

Category: Pedagogies

Personalised Curriculum and Student-centred Learning



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



Red Barnet, MHPSS Collaborative



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:

Pedagogies

Teacher and Student Interaction

Peer Collaboration

School – Family – Community
Collaboration

Wellbeing and Support

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.



Personalised Curriculum and Student-centred Learning

Overview:

This tool highlights innovative teaching practices to support students from diverse linguistic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Main goals are to enhance student engagement, reduce dropout rates and ensure academic success despite cross-cultural challenges. The target audience includes students aged 12-19 years, with different levels of understanding of the local language, various mother tongues with immigrant or refugee background. Key stakeholders are teachers, school directors and parents/guardians who contribute to the school's inclusive approach to education.

Implementation Steps:

Preparation:

- **Curriculum Adaptation:** Teachers may adapt official school curricula according to students' needs, selecting relevant material from the official textbooks. They can add new resources such as pictures and exercises, focusing on reading and writing skills and learning about national culture.
- **Language focus:** While taking into consideration the linguistic and cultural background of students, teachers may also incorporate techniques and tools from methods used to teach the local language as a second language.

Implementation:

- **Student-centred Learning:** Apply a participatory teaching method in the classroom, by encouraging active participation and discussions between students. Through dialogue, emphasis should be placed on recognising and understanding students' everyday views, helping them to gain a deeper and practical understanding of the language. Some features of student-centred learning include respect for diverse opinions, collaborative learning, teacher as facilitator, questioning and critical thinking, etc.
- **Engagement Strategies:** Try to present easy to grasp topics to engage students in dialogue and facilitate discussions that allow comparison of their experiences with historical and cultural events.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- **Project-Based Assessment:** Students complete a project that demonstrates the effectiveness of the teaching method.
- **Reflective Journals:** Students keep a journal where they reflect on their learning experiences, challenges, and growth based on specific objectives or criteria.
- **Formative Quizzes and Polls:** Regular, low-pressure quizzes or polls that provide immediate feedback to students and teachers.
- **Learning Contracts:** Students together with their teacher create agreements outlining what they will learn, how they will learn it, and how they will demonstrate their learning. This method empowers students to take ownership of their learning, tailor their learning experiences, and set personal objectives.
- **Performance-Based Assessment:** students demonstrate their skills and knowledge through presentations, performances, or practical tasks.



While these student-centred assessment methods offer a dynamic approach to evaluating learning, they may not be fully applicable in education systems that rely heavily on traditional assessment methods, such as standardised tests and final annual examinations. In such systems, the focus is often on summative assessments that measure students' knowledge at a single point in time, usually through written tests. These traditional methods prioritise uniformity and comparability across large groups of students, making it challenging to implement more individualised and process-oriented assessments like project-based assessment, reflective journals and formative quizzes. However, it lies upon the teacher to find ways to incorporate these student-centered methods while simultaneously preparing students to succeed in tests and examinations, ensuring a balanced approach that fosters both deep learning and test readiness.

Examples and Case Studies:

This tool derives from a Greek school case study. The school is one of the 26 multicultural schools in the country. It is a middle school, located in a coastal municipality in the Attica region and a suburban town of Athens and has approximately 200 registered students. It has reduced drop-out rates, despite its diverse and vulnerable students. This success is attributed to the teachers' innovative teaching methods and personalised adaptation of the curriculum. Teachers deal creatively with the heterogeneity of students. Some examples drawn from the case study are:

- **Supportive material:** Teachers prepare handouts that include the main topics to be discussed, where important concepts and terms are highlighted. The handouts are distributed to the students, who are able to read them as the discussion unfolds.
- **Interactive Discussions:** While the teacher is the discussion facilitator, they try to consistently capture the students' attention (which in some cases may be particularly challenging) by talking about the class topics, asking questions by highlighting important terms/words, and explaining what they mean. The answers to some questions the teacher asks are found in the handout text, while others require the students' critical contribution and thinking.
- **Language Instruction:** The method of teaching Greek as a second language is widely used and is based on the material produced in the Education of the Muslim Minority Children in Thrace project.

Lastly, the case study highlights the significant advantage of having the high school building located right across the yard from the lower school, facilitating a smooth transition to the upper school level.



Benefits:

The above mentioned teaching methods have increased student engagement, improved academic performance and created a supportive learning environment. Teachers report that these methods promote deeper understanding of the language and basic subjects and enhance students' sense of belonging in the school.

Tips for Success:

Motivate educators to share ideas and tactics while observing and learning from the practices of their peers

Exploit chances for professional development to stay updated on pedagogical developments and strategies for multicultural classroom

Dare to take initiative and explore the strategy that fits best to the goals and needs of the students.

Improve the communication channels and cooperation between educators, administrators, and the school community to assist students' academic and personal growth in a cogent manner.

Additional Resources:

Additional resources to support implementation and further learning you can find here:

- [Material produced in the Education of the Muslim Minority Children in Thrace project, 1997-2010](#)
- The dialogic classroom: <https://whatisessential.org/dialogic-classroom>

Below is an example of a lesson plan which includes practical examples of how to incorporate the tools discussed above in the context of Environmental Education. You are encouraged to adapt the topic and activities to suit your needs.



Lesson's plan title	Enhancing Academic Success in Multicultural Schools/ Environmental Education
Target group	Students aged 12-19 years, with varying levels of understanding of the local language, various mother tongues, and immigrant or refugee backgrounds.
Aim	To implement innovative teaching practices that enhance student engagement, reduce dropout rates, and ensure academic success among students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds.
Lesson Plan Objectives	To engage students in a dialogic exploration of environmental issues, fostering curiosity, empathy, and a deeper understanding of their impact on the world.
Duration	3 sessions (45 minutes each)
Topics (e.g.)	Environmental Education etc.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarise yourselves to the curriculum and adapt it according to students' needs (i.e developmental stage, interests, linguistic and cultural background, etc.), selecting relevant material from the textbooks and by adding new resources such as pictures and exercises. Focus on reading and writing skills and, if applicable, learning about different national cultures. Take into consideration the linguistic and cultural background of students. You can use the method of teaching the local tongue as a second language.

Lesson's plan title	Enhancing Academic Success in Multicultural Schools/ Environmental Education
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Google Translate or Mediator Interactive PowerPoint presentation Handouts summarising key points Photos of local flora and fauna Recycled materials for hands-on activities Internet access for online research
Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with a brief interactive story or video about a fictional character facing environmental challenges. Discuss the importance of protecting the environment using simple language and visuals. Use the "reflect-write-speak" technique to encourage students to write down their thoughts and feelings in the local language about the environment and share them with the class.
Additional Reading	If applicable

Conclusion:

To conclude, the teaching methods described in this tool offer a promising model for supporting teachers and students in multicultural classrooms, emphasising the importance of flexibility, inclusivity, and active engagement in learning. Educators are encouraged to explore and adapt these strategies to their own contexts, recognising the unique challenges and opportunities presented by diversity in the classroom.



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