

Category: Peer Collaboration

# Extended Learning Time



Toolkit  
**Successful Learning  
Practices for  
All Children to Thrive**



## POLICIES AND PRACTICES BASED ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOR REDUCING UNDERACHIEVEMENT AND EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN EUROPE



## Acknowledgments

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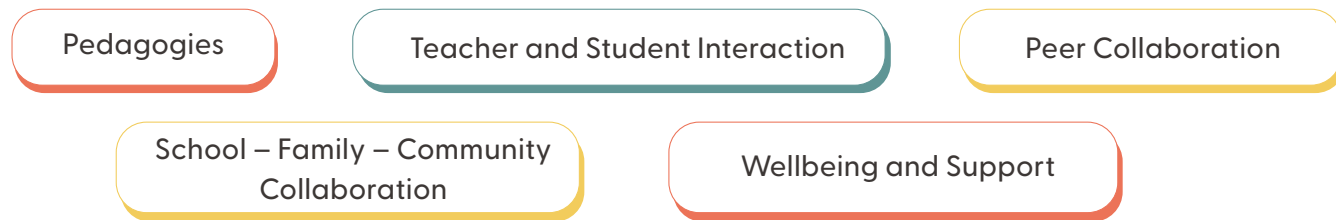


## Introduction

This toolkit, “Successful Learning Practices for All Children to Thrive,” is a practical resource that shows how to create successful learning environments in classrooms, schools, and communities. It helps teachers and school leaders build effective learning spaces that improve basic skills, support struggling students, and develop children’s social and emotional skills. The toolkit is based on 20 case studies from 9 European countries, offering practical strategies that have worked in real schools.

These case studies come from primary and secondary schools across Europe that have successfully helped underachieving students and prevented early school leaving. The research was conducted in diverse schools across Portugal, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Malta. From these schools, we gathered concrete practices that improve both academic learning and social-emotional development.

The toolkit is organised around five key areas of successful learning environments:



While each tool is placed in one of these areas, many tools work across multiple areas. For instance, “Interactive Groups” not only helps students work together but also connects with the community, supports wellbeing, and improves academic results.

It’s important to understand that the most successful schools use multiple tools together. While each tool can help on its own, the best results come from working on all five areas across the whole school. We recommend looking at your school’s current strengths and areas for improvement to help you choose the most useful tools for your situation.

This toolkit is available as an online platform in seven languages: Spanish, Portuguese, English, Finnish, Maltese, Greek, and Italian. All the tools have been carefully tested and developed through dialogic co-creation with nearly 1,000 participants in the SCIREARLY project, including school staff, students, families, and community members.

Our aim is to give educators and communities the tools they need to help every child succeed in school. By sharing successful practices from different learning environments in an accessible way, we’re working to create schools where all children can thrive, regardless of their background.





## Glossary

A glossary section is essential in this toolkit to provide clear definitions of key terms and concepts, ensuring that all users, including teachers, school leaders, education experts, policymakers, and community members, can fully understand and effectively implement the successful teaching and learning practices. This section helps bridge any gaps in terminology and ensures consistent understanding, making it easier to apply the evidence-based strategies and improve educational outcomes for students.

### Dialogic Teaching and Learning

Dialogic teaching and learning emphasises dialogue and quality interactions as the primary means of achieving understanding, learning and development. A dialogic approach to teaching and learning aims at creating an environment where all students, teachers and other members of the community actively engage in meaningful and respectful dialogue. Here are some of the key premises:

Ensuring that everybody's voice is valued equally, and everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue. This encourages diverse perspectives and ensures that all voices are heard.

Recognising and valuing the cultural backgrounds and experiences of all students and teachers. This helps to create a more inclusive and understanding learning environment.

Dialogic interactions among students, teacher-student and within the community are oriented towards transforming the sociocultural context and create optimal conditions for learning and development.

Co-constructing meaning and understanding through dialogues between students and teachers. This collaborative process helps deepen comprehension and retention of information.



Building a sense of community and mutual support among students and teachers. This principle fosters collaboration and collective responsibility for learning.

Respecting and valuing differences among students and teachers. Dialogue should celebrate diversity and use it as a resource for learning. Encouraging critical thinking and challenging everyone to think deeply and question assumptions.

### Emotional Dimension

Recognising the importance of quality relationships in learning. Successful practices create a supportive environment where students and teachers feel safe, supported and confident to express their emotions and experiences.

### Authentic Learning

Ensuring that the dialogue and learning are relevant to the students' and teachers' real-life experiences and contexts. This makes the learning more meaningful and applicable.

### Translanguaging

When one person speaks in one language while another person responds in another.

### Reception Classes

Classes where children with another mother tongue are in specialised classes where translanguaging is used to help children learn the host country language - with the intention that the children enter mainstream education as they gain language proficiency.



# Extended Learning Time



## Overview:

Extending Learning Time is designed to continue students' learning beyond formal school hours, giving them additional time for educational activities in a supportive and enriching environment. For instance, extending learning time activities usually include volunteers who actively participate, providing students with the opportunity to interact with a wider range of individuals beyond their regular teachers. By offering this extra layer of support, schools can help improve students' basic and transversal skills. This initiative is especially beneficial for those who may struggle to keep up with certain subjects, as it provides extended opportunities to continue learning.

The goal of extending learning time is to provide students with extra support beyond the regular school schedule, often in a more personalized and focused setting. For example, by opening the school library and offering a safe and supportive environment, students can complete assignments, study, or receive targeted help in areas where they need additional reinforcement. This support helps students strengthen their skills across various subjects, while improving their academic self-concept. These environments, built on supportive and collaborative interactions, create affordances for developing personal skills that help individuals overcome challenges such as discriminatory experiences. These spaces provide valuable opportunities to gain emotional skills that are beneficial both in everyday life and within the educational setting.

Extended Learning Time programs help reduce the vulnerability of students, particularly adolescents, by decreasing risk factors in their environments and promoting the development of academic, personal, and social skills. These programs are especially valuable for students who need more time to process information, as the regular class schedule may not always provide enough flexibility for that. By offering extended learning opportunities, students can learn at their own pace, expanding their educational opportunities and allowing them to make academic progress that might not be possible within standard class hours.

This approach is fully inclusive, with no restrictions based on age, language, or setting, allowing the entire community to participate. Everyone is welcome—from students of all ages to extended family members, teachers, and school administrators. Support can also be provided in multiple languages, ensuring that language is never a barrier for learners. The flexibility of the program allows learning to take place in a variety of settings, such as libraries, classrooms, or even playgrounds. By fostering this collaborative environment, the initiative extends educational opportunities beyond regular school hours, benefiting everyone involved.



## Implementation Steps:

### Preparation

To begin implementing Extended Learning Time, start by identifying the students' academic needs. Develop a plan that schedules extra learning sessions either before or after school hours. You can also offer this service on weekends or during holiday periods.

This plan should involve not only school staff but also older or former students, families, and other community members. With everyone's support, create a flexible timetable that establishes the designated spaces and times for Extended Learning sessions.

### Implementation

Based on student needs and the availability of volunteers, the learning spaces (such as the library) can be opened regularly. These sessions typically include school staff, former or older students, families, university students, and volunteers who help students with homework, studying, reading, and improving skills like reading and writing. They also assist students with questions from class and exam preparation.

Students have full flexibility in choosing whether to attend these sessions to either offer help or receive it. During these activities, participants are organized into different groups, ensuring tailored support in different subjects or skill development.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the initiative's success, monitor and evaluate its impact regularly. This can be done by having one or more teachers, students, family members, or community members track daily progress. For instance, informal check-ins or discussions during sessions like the tutorial library help identify immediate needs and make quick adjustments.

In addition to daily monitoring, consider holding monthly, quarterly, or annual meetings to review progress, address challenges, and brainstorm ways to improve the program moving forward.

## Examples and Case Studies:

Amira, who usually avoids going to the board in class, recently had a breakthrough. After practicing an exercise with a volunteer in the library, she felt confident in her understanding of the subject. For the first time, she asked her teacher if she could go up to the board to demonstrate what she had learned. With excitement and newfound confidence, she successfully completed the task, proud to showcase her knowledge.

Integrating the Extended Learning Time program into the daily routine of the school. To address this, the school had to carefully plan and adjust both time and space to ensure these extra learning sessions fit seamlessly into the existing schedule. Flexibility might be key in ensuring that these sessions could take place before or after regular school hours, as well as on weekends or holidays when needed.

Ensuring diverse participation and creating a supportive, inclusive environment. For that purpose, involving not only school staff but also volunteers from the community, is essential to foster a positive and collaborative atmosphere, making the learning environment both enriching and welcoming for all.

## Benefits:

**Academic performance:** by participating as either students or volunteers, learners enhance their knowledge and skills. The extended learning time allows students to reinforce or deepen their understanding, helping them not only meet but often exceed the academic standards for their grade level. This strategy prevents students from falling behind and supports continuous progress in their learning journey.

**Well-being of the pupils:** In addition to improved academic performance, students benefit from a boost in overall well-being. Participating in extended learning opportunities increases motivation, self-confidence, and self-esteem. By experiencing academic success, students feel more capable and enthusiastic about continuing their studies.

*"At the beginning few students came to the tutored library, but then they realized there where people ready to help, to support them with the homework or with tasks they needed help to resolve or understand. They were asking and experiencing this space as something very meaningful"*

*(Teacher)*



## Tips for Success:

### Diverse participation:

Encourage a wide range of volunteers to participate, offering students access to people with varied skills and perspectives. This increases the chances of success and ensures that students receive well-rounded support.

### Active involvement of all students:

Promote these spaces to all students, not just those who struggle academically. Even students excelling in their studies can benefit from reinforcing their knowledge and helping others, creating a collaborative learning environment.

### Flexible scheduling:

**Make these learning spaces available several times a week to accommodate as many students as possible. This flexibility allows for better access to those who need it, regardless of their personal schedules.**

### Lack of volunteers:

To recruit enough volunteers, offer flexible hours and highlight the value of diverse community involvement, such as families, alumni, university students, and community members.

### Acknowledging contributions:

Ensure that all volunteers feel appreciated. Clearly communicate the significance of their contributions to the success of the initiative, so they understand the purpose and value of their work.

### Encouraging participation:

**Emphasize that these educational spaces are beneficial for everyone, not just for students with academic difficulties. Highlight the inclusive nature of these sessions, where all participants can learn and grow.**

## Additional Resources:

Impact of extending learning time with vulnerable groups.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740924003815>

Impact of the extension of learning time on the learning space

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2210656119300248#s0055>

## Conclusion:

- Extended Learning Time strategies play a crucial role in helping students improve their academic performance and overall well-being.
- Creating these spaces fosters greater student engagement, helping ensure that no one is left behind.
- Active participation from the whole school community is essential in creating high-quality learning spaces that support both academic and social development.

Educators are encouraged to adopt the Extended Learning Time tool to fit their specific contexts. By providing regular, monitored support, students receive meaningful assistance that boosts their development. Addressing common classroom issues, such as students falling behind or showing disruptive behavior, becomes easier when they are given the opportunity to thrive outside of the traditional classroom setting.





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