”, a project that helps migrants and refugees.
- In Primary grade 3: “We see the elderly with the eyes of a child” Project, a project that involves care actions with a retirement community in the town.
- In Primary grade 4: “SOS Pachamama” Project, a project which aims improves the natural environment.
- In Primary grade 5: “Helping Alejandro” a project directed at learning Sign Lan-

guage in order to help Alejandro, who has aphasia and cannot hear, to communicate with classmates and teachers. When the teachers learned how to use sign language, they were able to teach Alejandro and his classmates to relate in a different way.

- In primary grade 6: “Sanitary Hearts” Projects which are directed at health related issues in the region.

Aim and objectives

The overall aim of this service-learning initiative is to promote a ‘learning by doing’ philosophy among students when it comes to impacting their social environment.

Objectives:

Students and teachers meet to collaborate and exchange opinions and ideas. Students learn that they are active citizens and change-makers in their communities. Students are co-creators of the projects, facilitated by their teachers.

Partnership: The school has partnerships with multiple community-based projects run by NGOs and other organizations³⁷, who work hand in hand with the school to promote student learning. They offer in-kind services, the opportunity for students to engage, explore, and investigate and to interview key members of the community for their projects.

Together with the NGOs, the school defines thTogether with the NGOs, the school defines the kinds of services that can be engaged in to benefit others, whether local or abroad. Students are expected to engage in a variety of activities, including making presentations (in school and to the community), creating flyers, etc. The school also presents its projects to other schools³⁸.

Why is Service Learning effective?

- Existing social needs are translated into

37. Examples of these NGOs include: Socialization and Communication, an NGO dedicated to people with Special needs: Ayandena (care for abandoned animals; the local police department; the town hall and the Enredando association; Madre Coraje, an association working with poor people in Peru; Accem , which works with migrants and refugees); Casa de Mayores, which works with the Elderly) Greenpeace, with a focus on the environment; and C and S, “Knowledge and Socialization,” Blood Transfusion Center and Macarena Hospital.

38 The work of the Malala School has received various awards for its work.

opportunities for students to learn and this makes learning meaningful. Through service learning, students get to see how their knowledge can be put into practice.

- Students become active and more conscious citizens of today. This also elevates the school's role and importance within the community.
- Students gain the opportunity to learn by doing community service, and in this way they contribute to society. This allows them to develop a sense of global competence, and an awareness of the world around them. It prepares them to become part of an inclusive and sustainable world.
- Service Learning provides a transformative context for learning through community service to help others. It makes learning more meaningful and deepens understanding.
- Through this method, students also learn about, and meet, members of society who have dedicated their lives to helping others and are contributing to a healthy and more caring world.
- Students gain the opportunity to care for themselves, for others, and for people in their communities (near and far) and this allows them to develop a deeper sense of empathy towards others, which is an essential tool when combatting for instance bullying in schools.

How can service learning be carried out?

Preparation and Implementation³⁹

All SL projects are connected to the curriculum and the subjects taught at the school. Students usually learn about the academic content at school, but they apply their knowledge, and also gain new knowledge by engaging in real time and real contexts with social issues and problems in society. NGOs

play a critical role (for each project, collaboration takes place with one NGO). Examples of activities include visiting and helping in a nursing home, or another school in town, or collaborating with the NGO that helps children in developing countries. The main objective is always, from the very beginning, to develop in students a sense of being part of society. Students gain a sense that they can make a difference in this process. Teachers facilitate student reflection on how they can help communities and individuals who face challenges, feel more included in society.

SL activities are carried out in three phases and these phases are the same for all groups in all projects. The Educational Project of school which contains guidelines relating to procedures need to be clearly known by all staff and teachers. Teacher training also takes place every year and focuses on each step that is taken to implement SL, the projects themselves, the aims SL etc. many new teachers have never work in this manner. Teachers usually meet design the various educational modules, a process that takes about 15-20 days.

A first step towards implementation is contacting NGO representatives. The teachers in the school simultaneously develop the learning unit, create a timeline for the various activities associated with the program, and decide which activities will be evaluated. The team also plans which activities students need to take responsibility for and the content of these activities. This is presented to the rest of the class, generally using videos, newspapers, etc. After the presentation, there is a discussion with the students about the various elements of the projects. In this manner, the intention is to develop a sense of responsibility among students. They are encouraged to help shape the projects. Subsequently, the students engage in an analysis (through various types of re-

39. The Malala school can be contacted to provide more detailed descriptions of each activity



search) of the issues that will be at the heart of the SL projects. This analysis is helped by showing the students information on websites, through videos, newspapers, etc. and guiding them to other resources for information. The students analyse the challenges that various communities face and the teachers help them become more aware of the realities associated with being disadvantaged in some way (such as having limited resources). Students also devise campaigns to promote understanding and awareness. Much of the work by students in this phase is connected to the subject area 'Grammar', especially the requirements associated with comprehension and oral speaking. This sequence above is similar for each group but the content varies.

The design of activities in the subsequent phase depends on the group of students, especially related to their age, but also the teachers responsible for the class work and the and project as well as the NGO representative. Though there is an institutional memory of projects conducted in previous years, each year the process is restarted. The only aspect that remains the same is the key objective of this particular phase: to introduce to our students a situation that they can discuss and debate, in order to develop empathy, and to encourage the students to become an active part of the process.

How can this initiative be evaluated?

In terms of academic standards, the school is assessed through the local Andalusian standards of education and needs to adhere to all of the achievement criteria and indicators specified for each student. It is also assessed according to national standards. The same number of hours need to be devoted to the school curriculum as in any other school. The difference with many other schools is that it designs the contents of the curriculum itself around the SL projects.

Regarding the evaluation of the course itself, at the end of every school year teachers meet to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the SL that year and develop a plan for the coming year. The school also receives feedback from the parents. Questionnaires are sent out for that purpose. Every Tuesday, there is also a two-hour meeting with families to discuss the progress of their child.

More concretely:

Family Surveys: The family surveys evaluate the degree to which:

- Families are informed about the consequences of students being taught through the Service Learning Project (SLP), which is included in the School's Educational Project.
- The development of SL activities results in positive outcomes in the school's environment.
- Families fully collaborate and participate in the SL activities which take place in the school.
- Families think the topic of each SL Project needs to be included in the curriculum.
- Families value teachers' efforts in developing SL initiatives and activities.
- SL initiatives and activities can develop basic competences, which include ethical and social responsibilities for students.
- SL initiatives and activities provide students with real and significant learning experiences that can influence their lives.
- Students are encouraged and motivated to go to school and engage with the SLP.

Student Evaluations. Students are evaluated in terms of their:

- Understanding of the SL projects and their reflections and motivation about the projects. They are required, through classroom assessments, as well as formative and summative evaluation, to provide evidence of a deeper analysis about the roots, causes, and consequences of the topic being studied.

- Completion of each of the curricular objectives in each area.
- Involvement in the decision-making process when carrying out the project.
- Development relating to the key competencies aimed for, as well as their participation in, and commitment towards the projects they engage in.
- Motivation levels towards the SL Projects.
- Understanding of the different activities, their relevance and their significance.
- Collaboration with peers during the process of implementing the project.
- Understanding of the consequences of the project in improving the classroom climate.
- Experiential learning, conducive to further learning.
- Remembering the informational content of the course.
- Satisfaction with service to the community.
- The SLP has led to the improvement of student academic levels and participation.
- Teachers have been motivated by the activities associated with the SLP project.
- Teachers have shared their motivation and enthusiasm with each other.
- As a consequence of the SLP activities, teachers have improved their own teaching practices.
- Teachers' input on the training on SL methodology in the SLP general training were included.
- Due to SLP activities, the school climate has improved (e.g. relationships between students and between students and their teachers).
- Students have shown more interest in helping others and in taking part in society.
- Teachers have integrated the project into their teaching content, with an analysis phase, reflection phase, and commitment phase.
- Teachers and staff have spread word about the project.

Evaluations by the Community and Organizations. NGOs and other organizations also provide evaluations, which are based on:

- The Director of the schools' valuing of the NGO participation in the project and the participation of different stakeholders.
- NGO and Community Organizations' evaluation of students in terms of the extent that the learning experience was positive for the students.
- NGOs and Community Organizations also evaluate their level of satisfaction with the process of participation and collaboration by the school.
- The outcomes of activities that have been carried out, and whether these outcomes meet the needs of the NGO or Community Organization (satisfaction with the services provided).

Teacher Evaluations (Formative and Summative). Teachers are also evaluated in terms of their input, using formative and summative evaluations, which examine to what extent:

How can SL be used by other schools and teachers (in Europe)?

Because SL is a general program and orientation, it can be transferred to any school that has the time, motivation, and freedom to apply the principles that have been presented above. It is a flexible, time intensive, and engaging approach that involves multiple stakeholders and includes a strong community focus.

What challenges need to be addressed when carrying out this initiative?

- The approach is time intensive and demands significant input from all stakeholders.
- In many school systems and many schools there can be pressures to stick rigidly to the established, more traditional, curriculum. The support of the school leadership and the community is essential.



- Lack of teacher competences to implement an engaging and comprehensive project. This implies the need to sometimes conduct extensive training.
- Teacher turnover and burn out that all schools face.
- Few parents have ever experienced SL in their own lives or school careers, so they often do not understand SL at face value. This means that continuous energy and time needs to be spent informing and engaging parents.
- Under normal circumstances, SL requires a good deal of face-to-face work and interaction. This is not always possible when disruptions such as pandemics occur⁴⁰.

An inclusive centre, an inclusive world: An Inspiring Initiative from the CEIP Malala School in Seville, Spain

The following inspiring initiative was contributed by Gloria Palomo García, Head Teacher, tutor and teacher of the Spanish language, and Arts and Crafts, in the 5th grade of primary school.

What is the focus of 'inclusive centre, an inclusive world,' project?

Description. The service learning approach uses the following process, in three phases, for all groups within a project.

Students analyze an important aspect of rea-

lity (which is depends on each project). They reflect about how they can contribute in order to improve a given situation.

They also commit themselves to understanding these realities and to improve the lives of people in the community.

The 5th year project, "An inclusive centre, an inclusive world" is a Service Learning (SL) project at the Malala School with a focus on diversity, in which teaching is conducted in Spanish, English and French. The initiative is carried out using awareness campaigns relating to the need to include people with special needs or other groups, and with the intention of making changes to the environment.

This initiative arose from a situation in which there was a student in the 5th grade, who was suffering from aphasia, which prevented him from speaking and from interacting. This condition made him feel isolated in class and during the breaks. As a consequence, teachers were trained to learn sign language. This had a huge impact on the student's functioning and participation in school activities. This initiative is an extension of the school's SL orientation⁴¹.

Aims. This is one of multiple initiatives connected to the SL orientation at Malala School⁴². The aim of all SL projects at Malala School is to focus on a social need within a given community. In this case, the focus is on vulnerable youth who experience special needs of some kind. This can relate to any kind of special need, e.g. physical, psy-

40 The COVID-19 pandemic led to the introduction of educational projects based on SL by creating an online project entitled "Malala Tribe":
<https://view.genial.ly/5f4240841d09d70d72b96294/guide-aprendizaje-servicio-20-21>

41 Beyond the 5th grade, teachers who learned Sign Language have organized other activities to sensitize students to this issue. Examples:
Sign language in 100 words by 4-year-old students:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=FxrNxLsXzig&feature=emb_logo
Proposal to work on equality and diversity:
<https://elalmendralvioleta.blogspot.com/2019/11/propuesta-para-el-alumnado-de-5-del.html>

42. See for example, the following initiatives at the Malala School:
<https://quintoenelceipmalala.blogspot.com/2018/10/nosotras-tambien-pintamos-algo.html>
<https://leerbajoelalmendro.blogspot.com/2018/12/una-tarde-cocinando-suenos-juntos.html>
<https://quintoenelceipmalala.blogspot.com/2019/01/investigamos-razones-de-exclusion.html>

chological, or social. Students attempt to develop sensitive and caring ways in which they can enrich the lives of their peers.

Partnerships. Among the most important partners are the families of the students, who become involved in the process as project leaders. Additionally, the local community becomes involved by offering opportunities for the students to investigate, learn, inquire, interview and advance their thinking. This also applies to NGOs, who collaborate in the school's various SL projects. In this particular case, the school collaborated with an association that works with students with special needs.

Students targeted in initiative and participating teachers In general the primary education teaching team for the 5th grade consists of 7 teachers and a total of 52 students (17 girls and 35 boys, aged 10 to 11).

What makes this Initiative Effective?

At its core, the initiative is about caring and being able to concretely problem solve a number of challenges. This concrete problem-solving approach, embedded in school and community action, means that all students look at themselves, peers, teachers and the NGO as resources they can use to find a way to improve a particular situation. This means that each student in a class has value and is included and engaged in the activity. In addition, they learn team and collaborative skills by working with others, thus promoting the value of each student and the importance of inclusion in class activities.

How can this initiative best be evaluated?

Teachers can do the following to evaluate this initiative:

- Teachers can be asked to reflect on what they as teachers have learned about addressing the challenges that children with special needs face in school (and outside

school), and to what extent the project, in their opinion, meets the needs of students with special needs.

- Teachers can scaffold the learning that takes place by asking students to design projects such as essays, role plays, art, short films, theatrical productions, etc.; these can be assessed.
- Teachers can evaluate student learning or coordinate self-evaluation among students regarding what they have learnt.

To reflect and evaluate the initiative, students can:

- Self-assess what they have learnt from the project, also identifying how it could be improved and maybe even how they would want to be involved in that process.
- Evaluate the process (e.g. decision making, communication) and also the outcome of the project.

To evaluate the initiative, parents can:

- Discuss with their children what they have learnt through the project, as well as what their children think could be improved.
- The school can organize a focus group or meeting with parents to ask how their children experienced the project.
- The school can organize a focus group or meeting with parents of children, who have a variety of special needs, to ask whether they think the project was successful in their view, and how it can be expanded or improved.

The broader community (e.g. NGOs involved) can evaluate this process by:

- Scheduling a meeting with the school (and perhaps parents and students themselves) to provide feedback on the project.



How can this initiative be used by other schools and teachers (in Europe and elsewhere)?

A Service Learning orientation provides a framework and approach that connects very well to the kind of comprehensive work that can benefit children with special needs. Instead of isolated solutions, SL presents an approach that generates solutions that are carried by all stakeholders. It therefore offers opportunities to other schools to address the many challenges that are associated with helping students reach their full potential within a supportive environment.

What are the challenges that need to be overcome in carrying this initiative?

- Overcoming stereotypes and prejudices about children with special needs, among students, teachers and the community. These also relate to feeling ‘sorry’ for these students and seeing them from a deficit lens.
- Being able to recruit interested teachers who are willing engage in extra learning and training, and who are willing to give their time and effort to work on specific projects.
- Convincing families of children with special needs that their children will benefit from the project.
- Maintaining continuous communication with the family and other stakeholders so that the students engaged in the project feel they are constantly being supported in their learning.

School-based Inspiring Initiatives Associated with the PIEF Program. An Inspiring Initiative from Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco do Porto

This following description focuses on initiatives associated with the PIEF program in Portugal. The description has been provided by He-

lena Bragança, who teaches Portuguese at the Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco do Porto.

What is the PIEF program?

Description

PIEF (Education and Training Integrated Program) is a temporary socio-educational program with measures that are to be adopted after all other integration measures at school have been exhausted. It is based on a risk analysis and protective set of measures that are undertaken by several supporting entities.

Risk Factors: The schools employing PIEF work primarily with families who are living in poverty and experience unemployment, often associated with low levels of schooling. Families’ low levels of education often have generational component. Due to this, 100% of such students receive ASE (School Social) Action benefits and 92% of families receive RSI-Insertion Social Income benefits. School Social Action provides economic assistance to economically disadvantaged students and translates into support in terms of manuals, school supplies, meals, study visits, etc.

Protection factors: The integration of young people in the PIEF program, where students can be monitored outside of school, constitutes a protective factor, since it takes into account the socio- cultural characteristics of the students, especially for Roma youth. The basic and secondary School of Cerco do Porto, Porto, functions as the engine of a network of partnerships that facilitate the educational development of students and support to the families most in need.

Aims

The PIEF program covers general and specific objectives in an attempt to develop indicators of ‘at risk’ youth that enable individuals and families to receive further support information. Specific aims include:

- Prevent exposure to risks associated with early entry into the world of employment, as the result of ESL;

- Promote the completion of compulsory education and avoid ESL.
- Prevent the development of risky behavior among young people.
- Promote educational success and promote a taste for knowledge.
- Promote socially appropriate ways of being.
- Foster relationships between parents, students and the school.
- Ensure more effective monitoring of each student's learning process.

PIEF is implemented for each young person through an Education and Training Plan (PEF), based on the principles of:

Individualisation (considering age, personal situation, interests and needs for school and social integration, based on an initial diagnostic assessment).

Accessibility (allowing for intervention and integration of young people at any time of the school year)

Flexibility (allowing for the integration of young people through different educational/training actions).

Continuity (ensuring permanent and integrated interventions).

Execution Phasing (allowing for the development of an intervention by structuring stages of a young person's educational and training trajectory).

Celerity (obtaining school certificates in shorter periods of time).

Updating (allowing for the revision of the plan, according to changes in a student's situation and his/her needs) - Joint Directive No. 948/03 (This is the directive that creates the legal framework for the PIEF Program).

Partnerships

The PIEF Program includes partnerships with: 1) the Directorate-General for Schools; 2) the Institute of Employment and Training (IEFP) 3) The Health Center/Hospital.

Why is this program important?

The program attempts to not only meet the needs of students, but it also involves parents. There are accountability measures and criteria that provide consistency in the delivery of the program and guarantee that students receive an education that will enable them to become socially and economically integrated.

Main needs of the youth

School youth are confronted with a series of needs:

1. Educational needs reflected by the gap that exists between what would be expected of them at their age and the educational qualifications they currently have.
2. Affective and emotional development needs. Many of these youth have great difficulties in regulating and managing their emotions, at times reflected by behavioral patterns that can be considered socially risky.
3. Access to health care. Almost all youth have poor dental health, which has already been diagnosed, but has not yet been treated. This appears to be the result, on the one hand, of a lack of economic resources and, on the other hand, limited involvement of parents in such matters.

Targeted Students in the program

Each young person in the Education and Training Plan (PEF) participates in the PIEF program with an individualized plan based on age, personal situation, school interests and social situation, after undergoing initial diagnostic assessment.

What is the core idea behind the PIEF Program and how is it carried out?

The core idea behind PIEF is to support students through an inclusive education philosophy which is reflected in the phrase "A



School for all". It is, as mentioned, aimed at students who are risk of school dropout. The following key procedures take place:

1st: Listening to all stakeholders (parents, guardians, students, partners, teachers and other members of the educational community) to understand why high levels of absenteeism and ESL exist.

2nd: After understanding the main reasons for school absenteeism/ESL, a strategy is developed by all stakeholders to address the following constraints:

- Financial / economic constraints: for example, liaising with the Social Security Institute and its interlocutors and also with the family to try to address economic difficulties that might be contributing school disengagement and ESL. This can lead, for example, to support in the payment of school transportation, food supplements, collecting clothing and food, etc.).
- Constraints at the personal level, such as lack of motivation to participate in school activities. This has led to solutions such as: surveying students' vocational interests and assessing to what extent the curriculum addresses these interests; planning activities that motivate students' motivations.
- Other constraints (cultural, social, etc.) – developing plans with partners to better involve families and students in training related to parental supervision and skills, importance of education, schooling, etc.

Other solutions have involved varying the existing school schedule. This has been done to encourage greater participation by students in their classroom activities, when they are in school. For instance, in the 2020-2021 school year, the formal class schedule covered only the morning shift. This allowed students to be free during the afternoon to develop other activities outside of the

school, or to have more free time to be with family and with their peers.

Evaluation results of the PIEF program

The evaluation of the program in the target school was informed by the input of teachers, parents and community members. The results point out that:

Teachers have reported:

- Becoming aware of a decrease in absenteeism and school dropout.
- Greater participation in school life.
- Reduction in risky behavior
- Greater evidence of student motivation to answer questions regarding their needs and expectations.
- Decreases in the number of absences
- Increases in the number of students who had had a history of school absenteeism and school dropout to be certified into the 2nd and 3rd cycles.

Parents' have reported that:

- Fathers participate more in school life when there is more direct and close contact with the school and when they perceived that their opinion was taken into consideration when projects were designed.
- Parents indicated they were pleased with the flexible curriculum and the school training that was being offered.
- Parents participated more in school life when there was direct and close contact with the school and when they perceived that their opinion was taken into consideration when projects were designed.
- Other parents from other areas of the city were not only becoming more aware of the program and better attendance at school and were requesting to join.

The responses from community members and their degree of involvement indicated that

community members had started to play a more active role, both as partners in the development of collaborative initiatives with families and students, and in attending meetings.

How can this program be further evaluated?

- Teachers can do the following to assess whether the program is meeting key objectives:
- Monitoring the number of students who complete the program and identifying why some do not.
- Study to what extent student grades improve and to what extent they advance to higher grades.
- Identify students who have progressed within the school and identify reasons for this.

Why is this initiative effective?

PIEF is based on the realization that there is a need to invest in differentiated and complementary education, alongside the standard education that children receive. It takes the needs of students and their families seriously, while also emphasizing that education is important. The purpose has been to combat serious absenteeism and ESL. Part of the ESL can be attributed to cultural and family obligations (e.g. early marriage among Roma women). Due to this, several steps were undertaken to try to address such challenges: 1) meeting with parents and students with a history of absenteeism and ESL; 2) developing a curriculum that works better for students and their guardians; 3) defining complementary training possibilities together with students and parents; 4) developing projects that adhere to the legal ramifications of PIEF measures (allowing for flexibility of the curriculum); 5) completing a schedule of activities; and 6) evaluating the project, also by listening to the opinions of parents and students.

How can this program be used by other schools and teachers in Europe?

The core initiatives associated with the PIEF policy can be inspiring for schools with students from underserved communities. However, these initiatives can also be applied in other schools, given the importance of developing educational initiatives that are sensitive to socio-economic and cultural contexts, and that build on the actual needs and expectations of students and their families.

What challenges need to be to overcome when carrying out this program?

Key challenges include the need:

- For teachers to motivate students on a daily basis to attend school, taking into account socioeconomic environments that do not tend to be conducive to learning’.
- To regularly encourage the active participation of parents and guardians in the process.
- To make curriculum adjustments and the work needed to make that happen.
- To develop and maintain a positive relationship with parents and guardians with the aim of more engagement in the school.
- To overcome a lack of trust among parents and the community with respect to the role and activities of the school.
- To overcome low expectations of student performance and subtle biases.
- During school closures (e.g. COVID restrictions) to develop sometimes innovative ways of communicating with students and their parents/guardians, within a context where many families have limited access to technology and other learning resources, and where there is often limited personal space to do school work.



The Include to Emerge Project: An Inspiring Initiative from the Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco de Porto, Portugal

The following program was contributed by the Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco de Porto, Group of Schools in Oporto, Portugal, by teacher Helena Bragança, who teaches the first cycle of primary schools.

Overview of the inspiring project: What is the focus of this initiative?

The project *Include to Emerge* initially took place between September 2019 and June 2020. The project was connected to the Agrupamento (Grouping of Schools), where it was created to prevent and reduce school failure, and to ensure that all students reached literacy and numeracy standards, with a focus on creating conditions that would promote inclusion. A reflective analysis was conducted in which teachers were able to identify significant academic gaps among their students, often linked to their family and social environments. Teachers focused on two significant gaps: 1) Portuguese, particularly for 2nd year students who could not read or write on their own and 2) barriers for first year students, which prevented them from them advancing in their learning.

Regarding Portuguese language learning, interventions aimed at improvements in the area of language discrimination, visual and auditory recognition, selective attention, phonological awareness, oral and written comprehension, written expression and structuring. In mathematics, the focus was on knowledge of numbering, relations of magnitude, and mathematical language.

After conducting an annual diagnostic assessment of students in September, the project was conducted by teachers of first and second year students, on the basis of

each student's profile. An individualized learning plan with supporting tasks and specific logistics was developed for each student. However, despite the fact that students had registered for the project and were in school until March of 2020, due to Covid 19, the learning environment shifted to Distance Learning.

What is the focus of this initiative?

This initiative "Include to Emerge" was created to prevent and reduce school failure, and to ensure that all students reached certain literacy and numeracy standards, with a focus on creating conditions that would promote inclusion. The initiative is two-part, firstly by working with teachers and secondly by developing a program to help students achieve success. Firstly, a reflective analysis is conducted in which teachers identify significant academic gaps among their students, often linked to their family and social environments. This leads to the development of an individualized learning plan, with supporting tasks and specific logistics for each student, to ensure that their individual situation is taken into account.

Key Aim

The program aims to recognise each individual student's uniqueness and develops a follow-up process for each student relating to this. In the case of the Agrupamento de Escolas do Cerco de Porto the learning gaps were in Portuguese language and mathematics

Partnerships

The Include to Emerge project developed out of a dynamic partnership among support teachers, who were given hourly credit, and classroom teachers. Regarding specialized diagnosis and referral for any therapy that students needed, collaboration took place with the existing Psychology Service of the School Group, with the CRI [in the areas of Speech and Occupational Therapy] and with several family physicians.

Why is this initiative important?

This initiative, through individualized learning plans, promotes inclusion through skill development and increased self-esteem among students. The fact that students knew that their teachers cared about their learning, and were engaged in their learning, provided very positive outcomes both for students and their families.

How can this initiative be evaluated?



This initiative can be evaluated by monitoring the work done by students in each of the sessions through direct observation and through formative and summative assessment results. Evaluation might show that certain students no longer need such intervention if they demonstrate autonomy, commitment and motivation. One can also evaluate a student's performance in relation to the overall improvement of all students in that age range, or by looking at improvements in a similar range of students from the year above.

Student's Response to the Initiative

On the whole, students responded well to the intervention because they felt they could experience success and that the intervention helped them develop their autonomy. Students appreciated the quiet environments they could work in (without distraction) and the individualized monitoring. Students were able to see the changes in their own behaviours and learning. Though not effective for all students, the approach was successful in helping multiple students move forward in their education and develop the skills needed to be successful. At the end of the school year in which Include to Emerge took place, of the fourteen [14] students who had participated in the program, nine [9] registered clear progress.

Parent's Response to the Initiative

Some parents were initially a bit hesitant because their child was being removed from the classroom, and parents were concerned that their child "was losing what the teacher teaches". When students demonstrated that they were making progress these opinions changed. By the end of the first phase, all-parents recognized the importance of the intervention. The commitment of families was decisive, as they maintained close contact with the school and the students while the initiative took place.

(Educational) Community Members' Response and degree of Engagement

- The educational community in implementing this initiative will need to be fully involved.
- The Director can promote allocating human resources (specific teachers) and materials (transportation; books; paper, computer equipment, etc.)
- Teachers can gather, discuss, share doubts and suggestions, manage the time and space of learning according to what the student needs to learn.
- Staff can welcome and guide students to the different spaces where activities take place, with praise and incentives for learning

This initiative can be extended to any school if there is willingness and commitment from the teachers. Team spirit, patience, creativity and persistence is also needed to find solutions inside and outside of the school to address the students' challenges.

How can this initiative be used by other schools and teachers throughout Europe?

The following process took place in order to build the project. These steps would ideally also be followed in order to implement any program that aims to emulate the 'Include to Emerge' project:



- An initial assessment at the beginning of the school year should take place for all students. This would identify any potential academic gaps that might be creating barriers to moving forward.
- Development of an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) for the students needing support, taking into account their needs, understanding of their situation, the parental and family situation, their experiences talents, motivations and abilities.
- Activities and materials would need to be adjusted and re-framed to better meet student's needs.
- Teams of specialized support teachers and classroom teachers would need to be created and these teams would become familiar with each student's IEP.
- Strong communication with the students, larger school community and parents about progress and particularly gains throughout the period of implementation.

In addition - specific to our own analysis and program - we developed small reading and writing groups of 5/6 students and focused on fluency, reading comprehension and production of written text. This process started with organizing the readings during the first two months, then building the educational process around small projects, working with students' preferred content, strengthening communicational skills and problem solving in the area of mathematics or the content on the environment. The project teacher, in partnership with the subject teacher, defined the work/project that these students needed to engage in, and we focused strongly on helping students develop an interest and passion for reading and writing. The process was designed to increase students' self-esteem by having them work in small and 'safe' groups.

Challenges that need to be overcome

Some clear challenges arose that would need to be addressed when taking such initiatives:

1. Maintaining regular attendance levels.
2. Receiving a medical diagnosis for some students if there are more mental or physical barriers to learning.
3. Referral of students for needed therapies or for purchasing eyeglasses.
4. Any reservations parents might have.
5. When schools are shut down and distance learning becomes necessary (like with COVID 19 closures), students and their families need access to the school, teachers and to technology (computers, smart phones, good internet); teachers need to take more efforts to design on-line curriculum and to stay in touch with families and students (since they are almost all learning from home).

Amarena's Zadar adventure: An Inspiring Initiative from the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora, Zadar

The following inspiring initiative was contributed by Tihana Magaš of the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora. Tihana Magaš teaches history to high school students aged 14-18 and is the debate trainer and leader of the European Parliament program of the school.

What is main focus of this initiative?

Description Amarena's Zadar adventure is a classroom-based initiative in which high school students are paired with primary school children to engage in a joint project. Such an initiative works best if carried out as a year-long project.

In this particular case, high school students design a picture book for primary school

children dedicated to the history of Zadar, a town in southwestern Croatia, which is of historical significance.

To create such picture book, students conduct research on Zadar, create a story, participate in city tours, and collect pictures. The picture book includes not only a description of the city's landmarks but also other activities applicable to kindergarten and primary school children and which are of concern to them.

Once the picture book is completed, multiple copies are produced. Students collect voluntary donations, which are then given to charities for humanitarian purposes. For example, when this initiative was carried out at the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora, part of the donations were given to associations and NGOs who provided support to people and families affected by a flood.

After completing this cycle, high school students then visit kindergartens and primary schools in their city or neighboring places where they conduct a workshop, based on the picture book, with younger children. During such visits, these high school students bring candies, fruits, and materials bought with some of the money they raised through voluntary donations to the primary school children. In exchange, the primary school and kindergarten children, with their teachers, organize a welcome party, a lunch, and a tour of the primary school and the neighborhood where it is located.

The workshops that the students conducted in kindergartens and high schools were different, depending on the location of the institutions they visited. If the institutions were near the sites, they went (accompanied by professors and educators) to the locations depicted in the picture book.

If students went to schools and kindergartens, they read the picture book together and completed tasks contained in the picture books. In this manner, younger students received assistance in solving certain tasks if

they were determined to be too difficult, but also to have the opportunity to delve deeper.

Aims This initiative aims to:

Help students interpret the world around them and to help them make the world a more caring place, and also to show how such an initiative can be intergenerational.

Improve the research skills of secondary school students by having them research a city of interest for primary school children. They need to use creative strategies for this research.

Refine the research skills of Secondary School students throughout the process, teaching them about project management, while at the same time expanding their teaching and training skills.

Enhance the development of intercultural competences by allowing students to interact and learn from other students from different backgrounds and from different schools.

Help students reflect on their moral values, gain better decision making as well as skills that make them realize that they can be active agents of change

Broaden students' horizons. Many have limited knowledge of places like Zadar and/or have limited experience working collaboratively. They collect historical facts, anecdotes, and artifacts that help them visualize and accommodate new ways of thinking into their lives.

Fosters social solidarity and the importance of active participation by all.

Partnerships: Partnerships with local authorities and schools are needed to carry out this initiative, The Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora and teachers who are engaged in this initiative contact primary schools and kindergartens to see if there is interest in having secondary students lead a workshop based on the picture book. The Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora relies on the support of the local authorities for funding travel and accommoda-



tion costs that finance the trips of students to kindergartens and primary schools and the support of families and the school in covering the costs of materials to print the picture book.

Students targeted and teachers participating While this is a class-based initiative which can be conducted by teachers, it also invites students at the primary school to become engaged, as well as parents, who oversee the engagement of their children.

At the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora, this initiative is carried out by a history teacher with at least 15 interested students who are in the age range from 16-17 years. The Secondary School students work with similar numbers of primary school children.

Student engaged in this initiative need to have sufficient time to: (1) collect and analyze stories; (2) conduct research on the schools where they are going to share their experiences with their younger peers and volunteer to raise resources for these schools; (3) be trained to present their work to their younger peers; (4) conduct field trips to the schools where students will share their work with younger peers; and (5) learn how to create an exhibition and put it together.

Why is this initiative impactful?

This initiative is effective because it:

- Engages students in research of their own city through the use of creative approaches;
- Strengthens the bond among students, and between students and teachers, since teachers become supporters and facilitators of the process.
- Students work together with other students (group work) during the city tours and trips to other school.
- Enhances students' understanding about their role in the world and how their actions can contribute to make it a better place, by raising money for charities.

- Helps students further develop their research, project management and collaboration skills.

In what contexts can this initiative be carried out?

This initiative can be carried out in any class during the academic year, as long as there is space and time to do so, as long as there is a willingness among the teachers and staff of a school to take this up, and as long as there are interested students who are highly motivated to learn about a nearby town and the students who live there.

Teachers carrying out this initiative can introduce assignments at different times of the academic year. For instance, they can ask students to write an essay about the topic chosen for the picture book. They can also ask students to take or draw pictures, write a short description of the picture, and to think about one activity that links to one picture that can be applicable to children in kindergartens and primary schools. Later, a workshop can be organized where pictures and activities are selected to include in the picture book.

Teachers give additional workshops during the course of the year to guide students in fundraising, prepare them for their visits to the kindergartens and primary schools and develop different creative approaches to gather data. Teachers can ask students to complete an assignment in which they prepare a presentation to be shared with primary school students about their work.

Finally, during the last stage, students can write a reflection paper in which they describe their experiences in the kindergartens and primary schools and reflect on what they have learnt from the visits, the historical data and the responses of the primary and kindergarten students.

How can this initiative be evaluated?

Teachers can do the following to assess the success of this initiative:

- Interview students about the importance of obtaining historical data about a town.
- Observe students' behaviour during class time while the initiative is being carried out and record their level of participation.
- Prepare a role play simulation in which one student explains what was significant about the study conducted and what the main challenges and solutions were; also what objects, facts, dilemma's etc. opened their eyes.
- Ask students to present their experiences about designing the picture book, collecting donations, and organizing the workshop with children.
- Use a checklist to explore the views of the secondary school students once the initiative is over, to assess student learning.
- Have students self-assess their own learning and level of participation.
- Organize a meeting with the teachers involved to identify what went well, what could be improved and how to stimulate other teachers to carry out this initiative in their classrooms.
- Test students who participated in the project, both before and after the project, to see what knowledge they gained about the history of the area they studied and wrote about.

Parents can also record their reactions to their children's experiences. This serves to engage parents.

- By participating/observing how their children collect materials for the picture book.
- By having physical or online meetings with parents whose children participated in the initiative, to strengthen the relationships between school and families.

- By indicating to what extent they have witnessed changes in the home behaviours of the children, for instance using a checklist provided by the school and shared with teachers.

How can this initiative be used by other schools and teachers (in Europe)?

- This initiative can help schools and teachers maintain student interest by having them explore a topic that it is of interest to them. This initiative does not need to focus on the history of the city where students live, and therefore does not necessarily have to take place in the history classes, but it can help them explore nearby, unknown areas that raise curiosity and compel students to ask questions and find answers.
- The initiative can be replicated in any context, but it requires careful planning to allow each stage of the initiative to develop. A diversity of assignments keeps students engaged in producing the picture book.
- This initiative can attract teachers who are willing and interested in getting to know their students better, and who have the capacity to design clear assignments with specific project management tasks, and who are able to coordinate and train students to work and teach younger peers.

What are the challenges to overcome when carrying out this initiative?

- The initiative takes time and resources in a sometimes very full school day, and where there can be pressures to stick rigidly to the established curriculum. The support of the school leadership is essential. There also needs to be an awareness among the school community that students gain a set of competences that will benefit both their school-based learning



and also their lifelong learning.

- By being a classroom-based initiative, it requires the participation of teachers who are willing to include this initiative in their teaching. It also requires the willingness of teachers to motivate students and keep them engaged in the entire process, from beginning to end.
- This initiative also requires teachers to have a wide array of non-traditional teaching competences, as well as a keen understanding of students' emotional and empathetic domains.
- It may be difficult to find teachers willing to carry out this initiative on their own. To overcome this, it is useful set up a coordinating group of teachers who can help with different aspects of this initiative.
- This initiative requires funding and collaboration with primary schools. Schools can also work with local authorities who might provide funds and help teachers find primary schools willing to invite students to present their work.

“Your Name is Kept”: An Inspiring Initiative from the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora in Zadar, Croatia

The following inspiring initiative was contributed by Tihana Magaš, a secondary school history teacher for students aged 14-18. Ms. Magaš is also a debate trainer and leader of the European parliament program of the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora in Zadar, Croatia.

What is the focus of this initiative?

Description

“Your name is kept” is an initiative that is derived from storytelling, in which students decide to focus on a specific project in which they can film, photograph, videotape and interview people. Secondary school students carry out this initiative throughout the academic year and can interview their relatives and friends to collect stories about their experiences du-

ring the War in Croatia in the 1990s. The reason this initiative at the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora appeals to many students is because this recent war is “hidden”. It is not often talked about, and some students have members of their family who experienced the war and have not had the chance to express their emotions or thoughts about it. The aftermath of the war continues to affect and shape the socio-cultural lives of students and their families. Therefore, sharing those stories is a manner to reach some degree of reconciliation and deeper understanding.

In this initiative, students are expected to learn about the War in Croatia in the 1990s, its causes and especially the impact it had on Croatia. Students learn how to conduct interviews (using ethical principles) before they start interviewing. With the support of teachers, the students prepare a letter for the interviewees, explaining the aims of the project and the reasons they are being interviewed.

Students are trained in conducting interviews with extra attention devoted to conducting interviews that do not cause discomfort or harm to the interviewee: they are taught to listen to the interviewee, to respect the anonymity of the interviewee, unless otherwise specified, and to refrain from forcing interviewees to answer sensitive questions – all based on meeting the comfort standards of the interviewee.

Once the stories about the during the War in Croatia in the 1990`s are collected, the students pass on their knowledge to primary school students, aged 13 to 14, in neighboring towns, which were affected by the war that took place on Croatian soil. They create a photo exhibition for other students, teachers, and family members to see at the other school, and also act as guides for the exhibition. During the preparation for the project and the research on the war, students sometimes, at their discretion, bring photos or other objects from that period. However, after collecting stories, they themselves choose what to focus on when telling the story of the war. Some, for example, talked about the

wearing of Converse All Stars sneakers to refer to the experiences of teenage soldiers during the war. By talking about the main source of water in the city, students talked about life without water and electricity while cities in Croatia were under siege.

Before visiting the primary schools, students are trained and supported in collecting information about the towns in which the primary schools are located. They are also taught to identify social issues that are being insufficiently addressed. Students are then asked to fundraise for associations and NGOs that work to address such social issues. The money is collected from “ticket sales” for the exhibition (voluntary donations). They also organise a collection of groceries or products that can be donated to organizations that need it. In the past, they have sold cakes and souvenirs in the main city square and within the school, for instance. At the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora, students raise money for families in need at Vukovar, the most devastated city in Croatia during the War in the Balkans, and for the *Vukovarski Leptirići*, an association located in Vukovar, which supports children with special needs.

In the primary schools, high school students organize workshops and activities where they teach primary school children, with the support of teachers, using art to collect people’s stories and memories, and create exhibitions that address complex issues that directly or indirectly affect their lives. The workshops and lectures that are given by high school students vary and depend on the characteristics of the schools and places they visit.

However, the basic approach entails getting acquainted with the various stages of creating the exhibition. After talking to elementary school students about what they would like to create as an exhibition, they teach the primary students the basics of photography, how to be a guide at an exhibition, etc.

In this manner, each elementary school

student can, with the help of an older mentor from the secondary school, contribute to the exhibition in his or her own way - from drawing to singing at the opening of the exhibition, to writing speeches about the objects or stories that are being exhibited. In exchange, primary school children organize a welcome party, a lunch, and a tour of the primary school and the neighbourhood where it is located.

Aims: This initiative aims to:

Help students better understand how to deal with complex issues that directly or indirectly affect their lives and their families through art.

Foster students’ intercultural competence and awareness by creating opportunities for them to interact with students from diverse backgrounds.

Help students reflect on their moral values and show them how they can contribute making the world a better place.

Help students develop their research skills, project management skills, and teaching/training skills, while also teaching them the ethical dimensions of conducting research.

Partnerships: To carry out this initiative, partnerships with local authorities and schools are needed. Some degree of locating schools takes place by the teachers who lead the project. They attempt to find out which primary schools might be interested in having students from the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora share their work and experiences. The Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora relies on the support of local authorities in funding the travel and accommodation costs for primary school students’ trips to towns that are near Zadar. The space and materials needed for the exhibition are provided by the school.

Students targeted and teachers participating: As part of their history class, all secondary school students in the 4th year, ages 15 to 18, are expected to carry out research on the War in Croatia and to conduct interviews with family and relatives, who they think



have something to contribute. All of these activities are totally voluntary, and students participate according to their interests and commitment.

Sequence

The sequence starts with teachers asking students about their interests, whether they would like to create an exhibition, present their work in primary schools to young students, and conduct fundraising for the primary schools. History teachers at the Gimnazija Vladimira Nazora then volunteer for the next stages of the research. They act as mentors and facilitators for the students. Once the exhibition is created, teachers with students develop and implement a plan to teach the primary school students about their town's history through the stories in the exhibition.

Why is this initiative effective?

This initiative is effective because it:

- Helps students discuss sensitive and taboo topics such as war and its social and emotional aftermath, not only with other younger students, but with their teachers, parents and other community members. It allows students to explore their own thoughts and feelings about the consequences of war, and kind of learning that such projects generate.
- Keeps students engaged in school and learning by giving responsibility, buy in and also by providing them with tools and skills they can use for lifelong learning.
- Becomes an opportunity for students to make friends with peers from other classes.
- Strengthens the bond between students and teachers, since teachers act as supporters and facilitators. Also, students have the opportunity to spend time together with teachers and other students during the trips to other schools.
- Fosters parental engagement in student activities, since parents can not only share their stories with their children and

help them contact relatives and friends who might want to share their experiences as well, but they also can see the outcome of this initiative by attending the exhibition and sharing their opinions.

- Enhances students' understanding about their role in the world as change agents, and how their actions can contribute to make it a better place.
- Helps students further develop their research and project management skills.

In what contexts can this initiative be carried out?

This initiative can be carried out in any secondary school where there is an interest in historical events and where teachers are committed to make learning come alive. In carrying out this initiative students need to be trained during the academic year in the steps and ethics of conducting research and interviews. Teachers introduce assignments at different stages that can help students develop the knowledge and skills required to complete this initiative. For instance, teachers can ask students to take pictures, write a short description of the picture, and then introduce this into a workshop where the pictures are printed and assembled into an exhibition. Once the interviews are completed and transcribed, teachers can ask students to create a presentation about the War in the Balkans, to write a memo on how the interviews went and also the key themes discussed during the interview. Additional workshops by teachers, where they guide students in the organization of fundraising, preparing for visits to the primary schools and being prepared can be conducted. Teachers can also ask students to complete an assignment where they prepare a presentation about their work to show this to primary school students. Finally, during the last stage, students can be asked to write a reflection paper where they describe their experiences in the primary schools and reflect on what they have learnt from visiting the primary schools.

How can this initiative best be evaluated?

Teachers can do the following to assess the success of this initiative:

- Interview students about the importance of obtaining historical data about a town.
- Assess students' understanding of the project and the process involved by having them present their objectives in class.
- Observe students' behaviour during class time while the initiative is being carried out and record their level of participation.
- Use a checklist to explore the views of the secondary school students once the initiative is over, to assess student learning, and also their thoughts and feelings about tackling such a difficult topic. Have students self-assess their own learning and level of participation.
- Organize a meeting with the teachers involved to identify what went well, what could be improved and how to stimulate other teachers to carry out this initiative in their classrooms.
- Test students who participated in the project, both before and after the project, to see what knowledge they gained about the history of the area they studied and wrote about.
- By having physical or online meetings with parents whose children participated in the initiative, to strengthen the relationships between school and families.
- By reporting satisfaction levels in witnessing changes in the behaviours of students at home, with a checklist provided by the school and shared with teachers.

Parents can also provide their reactions to their children's experiences:

- By having students present to parents and others in a meeting, for instance talking about for instance things they discovered that they did not expect and what they expected yet did not find.

- By participating/observing their children collecting stories and serving as guides in the exhibition, also writing their reflections in a visitor's book for the exhibition.
- By having physical or online meetings with other parents whose children participated in the initiative, to strengthen the relationships between the school and families.
- By indicating to what extent they have witnessed changes in the home behaviours of the children, for instance using a checklist provided by the school and shared with teachers.

How can this initiative be used by other schools and teachers in Europe (and elsewhere)?

- This initiative can be used in other schools to help students reflect on and engage with difficult and complex issues that affect their lives, families, and societies. They learn to engage through research, reflective exercises, and the creation of an exhibition. These do not necessarily need to be connected to histories of war, but can also address other complex topics that students are interested in (e.g. racism, poverty, discrimination, exclusion, stereotypes, gender).
- The initiative can be replicated in a variety of contexts, but it does require careful planning to each stage of the initiative needs support and sufficient attention.
- This initiative will be attractive for teachers who are interested in getting to know their students and the community better.
- Teachers need to be prepared to address complex and at times controversial topics and the emotions that can sometimes emerge. Being trained in addressing classroom and societal diversity helps teachers anticipate possible challenges and allows them to make full educational use of the complexity of the classroom and society.
- Teachers also need to know how to give precise and clear instructions to stu-

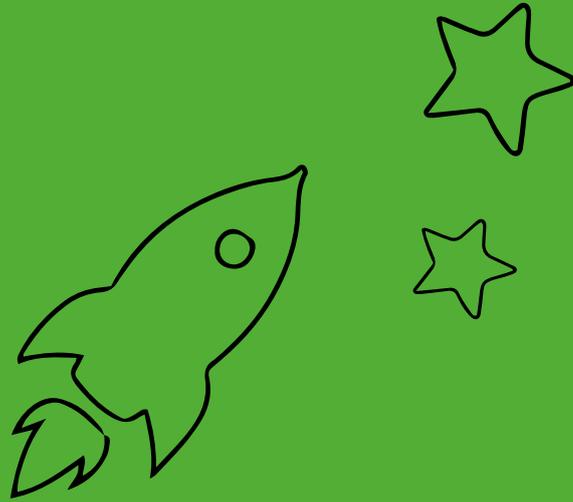


dents, have good project management and coordination skills, and have the ability to train their students to teach their younger peers.

What are the challenges to overcome when carrying out this initiative?

- The initiative takes time and resources in a sometimes very full school day. There can be pressures to stick rigidly to the established curriculum. The support of the school leadership is essential. There also needs to be an awareness among the school community that students gain a set of competences that will benefit both their school-based learning and also their lifelong learning.
- Because this is a year-long, teacher-based initiative, it requires the commitment of teachers who are willing to coordinate it from the beginning until the end. It also means teachers need to know how to motivate students and keep them engaged in the process. This initiative requires teachers to have multiple competences. As such, it may be difficult to find teachers willing to carry out this initiative on their own. Support from school leadership is essential. It can be useful to set up a coordinating group of teachers who can help with different aspects of this initiative.
- This initiative does require some funding. When schools cannot meet the extra costs, they can work with local authorities who might finance (parts of) the initiative and help teachers find primary schools willing to invite the students to present their work.
- Secondary schools wanting to take this on should treat the primary schools and their teachers as equals – that is not always the case.
- When travel restrictions are in place, such as during the COVID crisis, there are more challenges to be faced. This initiative can be adapted to a digital format in the context of lockdown and mobility restrictions. Students can be asked to collect stories online. The exhibition can be changed to a digital format and shared on the school's website. The meetings with students from different schools can take place online and these can be facilitated by teachers. Alternatively, when there is a lack of digital resources to facilitate meetings between students from different schools, teachers can opt for the possibility of postponing trips to primary schools until this becomes possible again. Using a digital format helps students improve their digital skills and keeps them engaged through distance learning.





10. FACING NEW REALITIES



10. FACING NEW REALITIES

The COVID pandemic and the resulting societal restrictions imposed by authorities greatly altered schooling as we have known it for at least a century and has affected students, families, schools and communities worldwide. At no other time did the physical absence of students in classrooms necessitate innovative strategies for distance learning which in turn required not only upgrading and access to ICT equipment, infrastructure and training, but the development of support systems and tools for overwhelmed teachers and parents attempting to conduct effective schooling in the home environment. The importance of digital learning, already growing pre-COVID, has been accelerated. Any discussion of school disengagement and ESL in the post-COVID period will be impacted by the new reality.

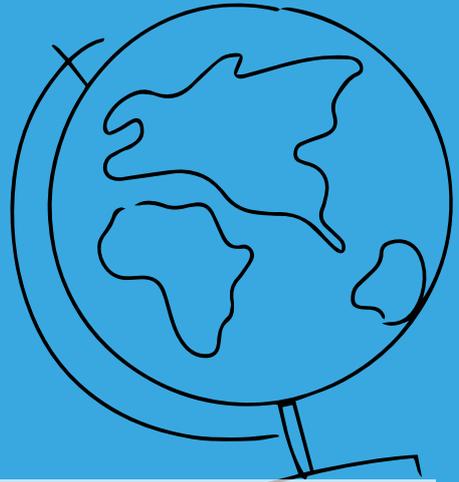
How effectively teachers and policy makers innovate solutions to retain students in schools by enhancing their educational expe-

rience and opportunities will depend on the types of creative action plans they develop and implement to support both the parents and students relating to the challenges of distance learning. Otherwise, the loss of education will have generational consequences.

More than ever, educational practice needs to prepare students to respond to global issues, not the least of which are pandemics, climate change, mass migration of people and political upheaval. To foster learning and commitment, students need caring support systems which create close personal relationships with teachers and each other.

The proactive practices and initiatives elaborated in this toolkit and tested in the schools highlighted in these chapters are geared to create mutual ethics of care to stimulate learning and thereby create incentives and motivations for students to stay in school. It is our sincere hope that we have provided you with sufficient tools, guidelines, and reflective and practical practices to make this happen now and in the years ahead.





11. APPENDICES



Appendix A: Non-academic ESL factors (Adapted from González-Rodríguez et al., 2019)⁴³

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	
Gender	<p>Males have a higher risk of ESL than women.</p> <p>Females have a higher risk of ESL than males in countries of Southeast Europe.</p> <p>Gender stereotypes and culture influence educational expectations of males and females.</p>
Disorders or syndromes	<p>Generalised anxiety disorders, Social phobia, Suicidal ideation, mood disorders, specific learning disorders, attention deficit with or without hyperactivity, behavioural disorders, oppositional defiance disorders, antisocial personality, foetal alcohol spectrum disorders.</p>
Individual Level	<p>Low self-esteem, Low motivation Low self-confidence, Feeling of inferiority, Self-defeat Anti-social</p>
Health problems	<p>Somatic complaints (headaches and stomachaches) Serious diseases</p>
Substance use/abuse	<p>Cannabis, Nicotine, Cocaine, Alcohol, Other illicit drugs, amphetamines, general drugs, non-medical use of prescription</p>
Aggression	<p>Verbal and physical</p>
Legal issues	<p>Troubles with the law, Legal issues related to documentation and migrant status.</p>
Premature Relationships	<p>Young pregnancy, Teen parents, Sexual and child abuse.</p>

43. González-Rodríguez, D. Viera, M.J. and Vidal., J. (2019) Factors that influence early school leaving: a comprehensive model. Educational Research, 61 (2), 214-230.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	
Work	Working more than 20 hours a week, Greater stress at work, helping the family work, The appeal of attractive wages for young people still in education.
Parents (low income, low cultural and human capital, health problems, psychological disposition & legal issues)	Low income or low income combined with family disruption Employment of parents Material available in homes Parents with unstable or multiple jobs Educational level of each parents and labour aspirations that parents expect from their children Cultural capital of parents for their children Legal health issues of parents Parental mental illness Socio-psychological health of parents
Family environment	Parental substance abuse Household mobility (e.g. migration) Marital discord Single-parent households Family conflict Limited interest in the education of children Parental support or involvement Child maltreatment Corporal punishment Inconsistent parental discipline Parental rejection Limited family support Parenting practices Modelling of behaviours
Family-Related Socio-Cultural Factors	Status migration, Intergenerational culture clashes Ethnic and racial background



FRIENDS-RELATED FACTORS

Features of Friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socially discriminated Unpopular Uninterested in school or dropped out of school Poor grades No university plans Negative influence Disengaged Negative peers or cross group friendships Absence from school Uses non-medical prescription drugs or illicit drugs
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STUDENTS

Academic performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low achievement in general Lack of participation, and interest in classes, Repetition of grade level, Over-age students, Suspended, Poor executive functions, Does not like to work hard in school, Zero hours of homework completed per week, Low learning skills in math, English and reading, Low academic achievement on high school exit exams
Satisfaction	Satisfied with educational program or not
Absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absenteeism in general, repeated absences, Skipping of classes mixed with attendance, Complete absence during a certain period of the school year, Complete absence from school for an extended period of time, School attendance accompanied by period of non-attendance, Repeated misbehaviour in the morning to avoid school, Repeated tardiness in the morning
Low participation	Student does not participate or shows low participation in programs and extracurricular activities

STUDENTS

Maturity	Low degree of maturity in relation to his/her peer group
Language	Inequalities linked to language, Language of instruction is not the mother tongue
Mobility	Student has moved schools or countries

CLASSMATES & SCHOOLMATES

Interaction with classmates/schoolmates	Student does not have many friends at school, is rejected by others, is avoided by others or is unpopular, Has antisocial behaviour.
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TEACHER

Teacher Features	<p>Number of students per teacher,</p> <p>Teacher rates students as disruptive to class,</p> <p>Low qualification, lack of experience and pre-and post-training on issues of diversity, inclusion, and pedagogy,</p> <p>Pedagogical approach of the teacher is not the most appropriate for the group of students that the teacher is instructing,</p> <p>Teacher's attitudes,</p> <p>Teacher does not expect students to graduate and be successful</p>
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SCHOOL	
Organisation & Policies	School' policies and regulations , Structural organisation, Hiring of staff and teachers Stated mission and vision for the school Policies on absenteeism, grades, grade retention, school conduct Operation of building and facilities
School Location	Distance from school, School located in poverty areas School in unprotected areas (crime, dilapidated buildings, etc.)
School Environment (physical and social environment with notions of respect and acceptance)	Bad school environment (negative behaviours, displays of violence) Socio-economic composition of the student body, High ratio of student body to school staff
School Resources	Limited school human and economic resources Lack of school breakfast or lunches Limited staffing for school facilities Limited material resources in school (rooms, playground facilities, etc.) Absence of or limited school lunches



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