

Category: School - Family - Community

Family Education



SCIREARLY



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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Category: School - Family - Community Collaboration



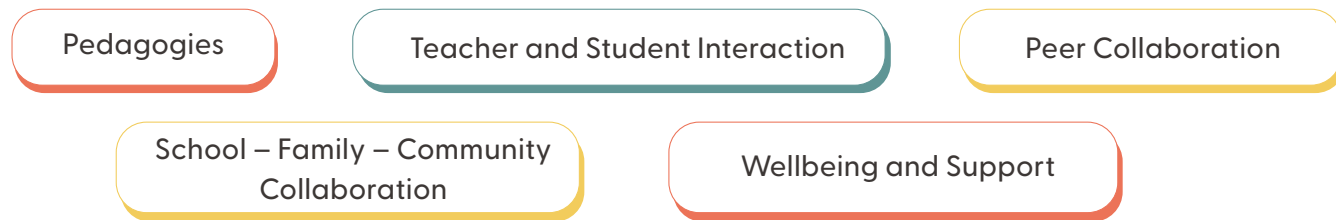


Introduction

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.



Family Education



Overview:

Family Education is a research-informed strategy for improving student outcomes through training sessions organized by and for parents and community members, held at the school. These sessions address real needs of the families, such as literacy, language skills, or university exam preparation for adults. Importantly, the participants themselves decide the content based on their community's needs, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement. Indeed, when schools and families collaborate based on dialogic principles, student performance improves, and values such as solidarity, respect, and coexistence are strengthened. This tool provides teachers with a framework to organize and implement Family Education programs, empowering parents and community members to become key stakeholders in their children's educational success.

Family Education transforms parents and family members from passive supporters into active participants in the school community. By involving them in classroom activities and broader school initiatives, schools can create an inclusive learning environment that fosters higher achievement and reduces early school leaving.

The primary goal is to provide training opportunities for family members to develop skills like literacy, cultural knowledge, ICT usage, or language learning, tailored to their interests and needs. These activities not only improve family members' personal and academic growth but also increase their involvement in the school, promoting a collaborative learning environment where students, teachers, and families work together.

By participating in these workshops, families gain academic knowledge, collaborate in their children's classrooms, and contribute to creating a shared, inclusive school atmosphere.

Target Audience: Any family member, from parents to grandparents, can participate in the training programs.

Settings: Schools (teachers, students, parents, and other family members), community spaces (libraries, social centers).

Available Languages: The program promotes inclusivity by supporting linguistic diversity, ensuring all families can participate, regardless of language barriers.

Implementation Steps:

Preparation:

The preparation phase begins with the formation of a committee or group at the school, comprising school staff, parents, and other family members who represent the educational community. Once this committee is established, meetings are organized to invite all interested families. During these meetings, families are consulted about their training needs and preferences, ensuring their input is central to the planning process.

Based on this feedback, the committee manages the development of tailored training programs. These programs can be delivered using the school's resources, such as teachers, classrooms, and technology, or by utilizing external resources, including municipal libraries, community centers, or external trainers, depending on what best fits the needs of the families.

Implementation:

After organizing the training sessions, all interested participants are invited to attend. The committee ensures that any potential barriers, such as language differences or scheduling conflicts, are addressed. Solutions are developed collaboratively and dialogically, ensuring that all family members, regardless of their background or circumstances, can fully participate in the program.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Progress is monitored on an ongoing basis as family members increase their involvement and communication with the school community. This constant interaction allows the committee to stay informed about the success of the training and any emerging challenges. If new needs or difficulties arise, the committee can adapt the program accordingly. Feedback from participants is invaluable, both for overcoming barriers and for planning future training sessions that respond to the evolving needs of the school community.





Examples and Case Studies:

Alicia is a Roma woman whose children attend Artatse, a school located in the Basque Country, in one of the most deprived areas of Bilbao. The neighborhood is well engaged with the school since it opens its doors and invites (and values) families' participation in school activities, such as Interactive Groups. Their participation consists of facilitating peer interactions while children solve a particular task or activity in close collaboration and constant dialogue among them. Alicia's involvement in school began through her son Elias, a 8 years old Roma boy who enjoys school, particularly reading and writing activities. Because of Elias' enthusiasm to get his mum in the classroom, Alicia comes to volunteer everytime she can. However, her involvement began to make her think about how well Elias is advancing in literacy, and how much she misses her time at school as a young girl. The school, in collaboration with an association of Roma women located in the community, began to offer family training spaces for those mums, dads or families that might be interested in resuming their academic paths. Thereafter, Alicia is one of those mums who never misses family training sessions every Thursday morning, and although she is no longer always available to volunteer in Elias' classroom, her son is really proud of her mum because she is learning as he is.

Initial Resistance:

Some families may be hesitant to join. To overcome this, clarify that training is designed to meet their needs and interests, and is highly flexible.

Time Constraints:

Families often have limited time. Offering flexible schedules ensures more families can participate.

Benefits:

Some of the benefits most frequently highlighted in the case studies analysed include the following:

Family Empowerment: Families acquire practical skills that improve their lives and boost their involvement in the school.

Increased Participation: Families become active members of the school community, regularly engaging with staff and students.

Improved Family-School Relations: Families develop trust and confidence in the school, enhancing the collaborative environment.

Families' Expectations and Motivation: As families gain more knowledge, they become better equipped to encourage their children's academic success.

Improved Student Performance: Family involvement leads to better support for students, resulting in higher academic achievement and more inclusive learning.

"When children see their mothers coming to school to learn, they recognize that education holds intrinsic value. It becomes something important, something that matters. This creates a shared space where families actively participate in school life, and the school, in turn, becomes a part of their family life."

(Teacher)





Tips for Success:

Maintain Open Communication: Keep a regular dialogue between families and school staff to build trust and ensure the program meets everyone's needs.

Offer Flexibility: Provide varied schedules and support to accommodate families' different time commitments and needs.

Align with Family Needs: Make the training sessions relevant to the families, focusing on skills they can apply in both their personal and family lives.

Low Initial Expectations: Families may doubt their ability to succeed in training. Emphasize that the sessions are designed to be accessible and relevant, boosting their confidence to participate.

Low Participation: Families may not recognize the value of the training at first. Raising awareness of the program's benefits can help motivate them to get involved.

Additional Resources:

Family participation always matters (Video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-62mK-WTt4Uo&list=PLWaUnF8ej6muMEXXbYyATUA9rQISFOop2&index=7&t=5s>

[Transforming Difficulties into Possibilities: Family Training as an Action for Educational Success in Contexts of Poverty.](#)

[Increasing educational expectations of Roma and Moroccan immigrant families in Spain through family education](#)

Conclusion:

Family Education enables families to acquire new skills, become role models for their children, and support their academic journey more effectively. As families become more involved in their children's education, students perform better academically, and the entire school community benefits from a more inclusive and collaborative environment.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt this tool to their school's unique context. By integrating Family Education into their school's culture, they will see improved student learning, better family-school relationships, and greater overall student success





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