



## WP2: Framework and Tools Development and Experimental Protocol

*D2.1 Thriving Schools  
Framework lead by IHU*



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## Table of Contents

Executive summary	4
Introduction	5
Key terminology	8
Organisation of the current report	9
<b>Part 1. Mental Health and Well-being in Schools</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1. Mental Health and Well-being in Schools – A whole school approach</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction to Mental Health and Well-being curricula</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2. Teacher Well-being</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1. What is teacher well-being?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2. The significant role of teacher Well-being</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3. Students' Well-being</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.1. What is student well-being?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.2. The significant role of student well-being</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4. Introduction to Positive Psychology</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.1. The approach of Positive Psychology about Teacher's &amp; Student's Well-being</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.2. Positive Psychology Interventions for Teacher's &amp; Student's Well-being</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5. Introduction to the PERMA model</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>5.1 Positive Emotions</b>	<b>18</b>
Teachers	19
Students	22
<b>5.2 Engagement</b>	<b>25</b>
Teachers	26
Students	28
<b>5.3 Relationships</b>	<b>30</b>
Teachers	31
Students	34
<b>5.4 Meaning</b>	<b>36</b>
Teachers	37
Students	39
<b>5.5 Accomplishment</b>	<b>40</b>



Teachers	41
Students	42
<b>Part 2. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-wide Positive behavior Support (SWPBS) in School</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>1. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-wide Positive behavior Support (SWPBS) in School – A whole school approach</b>	<b>45</b>
<i>1.1 Introduction to SEL &amp; SWPBS curricula</i>	<i>48</i>
<b>2. The SWPBS framework</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>2.1 Common Philosophy and Purpose</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>2.2 Leadership</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>2.3 Clarifying Expected Behavior</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>2.4 Teaching Expected Behavior</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>2.5 Encouraging Expected Behavior</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>2.6 Discourage Inappropriate Behavior</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>2.7 Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>2.8 Training, Development and Support of Staff</i>	<i>71</i>
<b>Part 3 From PERMA to Practice: Adapting SWPBS Elements within the Thriving Schools Framework</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>3.1 Adapting School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) Elements for PERMA Implementation</b>	<b>76</b>
<i>3.1.1 Integrative Example of PERMA + SWPBS in Action</i>	<i>78</i>
<b>References</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>87</b>
Annex 1. Sample matrix of program rule and expected behaviours	87
Annex 2. Sample Visual Poster – Expected Behavior: Be an Active Listener	88
Annex 3. Lesson plan template (social skill – acquisition phase)	89
Annex 4. Lesson Plan template (social skill – maintenance phase)	93
Annex 5. Lesson Plan (Routine)	95
Annex 6. Teaching Schedule	97



## Executive summary

The *Thriving Schools: A Systemic, Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being* project (Project Number: 101196057) sets out a comprehensive framework to address the urgent challenges of mental health, well-being, and social-emotional development in European schools. Grounded in Positive Psychology and Positive Education, the framework integrates the PERMA model (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment) with Whole School Approaches (WSA) and School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) to promote flourishing among both teachers and students.

The report highlights that schools are not only academic institutions but also central environments for fostering psychological and social well-being. Teacher well-being, student well-being, and positive school climates are interdependent factors that significantly influence educational outcomes, resilience, and equity. Evidence shows that when educators and learners thrive emotionally and socially, they demonstrate higher motivation, improved relationships, stronger resilience, and enhanced academic performance.

**Part 1** of the framework provides a theoretical and scientific foundation for mental health and well-being in schools. It introduces key constructs such as teacher and student well-being, explores the role of Positive Psychology, and details the application of the PERMA model. Each pillar of PERMA is described through definitions, theoretical underpinnings, and practical activities for both teachers and students, offering schools a structured, evidence-based approach to embed well-being in everyday practice.

**Part 2** focuses on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS). It outlines a systemic, preventive approach to building inclusive and supportive school environments. Key components include clarifying and teaching expected behaviours, encouraging positive actions, discouraging inappropriate behaviours through constructive strategies, and ensuring continuous monitoring and professional development. The framework emphasizes that behaviour and social-emotional competencies must be taught explicitly, reinforced consistently, and supported by the active involvement of school leaders, staff, families, and external coaches.

**Part 3** bridges theory and practice by integrating the PERMA model of well-being with selected elements of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) framework. It outlines how schools can translate PERMA's principles—Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—into daily routines, policies, and classroom practices through SWPBS tools.

The *Thriving Schools Framework* represents an innovative, systemic model with European added value. It builds on prior Erasmus+ initiatives (e.g., SWPBS, PROMEHS, ProW) and aligns with EU priorities such as the *Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success* and the EC's (2024) *Guidelines on Well-being and Mental Health at School*.



## Introduction

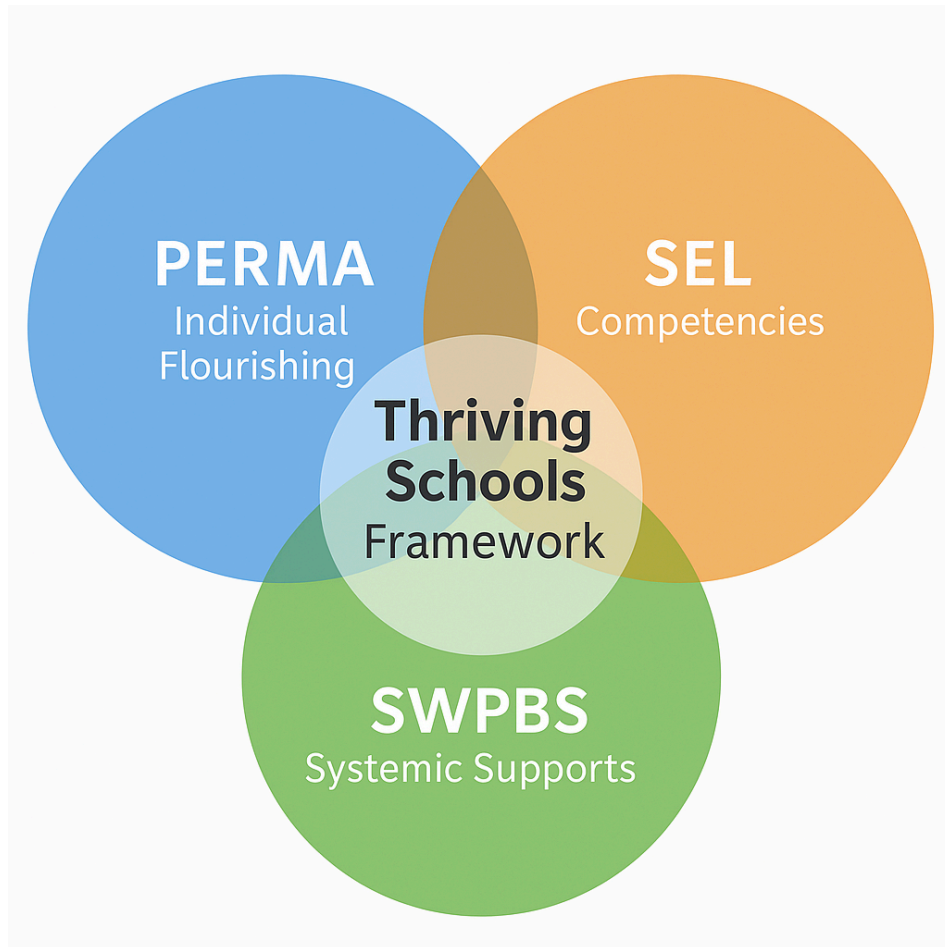
The *Thriving Schools* project was developed in response to the growing concern over declining levels of mental health and well-being among students and teachers across Europe. Recent evidence highlights an urgent need for systemic approaches that address the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of education alongside academic achievement (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2024). Schools are increasingly recognised as key environments not only for learning but also for fostering resilience, social-emotional skills, and a sense of belonging.

This deliverable (D2.1) presents the *Thriving Schools Framework*, which integrates principles from **Positive Psychology**, **Positive Education**, and **Whole School Approaches (WSA)** with the **School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)** model. Central to the framework is Seligman's PERMA model—Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment—which offers both a scientific foundation and practical strategies to promote flourishing within the school community. By embedding these elements into daily practice, schools can create environments that enhance the well-being of teachers and learners alike.

The framework builds upon more than a decade of research and experimentation through European initiatives such as PROMEHS, ProW, SWPBS, and Learning to Be. It addresses three interlinked domains: (a) teacher well-being, (b) student well-being, and (c) whole-school climate. In doing so, it responds directly to EU policy priorities, including the *Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success* and the *European Education Area* vision, which emphasize equity, inclusion, and well-being as prerequisites for quality education.

The Thriving Schools Framework is an innovative, systemic model that integrates three key approaches: Positive Psychology (specifically the PERMA model), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS). While each framework has its own focus, they are designed to work together to create a cohesive, whole-school approach to mental health and well-being (Diagram 1.)

- **PERMA** is a model for individual well-being and flourishing. It provides the "**what**" of well-being by focusing on the five core elements: **Positive Emotions**, **Engagement**, **Relationships**, **Meaning**, and **Accomplishment**.
- **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** provides the "**how**" by equipping students with the skills they need to achieve PERMA's goals. SEL focuses on building competencies like self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, and social skills. For example, the PERMA pillar of Relationships is directly supported by the SEL competency of relationship skills.
- **School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)** provides the "**system**" that makes the other two frameworks sustainable. It creates a proactive, preventative, and consistent school environment where positive behaviors and SEL skills can be explicitly taught, practiced, and reinforced. SWPBS establishes the structures and routines (the "**rules**" and "**systems**") that allow SEL and PERMA to be consistently applied across the entire school community.



**Diagram 1:** Integration of PERMA, SEL, and SWPBS within the Thriving Schools Framework.

The purpose of this report is twofold: first, to provide a theoretical and evidence-based rationale for the promotion of well-being and social-emotional learning in schools; and second, to present practical tools, interventions, and monitoring mechanisms that will guide implementation. The deliverable is structured in two main parts, with integrated tools for monitoring and evaluation:

**Mental Health and Well-being in Schools** – an overview of teacher and student well-being, Positive Psychology, and the PERMA model, with suggested activities for integration into school life.

**Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and SWPBS** – a systemic approach to teaching, reinforcing, and sustaining positive behaviours, supported by leadership, monitoring, and professional development.

The final third part Part 3 demonstrates how PERMA provides the vision for flourishing, while SWPBS ensures its consistent and sustainable implementation across the school environment.



By combining theory, practice, and evaluation, the *Thriving Schools Framework* provides schools with an innovative, holistic, and sustainable model to promote the mental health and well-being of all members of the school community—teachers, students, staff, and families.



## Key terminology

Term	Definition
<b>Well-being</b>	A multidimensional concept including emotional, psychological, social, and physical aspects. In schools, it refers to teachers and students feeling safe, supported, engaged, and able to flourish.
<b>Teacher Well-being</b>	The quality of teachers' professional and personal lives shaped by workload, resources, relationships, and support. It includes job satisfaction, resilience, and self-efficacy, influencing retention and student outcomes.
<b>Student Well-being</b>	How students feel, function, and engage with learning and peers. It includes emotional safety, belonging, agency, resilience, and the ability to manage stress—seen as both a right and a condition for learning.
<b>Positive Psychology</b>	The scientific study of strengths and factors that enable individuals and communities to thrive, focusing on flourishing rather than deficits.
<b>PERMA Model</b>	A framework for well-being (Seligman, 2011) consisting of five pillars: Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment.
<b>Whole School Approach (WSA)</b>	A systemic strategy embedding well-being into curriculum, pedagogy, policies, leadership, and family engagement, involving all school community members.
<b>Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)</b>	The process of developing skills for self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, relationships, and responsible decision-making, essential for academic and life success.
<b>School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)</b>	An evidence-based framework for promoting positive behaviours and reducing problem behaviours across the school. Implemented at universal, targeted, and intensive levels, using data to guide decisions.
<b>Well-being Champions</b>	School-based core teams (teachers, leaders, stakeholders) supported by coaches, responsible for coordinating and embedding the Thriving Schools Framework.



## Organisation of the current report

This deliverable (D2.1) presents the *Thriviving Schools Framework* as a comprehensive and evidence-based model for promoting mental health, well-being, and social-emotional learning in schools. The report is structured into two main parts, each addressing a key dimension of the framework and its application. Part 1 introduces the theoretical background on mental health and well-being in schools, with a focus on teacher and student well-being, Positive Psychology, and the PERMA model. Part 2 presents the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) within a Whole School Approach, outlining key components for implementation. Part 3 bridges theory and practice by integrating the PERMA model of well-being with selected elements of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) framework. References and annexes with practical resources complement the main sections. Together, these sections form a coherent resource that bridges theory, practice, and evaluation, supporting schools, educators, policymakers, and researchers in implementing sustainable strategies to foster thriving learning environments.

## Part 1. Mental Health and Well-being in Schools

### 1. Mental Health and Well-being in Schools – A whole school approach

#### 1.1 *Introduction to Mental Health and Well-being curricula*

Over the past two decades, there has been growing recognition that schools play a central role not only in students' academic development, but also in their emotional, psychological and social well-being. Mental health is increasingly seen as a foundational component of learning, rather than an issue to be addressed only when problems emerge. As a result, many education systems across Europe and beyond have begun to incorporate mental health and well-being directly into school curricula.

A school curriculum that promotes mental health and well-being goes beyond simply teaching about mental illness or offering occasional awareness-raising events. It includes systematic opportunities for students to develop emotional literacy, self-awareness, empathy, resilience, social skills and responsible decision-making—competencies that are essential for lifelong learning and participation in society. These are the core components of what is known as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), a framework that has been widely studied and implemented in diverse school contexts. Meta-analyses have consistently shown that universal SEL programs can improve students' academic achievement, social relationships, emotional regulation and mental health outcomes (Cipriano et al., 2024; Learning Policy Institute, 2023).

Importantly, experts such as Carmel Cefai have stressed that well-being should not be treated as an “add-on” or a standalone subject, but rather as an integrated and cross-curricular dimension of education (Cefai et al., 2018). In his NESET report for the European Commission, Cefai and colleagues (2018) argue for strengthening Social and Emotional Education (SEE) as a core curricular area, with dedicated time, structured pedagogy and teacher training. His model encourages schools to teach well-being both through dedicated lessons and through everyday interactions, classroom climate, and whole-school practices.

This leads to the broader framework of the Whole School Approach, which recognises that promoting mental health is not only about what is taught, but also how it is taught, and the values, relationships and environment in which learning happens. A Whole School Approach involves all members of the school community—students, teachers, school leaders, non-teaching staff and families—in creating a safe, supportive and inclusive climate that fosters emotional well-being. Recent research (Lekamge et al., 2025; Flitcroft et al., 2024) has shown that this type of systemic approach can lead to reductions in bullying, aggression and risk behaviours, and help to build a sense of belonging and trust that supports both mental health and learning.

Such an approach also includes attention to teacher well-being, recognising that educators cannot support students effectively if they themselves are overwhelmed or unsupported. Schools that invest in staff well-being and emotional competence are more likely to create the conditions for successful implementation of well-being curricula (Frazier & Doyle Fosco, 2024).



Integrating mental health and well-being into the school curriculum is therefore not just a response to rising concerns about stress, anxiety or behavioural challenges. It is a proactive, evidence-based way of supporting the holistic development of every child and ensuring that schools are places where all students—not just those who are already thriving—can learn, grow and flourish. Whether through SEL programmes, resilience-building activities, or school-wide strategies, the curriculum becomes a key vehicle for promoting human development, emotional growth and inclusive education.

## 2. Teacher Well-being

### 2.1. *What is teacher well-being?*

One of the primary challenges in teacher well-being research lies in the absence of a universally accepted definition (Hascher & Waber, 2021). Well-being is inherently multifaceted (McCallum et al., 2017), and in the case of teachers, it becomes even more complex due to the unique professional, organizational, and relational dynamics that shape their everyday experiences. These include the structure of the teaching career, school leadership styles, workload demands and available resources, the quality of social interactions (e.g., with parents and students), and various situational factors such as student motivation (McCallum, 2021; Viac & Fraser, 2020).

Several conceptual approaches have been applied in educational research to define and assess well-being. A commonly used perspective is that of *subjective well-being* as formulated by Diener and colleagues (1999), which encompasses individuals' cognitive evaluations and emotional responses to life circumstances, often operationalized in terms of job satisfaction and emotional balance (e.g., Chan, 2009; Hung et al., 2016). Other occupational-oriented approaches aimed to capture the specific nature of well-being at work. A key example is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which conceptualizes well-being as the result of the balance between job demands (e.g., workload, emotional strain) and job resources (e.g., autonomy, support), integrating both positive (e.g., engagement) and negative (e.g., burnout) experiences.

Efforts to define teacher well-being holistically have also emerged. For example, Aelterman et al. (2007) proposed an integrated model that highlights the interaction between personal factors (e.g., needs, expectations) and environmental conditions (e.g., school climate, collegial support). Similarly, Viac and Fraser (2020) developed a comprehensive framework including four dimensions: cognitive (e.g., self-efficacy), subjective (e.g., satisfaction), physical/mental (e.g., psychosomatic symptoms), and social (e.g., collegial relationships). From a multidimensional occupational perspective, Van Horn et al. (2004) conceptualized well-being in terms of affective, cognitive, professional, social, and psychosomatic domains.

Given the diversity of perspectives and the need for an integrative yet practical framework to guide the design of the forthcoming experimental protocol, this project adopts Seligman's PERMA model (2012) as its conceptual foundation. The PERMA framework proposed by Seligman (2012) defines well-being through **five core elements: Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment**. Together, they offer a scientifically grounded and practically applicable structure for understanding and promoting teacher well-being in education.



## **2.2. The significant role of teacher Well-being**

Teacher well-being has become a growing concern for policy, research and practice in recent years, as the teaching profession consistently ranks among the most stressful occupations. Daily rigors, including intense human interactions, heavy workloads, insufficient support, negative relationships, and challenging student behaviors, increase teachers' susceptibility to mental health issues and professional dissatisfaction (McCallum et al., 2017; Michael et al., 2025; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Failure to address these challenges may lead to job disengagement, reduced effectiveness, and high job turnover rates (Falecki & Mann, 2021; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014).

The growing body of research on teacher well-being highlights its potential impact on educational outcomes for teachers, students, and the broader classroom and school environments. Educational systems are increasingly interested in teachers' psychological states, such as well-being, resilience, and self-efficacy, as these factors play a proactive role in maintaining teacher retention and reducing job turnover (OECD, 2019a). Besides teacher well-being being associated with job engagement and satisfaction (Falecki & Mann, 2021), compelling evidence suggests that it could enhance instructional practices, thereby contributing to improved student outcomes and an overall enriched educational experience for students (Braun et al., 2020; Mennes et al., 2023). Previous studies also argued that teachers' positive emotional states may foster healthier teacher–student interactions (Virtanen et al., 2019) and more effective management of challenging student behaviors (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In fact, the Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) prosocial classroom model views teacher well-being as a main contextual component within the classroom that might indirectly affect students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes through process-related mechanisms, including teacher–student relationships, effective classroom management, and effective SEL implementation. Teachers' negative affect, on the other hand, can negatively influence students' social and academic outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Teachers' well-being is often overlooked in policymaking and reforms (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Teachers are called upon daily to meet young children's emotional demands and manage behavioral challenges. Moreover, the learning needs of children within the classroom are often highly diverse, while specific guidance or support from school management or specialists is usually insufficient (Heilala et al., 2023). These complex interpersonal demands, along with challenges such as low compensation, low autonomy, and parental expectations, may contribute to increased stress and burnout (Ballantyne & Retell, 2020; Ng et al., 2023), which, as noted in previous studies, can also lead to high turnover rates within the teaching profession (Cumming et al., 2021; McMullen et al., 2020).

International organizations, such as the European Commission et al. (2021), OECD (2019), have recently stressed the importance of studying, evaluating, and monitoring teacher well-being. However, although teacher well-being is gaining attention internationally, effective strategies to address it are overdue (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Over the last years, practitioners and researchers have adopted strategies from other research fields to evaluate teachers' well-being (e.g., organizational psychology). Additionally, traditional practices to promote well-being mostly focused on the negative psychological states (e.g., stress) that might have hindered the positive effect of teachers within schools (Michael et al., 2025; Van Horn et al., 2004). These highlight the need for new positive-oriented approaches to address the aspects of well-being at work for teachers.



### 3. Students' Well-being

#### 3.1. *What is student well-being?*

Student well-being is a foundational concept in education today, closely linked to how students feel, function, relate to others, and engage with learning. It refers to the overall quality of a student's life experience, both at school and beyond, encompassing emotional, psychological, social, and physical dimensions. Rather than focusing only on the absence of problems—such as anxiety, bullying, or academic stress—student well-being highlights the presence of positive conditions that allow young people to flourish.

Well-being in school includes feeling safe, valued, and supported; having strong, respectful relationships with peers and teachers; experiencing joy and purpose in learning; and believing in one's ability to succeed and make a difference. It is also about being able to manage stress, recover from setbacks, and build a sense of identity and belonging. The OECD (2021) defines student well-being as a multi-faceted framework that incorporates not only mental and emotional health but also physical well-being, social connectedness, sense of agency, and engagement in school life.

This broader vision is supported by international research showing that students with higher levels of well-being tend to demonstrate greater academic motivation, improved behaviour, stronger peer relationships, and better learning outcomes (Cipriano et al., 2023). Well-being and learning are not separate: they reinforce each other. When students feel emotionally secure and psychologically safe, they are more open to learning, more able to concentrate, and more likely to participate actively in the classroom (Norrish et al., 2013).

The school environment plays a crucial role in shaping student well-being. It is not just a personal matter, but something that is influenced by teaching practices, classroom climate, school policies, and the values embedded in the curriculum. A caring, inclusive, and empowering school culture can significantly boost students' confidence, reduce stress, and encourage meaningful engagement with education. Small daily interactions—like a teacher listening, a peer offering support, or a space where students feel free to express themselves—can have a lasting impact.

Leading scholars in this area argue that schools must take an active and structured role in promoting student well-being, integrating it intentionally into teaching and learning. He advocates for social and emotional education to become a core curricular area, not an occasional activity or extra project. Accordingly, well-being should be taught, modelled, and practised throughout the school day and across subjects, as a natural part of students' overall development. This approach is based on the idea that well-being is both a right and a prerequisite for learning, equity, and inclusion (Cefai et al., 2018).

In summary, student well-being is not a marginal topic or a concern only for school counsellors. It is central to how students experience school, how they grow as individuals, and how they prepare for life beyond the classroom. Promoting well-being means equipping students not just with knowledge, but with the emotional and social tools they need to live meaningful, connected, and resilient lives.



### **3.2. *The significant role of student well-being***

Student well-being plays a crucial role in education—not as a secondary concern, but as a core condition for learning, development, and participation. When students feel well emotionally, socially, and psychologically, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with their school experience. They show greater motivation, are more attentive in class, relate better to their peers, and are generally more open to learning.

Multiple studies confirm that well-being has a direct impact on academic achievement, behaviour, and long-term life outcomes. A student who feels safe, respected, and emotionally supported is better equipped to face challenges, regulate emotions, and take responsibility for learning (Cipriano et al., 2023; Norrish et al., 2013). Conversely, when well-being is neglected, schools may face increased behavioural problems, disengagement, school refusal, or early dropout.

Well-being also supports the development of social-emotional competencies, such as empathy, cooperation, and resilience—skills that are essential in navigating both academic and everyday life. These competencies do not develop automatically: they require structured support through relationships, learning experiences, and consistent messages across the school environment. As emphasised in the research, embedding well-being into the school curriculum is a way to ensure that all students—not only those facing visible difficulties—receive the tools they need to grow and succeed (OECD, 2021).

The presence of well-being in the curriculum also contributes to greater equity. Students from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds often experience additional stressors that can affect their learning. A school that actively promotes well-being creates protective conditions that help to reduce the impact of those risks (Li & Li, 2024). In this sense, student well-being is not only a personal benefit but a collective and systemic resource that contributes to inclusion and justice in education.

Well-being has effects far beyond individual students. Classrooms where well-being is valued tend to be more cohesive, participatory, and respectful. Teachers report more positive interactions, better classroom management, and a stronger sense of community (Capone et al., 2018). This leads to a virtuous cycle: students feel better, learn better, and contribute more positively to the learning environment of others.

For these reasons, it is essential that student well-being be recognised and sustained as a structural part of the curriculum, not limited to one-off activities or short-term projects. By doing so, schools become not just places of instruction, but environments where every student has the right conditions to thrive—academically, socially, and personally.

## **4. Introduction to Positive Psychology**

### **4.1. *The approach of Positive Psychology about Teacher's & Student's Well-being***



Positive Psychology provides a powerful and inspiring framework for promoting well-being in schools. Unlike traditional approaches that focus primarily on problems, risks, and deficits, Positive Psychology asks a different question: “What helps people thrive?”. In the school context, this means focusing on the strengths, resources, and potential of both students and teachers, and building a learning environment where flourishing is not the exception, but the norm.

At the core of Positive Psychology is the belief that well-being is not just the absence of distress, but the presence of positive experiences, such as joy, purpose, engagement, connection, and achievement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). These elements are not only important for students' personal development—they are also deeply connected to how students learn. When students experience positive emotions and feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to be curious, motivated, and resilient in the face of challenges (Waters & Loton, 2019; Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014).

A wide range of school-based interventions grounded in Positive Psychology—such as gratitude exercises, identifying and using character strengths, or performing small acts of kindness—have been shown to improve students’ mental health, reduce stress, and strengthen social bonds (Carr et al., 2020). These interventions don’t require large resources or dramatic changes; they can be woven into daily routines, classroom conversations, or reflection time. What matters most is consistency and intentionality.

Positive Psychology is equally relevant for teachers. Teaching is a profession that demands not only cognitive and pedagogical skills but also emotional energy, empathy, and adaptability. Educators who practice self-care, develop their own strengths, and experience positive relationships at work are more likely to sustain their motivation and support their students effectively (McCallum & Price, 2015). In fact, the emotional well-being of teachers is a key factor in building classroom climates that are safe, inclusive, and conducive to learning.

Evidence suggests that teachers who engage in strengths-based reflection, mindfulness practices, or goal-setting activities report lower levels of burnout and a stronger sense of professional purpose. When school leaders support these practices—by recognising staff contributions, encouraging collaboration, and promoting autonomy—the benefits multiply, for both staff and students (Slemp et al., 2018; Waters, 2011).

Importantly, Positive Psychology does not suggest ignoring difficulties. Rather, it offers tools for responding to challenges with greater clarity and confidence by cultivating internal resources and positive emotions that can buffer stress and build resilience. It encourages a shift from “what’s going wrong?” to “what’s strong?”—not as a way of denying hardship, but of expanding the lens through which individuals and communities understand their capacity to grow and adapt.

In educational settings, adopting a Positive Psychology approach means promoting a culture of flourishing, not just survival. It calls for integrating well-being into the curriculum, into teacher development, and into the daily life of schools. This aligns with models like PERMA and Positive Education, which will be discussed in the next section, and connects seamlessly with whole-school well-being frameworks already in use across Europe and beyond.



## **4.2. Positive Psychology Interventions for Teacher's & Student's Well-being**

Positive Psychology has provided the foundation for a range of interventions specifically designed to enhance well-being in educational contexts. These interventions aim to cultivate psychological strengths, rather than merely addressing deficits, and are rooted in the idea that students and teachers alike benefit from practices that promote positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

For students, Positive Psychology interventions (PPIs) are typically embedded in the curriculum or classroom routines with the goal of supporting emotional development and mental health in a proactive way. Research shows that students who participate in such interventions often demonstrate greater self-regulation, increased resilience, and a more optimistic outlook, which in turn contribute to improved academic engagement and social relationships (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014). These approaches focus on developing character strengths, fostering a sense of purpose, and helping students build internal resources to face life's challenges. The outcomes are not only psychological in nature but also educational: students with higher levels of subjective well-being tend to be more focused, motivated, and connected to their school environment (Carr et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of PPIs lies not in isolated activities, but in their systematic and consistent integration into the learning process. When well-being is approached as a regular and intentional part of education, it helps students build habits of reflection, appreciation, and connection that support their long-term development. Moreover, by shifting the educational lens toward what is working and what is strong, rather than what is lacking, these interventions help establish a positive classroom climate, where emotional safety and mutual respect can thrive.

The benefits of Positive Psychology interventions are not limited to students. Teachers, too, are increasingly recognised as beneficiaries of these approaches. Teaching is a profession marked by emotional labour, cognitive demands, and a high risk of burnout. The use of well-being strategies grounded in Positive Psychology—such as mindfulness, goal setting, and strengths-based reflection—has been shown to contribute to greater job satisfaction, emotional regulation, and psychological resilience among educators (McCallum & Price, 2015).

When teachers experience a stronger sense of professional purpose and emotional balance, they are more likely to build supportive relationships with their students and contribute to a healthier school culture overall. This reciprocal effect between teacher and student well-being reinforces the idea that well-being should not be seen as an "extra," but as a central aspect of teaching and learning. In fact, research suggests that leadership practices which support teacher autonomy and acknowledge individual strengths are significantly associated with improved well-being and motivation (Slemp et al., 2018).

A consistent theme across the literature is that Positive Psychology interventions work best when they are embedded in a whole-school approach. Their impact is strongest when they are not treated as isolated programs, but as part of a broader vision of education that values human flourishing as much as academic performance. In this perspective, well-being is not simply a means to achieve better learning



outcomes—it is a goal of education. The integration of Positive Psychology into school life promotes a culture where teachers and students can thrive, and where schools become environments that nurture, rather than exhaust, the emotional and psychological resources of their communities (Waters, 2011; Waters & Loton, 2019).

## 5. Introduction to the PERMA model

PERMA is a model of Positive Psychology proposed by Seligman (2011), which was designed to enhance well-being and human flourishing. “PERMA” is an acronym for the five facets of well-being, which are:

- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- Positive Relationships
- Meaning and
- Accomplishment

The five pillars of the PERMA model are equally important individually, but in combination with each other, they form the foundation for achieving high levels of well-being. The awareness of PERMA can help teachers increase their well-being by focusing on combinations of feeling good, living meaningfully, establishing supportive and friendly relationships, accomplishing goals, and being fully engaged with life.

These five elements of Seligman's PERMA model delineate a set that functions as a tool aimed at transferring the theoretical background of Positive Psychology to a practical level, leading to the pursuit and achievement of well-being. There is much empirical evidence confirming the effectiveness of the PERMA well-being model, which could be a potentially useful model aimed at enhancing teachers' well-being. As a tool in the hands of teachers, the PERMA model can act as a guide for both their own personal happiness and effectiveness in implementing it within their work.

In this project, the PERMA well-being model will be utilized as a possible model for teachers' well-being since it has strong empirical evidence of effectiveness. In the PERMA theory, Seligman notes that each element of well-being should meet the following 3 properties: a) Contribution to well-being, b) Persuasion for personal and intrinsic purposes, and c) Independent definition and measurement.

## PERMA model of well-being

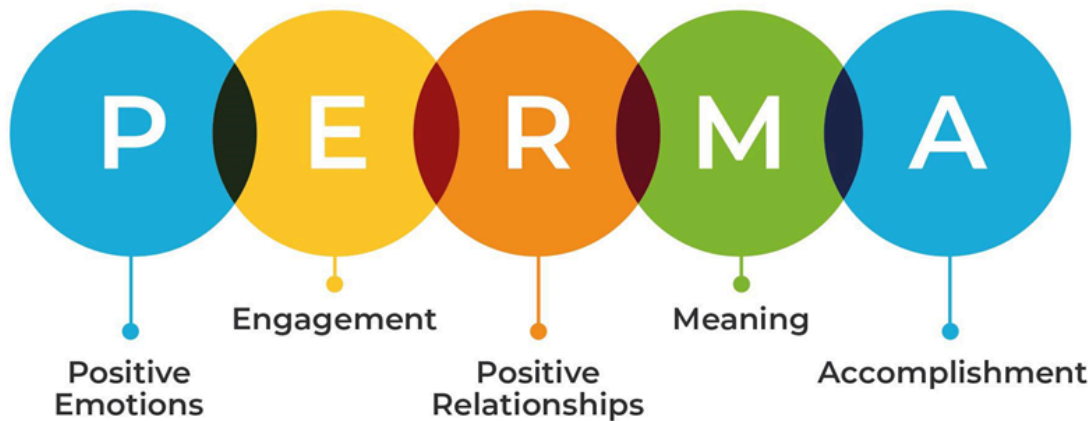


Figure 1. The PERMA model of well-being graph

### 5.1 Positive Emotions

#### 5.1.1 Definition

**Positive Emotions** is the first of the five pillars in the PERMA model (Seligman, 2012) and represents a foundational element of well-being. It refers to **the range of pleasant emotional experiences that help individuals feel good in the moment and contribute to long-term life satisfaction**. These emotions include love, joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, and awe.

It is important to clarify that the presence of Positive Emotions does not imply the absence of negative ones, nor is it realistic or healthy to expect constant positivity. Rather, well-being entails embracing the full spectrum of emotional experiences and cultivating positive states where possible. In this context, the concept of *acceptance* plays a critical role—encouraging individuals to acknowledge challenges while making a conscious effort to create and savor positive emotional experiences.

#### 5.1.2 Theoretical Background + Key concepts

Positive Emotions expand an individual's thought–action repertoire, encouraging exploration, creativity, and flexibility (see Broaden-and-Build Theory; Fredrickson, 1998). Over time, these broadened responses help build enduring psychological, cognitive, social, and physical resources, including resilience, problem-solving skills, and supportive relationships. Frequent positive emotional experiences have been shown to:

- “Undo” the effects of negative emotions
- Enhance physical and mental health
- Promote adaptive coping strategies

- Contribute to personal growth and improved functioning in professional and social domains.

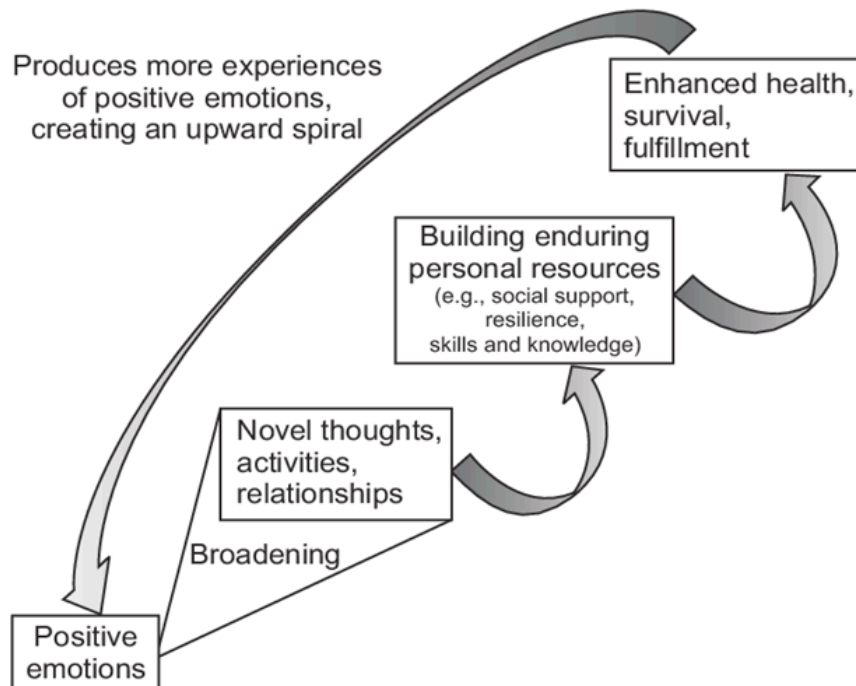


Figure 2. The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010)

Fredrickson and colleagues (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010) also emphasized that individuals can intentionally increase positive emotions related to the past (e.g., gratitude, forgiveness), the present (e.g., enjoyment, pleasure), and the future (e.g., hope, optimism). However, there are natural limits to how frequently positive emotions can be experienced, which is why positive psychology distinguishes between short-term pleasure and long-term well-being. Aiming solely for happiness via immediate gratification—a concept referred to as the *hedonic treadmill*—is not as effective as developing meaningful resources through repeated positive emotional experiences. In sum, the intentional cultivation of Positive Emotions enables individuals to build emotional strength, deepen social bonds, and enhance well-being in a sustainable way.

### 5.1.3 Activities for Positive Emotions

#### Teachers

##### 1. “What Went Well” Reflection

- **Objective:**  
To strengthen positive thinking habits and build neural pathways that support constructive



self-talk and resilience. Regular focus on positive experiences enhances the brain's neuroplasticity, making it easier over time to notice and savor the good.

- **Time Required:** ~10 minutes
- **Description:**
  1. Ask teachers to reflect on the past few weeks and identify things that went well in their school, classroom, or interactions with colleagues. If negative aspects arise, accept them without judgment, and gently guide participants to reframe them more positively if possible.
  2. Invite each teacher to create a private list of five personal highlights or successes. Sharing is optional.
  3. **Reflection:** Conclude by asking how they felt while doing this exercise, acknowledging that shifting focus can feel unfamiliar and sometimes difficult at first. Reinforce that it becomes easier with practice.

## 2. The Positive Emotions Game

- **Objective:**

To deepen understanding of the ten core Positive Emotions identified by Fredrickson through creative expression and experiential learning.
- **Time Required:** ~10 minutes
- **Description:**
  1. Divide participants into pairs or groups of three.
  2. Distribute (or send via chat) a card naming one Positive Emotion: Love, Joy, Gratitude, Serenity, Interest, Hope, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, or Awe.
  3. Instruct each group to prepare a creative 1-minute presentation—using mime, storytelling, or drawing—to depict their assigned emotion without naming it directly.
  4. Reconvene as a full group. Each team presents, and the others guess the emotion.
  5. **Reflection:** Invite teachers to share their experiences of embodying and recognizing the emotions, and how it felt to express them creatively.

## 3. Change Your Mindset Exercise

- **Objective:**

To encourage a shift from a fixed mindset (“I can’t change”) toward a growth mindset (“I can improve”), which supports optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy.
- **Time Required:** ~20 minutes
- **Description:**
  1. Begin by asking whether teachers have heard of the terms *Fixed Mindset* and *Growth Mindset*. Discuss initial ideas.
  2. Present clear definitions:
    - *Fixed Mindset:* Abilities are static; you either have them, or you don’t.
    - *Growth Mindset:* Abilities can be developed through effort and practice.
  3. Clarify any misconceptions gently.



4. Provide the **Changing Mindset Worksheet** (see below), which lists examples of fixed mindset thoughts. Teachers are asked to rewrite each as a growth mindset statement. Allow ~10 minutes to work individually or in pairs.
5. **Reflection:** Gather as a group to share examples and discuss the thought processes involved. Highlight how reframing thoughts can influence emotional responses and behaviors.

### CHANGING MINDSET worksheet

FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
<b>EXAMPLE</b>	
1. I made a mistake	Mistakes help me improve
1. Character does not change	
1. Crisis will last a long time	
1. I will never be as smart as her	
1. Friendships can be so complicated	
1. I am not a creative person	
1. You can't trust anyone	
1. I am not good in Mathematics	
1. No matter how hard I try, I won't pass the exam.	
1. Life is unfair. I give up	

#### 4. Count Your Blessings Activity

- **Objective:**  
To train attention on what is already good and present in one's life, shifting focus from scarcity and worry to appreciation. Research shows this can quickly reduce stress and protect against burnout.
- **Time Required:** 5–10 minutes
- **Description:**
  1. Introduce the idea of a “blessing” as “something we have been gifted and appreciate.” Ask teachers to write down at least five blessings in their life, work, or relationships.
  2. **Reflection:** Invite volunteers to share how they felt during this process and any surprises they noticed.



## 5. Keep a Gratitude Journal

- **Objective:**  
To enhance feelings of gratitude, appreciation, and happiness through consistent daily practice.
- **Time Required:** ~3–5 minutes per day, over 21 days
- **Description:**
  1. Each day, teachers write down three things they feel grateful for. Entries can range from small (“the taste of morning coffee”) to large (“support from a colleague during a hard time”).
  2. **Guidelines for effective journaling:**
    - Be specific and personal.
    - Consider how life would be different without each blessing.
    - Keep entries fresh and genuine rather than repetitive.
    - Write regularly but avoid forcing the process.
  3. **Reflection:** After 21 days, take time to reflect on any changes in mood, awareness, or overall outlook. Teachers can share experiences in a future group session if they are comfortable doing so.

## Students

### 1. “What Went Well” Wall

- **Objective:**  
To help students recognize and focus on positive experiences, successes, and moments of joy—both big and small—in their daily school life.
- **Description:**  
A dedicated wall or bulletin board is created in the classroom, titled “What Went Well.” Each day or once a week, students are invited to reflect on their experiences and write down something that went well on a sticky note or a small card. These can include:
  - Academic achievements (“I finished my story today”)
  - Social interactions (“I played with someone new”)
  - Personal feelings (“I felt proud when I helped my classmate”)
- **Implementation Tips:**
  - Allocate 5 minutes during morning meeting or end-of-day reflection.
  - Encourage specific, positive language.
  - Rotate the wall weekly or monthly to keep it fresh and visible.
  - Allow anonymous contributions for shy students.
- **Benefits:**  
Builds emotional awareness, reinforces gratitude, normalizes peer success, and helps students end the day or week on a positive note.

### 2. Emotion Charades



- **Objective:**  
To enhance emotional literacy and expression by helping students recognize, understand, and label different Positive Emotions in themselves and others.
- **Description:**  
In small groups or as a whole class, students take turns acting out one of Fredrickson’s 10 Positive Emotions—Joy, Love, Gratitude, Serenity, Interest, Hope, Pride, Amusement, Inspiration, or Awe—without using words. Their classmates guess which emotion is being portrayed.
- **Implementation Tips:**
  - Begin with a brief introduction to all 10 emotions using images or examples.
  - Prepare cards with each emotion written or illustrated.
  - Offer suggestions or scenarios for younger students to act out (“You open a gift and it’s your favorite toy” = Joy).
  - After each round, discuss how that emotion might feel or show up in real life.
- **Benefits:**  
Increases students’ emotional vocabulary, supports empathy, encourages creativity, and strengthens group bonding.

### 3. Gratitude Journals

- **Objective:**  
To foster daily gratitude and appreciation, helping students focus on positive elements in their lives and school experiences.
- **Description:**  
Each student keeps a personal Gratitude Journal (notebook or worksheet). Daily or a few times per week, they write three things they are grateful for. These might include:
  - People (“My friend waited for me at lunch”)
  - Experiences (“We had fun in art class”)
  - Sensory pleasures (“The sun was warm during recess”)
- **Implementation Tips:**
  - Dedicate time once or twice a week (e.g., Friday mornings or after lunch).
  - Offer sentence starters for younger students (“Today I liked...” / “I felt happy when...”).
  - Occasionally hold “Gratitude Circles” for voluntary sharing.
- **Benefits:**  
Supports emotional regulation, enhances mood, builds a habit of positive thinking, and can serve as a personal resource during difficult times.

### 4. Growth Mindset Posters

- **Objective:**  
To promote a growth mindset by helping students identify unhelpful fixed beliefs and reframe them into empowering alternatives.
- **Description:**  
Students work individually or in small groups to create visual posters that contrast fixed mindset statements with growth mindset alternatives. Examples include:



- Fixed: “I’m not good at this.”  
Growth: “I’m still learning, and I can get better with practice.”
- Fixed: “I always get things wrong.”  
Growth: “Mistakes help me improve.”

● **Implementation Tips:**

- Begin with a class discussion about what it means to have a “growth mindset”.
- Brainstorm common limiting thoughts students have (you can use the Changing mindset worksheet below).
- Encourage creativity—posters can include drawings, colors, or even characters representing mindsets.
- Display posters around the classroom as visual reminders.

● **Benefits:**

Builds emotional resilience, encourages a more optimistic approach to challenges, and integrates emotional learning with creative expression.

### CHANGING MINDSET worksheet

FIXED MINDSET

GROWTH MINDSET

FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
EXAMPLE 1. I made a mistake	Mistakes help me improve
1. Character does not change	
1. Crisis will last a long time	
1. I will never be as smart as her	
1. Friendships can be so complicated	
1. I am not a creative person	
1. You can't trust anyone	
1. I am not good in Mathematics	
1. No matter how hard I try, I won't pass the exam.	
1. Life is unfair. I give up	

**5. Count Your Blessings Circle**



- **Objective:**  
To cultivate a collective sense of gratitude and appreciation, promoting emotional connection and a caring class climate.
- **Description:**  
In a structured circle time, students are invited to share something they feel blessed or thankful for. This can relate to school, family, friendships, or something that brought them joy recently.
- **Implementation Tips:**
  - Establish respectful ground rules (e.g., listening without interrupting, “pass” option if a student doesn’t want to speak).
  - Start with the teacher modeling the process: “Today, I feel grateful for how focused you were in class.”
  - Use a talking object (e.g., a soft ball or a gratitude stone) to indicate whose turn it is to speak.
- **Benefits:**  
Strengthens empathy, builds community, teaches active listening, and helps students recognize the good around them and in others.

## 5.2 Engagement

### 5.2.1 Definition

Engagement is the second factor of the PERMA manual. **Engagement refers to the state people experience when they lose track of time, and they feel they enjoy the process they are involved in.** Chikszentmihalyi (1990), who first described this state/ process, describes “flow” as: “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego fails away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost”.

### 5.2.2 Theoretical Background + Key concepts

Engagement includes different dimensions such as the psychological, cognitive and community participation and citizenship dimension. The cognitive dimension is when people are fully absorbed and concentrated in an activity. and when people appreciate different activities, such as targeting and self-regulation. Lastly, engagement can be behavioral, involving participation in the community and community activities.

Flow can be both a voluntary and involuntary focus process, which can be learned, and people can learn to “get into flow” on purpose. When a person is engaged in flow through concentration, absorption, and focus is operating at the highest dynamic capacity, doing something they enjoy. Neurocognitive research shows that when people experience flow, they use the least amount of brain activity, which means they are not straining to focus, but they operate on optimal levels of concentration. People have different ways to immerse themselves in the state of flow (e.g. cooking, baking, driving, playing music, etc. .), and it is a skill that can be developed and reinforced.

Flow can help people in their professional work by finding what makes them enjoy their work and get into flow consciously and purposefully. This can also enhance productivity and the sense of



accomplishment through one's profession. For a person to experience engagement and flow in the workplace, the prerequisite is for the work to be linked with activities which meet the employee's needs. When this criterion is met, employers report employee commitment and intellectual absorption.

There is also research data indicating that teachers who experience flow and engagement influence their students' experiences, so teachers who are enthusiastic, authentic, and inspiring can generate engagement and interest in learning in their students.

### **5.2.3 Activities for Engagement**

#### **Teachers**

##### **1. VIA Character Profile: Identifying Signature Strengths**

###### **Objective:**

To help teachers recognize their top character strengths and understand how using these strengths can enhance engagement, meaning, and resilience in both professional and personal contexts.

###### **Time Required:**

10 minutes (home activity)

###### **Description:**

Teachers are invited to complete the VIA Character Strengths Survey online:

 <https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

This validated tool helps individuals identify their top five "signature strengths"—core qualities they use frequently and feel authentic in expressing.

###### **Steps:**

- Brief teachers on the scientific foundations of the VIA model and the benefits of strengths-based self-awareness.
- Encourage honest and instinctive responses while completing the survey.

###### **Reflection:**

Teachers are asked to reflect on their results:

- Did any strengths surprise you?
- Can you identify a recent situation where you naturally used one of your top strengths?
- How did it make you feel?

##### **2. Strengths Wheel: Visualizing Strengths in Action**

###### **Objective:**

To assess how actively teachers are using their signature strengths in daily life and identify areas with untapped potential.



**Time Required:**

10–15 minutes

**Description:**

Using a circular “Strengths Wheel,” teachers score how much they currently use each of their top five strengths (0 = not at all; 10 = fully) and how much room they perceive for expanding their use. Two dots per strength are placed: one for current use, one for potential use. A triangle connecting the dots visualizes the “gap” and highlights growth opportunities.

**Reflection Questions:**

- Which strengths are underused in your work?
- What could you do more of to apply these strengths?
- What small daily actions could help you increase your engagement at school?

### **3. Character Strengths Conversations with Colleagues**

**Objective:**

To create space for professional dialogue, peer learning, and relational engagement through sharing how teachers use their strengths.

**Time Required:**

15–20 minutes

**Description:**

Colleagues meet in pairs or small groups to discuss their VIA results and reflect on:

- How they apply their strengths in the classroom and beyond.
- Challenges they face in using certain strengths.
- Ideas or practices are learned from one another.

**Reflection Prompt:**

After the discussion, teachers reflect individually:

- What did I learn about myself or others?
- How can I apply any new ideas I heard today?

### **4. Signature Strength Action Plan**

**Objective:**

To create a realistic, individualized plan to apply signature strengths more intentionally in specific life domains.

**Time Required:**

20–30 minutes (home or workshop activity)

**Steps:**

Teachers select one of their top five strengths and respond to:

- How am I already using this strength?
- Where else in my life could I apply it?
- What is my plan? How often and in what way will I act?
- What would success look like?

**Follow-up:**

Plans may be shared with colleagues in later sessions for peer encouragement or feedback.

**5. 340 Ways to Use Your Strengths (*Optional Enrichment*)****Objective:**

To provide inspiration and practical ideas for how to activate signature strengths in new ways.

**Time Required:**

10–15 minutes (home activity)

**Resources:**

- [340 Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths \(PDF\)](#)
- [VIA Tips for Using Each Strength](#)

Teachers are encouraged to explore ideas and integrate 1–2 suggestions into their action plan.

**6. Staff Character Strength Tree****Objective:**

To celebrate staff diversity, build team cohesion, and visually represent the collective strengths of the school community.

**Time Required:**

20–30 minutes

**Description:**

A large cardboard tree is placed in a common area. Each teacher writes one signature strength per paper leaf (five leaves per teacher) and adds them to the tree collaboratively.

This symbolic act reinforces mutual appreciation and teamwork.

**Reflection Prompt:**

- How did this visual exercise change your perception of your colleagues?
- How might this activity influence future collaboration?

**Students**



## 1. VIA Strengths for Kids

### Objective:

To help students identify their own strengths and explore how to apply them in school and life.

### Time Required:

20–30 minutes

### Description:

Students complete a child-friendly version of the VIA Youth Survey (ages 10+):

<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/youth>

Teachers facilitate reflection on the results:

- Which strengths do you use the most?
- When do you feel most “in the zone” at school?
- How could you use your top strength to help a friend or succeed in class?

## 2. Strength Superhero Posters

### Objective:

To creatively express and celebrate students’ character strengths.

### Time Required:

30–45 minutes (in-class project)

### Description:

Students design a poster of themselves as “strength superheroes” using one of their VIA strengths. The poster includes:

- Strength name and symbol
- Description of how they use the strength
- An imaginary situation where they use their strength to help others

### Outcome:

Students display their posters around the classroom to promote a culture of recognition and positivity.

## 3. Classroom Flow Stations

### Objective:

To facilitate flow-inducing activities that promote focused engagement and intrinsic motivation.

### Time Required:

Varies depending on schedule

### Description:

Teachers set up thematic stations (e.g., puzzles, art challenges, coding games, building tasks) where



students engage in self-selected, low-pressure, skill-appropriate activities.

This practice enables students to:

- Choose based on interest
- Immerse themselves in focused action
- Experience autonomy and creativity

#### 4. "Strengths in Action" Story Circles

**Objective:**

To encourage students to reflect on and share real-life examples of strengths they've used or observed.

**Time Required:**

15–20 minutes (weekly or biweekly)

**Description:**

In small groups, students are invited to share stories about:

- An instance where they showed bravery, kindness, perseverance, etc.
- Someone they saw using a strength
- How it made them, or others feel

**Teacher's Role:**

Model a story, guide respectful listening, and celebrate the diversity of strengths.

#### 5. My Strength Challenge

**Objective:**

To challenge students to apply one character strength in a new or intentional way over a week.

**Time Required:**

5–10 minutes to introduce + 1-week follow-up

**Description:**

Students choose a strength (e.g., perseverance, curiosity) and set a personal goal (e.g., "I will finish a book I started"). After one week, they reflect:

- Did I stick to my challenge?
- What did I learn about myself?
- How did it feel to act with intention?

### 5.3 Relationships

#### 5.3.1 Definition



Positive Relationships are the third factor of the PERMA manual. **Positive relationships refer to connections between people that are characterized by warmth and trust, the sense of belonging in a group/ community/ society and a feeling of being valued and/ or loved for who you are, and being satisfied with your social network.** All types of positive relationships operate as dynamic forces that facilitate individuals to create and maintain high levels of well-being.

To build positive relationships, a person needs to be adaptable to the environment in which they operate (professional, personal or social in general) to promote positive outcomes. In addition, sufficient support from the ensemble in which one operates is perceived as more valuable and therapeutic, helping people live a meaningful life and having a greater sense of belonging. This means that the quality of the relationships we form with other people around us is vital in helping us live a fulfilling and positive life with positive energy.

### **5.3.2 Theoretical Background + Key concepts**

Positive relationships are essential for well-being and can be nurtured through acts of kindness, cooperation, gratitude, empathy, and positive communication. Strong relationships contribute not only to emotional well-being but also to physical health, self-esteem, and social integration.

A key way to foster such connections is using character strengths, especially kindness and gratitude. Kindness—doing good for others without expecting anything in return—has been shown to benefit both the giver and receiver, boosting well-being and strengthening bonds. Gratitude, the appreciation for what we have and who we are connected to, is also strongly linked to greater happiness and better relationships. Mindfulness—being fully present and aware without judgment—also supports relationship quality by improving emotional regulation, reducing stress, and enhancing empathy and connection. Mindfulness can be practiced both formally (e.g., meditation) and informally (e.g., mindful listening or conversation).

Research highlights the importance of teacher-student and peer relationships in educational settings. Warm, supportive connections can improve student motivation, participation, and achievement, while also enhancing teacher satisfaction. Developing emotional and social intelligence is foundational to positive relationships. These include the ability to:

- Recognize and manage one's own and others' emotions (emotional intelligence)
- Communicate effectively, manage conflict, and show empathy (social intelligence)

Finally, how we respond to others' good news significantly impacts relationship quality. Among the four typical response styles, only Active and Constructive Responding (showing genuine enthusiasm and engagement) builds deeper connection and trust. In sum, positive relationships are built through empathy, mutual support, gratitude, emotional awareness, and responsive communication. They grow where people feel valued, understood, and supported in becoming their best selves.

### **5.3.3 Activities for Positive Relationships**

#### **Teachers**



### 1. My Favourite Teacher

**Objective:** Highlight the importance of connectedness and the impact of positive teacher-student relationships.

**Time:** 5–10 minutes

**Description:**

- Reflect on a teacher from your past (preschool to university) who made you eager to attend school and feel good about learning.
- Identify 2–3 specific actions or behaviors that made that teacher special to you.

*Reflection:*

- Share your feelings during this reflection and discuss the qualities that build meaningful relationships in education.

### 2. The Positive Connections Recipe

**Objective:** Develop a shared understanding of what constitutes a positive relationship and identify key relationship qualities.

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Description:**

- In small groups (3-4), brainstorm keywords and behaviors that define positive connections.
- Share ideas within your group, note common themes, and then share with the larger group. Tools like Padlet or Slide can be used for idea collection.
- Discuss how these "ingredients" (skills, attitudes, behaviors) can be applied to build positive relationships.

*Reflection:*

- Reflect on how this exercise deepens your awareness of positive relationship dynamics and ways to foster them in your professional environment.

### 3. Empathy Quiz (BINGO)

**Objective:** Enhance understanding of empathy and recognize different communication responses in conversations.

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Description:**

- Learn about empathy as the ability to understand and share others' feelings.
- Review different ways people respond in conversations (e.g., empathizing, advising, one-upping, shutting down).
- Complete a quiz identifying which responses exemplify empathy and which do not, using practical dialogue examples.

*Reflection:*

- Discuss correct answers, clarify misconceptions, and explore how empathetic communication can improve relationships with students and colleagues.



#### 4. Active Constructive Responding

**Objective:** Learn about and practice “Active Constructive Responding” to positive news to strengthen relationships.

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Description:**

- Watch a short video explaining four ways people respond to positive news and why the active constructive style matters most.
- While watching, note the characteristics of the four response styles and their impacts.

*Reflection:*

- Discuss how you can apply active constructive responding in your daily communication with students and colleagues to build rapport and trust.

#### 5. Gratitude Letter or Email

**Objective:** Cultivate gratitude by expressing appreciation to someone important in your life.

**Time:** 10–20 minutes

**Description:**

- Write a letter or email to someone who has positively impacted you but hasn’t yet received your thanks.
- Be specific about what they did, how it affected you, and your current feelings of gratitude. Aim for about 300 words.
- Set an intention for when and how you will deliver this letter.

*Reflection:*

- Share your feelings about writing the letter and your plan for delivering it.

#### 6. Gratitude Visit (Homework)

**Objective:** Deepen gratitude practice by personally delivering your gratitude letter.

**Time:** Variable

**Description:**

- Arrange a meeting or call with the person to read your gratitude letter aloud, asking them not to interrupt until you finish.
- Observe and share reactions openly. Leave the letter with them as a keepsake.

*Reflection:*

- Reflect on the experience and, if comfortable, share it in a future session.

#### 7. Random Acts of Kindness (Homework)

**Objective:** Build positive relationships through regular acts of kindness.

**Time:** Ongoing, as often as possible (recommend 3 acts daily for 21 days)

**Description:**



- Perform simple acts of kindness, such as making coffee for a colleague, offering your seat, or holding a door open.  
*Reflection:*
- Reflect on how these acts affected your mood and relationships and share any insights or questions in follow-up discussions.

## 8. Mindful Listening (Homework)

**Objective:** Practice mindful, attentive listening without responding, enhancing presence in communication.

**Time:** 5–10 minutes daily

**Description:**

- Observe at least one conversation per day without participating. Notice details like tone, body language, and emotional content.  
*Reflection:*
- Reflect on what you noticed about communication patterns and your own listening habits.

## Students

### 1. My Favourite Teacher Reflection

- **Goal:** Help students recognize the impact of positive teacher-student relationships.
- **How to implement:**
  - Ask students to think quietly about a teacher who made them feel motivated, cared for, or excited to learn.
  - Prompt them to recall specific actions or qualities that made this teacher special (e.g., kindness, encouragement, patience).
  - Students can then share their thoughts verbally in pairs or small groups or write a short paragraph or journal entry.
  - Facilitate a group discussion about why positive relationships with teachers matter and how students can contribute to such an environment.

### 2. Positive Connections Brainstorm

- **Goal:** Encourage students to identify what makes friendships and classroom relationships positive.
- **How to implement:**
  - Divide students into small groups (3-4 students).
  - Give each group a large sheet of paper or a whiteboard space. Ask them to brainstorm and write down words or phrases describing positive relationship qualities (e.g., trust, respect, listening, kindness).
  - After 10 minutes, have each group present their keywords to the whole class.



- As a class, create a master list of positive relationship traits and discuss how these can be practiced daily.

### 3. Empathy Bingo

- **Goal:** Teach students to distinguish between empathetic and non-empathetic responses in conversations.
- **How to implement:**
  - Prepare Bingo cards with different types of responses (e.g., empathizing, advising, shutting down).
  - Present short, relatable dialogue examples where one person shares an experience and another responds.
  - Students mark their cards when they identify empathetic responses or behaviours.
  - Review each example with the class, explaining why a response is empathetic or not, and discuss the importance of empathy in friendships.

### 4. Active Constructive Responding Practice

- **Goal:** Build students' skills in supporting peers positively when they share good news.
- **How to implement:**
  - Explain the concept of active constructive responding: showing genuine enthusiasm, asking questions, and engaging actively.
  - Organize role-play activities where one student shares good news and the partner practices responding actively and constructively.
  - Rotate roles and debrief as a group about how it felt to give and receive positive responses.
  - Encourage students to practice this in real-life conversations.

### 5. Gratitude Journal or Letter

- **Goal:** Foster a habit of recognizing and appreciating positive aspects of life and relationships.
- **How to implement:**
  - Introduce the idea of a gratitude journal where students write down three things they are thankful for each day. These can be small or big things (e.g., a sunny day, a kind friend).
  - Alternatively, or additionally, have students write a letter of thanks to someone important in their lives (friend, family member, teacher).
  - Provide prompts to help them be specific about what they appreciate and why.
  - Set a regular time (daily or weekly) to write and offer opportunities to share reflections if comfortable.

### 6. Random Acts of Kindness Challenge

- **Goal:** Encourage daily kindness and awareness of its positive effects on relationships.
- **How to implement:**



- Challenge students to perform 1-3 small acts of kindness each day for a set period (e.g., one week or three weeks). Examples include helping a classmate, sharing supplies, or offering compliments.
- Create a kindness tracking chart or journal where students note their acts.
- At the end of the challenge, facilitate a group reflection on how performing kind acts made them feel and how others responded.

## 7. Mindful Listening Exercises

- **Goal:** Improve students' attention, empathy, and communication skills through active listening.
- **How to implement:**
  - Teach students the basics of mindful listening: focusing fully on the speaker, not interrupting, observing tone and body language.
  - Set aside a few minutes daily or weekly for mindful listening practice. For example, listen to a peer share a story without interrupting, then summarize what was said.
  - Use guided prompts or questions to help students reflect on the experience ("What did you notice about the speaker's feelings?" "How did it feel to listen without interrupting?").
  - Encourage students to apply mindful listening in their everyday conversations.

## 5.4 Meaning

### 5.4.1 Definition

Meaning is the fourth factor of the PERMA model. **Meaning describes the state when a person feels they have a higher purpose and direction in their life.** People who report having high levels of meaning in their lives also tend to report being happy and satisfied with their lives. Meaning alone doesn't necessarily lead to a happy life, though. Meaning is having a sense of direction, feeling connected to something bigger than yourself, doing something valuable and worthwhile and/ or feeling that there is a purpose in everything a person does. An example is religion and spirituality, which provide many people with a sense of meaning in their lives.

### 5.4.2 Theoretical Background + Key concepts

Meaning can be reached through utilizing the character strengths for personal satisfaction, but also for the fulfillment of a higher purpose, which is considered as important by the person and others. Strategies for achieving meaning in life include acting in accordance with one's values and using character strengths for the common good.

Having meaning in one's life provides them with increased levels of well-being, with all the benefits well-being provides to people. It is important to note the relationship between purpose and psychological resilience. When people have meaning in their lives, they are better able to handle the adversities they face and experience lower levels of stress and anxiety when going through a difficulty. In addition, people with meaning are better able to make sense of traumatic or adverse experiences than those who don't have a sense of meaning in their lives.



### 5.4.3 Activities for Meaning

#### Teachers

##### 1. Identify My Purpose

- **Objective:** To explore what gives teachers a sense of meaning in life and work.
- **Time Required:** 7–10 minutes
- **Instructions:**
  1. Ask teachers to reflect individually and write their responses to the following prompts:
    - What do I enjoy doing?
    - When do I feel a sense of “flow”?
    - What is the meaning of my work?
    - What is meaningful to me personally?
  2. Allow a few moments for quiet reflection and journaling.
- **Reflection:**

Invite volunteers to share insights with the group. Prompt a discussion: *Did anything surprise you? How do these reflections influence how you see your work?*

##### 2. Meaning in Everyday Life

- **Objective:** To help teachers connect their signature strengths with meaningful actions that have an impact beyond themselves.
- **Time Required:** 10 minutes
- **Instructions:**
  1. Ask teachers to list their five signature strengths (from the VIA Character Strengths profile).
  2. Then, write down how they currently apply each in their professional and personal life, especially in ways that benefit others.
- **Reflection:**

Teachers may share examples and reflect on the question: *How can I bring more meaning into daily activities by using my strengths with intention?*

##### 3. At My Best in the Workplace

- **Objective:** To recognize personal strengths through storytelling and peer feedback.
- **Time Required:** 15 minutes
- **Instructions:**
  1. Pair participants and assign one speaker and one listener.
  2. The **speaker** describes a real work-related situation where they felt “at their best,” with rich detail.
  3. The **listener** remains silent, only taking notes on any demonstrated strengths.
  4. After 3–4 minutes, the listener shares their observations, summarizing the speaker’s strengths.



5. Switch roles and repeat the process.

- **Reflection:**

Discuss as a group: *How did it feel to be acknowledged for your strengths? Were there any strengths pointed out that you hadn't noticed before?*

#### 4. What Positive Things Do You Find in Your Work?

- **Objective:** To bring awareness to the positive aspects of teaching and promote gratitude and presence.

- **Time Required:** 10 minutes

- **Instructions:**

1. Ask teachers to list 3 positive experiences they've had at work recently.
2. Examples might include: "My students were engaged today," or "I had a supportive conversation with a colleague."
3. Share in small groups (3–4 people).

- **Reflection:**

Invite discussion: *How does recognizing positive moments affect how you view your job?*

#### 5. Gratitude in the Workplace

- **Objective:** To foster a sense of appreciation for what's working well and shift focus from problems to solutions.

- **Time Required:** 10 minutes

- **Instructions:**

- Ask teachers to write down as many positive aspects of their workplace as they can (e.g., team spirit, leadership, student engagement).
- Invite sharing and discussion in pairs or a whole group.

- **Reflection:**

Guide a conversation using prompts like:

- *How did writing these down make you feel?*
- *Was anything surprising?*
- *Can any of these elements help solve a current challenge you're facing?*

#### 6. Best Possible Self in the Workplace

- **Objective:** To envision a meaningful and successful future self and use this vision to guide current actions.

- **Time Required:** 5 minutes per day (guided meditation + daily practice)

- **Instructions:**

1. Lead teachers through a guided visualization exercise imagining themselves 5–10 years into the future, thriving in their work.
2. After the session, ask teachers to continue this practice on their own for a week, writing short notes each day on what their "best self" looks like and what it might take to get there.



- **Reflection:**

In a follow-up session, invite teachers to share their experience: *How did your vision evolve over the week? What did you learn about your values and aspirations?*

## 7. Practice Mindfulness

- **Objective:** To cultivate present-moment awareness, particularly in challenging or stressful moments.

- **Time Required:** 5 minutes per day

- **Instructions:**

1. Teach the "3 Things" grounding exercise:

- Notice **3 things you see**
- Notice **3 things you hear**
- Notice **3 things you feel/touch**

2. Ask teachers to practice this daily for one week and jot down their observations.

- **Reflection:**

Ask: *How did this practice affect your focus or mood? Could this be integrated into your daily routine or classroom environment?*

## Students

### 1. What Makes Me Feel Proud

- **Objective:** Help students identify moments when they felt proud and what strengths they were using.
- **Instructions:**
  - Ask students to write or draw a time when they felt proud of themselves (e.g., helping a friend, doing well on a project).
  - Encourage them to describe what made the moment meaningful.
- **Discussion:**

Invite them to share with the class or in pairs. Prompt: *Why do you think this moment matters to you?*

### 2. Strengths in Action

- **Objective:** Students learn to apply their personal strengths in meaningful ways.
- **Instructions:**
  - After identifying their top 3-character strengths (from a simplified VIA survey or classroom discussion), ask students to write or draw how they use each strength to help others or improve their class.
- **Discussion:**

Share examples as a group and brainstorm how they can use these strengths more in everyday school life.



### 3. My Best Day at School

- **Objective:** Help students reflect on what makes a school day meaningful or enjoyable.
- **Instructions:**
  - Ask students to describe their “best school day ever”—what happened, how they felt, who was involved.
  - Have them reflect: *What made this day so special? Can we bring more of that into our classroom?*
- **Discussion:**

Use a classroom board to record common elements (e.g., feeling included, learning something new, helping others).

### 4. Three Good Things (Meaning Edition)

- **Objective:** Encourage students to notice small moments of meaning each day.
- **Instructions:**
  - Each day for one week, students write down **three meaningful things** that happened (not just happy things—moments where they felt proud, helpful, kind, or connected).
  - Examples: “I helped a new student,” “I tried my best on a hard task.”
- **Reflection:**

Discuss as a group or in journals: *How did paying attention to meaningful moments make you feel?*

### 5. Future Me (Visualization)

- **Objective:** Support students in imagining a future version of themselves that makes them feel proud and fulfilled.
- **Instructions:**
  - Guide students through a short visualization where they imagine their life in 5 or 10 years: What are they doing? Who are they helping? How do they feel?
  - Ask them to draw or write about their “Future Me.”
- **Reflection:**

Let students share if they wish. Reinforce that their values and actions today can help them grow into this future version.

## 5.5 Accomplishment

### 5.5.1 Definition

Accomplishment is the fifth and last factor of the PERMA model. **The term Accomplishment refers to the combination of a person meeting their objective goals and the match of the person’s personal ambition, inner drive and personality.** Accomplishment describes the process of self - actualization, where a person utilizes the ability to work towards achieving goals, sustain the motivation or the ability to persevere despite challenges or failures. This process involves various areas of life (professional and personal).



### 5.5.2 Theoretical Background + Key concepts

The term of self - actualization is a key concept in the Accomplishment research. The term was first described by Abraham Maslow (1954) as the “man’s” spiritual need for continuous improvement and the quest for self - actualization. Maslow ranked the basic human needs in the well-known “Maslow’s pyramid” and ranked the need for people to achieve a sense of fulfillment at the top. He proposed that the need to self - actualization is a very strong motivation in humans. In addition, Carl Rogers, along with Maslow, are the fathers of Humanistic Psychology also spoke about the tendency of the human personality to evolve from a simple to a complex entity, leading to achievement of self - actualization.

Research shows that setting goals acts as an important motivational factor which encourages self - management, effective planning and the activation of the person’s resources. To set goals effectively, the goals should have some characteristics. For the purposes of Achievement in the PERMA model we propose the use of a goal -setting model, the SMART model.

The SMART model is an acronym for the characteristics of the goals. Based on this model, the goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable/ Achievable, Realistic, and in a specific timeframe. An additional characteristic for the goal setting to be set correctly is that they should be self - determined for the purpose to activate intrinsic motivation in the person. Goals can be set for various aspects of a person’s life (work area, personal, sports, games, hobbies), but it is generally recommended that people work on 1-2 major goals simultaneously to be feasible.

### 5.5.3 Activities for Accomplishment

#### Teachers

These activities aim to help teachers develop greater self-awareness of their current state of well-being, identify personal and professional goals, and adopt habits that lead to meaningful accomplishments. By doing so, teachers can increase their sense of efficacy, motivation, and fulfillment.

#### 1. Self-Reflection: Barriers to Happiness (*Take-Home Activity*)

- **Objective:**  
To encourage self-awareness about teachers’ current well-being, identify what affects their happiness, and explore obstacles to goal attainment.
- **Time Required:** 10 minutes (reflection at home)
- **Instructions:**
  - Ask teachers to complete the following reflection at home, in writing:
    - On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy do I feel right now?
    - What could make me feel happier in my personal, family, and professional life?
    - What are the barriers preventing me from achieving that happiness (internal or external)?
  - In the next session, invite participants to revisit their reflections.
- **Reflection:**  
During the follow-up meeting, facilitate small-group or whole-group sharing. Ask:



- *What did you notice about your answers?*
- *Were the barriers mostly internal (e.g., self-doubt, habits) or external (e.g., lack of time, organizational issues)?*
- *What small changes can you make to overcome one of these barriers?*

## 2. Happiness Boosters Brainstorm

- **Objective:**  
To help teachers recognize and integrate small, realistic activities that improve their mood, energy, and overall satisfaction.
- **Time Required:** 5 minutes
- **Instructions:**
  - Pose the question: *What are some small things that consistently lift your mood or energy during the week?*
  - Ask teachers to quickly list 5–10 “happiness boosters” that are practical and personally enjoyable (e.g., listening to music, taking a short walk, meaningful conversations, journaling).
- **Examples of Happiness Boosters:**
  - Enjoying a cup of coffee without distractions
  - Talking to a supportive colleague
  - Playing with a pet or spending time in nature
  - Practicing a short mindfulness exercise
  - Completing a small task successfully
- **Reflection:**  
Guide a discussion on the following:
  - *Which of your boosters are you already doing regularly?*
  - *Which ones could you realistically add to your week?*
  - *How might regular happiness boosters support your overall sense of accomplishment and energy for your goals?*
- Encourage teachers to commit to using at least one happiness booster each day for the next week and report back.

## Students

### 1. My Proud Moments

- **Objective:**  
To help students recognize moments of success and internalize a sense of accomplishment.
- **Instructions:**
  1. Ask students to reflect on and write or draw **one moment they were proud of themselves** recently. It can be academic, social, or personal.
  2. Encourage students to include:
    - What they did
    - How they felt



- Why it was meaningful to them

- **Discussion:**

Invite volunteers to share. Prompt: *What helped you succeed? What can you learn from that moment?*

## 2. My Weekly Goals

- **Objective:**

To support students in setting and achieving small, attainable goals, and to boost confidence through success.

- **Instructions:**

1. Each Monday, ask students to set **one small goal** they want to accomplish that week (academic or personal).
2. Have them write it on a sticky note or in a personal planner.
3. Each Friday, reflect: *Did I meet my goal? What helped or didn't help?*

- **Variation:**

Display the goals on a classroom "Goal Wall" to build motivation and celebrate achievements.

## 3. My Happiness Boosters

- **Objective:**

To raise awareness about the small things that make students feel good and show them that self-care supports learning and performance.

- **Instructions:**

1. Ask: *What are 3 things that always make you feel better when you're stressed or tired?*
2. Students write or draw their answers (e.g., talking to a friend, drawing, music, playing outside).
3. Create a "Classroom Happiness Menu" with everyone's ideas posted on a board.

- **Follow-up:**

Encourage students to choose 1 happiness booster each day and reflect on how it helped their focus, mood, or motivation.

## 4. Strengths and Success Badges

- **Objective:**

To link personal strengths to achievements and recognize effort over perfection.

- **Instructions:**

1. Provide students with a list of strengths (e.g., perseverance, creativity, kindness).
2. Ask them to choose one strength they used during the week and write/draw how they used it.
3. Give out symbolic "badges" or stickers to celebrate their accomplishments.

- **Reflection:**

Prompt: *Why was this strength important? How can you use it again next week?*





## Part 2. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-wide Positive behavior Support (SWPBS) in School

### 1. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-wide Positive behavior Support (SWPBS) in School – A whole school approach

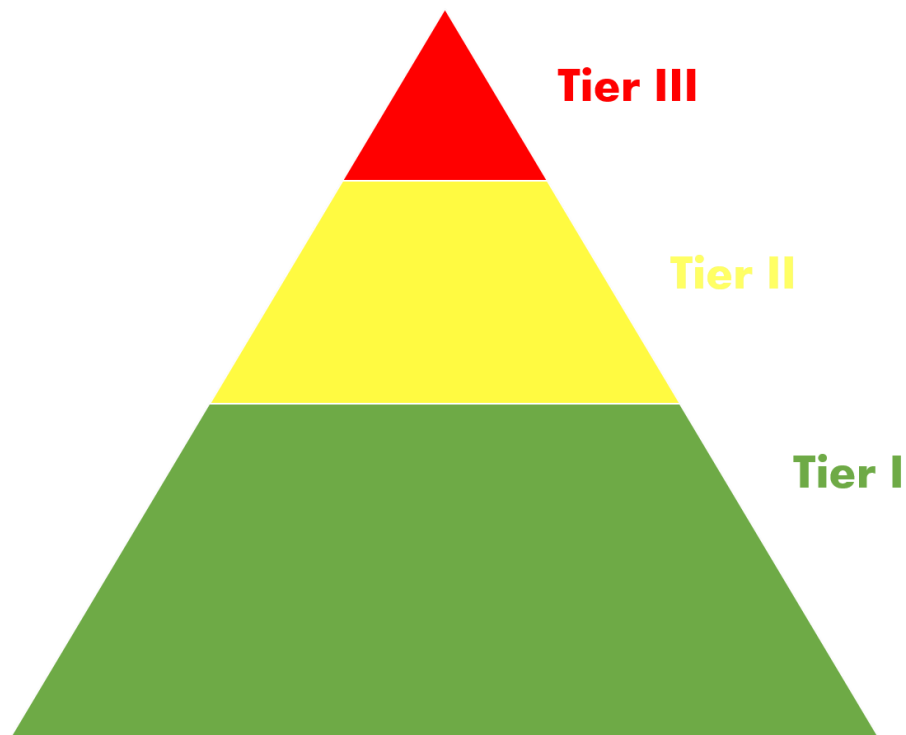
A whole-school approach to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) represents a shift from reactive, individual-focused interventions to a proactive, systemic model that cultivates a supportive, equitable and inclusive school culture. Rooted in frameworks such as Positive Psychology, and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), this integrated model prioritizes prevention, early intervention, and the promotion of positive interpersonal relationships across the entire educational community.

**Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** aims to equip learners with the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, form positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and engage constructively in academic and social environments (CASEL, 2020). SEL is embedded not only through explicit instruction but also across teaching practices, school climate, leadership strategies, and family engagement.

**School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)** is an evidence-based systems framework that focuses on restructuring school environments to support the development of adaptive behavior in all students. Rather than addressing misbehavior through punitive measures, SWPBS encourages schools to proactively establish, teach, and reinforce consistent behavioral expectations.

This model draws on decades of behavioral science and has proven successful in diverse educational contexts—including early childhood, primary and secondary education, and special education (Horner et al., 2010; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). It is built upon a three-tiered continuum of prevention and support, which is depicted in Diagram 2:

- **Tier I (Universal Prevention):** This foundational level involves school-wide strategies targeting all students. It includes the explicit teaching of positively stated behavioral expectations, regular reinforcement of desirable behaviors, and ongoing data monitoring. It is estimated that Tier I effectively supports 80–90% of students (Bradshaw et al., 2008).
- **Tier II (Targeted Support):** For the estimated 10–15% of students who require more intensive assistance, Tier II offers small group interventions, targeted skill-building, and increased monitoring. These interventions are designed to bridge gaps without the need for individualized plans.
- **Tier III (Individualized Intensive Intervention):** The most intensive level of support is reserved for 3–5% of students with chronic, high-risk behavior. This tier includes functional behavioral assessments and the development of personalized support plans tailored to each student's strengths, challenges, and environmental context.



**Diagram 2:** Levels of prevention

Source: [www.vide.vi](http://www.vide.vi)

#### **Core Components of the SWPBS Framework:**

1. **Shared Outcomes:** Schools collaboratively define measurable goals linked to academic success, emotional well-being, social engagement, and school safety. These outcomes guide implementation and are reviewed regularly.
2. **Systems Support:** Sustainable implementation requires both internal and external support structures. Leadership teams (often referred to as Well-being Champions) are trained and mentored by external coaches to develop school-wide expectations, reward systems, and data-informed action plans. Active leadership by principals and buy-in from at least 80% of staff are essential for fidelity and sustainability.
3. **Data-Informed Decision Making:** Schools systematically collect and analyze behavioral, academic, and attendance data to evaluate student progress, implementation fidelity, and the effectiveness of supports. Tools such as fidelity inventories, discipline logs, and classroom climate surveys support continuous improvement.
4. **Evidence-Based Practices:** Effective teaching strategies are used to model and reinforce expected behaviors. These include direct instruction, role-play, modeling, and feedback. Reinforcement systems (e.g., verbal praise, token economies, group contingencies) are employed to sustain motivation and build fluency. Inappropriate behaviors are met not with punishment but with corrective instruction and reteaching opportunities.
5. **Equity:** This component ensures fair treatment and access for all students, acknowledging that students come from diverse backgrounds and may have different needs.



Figure 3. Essential Elements

This approach aligns closely with the **Health Promoting Schools** framework advocated by the World Health Organization and UNESCO (2021), and with the EC guidelines on well-being and mental health in schools (EC, 2024), both of which emphasize coordinated actions across curriculum, ethos, environment, and community partnerships.

Ultimately, a whole-school SEL and SWPBS approach is not a standalone program but a cultural transformation. It relies on sustained professional development, inclusive leadership, and family engagement to embed social-emotional learning and behavioral support into the fabric of school life. The goal is not only to reduce disruptive behavior but to create a thriving educational environment where every learner—and every adult—feels respected, connected, and empowered to succeed.

#### Key factors for successful implementation

Several critical factors contribute to the effective implementation and sustainability of the SWPBS approach:

- **Broad Staff Commitment:** A shared understanding and support from at least 70–80% of the school staff is essential to create consistency in practices across all settings.
- **Positive Teacher–Student Relationships:** Developing trust and mutual respect between educators and students is central to promoting prosocial behavior and engagement.
- **Strong Leadership:** The active involvement of the principal or head teacher ensures alignment of the SWPBS framework with school-wide goals and policies.
- **Leadership Team Formation:** Establishing a representative and functional leadership team is vital to coordinate planning, training, communication, and data-based decision making.
- **Support from External Coaches:** Designated coaches provide continuous professional development and practical guidance to school teams, ensuring high-fidelity implementation.
- **Ongoing Behavioral Data Collection:** Gathering and analyzing data on student behavior enables schools to track progress, identify trends, and tailor interventions.



- **Collaborative Research and Evaluation:** Partner schools contribute behavioral and implementation data to the broader project for cross-national learning and evaluation.

### **1.1 Introduction to SEL & SWPBS curricula**

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) represent complementary, integrated strategies to promote students' well-being, engagement, and academic success across all school contexts. SEL focuses on equipping learners with essential life skills such as emotion regulation, empathy, collaboration, and ethical decision-making, as defined by the five core competencies articulated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Meanwhile, SWPBS is a proactive and preventive framework grounded in behavioral science that supports the consistent promotion of expected behavior and the reduction of challenging behaviors through a multi-tiered system of support. It is built on the principles of inclusion, equity, and the belief that all students benefit from clearly defined, taught, and reinforced behavior expectations.

In Thriving Schools project, SEL and SWPBS are operationalized through structured, evidence-based curricula, tailored to local educational contexts in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Romania. Schools adopt a whole-school mindset, with SEL competencies woven into lesson planning, school culture, and teacher-student relationships. Implementation involves structured teaching (via scenarios, discussion, role-play, and reflection), consistent reinforcement strategies, and collaboration with families and communities. Students engage with these curricula not only through formal instruction but through daily routines and the modeled behavior of adults within the school community. Both frameworks rely heavily on universal access, data-driven decision-making, and professional development to build capacity and sustainability. By embedding SEL and SWPBS within the wider educational mission.

## **2. The SWPBS framework**

At the core of Tier 1 of the SWPBS model are eight foundational elements that form the structure for successful implementation (Figure 4). These elements address both student behavior and staff development and include common purpose, leadership, defined expectations, teaching of behavior, reinforcement systems, data-driven decision-making, response strategies, and staff support. In the context of the Thriving Schools project, these components have been tailored for a six/seven-month annual implementation cycle, making them manageable and effective within participating schools.



**Figure 4:** 8 Basic Elements of Primary Prevention

Source: Sugai & Horner, 2008; MOSWPBS, 2018

A crucial precondition for launching the SWPBS framework is the engagement and agreement of the school staff. Before any intervention begins, the school principal signals interest and works alongside project partners to introduce the SWPBS framework to the staff. This initial orientation includes a comprehensive explanation of the project's aims, the scientific foundation of SWPBS, and practical examples from successful implementations in partner countries.

Following this presentation, each school organizes a confidential voting process among the teaching staff. A threshold of 70–80% affirmative votes is required to proceed, ensuring a collective commitment to the philosophy and practices of SWPBS.

#### Steps for Teachers to Begin Implementation:

1. **Attend the initial presentation** organized by the SWPBS team to understand the framework and its relevance to their school.
2. **Reflect on personal beliefs** about student behavior, discipline, and the learning environment.
3. **Engage in the school's decision-making process**, expressing commitment through the voting procedure.
4. **Prepare to collaborate** with colleagues in developing shared values and behavior expectations.
5. **Participate in further training sessions** and become part of the broader school community's movement toward a culture of support, consistency, and respect.



This collaborative and consensual launch process sets the tone for a unified and motivated staff, which research shows is essential for high-fidelity SWPBS implementation and long-term impact on student behavior and school climate.

## **2.1 Common Philosophy and Purpose**

A successful implementation of the SWPBS model begins with the development of a shared vision and a common philosophy regarding student behavior. This first step establishes a unified purpose among all stakeholders and lays the foundation for a consistent school culture that promotes positive relationships, inclusion, and well-being.

The school's **Leadership Team** (often referred to as Well-being Champions) leads this reflective process. Teachers, school leaders, and staff collaboratively explore their existing beliefs about discipline, behavior, and learning. These conversations are facilitated through staff meetings, inquiry circles, or surveys, focusing on questions such as:

- What do we believe about how students learn to behave?
- What kind of learning environment do we want to create?
- What behavioral values reflect our school's purpose?

These discussions guide the creation of a unifying **vision statement** and **school philosophy on behavior** that emphasizes the teaching of positive behaviors instead of punitive discipline.

### **Example: Vision Statements**

- "To create a safe, engaging, and positive learning environment where every student thrives."
- "To foster a community of respectful, responsible, and resilient learners who are prepared for success in school and life."
- "To cultivate a culture of kindness, collaboration, and continuous growth, where every student feels valued and empowered."



**Image 1. Visualization of the School Vision**

**Example: Behavior Philosophy Statements**

- “At our school, we believe that every student can learn and succeed. Our school-wide philosophy is built on the core values of respect, responsibility, and kindness. We are committed to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students feel safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.”
- “At our school, we are dedicated to fostering a school culture that promotes the social, emotional, and academic well-being of all students. We believe that positive behavior is a skill that can be taught and learned. We aim to create a predictable and positive environment where students feel valued, respected, and motivated to learn.”
- “At our school, we believe that a positive school climate is a shared responsibility. Our philosophy reflects our commitment to working collaboratively with students, staff, families, and the wider community to create a safe and supportive learning environment.”



**Image 2. Visualization of the Philosophy Vision**

From this foundation, schools define **three to five core values** that serve as the basis for all behavioral expectations. Commonly selected values include **Respect, Responsibility, Safety, and Kindness**. These values are operationalized by identifying what they “look like” in different school environments—classroom, hallway, cafeteria, playground, and so on.

**Teacher Guidance:**

Teachers are encouraged to:

- Reflect on how personal values influence classroom management
- Share classroom challenges and aspirations during collaborative workshops
- Contribute concrete examples of desirable student behaviors aligned with key values

**The result of this shared inquiry is the co-construction of:**

- A concise **vision statement** expressing the school’s long-term goals for learning and well-being
- A clear **philosophy statement** on discipline and behavior, emphasizing prevention, teaching, and reinforcement rather than punishment
- **Three to five core values** (e.g., respect, responsibility, inclusion, empathy, perseverance) that will become the cornerstones of the behavioral framework

**Real-life Paradigm:** At a primary school in Cyprus, the staff selected three school values—Respect, Responsibility, and Friendship. For each value, they co-developed simple behavior expectations. For instance, under “Respect” in the cafeteria: “Use a quiet voice and wait your turn in line.” These behaviors were printed on colorful posters and discussed during morning assemblies.

By grounding school practices in a shared philosophy and clearly articulated values, educators create a consistent, positive behavioral climate that supports both students’ learning and their social-emotional development.



## 2.2 Leadership

Effective and sustainable implementation of the SWPBS framework relies heavily on committed and distributed leadership within the school community. The designated School Leadership Team, typically consisting of **4 to 5 members**, including the school principal, plays a central role in coordinating, monitoring, and promoting the SWPBS approach.

The team's core mission is to foster a positive school climate and culture by aligning staff beliefs, developing capacity, and ensuring the systematic execution of the school's action plan. Based on international best practices (Horner et al., 2010; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012), successful leadership teams foster ownership, collaboration, and accountability through transparent communication and role clarity.

To ensure its effective functioning, the Leadership Team must operate under specific foundational principles:

**Trust:** Build a safe environment where team members feel secure sharing their challenges and ideas.

**Shared Purpose:** Team members align around common goals grounded in the shared needs of their students.

**Open and Honest Communication:** Encourage authentic, respectful, and empathetic dialogue.

**Democratic Dialogue:** Foster a culture where all voices are valued, and decisions are made through reasoning and consensus.

**Support and Collaboration:** Promote mutual encouragement and recognition among members to strengthen interpersonal bonds and collective efficacy.

### Core Operating Values:

- **Equality:** Every member's perspective is valid and contributes to the process.
- **Choice and Autonomy:** Participation is voluntary, and members shape what and how they learn.
- **Dialogue and Reflection:** Communication is grounded in shared inquiry and continuous improvement.
- **Application and Practice:** Teams pilot practices in classrooms and reflect on outcomes.
- **Reciprocity:** Members share experiences, knowledge, and responsibilities.

### Recommended Team Composition:

- **School Principal/Head Teacher** (mandatory)
- One teacher from lower primary (Grades 1–3)
- One teacher from upper primary (Grades 4–6)
- One special educator or support staff member

### Each Member Has a Specific Role:

- **Coordinator:** This role is responsible for leading the coordination and execution of the SWPBS action plan. The coordinator ensures clear and continuous communication among team members, including the educator and the external coach. Oversees the implementation of the



action plan, schedules meetings, communicates outcomes to staff, and maintains alignment with project objectives. Responsibilities include setting agendas, organizing regular team meetings, and guiding discussions to remain focused on project goals. During staff sessions, coordinator is responsible to inform about the actions and the decisions of the Leadership team.

- **Trainer:** This person keeps a closer relationship with the external coach. He/she undertakes to carry out staff training within school, model strategies for various classes and coordinate professional learning and training plan of staff.
- **Minute-Taker:** Documents meeting decisions and actions, ensures accessibility of records, and monitors follow-up.
- **Timekeeper:** Ensures the timely topic consumption during meetings, as well as the timely implementation of the activities of the project.
- **Contact persons:** Serve as contact points for parents, students, and the broader school community.

Every school has an assigned external coach, whose role is critical. The external coach is responsible for training schools throughout the duration of SWPBS implementation. He/she provides the guidelines for the project implementation and acts as the contact person for any inquiry from the school. The external coach plans regular face-to-face meetings with the Leadership team (at least once a month) and training sessions for all teaching staff, as well as leadership team trainings.

The Head Teacher formalizes the school's engagement through the **School Agreement Form**, and team progress is tracked in coordination with national and transnational partners. This promotes reflective practice and enables schools to adjust approaches based on data and evolving needs. By investing in strong leadership infrastructure grounded in trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility, Thriving Schools builds the foundation for meaningful and sustainable transformation.

#### **Instructions for Teachers:**

- Engage proactively in regular meetings and capacity-building sessions.
- Participate in collaborative decision-making and democratic discussions.
- Share classroom experiences that inform the implementation of SWPBS.
- Take initiative in applying strategies and reporting back on their effectiveness.

#### **School-Family Partnership and Community Collaboration**

Building meaningful, trust-based relationships with families and the wider community is a foundational element of the Thriving Schools project. Evidence from WP1 of the project highlights the essential role of family-school partnerships in fostering inclusive, respectful, and engaging learning environments. When families feel valued as active contributors, students' behavioral and emotional development is significantly enhanced.

Schools implementing SWPBS are encouraged to promote open, consistent, and culturally responsive communication with families. This includes regular updates about school expectations, opportunities for involvement in school life, and joint responsibility in promoting students' social and emotional growth. Engagement must go beyond simple information sharing—it should invite families to participate in shaping school culture.



- Organize participatory classroom activities such as storytelling, cultural presentations, and “career talks” led by parents.
- Inform parents regularly about school values, behavioral goals, and their child’s progress through meetings, newsletters, or digital platforms.
- Engage in one-on-one meetings to discuss individual student strengths and challenges.
- Offer guidance to families on reinforcing school-based strategies at home.
- Build bridges with community institutions (municipalities, cultural groups, professional organizations) to co-create events and mobilize local resources.

### **Community Engagement:**

Beyond the involvement of families, the broader community holds an equally critical role in ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of the SWPBS approach. Schools are encouraged to actively develop partnerships that extend beyond their physical boundaries and tap into the expertise, resources, and influence of local community institutions. Local municipalities can offer crucial support in terms of infrastructure, safety planning, and access to shared public spaces that foster safe and inclusive school environments.

Collaboration with health and social service providers enhances a school’s ability to support the well-being of students and their families holistically. These partnerships might involve joint referrals, in-school screenings, or coordinated educational sessions for families, particularly on emotional, developmental, or behavioral health topics.

Cultural and educational institutions such as museums, public libraries, and arts centers also serve as valuable partners. Through visits, co-organized events, or creative workshops, these institutions broaden the educational and social horizons of students and contribute to a culture of inclusion, creativity, and empathy. Schools also benefit from collaborations with universities and research organizations, especially in areas such as data collection, action research, and program evaluation. These academic partnerships can elevate the quality of implementation by generating evidence-based feedback and opportunities for continuous improvement.

In all cases, strong school-community collaboration nurtures a shared commitment to the development of children, reinforces the values of SWPBS across different social settings, and enriches the learning experiences available to every student. When schools act not in isolation but as part of a larger community ecosystem, they become more adaptive, inclusive, and resilient to the complex needs of today’s educational environments.

### ***2.3 Clarifying Expected Behavior***

A core element of the SWPBS framework is the establishment of clear, consistent behavioral expectations. Just as schools develop structured curricula for academic instruction, it is essential to design a parallel behavioral curriculum that helps students understand and internalize the social norms of their school environment. Once a school has developed its vision, philosophy, and core values—ideally through inclusive and collaborative processes—the next step is to translate these into observable and teachable behaviors.



This process begins by selecting three foundational values—such as respect, responsibility, and safety—that will guide the school’s social behavior curriculum. Each value is then further defined through specific behaviors relevant to various school contexts. For example, under the value of “Responsibility,” the rule “Be prepared for the lesson” may be chosen to reflect classroom expectations. These rules should always adhere to the **OMPUA criteria**: they must be **Observable**, **Measurable**, **Positively stated**, **Understandable**, and **Applicable** daily.

Table 1. Example of a measurable behavior rule

EXAMPLE	
Value: <b>Respect</b>	<b>Setting:</b> Classroom
Behavioral Rule:	“Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.”
<b>Observable:</b>	A teacher can clearly see whether a student raises their hand and waits.
<b>Measurable:</b>	Teachers can track how often the student follows this rule (e.g., 4 out of 5 times during group discussions).
<b>Positively stated:</b>	The rule focuses on what to do (not “Don’t interrupt” but “Raise your hand...”).
<b>Understandable:</b>	The wording is clear, age-appropriate, and free of jargon.
<b>Applicable daily:</b>	This rule is relevant to everyday classroom discussions and learning activities.

Initially, behavioral expectations are defined for classroom settings, but they can be progressively extended to all common areas of the school, including hallways, cafeterias, staircases, playgrounds, and restrooms. For each space, specific behavior rules are developed, again aligned with the school’s core values. This structured approach results in the development of a behavioral expectations matrix—a visual tool often referred to as a “School Matrix” or “School Behavior Board” (Annex 1). This matrix is prominently displayed throughout the school to ensure that students, staff, and families are continually reminded of the behavioral norms that underpin the school culture.

Table 2. School Board example

School Behavior Board					
Setting/Routine					
Values	School Expectations	Classroom	Stairs	Canteen	Toilets

	Safety	1. Sit properly and keep hands to myself	1. Walk carefully and hold the rail 2. Report if someone is hurt	1. Use both hands to carry my tray	1. Wash hands before and after eating
	Responsibility	2. Be prepared with my materials	3. Stay in line and follow directions	2. Clean up my space after eating	2. Flush and throw paper in bin
	Respect	3. Raise my hand and listen actively	4. Wait my turn and move quietly 5. Keep my voice volume at level 0-2	3. Speak politely and use kind words	3. Respect others' privacy and space

Additionally, schools are encouraged to identify **routines linked to daily procedures**—such as how to respond to an attention signal or how to line up after recess. **Routines are step-by-step actions** that provide students with a predictable and consistent framework for behaving appropriately in recurring situations. For example, in response to an attention signal like a hand clap pattern or raised hand, students may be expected to stop what they are doing immediately, look at the teacher, and remain silent until further instructions are given. Another example involves the lining-up routine after recess, where students are taught to freeze when the bell rings, walk quietly to the lineup area, and stand in a straight, silent line while waiting for their teacher. These routines reinforce the broader behavioral expectations by providing consistent opportunities for practice and positive reinforcement, ultimately supporting smoother transitions and a more structured learning environment.

In the context of the Thriving Schools project, primary schools across Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Romania implement this approach by selecting three core values, three to four related social behaviors, and one to two routines tailored to their own school setting and student population. These components are co-created with staff and shared with students and families using a variety of formats—posters, handbooks, digital platforms, and classroom activities. A visible, well-communicated behavioral curriculum promotes student ownership and ensures alignment among all stakeholders. This shared understanding of expected behavior fosters a safe, respectful, and predictable school environment in which all students can succeed both socially and academically.



## 2.4 Teaching Expected Behavior

Within the Thriving Schools project, teaching expected behavior is not only a core function of the SWPBS model but also a foundational practice for creating a respectful, inclusive, and consistent school culture. Teaching behavior is an instructional task—rooted in the understanding that just like literacy or numeracy, social behavior must be taught explicitly, reinforced consistently, and adapted to different developmental stages. Research confirms that direct teaching of behavioral expectations leads to greater student success and a reduction in discipline problems (Algozzine et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2005).

The teaching process begins once the school’s behavior matrix is finalized. For each identified rule or routine, clear procedures must be developed so that every student understands what is expected and how to achieve it. These procedures should be broken down into manageable steps, modeled consistently by all staff, and taught using a structured and engaging lesson format.

Teaching a Behavior Example
<p><b>Value:</b> Respect</p> <p><b>Setting:</b> Classroom</p> <p><b>Behavior Rule:</b> Be an active listener</p> <p><b>Procedure Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Keep your eyes on the speaker</li><li>2. Stay silent while others are talking (voice level 0)</li><li>3. Keep hands and feet to yourself</li><li>4. Think about what the speaker is saying</li><li>5. Raise your hand and wait your turn to speak</li></ol>
Teaching a Routine Example
<p><b>Routine:</b> Attention Signal</p> <p><b>Cue:</b> Teacher claps twice and raises hand</p> <p><b>Procedure Steps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Stop all activity immediately</li><li>2. Turn to the teacher</li><li>3. Keep voice at level 0</li><li>4. Stay still and quiet until next instruction</li></ol>



The example provided outlines the essential structure of a behavior-focused lesson. Each expected behavior or routine is taught through a dedicated lesson developed collaboratively by the school staff. These lessons are delivered across all classrooms and typically last for one full teaching period, following a clear and organized instructional format. The teacher's role is to lead the lesson through a sequence of defined steps that promote understanding engagement, and practice. Lesson plans follow a structured teaching model:

1. Introduce and name the behavior (Clearly describes social skill to students)
2. Explain its purpose and importance for the class (discuss with students for the reasoning and social usefulness of expected behaviour)
3. Model the appropriate behavior (using images, role play, or short videos)
4. Performs the steps of the rule by explaining them loudly as students watch.
5. Provide examples and non-examples
6. Involve students in identifying and correcting the non-examples
7. Offer opportunities to rehearse the behavior in small groups or pairs (only the teacher must apply non-example behaviour!).
8. Summarize the steps of the rule/behaviour.
9. Provides opportunities throughout the day to retain the skill through reminder, active supervision and positive feedback (maintenance and generalization).

To support implementation, teachers encouraged to promote the use of visual and instructional materials that reinforce the behaviors being taught (Annex 2). Teachers are encouraged to create classroom posters or presentations that illustrate the steps of expected behaviors or routines. These visual aids should be displayed prominently in learning spaces and serve as daily reference points for both students and staff. In addition to posters, PowerPoint slides, illustrated cards, or digital images can help make behaviors more concrete and accessible—especially for younger learners.

To structure lesson delivery, lesson plan templates tailored to either social behaviors (Annex 3) or routines (Annex 4) are provided and adapted to match developmental levels. Plans for teaching social behaviors are more comprehensive and can include storytelling, role-playing, and student reflection. In contrast, routine-focused plans emphasize procedural steps and are shorter in duration. Teachers should always clearly communicate the significance, real-life application, and social benefits of each behavior taught.

Schools are encouraged to prioritize teaching **based on observed behavioral needs**. Persistent challenges should be addressed first to ensure proactive intervention. Following the instructional sequence, students initially acquire the behavior (acquisition phase), gradually become proficient (fluency phase), and eventually retain and demonstrate it consistently across various settings (maintenance and generalization phases). During the fluency phase, educators observe whether students can independently perform all behavior steps. Once fluency is established, schools may introduce short “booster” lessons to maintain performance (Annex 5). Meanwhile, staff continue to provide frequent, specific feedback, reinforcing positive behaviors across the day. In the generalization phase, students begin to demonstrate these behaviors in different situations—outside the classroom, at home, or in community settings (McIntosh & MacKay, 2008).



The Leadership Team is responsible for developing an annual teaching calendar that outlines when and by whom lessons will be delivered (Annex 6). These plans should ensure full coverage throughout the school year and include booster sessions after school holidays or transitions. To strengthen consistency, schools are advised to include the teaching of behaviors and routines in school events, assemblies, and transitions. Staff should be supported with ongoing professional development and encouraged to integrate behavior instruction naturally within their daily teaching. Incorporating the use of a school-wide motto or collaborative school song—co-created with students—further reinforces the shared values and helps students internalize expectations in a meaningful, emotionally resonant way.

## **2.5 Encouraging Expected Behavior**

### Introduction

Bathia (2024) explains that *“Expected behaviours are things that kids do or say, that are kind, helpful and respectful. They make others make comfortable and happy.”* NSW Education (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/>) define the Expected Behaviour or Behavioural Expectations as *“the valued beliefs or attitudes that we want students to display”* and emphasizes the positive impact of clear and consistent expectations on learning and behaviour.

However, simply establishing expectations is not enough; these need to be taught, made visible, periodically reviewed, referred to regularly, and retaught as needed. Ideally, classroom rules should be developed from schoolwide expectations. Classroom rules should be a few – 1-3 rules for each expectation should be sufficient. Behaviour expectations are tools that encourage positive behaviour – they are standards of conduct which might take the form of *‘dos and don’ts’* or procedures to follow in certain situations.

Encouraging expected behaviour among school pupils is central to fostering a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment. In recent years, educators and researchers alike have emphasized proactive strategies over punitive ones, highlighting the value of clear expectations, positive reinforcement, emotional support, and school-wide frameworks. These approaches are most effective when they are consistent, inclusive, and grounded in psychological and pedagogical theory.

In the following lines we will present key strategies for encouraging expected behaviour in school-aged children, drawing on recent academic literature and practical insights from the last five years.

### Key strategies for encouraging expected behaviour

#### *a. Establishing Expectations Through Modelling and Collaboration*

The foundation of positive behaviour in schools begins with clearly established behavioural expectations. Scientific literature emphasizes the importance of explicitly teaching these expectations through both direct instruction and behavioural modelling. When educators model desired behaviours - such as showing respect when listening, using appropriate language, or following classroom routines - they provide students with concrete examples of how to act in given situations (Hulac & Briesch, 2021).



Students learn as much from what teachers do as from what they say, and consistent modelling helps to reinforce the norms of the classroom.

Perez et al. (2023) support the idea that *“behaviour-specific praise is a portable, feasible strategy for teachers and families to increase student engagement as well as to decrease off-task and disruptive behaviours in a variety of environments”*.

Collaborative rule-setting further strengthens these norms. Rather than imposing a long list of prohibitive rules, many educators now advocate co-creating a small number (typically three to five) of positively worded, clear, and observable expectations with students. For instance, instead of saying *“don’t shout”* a class might agree on the rule *“raise your hand to speak.”* According to FreeSLP (2023), *“limiting your classroom rules to five clear expectations... framed positively, encourages desired behaviours rather than focusing on prohibited actions.”* When students are involved in shaping these expectations, they are more likely to feel ownership and adhere to them.

Moreover, research supports the routine posting and reviewing of classroom rules, especially after transitions such as holidays or at the start of new school terms (Bear et al., 2020). Visual displays and regular discussions help maintain clarity and consistency, particularly for younger pupils or those with learning differences.

#### *b. The Role of Positive Reinforcement and Incentives*

Positive reinforcement is another pillar of effective behaviour management. Rather than focusing solely on correcting misbehaviour, reinforcement-based strategies aim to catch and acknowledge students when they engage in appropriate behaviour. Praise and specific feedback - such as *“I appreciate how you waited your turn”* - can have a powerful impact on students’ motivation and self-esteem. As the Orah Blog (2024) explains, *“By acknowledging and rewarding a child’s good behaviour... students develop a healthy sense of self-esteem and autonomy.”*

For younger children, tangible rewards like stickers, tokens, or classroom privileges often work well. These incentives can be part of a larger reinforcement system such as a point chart or class reward menu. More advanced strategies include group-based reinforcement programs like the Good Behaviour Game (GBG, [https://goodbehaviorgame.air.org/about\\_gbg.html](https://goodbehaviorgame.air.org/about_gbg.html)), where students work collaboratively to achieve behavioural goals. These systems not only reinforce individual behaviour but also encourage teamwork and mutual accountability (Kellam et al., 2020).

Reinforcement and feedback are crucial in education for promoting desired behaviours and enhancing learning outcomes. Positive reinforcement encourages students to repeat beneficial actions, fostering motivation and engagement. Immediate and specific feedback helps students understand their progress, identify areas for improvement, and develop self-regulation skills. Both strategies support the establishment of effective learning environments by reinforcing expected behaviours, reducing off-task activities, and promoting academic achievement. Implementing evidence-based reinforcement and feedback techniques is essential for shaping positive student behaviours and facilitating meaningful learning experiences.



Ghafar (2023) shows that certain research supports the use of positive reinforcement as an instructional strategy in educational contexts; however, other studies emphasize reasons why positive reinforcement may not always be effective in classroom settings. He points out that student success largely depends on consistent practices, making it essential to identify and apply effective positive reinforcement strategies. Additionally, providing students with appropriately challenging tasks and setting clear expectations is crucial for promoting their achievement.

However, it is essential that reinforcement systems be implemented thoughtfully. A recent UK study on school attendance incentives observed that pupils *"saw a tangible benefit"* to behaviour-based rewards but emphasized the importance of addressing underlying emotional or mental health needs to ensure long-term success (NFER Report, 2025). This balance between recognition and support is key to sustainable behavioural growth.

#### *c. Proactive Classroom Management and Engagement*

A proactive approach to classroom management also plays a crucial role in shaping expected behaviour. Strategies that anticipate and prevent misbehaviour are often more effective than reactive discipline. One such method involves increasing *"opportunities to respond"* (OTR) during instruction. This might include techniques like asking frequent questions, using response cards, or incorporating peer discussions. Menzies et al. (2021) note that *"OTR increases the rate at which students are academically engaged... [thus] reducing behaviour challenges."*

Clear and consistent classroom routines further support positive behaviour by providing predictability and structure. Posting a daily schedule, using non-verbal cues (like hand signals or transition sounds), and minimizing downtime are all strategies that help students remain focused and regulated (Simonsen et al., 2020). Respectful redirection - using gentle reminders rather than harsh commands - can also preserve students' dignity while keeping them on track.

#### *d. School-Wide Frameworks: PBIS*

Beyond the classroom, many schools have embraced Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a comprehensive framework for encouraging expected behaviour. PBIS is a multi-tiered system that includes universal supports for all students, targeted interventions for those at risk, and individualized plans for those with more intensive needs (Sugai & Horner, 2020). At its core, PBIS emphasizes the proactive teaching and reinforcement of school-wide behavioural expectations, rather than waiting for problems to arise.

Jones et al. (2024) outline key elements of whole-school approaches to behaviour support, including building positive relationships, promoting participation, and clarifying expectations. They show that *"The teaching of positive behaviours and additional support for pupils who struggle to meet high behavioural expectations"* are highly recommended and emphasize that *"Nevertheless, positive reinforcement (i.e. verbal praise, stickers, head-teachers awards) and sanctions (i.e. deduction of free time, detentions during or after school hours, suspensions, or exclusion) are advocated as important and necessary."*



According to various authors, the PBIS model relies on preventing problem behaviours before they happen, being based in a behaviourist psychology approach, while defining, teaching, and reinforcing appropriate behaviours (Algozzine et al., 2010; Pas et al., 2019, Fortune-Wilson, 2023). Research consistently supports the effectiveness of PBIS in improving not only behavioural outcomes but also academic performance, school climate, and teacher satisfaction (Simonsen & Freeman, 2021).

*e. The Influence of Peer Support and Emotional Learning*

Peers also play a significant role in reinforcing or challenging behaviour norms. Programs that incorporate peer-mediated strategies - such as Classwide Peer Tutoring (CWPT) or cooperative learning teams - capitalize on students' desire for social connection. When classmates serve as role models or tutors, they help normalize expected behaviours in a way that adults often cannot (Greenwood & Kim, 2020).

At the same time, social-emotional learning (SEL) and resilience-building interventions are gaining traction as vital tools in managing behaviour. Lessons that help students recognize and regulate emotions, practice empathy, and problem-solve can greatly reduce conflict and impulsivity. As reported in The Guardian (2024), "*Resilience interventions do work*", cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and mindfulness can significantly benefit mental health. Strategies like Think Time (also known as a calm-down-space) where students reflect on the link between their feelings and behaviours, learning how to manage their big emotions, have also shown promise. American Psychological Association (APA, 2025) describes how such practices help kids understand and manage their emotions.

*f. Addressing Individual Needs and Involving Families*

Finally, effective behaviour support must consider the individual needs of students. Some pupils - particularly those with anxiety, ADHD, or autism - may struggle with certain behavioural expectations. Early identification, individualized behaviour intervention plans, and support from special education staff are crucial in these cases. Engaging families is also key. Communication between school and home helps to align expectations and reinforce behaviour strategies consistently across settings (Bambara et al., 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, encouraging expected behaviour in schools is a multifaceted endeavour that requires a blend of clarity, consistency, compassion, and collaboration. By modelling positive behaviour, reinforcing it through praise and incentives, employing proactive classroom strategies, implementing school-wide systems like PBIS, fostering peer support, and promoting emotional resilience, educators can create learning environments where students thrive. The evidence from recent years underscores that supportive, proactive approaches are not only more humane than punitive ones, but also more effective in promoting long-term behavioural success.

**2.6 Discourage Inappropriate Behavior**



## Introduction

Classroom management and the ability to address inappropriate student behaviour remain among the most significant challenges faced by teachers today (Karasova & Nehyba, 2025). However, many teachers report feeling inadequately prepared to manage disruptive behaviour effectively, citing a lack of training in evidence-based strategies and a limited repertoire of constructive responses (Flynn et al., 2025). Maintaining a positive and orderly learning environment is essential not only for students' academic achievement but also for teachers' own well-being and job satisfaction.

Research consistently shows that many teachers feel they lack the necessary classroom management skills and often feel unprepared to respond to problematic behaviour in a productive, evidence-based manner (Flower et al., 2017; Freeman et al., 2014). This lack of preparedness can leave teachers feeling frustrated and ineffective when faced with disruptive students, which in turn negatively impacts their confidence and their ability to foster a positive learning climate (Gray et al., 2017). The aim of this section is to discuss effective strategies that teachers can use to discourage inappropriate behaviours in the classroom, creating a positive learning environment and supporting both student development and teacher well-being.

Before exploring effective strategies to discourage inappropriate behaviours in the classroom, it is essential to first develop a clear understanding of what constitutes such behaviours. Defining and recognising these actions, attitudes, and patterns of conduct provides a necessary foundation for selecting appropriate, evidence-based interventions that address the root causes and promote positive change (OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, *n.d.*). Inappropriate behaviour in the classroom refers to any action, attitude, or speech act by students that disrupts the learning environment, disrespects the rights of others, or violates the established school code of conduct.

To better understand and address inappropriate behaviour, it is helpful to distinguish between minor and major behavioural issues, based on their severity, frequency, and impact on the learning environment (Horner et al., 2004).

- *Minor inappropriate behaviours* are typically low-level, often unintentional, and may only momentarily disrupt the flow of teaching. These include talking out of turn, whispering to classmates during instruction, not following directions promptly, mild inattentiveness (e.g., daydreaming, fiddling with objects), or arriving late to class. While these behaviours may not seem serious in isolation, if left unchecked, they can escalate or contribute to a negative classroom climate over time.
- *Major inappropriate behaviours*, by contrast, are more severe, deliberate, or persistent actions that significantly disrupt the learning process, threaten the safety or dignity of others, or directly challenge the teacher's authority. Examples include verbal aggression toward peers or the teacher, repeated defiance or refusal to comply with rules, bullying or harassment, vandalism, and physical aggression. Such behaviours usually require more immediate, structured, and sometimes individualized intervention strategies.



Such behaviours undermine the educational goals of the class, disrupt teaching and learning processes, and can negatively influence the classroom climate. Inappropriate students' behaviour in classrooms is a significant source of concern for teachers (Malak et al., 2017).

### *Principles of Effective Behaviour Management*

Teachers are responsible for addressing these behaviours effectively and fostering a positive, respectful, and productive learning environment. To achieve this, it is crucial to establish a set of clear, evidence-based principles to guide both the prevention and intervention of disruptive behavior in the classroom (Sugai et al., 2000). These principles ensure that strategies effectively reduce disruption while promoting student growth, fairness and mutual respect (De Jong, 2005).

One of the most important principles is prevention over reaction. Effective behavior management begins with creating conditions that minimize the likelihood of misbehavior occurring in the first place. This includes establishing clear expectations, structuring engaging lessons, and maintaining an orderly, supportive atmosphere where students feel valued and understood (Sugai et al., 2000). When students know what is expected of them and feel connected to the classroom community, they are more likely to display appropriate behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Another key principle is consistency in applying rules, expectations, and consequences, both by teachers in the classroom and by parents at home, so that students receive clear, unified messages about acceptable behavior and understand that the same standards apply across different settings (Irby & Clough, 2015). Students respond best when teachers enforce rules and consequences in a predictable and impartial manner. Inconsistent or arbitrary responses to inappropriate behavior can confuse students and erode the teacher's authority (Irby & Clough, 2015).

At the same time, effective behavior management prioritizes positive reinforcement over punitive measures (Skinner, 1938). Rather than focusing solely on punishing undesired behavior, teachers should recognize and reward appropriate conduct. Positive reinforcement, such as praise, privileges, or tangible rewards, not only encourages the desired behavior to recur but also promotes a more positive and motivating classroom climate (Balliet et al., 2011).

Adhering to the principles of prevention, consistency, positive reinforcement and respect enables teachers to manage classroom behavior in a way that supports both immediate order and long-term student development. These principles provide the foundation for the effective implementation of specific strategies, which are explored in the next sections.

### *Strategies to Discourage Inappropriate Behaviour*

An effective and increasingly recommended approach to managing classroom behaviour involves the use of low-intensity strategies. These are subtle, non-confrontational techniques that teachers can apply proactively and consistently to discourage inappropriate behaviour before it escalates (Lotfizadeh et al., 2020). By addressing minor disruptions in a calm and least intrusive way, low-intensity strategies help redirect students' attention back to the task at hand, maintain the flow of instruction, and reinforce positive engagement without creating unnecessary conflict or drawing negative attention to the student.



These strategies have been shown to be effective not only in addressing behavioural challenges but also in increasing students' academic engagement and participation (Waebe & Lane, 2019). By equipping teachers with such manageable tools, schools can support both classroom harmony and teacher resilience, creating an environment in which all learners can thrive. Research shows that teachers can use low-intensity strategies to effectively address problematic behaviour and increase academic engagement (Waebe & Lane, 2019).

Discouraging inappropriate behaviour in the classroom requires a combination of direct and indirect intervention strategies. Direct strategies address misbehaviour in the moment, while indirect strategies create conditions that prevent or reduce the likelihood of misbehaviour over time. According to OSEP Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (*n.d.*), direct and indirect strategies can be implemented to address inappropriate behaviour.

Indirect intervention strategies to discourage inappropriate behaviours are proactive measures that create a positive and inclusive classroom culture and environment where inappropriate behaviour is less likely to occur (Algozzine et al., 2010). These strategies focus on prevention and building long-term positive habits. We would mention some:

- Establishing *clear expectations and routines* helps students understand what is required of them and what the consequences of inappropriate behaviour will be. Teachers should communicate these rules and routines clearly and consistently from the very beginning of the school year. Modelling and practicing them regularly reinforces understanding and supports students in meeting expectations.
- *Building strong teacher–student relationships* and creating a respectful classroom atmosphere help reduce misbehaviour. Teachers can create a positive climate by greeting students warmly, showing genuine interest in their lives, and consistently acknowledging their efforts. These actions build trust and encourage cooperation, making students more likely to engage positively with learning and adhere to classroom expectations.
- *Designing lessons that are interactive, differentiated, and appropriately challenging* helps keep students engaged and reduces the likelihood of misbehaviour caused by boredom or frustration. Teachers can maintain students' focus by providing frequent opportunities to respond, offering timely feedback, and incorporating collaborative group activities. Engaging instruction not only promotes learning but also supports positive classroom behaviour.
- *Integrating social-emotional learning (SEL)* into the classroom helps students develop empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution skills. Activities such as role-plays, guided reflection, and discussions about emotions teach students how to manage frustration, resolve disagreements constructively, and respond to challenges in appropriate ways. SEL supports both individual growth and a positive classroom environment.

Direct intervention strategies involve immediate, in-the-moment responses that teachers use to address inappropriate behaviour as it occurs, with the goal of stopping disruptions, maintaining order, and



guiding students back on task in a respectful and constructive way (Sugai & Horner, 2020). The most common direct strategies are:

- *Active supervision* involves purposefully moving around the classroom and making eye contact to signal awareness and prevent further misbehaviour.
- *Non-verbal cues* involve subtle actions, such as standing near a student, using a gentle hand signal, or giving a quiet reminder, to redirect behaviour without interrupting the flow of the lesson or drawing unnecessary attention.
- *Ignore, Attend, Praise* is a strategy where the teacher withholds attention from a student who is not following expectations while instead praising a nearby student who is demonstrating the desired behaviour, without making eye contact with the misbehaving student. This redirects attention and reinforces appropriate conduct.
- *Re-direct* involves giving a brief, clear, and private verbal reminder to the student about the expected behaviour, helping them get back on task without drawing undue attention.
- *Re-teach* involves specifically instructing the student on what they need to do to meet the classroom expectations, clearly explaining the appropriate behaviour and reinforcing the rule in context.
- *Provide choice* involves offering the student two alternatives: the desired appropriate behaviour and a less preferred option (such as completing the work away from peers or making up the task during a fun activity), giving the student a sense of control while still holding them accountable.

If left unaddressed, minor disruptive behaviours that may initially go unnoticed in a busy classroom can quickly escalate as the student moves through these stages. These responses allow the teacher to address behaviour calmly while keeping the class focused.

### *Conclusions*

Effectively managing inappropriate student behaviour is central to successful teaching and critical to maintaining a positive, productive learning environment. Although many teachers feel unprepared to respond to behavioural challenges, research clearly shows that applying evidence-based, proactive and respectful strategies can have a significant impact.

By understanding the nature and impact of minor and major disruptive behaviours, teachers can respond appropriately and consistently. Based on key principles such as prevention over reaction, consistency, positive reinforcement and mutual respect, teachers can develop a solid foundation for managing behaviour constructively.

Indirect non-intrusive strategies are powerful tools for addressing minor misbehaviours while preserving student dignity and classroom momentum. At the same time, combining indirect preventive approaches, such as building relationships, structuring engaging lessons and integrating social and emotional



learning, with direct, in-the-moment interventions, ensures a holistic and sustainable framework for promoting positive behaviour.

Ultimately, teachers who see themselves as leaders and role models and who adopt a reflective, evidence-based approach to behaviour management are better placed to create classrooms where all pupils can flourish academically, socially and emotionally. Supporting teachers through ongoing professional development and fostering a consistent, whole-school approach to behaviour management further enhances their capacity to discourage inappropriate behaviour and build a strong, respectful classroom culture.

## 2.7 Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment

### Introduction

A defining characteristic of an effective School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) and SEL framework is that it is *continuously improved* through high-quality data (Bradshaw, Pas & McIntosh, 2023). In practice, this means that every component introduced in Sections 2.1-2.6 is partnered with a clear plan for collecting, analysing and acting on information about **fidelity, outcomes and equity**.

Effective SEL + SWPBS implementation depends on an *evidence-to-action* loop in which data about fidelity, outcomes and equity are gathered, discussed and used to steer improvement. The PBIS core logic makes this explicit: *systems → data → practices → outcomes ← equity* .

Below, the section follows the structure used in 2.6, moving from purpose through tools, routines and quality safeguards, and ending with a practical yearly calendar that teams can adapt.

### Context and Importance

Schools in the Thriving Schools project commit to reviewing implementation data at least every six weeks and to disaggregating student outcome data by key sub-groups (e.g., gender, SEN) to guard against unintended disproportionality. In practice, this means that each core component described in sub-sections 2.1–2.6 is paired with clearly defined indicators and a schedule for collection.

### Why monitor?

- **Fidelity** – to verify that core features (e.g., common expectations, explicit teaching, reinforcement systems) are being implemented as intended. Programmes delivered with high fidelity produce significantly better academic and behavioural outcomes than those implemented “in name only”.
- **Outcomes** – to know whether student behaviour, engagement, and well-being are improving—and to spot emerging concerns early.
- **Equity** – to ensure that all student groups benefit fairly and that no subgroup experiences disproportionate exclusion or disciplinary action. Schools committed to reducing discipline inequities must adopt data systems capable of instantaneous disaggregation by disability, gender and race/ethnicity ([pbis.org](https://pbis.org)).



## Key data sources and tools

Purpose	Example Tools	Frequency	Lead actor
<b>Implementation fidelity</b>	<b>Tiered Fidelity Inventory 3.0 (TFI)</b> —assesses core features at Tiers 1-3 ( <a href="http://pbis.org">pbis.org</a> , <a href="http://pbisapps.org">pbisapps.org</a> ); PBIS Self-Assessment Survey (SAS) ( <a href="http://pbis.org">pbis.org</a> )	TFI: baseline, then 3-4× year; SAS: annually	Leadership Team + external coach
<b>Behaviour &amp; climate outcomes</b>	SWIS or other SIS discipline dashboard; attendance & punctuality logs; student climate/SEL surveys	<i>Office discipline referrals</i> : weekly; other indicators: monthly	Data analyst + grade-level teams
<b>Tier 2/3 progress monitoring</b>	CICO-SWIS graphs; individual Goal-Attainment Scaling; functional assessment data	Every 2-3 weeks	Tier 2/Tier 3 teams
<b>Equity &amp; disproportionality</b>	Risk-ratio reports; local equity dashboards; quarterly disproportionality template ( <a href="http://wayneresa-cdn.fxbrt.com">wayneresa-cdn.fxbrt.com</a> )	At least termly	Equity sub-team

**Tip:** In mixed-SEL/SWPBS models, add the *Well-Being Fidelity Inventories* (see Part 3) once per term to triangulate behavioural data with well-being trends.

## The data-review cycle

### 1. Collect & display

*Behavioural* data should be uploaded to an accessible dashboard before each meeting; *fidelity* data are scored collaboratively with an external coach to reduce bias ([pbisapps.org](http://pbisapps.org)).

### 2. Diagnose

Leadership Teams follow a standard protocol (e.g., 5-question problem-solving worksheet): *Where are we on track? Where are we off? Why?*



3. **Action-plan**

Adopt or adjust strategies, assign responsibilities, and set a review date.

4. **Communicate**

Share headline graphs with staff, students and families—transparency builds collective efficacy.

5. **Check-equity**

Repeat steps 1-4 for disaggregated data; examine root causes if risk ratios exceed 1.25.

Teams that meet at least monthly and follow an explicit data protocol have demonstrated larger reductions in problem behaviour than teams that meet ad-hoc ([pbissmissouri.org](http://pbissmissouri.org)).

**Ensuring data quality**

- **Define each metric** (e.g., what counts as a Major vs Minor incident) and train staff annually to code behaviour consistently.
- **Automate** data pulls wherever possible; manual spreadsheets introduce delay and error.
- **Triangulate** quantitative data (referral counts) with qualitative sources (student focus groups, playground scans).
- **Protect privacy** by using anonymised IDs in visual displays and following GDPR/FERPA guidelines for any individual-level reporting.

**From data to professional learning**

Monitoring is most powerful when it drives **targeted professional development**. After each quarterly TFI, the coach highlights two priority items (lowest-scoring, high-leverage) and schedules brief staff booster sessions. This “assess–teach–re-assess” loop mirrors the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles used in improvement science and has been shown to accelerate fidelity gains in emerging PBIS schools (McIntosh et al., 2024).

**Sample annual monitoring calendar**

Month	Fidelity	Outcome	Equity	Communication
Sept.	Baseline TFI 3.0	Create SWIS dashboard	Set disparity targets	Staff in-service: data roles
Oct.		1st monthly referral review		Newsletter: share school-wide goals
Nov.	SAS		Risk-ratio scan	Student assembly: celebrate improvements



<b>Jan.</b>	Mid-year TFI	Semester discipline & attendance	Disaggregate by grade	Board report
<b>Mar.</b>		Monthly review	Equity check	PLC focus on hot-spot solutions
<b>Jun.</b>	End-year TFI & Well-Being Inventories	Year-end outcome summary	Final disparity report	Public dashboard & celebration

### Key take-aways

- Data-based decision-making is **not** an extra layer; it *is* the engine of SEL + SWPBS success ([pbis.org](http://pbis.org)).
- Collect only data you are prepared to discuss and act upon.
- Use *multiple measures*—fidelity, outcomes, and equity—to gain a 360° picture.
- Schedule regular data-review meetings and follow a structured protocol to move from information to action.
- Celebrate progress publicly; adjust quickly when trends flag emerging needs.

By embedding systematic monitoring and assessment into the everyday life of the school, teams transform SEL and SWPBS from isolated initiatives into a living, adaptive framework that reliably supports *every* learner.

## 2.8 Training, Development and Support of Staff

### Introduction

A sustainable and inclusive approach to student well-being and academic success requires that the educators responsible for implementation are not only well-informed but also continuously supported. Training, development, and emotional support for school staff are fundamental pillars in implementing effective mental health and behavioral strategies. According to the World Health Organization and UNESCO (2021), a whole-school approach to health promotion must involve not only students but also staff, recognizing that their well-being, professional confidence, and emotional resilience are critical to the overall school climate.

### Context and Importance



Teachers are often the first to observe changes in students' behavior, emotional well-being, and learning capacities. As such, they play a pivotal role in both prevention and early intervention strategies for mental health concerns. However, this responsibility can only be effectively fulfilled when educators are adequately trained and feel competent and supported in their roles (European Commission, 2024). Without appropriate professional development and institutional backing, educators may struggle to identify mental health difficulties or to apply inclusive and supportive practices in a consistent manner.

Furthermore, teacher burnout, emotional fatigue, and feelings of isolation are increasingly recognized as threats to educational quality and student outcomes. In this context, investment in teacher training and well-being is not only a matter of professional development but also of safeguarding the mental health of the educators themselves.

### **Purpose and Importance of Staff Training**

Research underscores the critical role that staff training plays in enhancing school-wide positive behavior strategies and emotional support systems (Algozzine et al., 2010; Horner et al., 2010). Teachers and support staff must be trained not only in instructional strategies but also in behavior management, trauma-informed practices, emotional literacy, and mental health awareness (APA, 2025; Jones et al., 2024).

Effective training programs empower teachers to recognize early warning signs of emotional distress and behavioral disorders and to apply proactive classroom strategies. As Greenwood and Kim (2020) highlight, interventions are more successful when all school personnel—teachers, support staff, and administrators—consistently apply evidence-based practices. The broader aim is to establish a shared language, consistent expectations, and a collective responsibility for creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

### **Key Principles**

The development of school staff in the area of mental health and behavioral support is based on several interrelated principles:

1. *Capacity Building*: All staff members should be equipped with core competencies in mental health literacy, social-emotional learning (SEL), and behavioral interventions. Training must be embedded in broader institutional development and aligned with school values and goals (Horner & Sugai, 2005).
2. *Sustainability through Continuous Learning*: Training should not be a one-time event but a continuous process that includes regular refreshers, updates on best practices, and space for professional reflection and collaboration (McIntosh & MacKay, 2008).
3. *Collaboration and Teamwork*: Teachers, school counselors, special educators, and administrative staff must work collaboratively to foster a supportive environment. Shared responsibilities and joint training opportunities help build a culture of trust and coherence.



4. *Data-Driven Decision Making*: Tools such as the PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Algozzine et al., 2014) help schools assess their current practices and identify areas where training is most needed.
5. *Emotional Support for Educators*: The emotional health of educators is essential. When staff feel psychologically safe, valued, and supported, they are more likely to engage in innovative and empathetic practices with their students (WHO & UNESCO, 2021).

### **Types of Professional Development and Training**

Ongoing, high-quality professional development should address multiple areas:

- ***Behavior Management Techniques***: Programs such as the Good Behavior Game (GBG) and Classwide Positive Behavior Support (Menzies et al., 2021; Kellam et al., 2020) train teachers to reinforce appropriate behavior, use behavior-specific praise, and reduce reliance on punitive discipline (Bear et al., 2020).
- ***Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)***: Training helps educators facilitate SEL through classroom discussions, role-plays, and reflection activities (McIntosh & MacKay, 2008; Pérez et al., 2023). Emotion coaching strategies (APA, 2025) further support students' development of empathy, resilience, and self-regulation.
- ***Cultural Competence and Inclusive Practices***: Staff development should include training on equity, cultural sensitivity, and supporting students with diverse needs (Bambara et al., 2020; Hulac & Briesch, 2021).
- ***Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices***: Training supports the identification of mental health issues and appropriate referrals. It also fosters trauma-sensitive environments, especially in schools with high-needs populations (European Commission, 2024; WHO & UNESCO, 2021).

### **Research-Based Practices**

#### **Building a Collaborative and Supportive Culture**

A whole-school approach requires that training be embedded in a collaborative school culture. Team-based learning communities, mentorship programs, and staff coaching contribute to sustainable professional growth (Simonsen & Freeman, 2021; Bear et al., 2020). Peer learning and reflective practices allow staff to share successful strategies and align on values (Pas et al., 2019).

Moreover, schools must support staff emotionally. High workloads, student behavioral challenges, and systemic pressures can lead to burnout. Thus, staff well-being should be a parallel focus in professional development initiatives (Guardian, 2024; Jones et al., 2024).

#### **Implementation Challenges and Recommendations**



Despite growing awareness, challenges persist. These include limited time, insufficient funding, lack of access to specialists, and inconsistencies in implementation (Fortune-Wilson, 2023; NFER, 2025). To address these challenges:

- **Leadership commitment** is essential in allocating time and resources for training.
- **Partnerships with external agencies** (e.g., NGOs, universities, mental health services) can expand training opportunities.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** mechanisms (e.g., staff feedback, implementation checklists, TFI scores) should guide improvements.
- **Embedding training into teacher preparation programs** can ensure that new educators enter the profession with foundational skills in behavior support and mental health literacy.

School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is one of the most extensively researched frameworks that highlights the importance of staff development. According to Horner, Sugai, and Anderson (2010), successful implementation of PBIS depends largely on the capacity of educators to apply tiered support strategies, collect and interpret behavior-related data, and adapt interventions to meet the evolving needs of students. Teachers require not just theoretical knowledge but also practical tools and coaching to generalize practices beyond individual classrooms (Algozzine, Wang & Violette, 2011).

Evidence also suggests that staff who engage in ongoing professional learning communities (PLCs) or coaching cycles exhibit higher fidelity to implementation and greater confidence in managing student behavior. McIntosh and MacKay (2008) emphasize that skills such as teaching empathy, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution require consistent reinforcement by adults across school contexts. Without adequate follow-up and peer collaboration, training may have limited long-term impact.

Incorporating social-emotional development into staff training is also essential. European Commission (2024) guidelines recommend that teachers be trained in understanding trauma, stress responses in children, and strategies for de-escalating emotionally charged situations. Such training should be contextualized within each school's socio-cultural environment and involve active learning methodologies such as role-play, scenario analysis, and collaborative problem-solving.

### **Implementation Strategies**

To effectively implement a comprehensive training and support strategy for school staff, the following practical steps are recommended:

- **Structured Induction Programs:** New staff should receive induction that introduces them to the school's approach to student well-being, behavioral expectations, and collaboration structures.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Scheduled, cyclical training opportunities should cover areas such as mental health awareness, inclusive education, behavioral de-escalation, trauma-informed practices, and SEL.



- **Mentoring and Coaching:** Peer mentoring systems and instructional coaching focused on behavior support can help teachers refine their practices and address classroom challenges in real time.
- **Use of Diagnostic Tools:** Instruments like the PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (Algozzine et al., 2014) can guide school teams in evaluating the effectiveness of current strategies and prioritizing areas for staff development.
- **Staff Well-being Programs:** Schools should offer access to psychological support, stress management sessions, and team-building activities to strengthen staff morale and resilience.
- **Feedback Loops and Reflective Practice:** Teachers should be involved in evaluating training effectiveness and shaping future learning opportunities. This fosters ownership and ensures relevance.
- **Collaborative Structures:** Time should be allocated for team meetings, inter-professional dialogue, and cross-role collaboration. Such structures reduce isolation and support consistent practice across the school.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The quality of training, development, and support provided to staff is directly linked to the success of school-based mental health and well-being programs. As shown by research from Horner et al. (2010) and supported by WHO and UNESCO (2021), well-prepared and emotionally supported educators are more capable of creating inclusive, safe, and nurturing environments.

Schools must recognize that their most valuable asset is their staff. Investing in professional development, emotional support systems, and collaborative practices not only improves the well-being of educators but also amplifies their capacity to positively impact students. A strategic, structured, and empathetic approach to staff development is essential for achieving a sustainable, whole-school approach to mental health and positive behavior support.

Effective training, development, and support of school staff are foundational for promoting expected behaviors, preventing misconduct, and supporting mental health. A comprehensive and continuous professional development framework—grounded in evidence-based practices and tailored to the diverse needs of schools—empowers educators to foster inclusive and emotionally safe learning environments. As emphasized by Sugai and Simonsen (2012), training should not be viewed as a one-time initiative, but rather as an ongoing, adaptive process that strengthens the school's capacity to serve all learners.



## Part 3 From PERMA to Practice: Adapting SWPBS Elements within the Thriving Schools Framework

The implementation of the Thriving Schools intervention is grounded in the PERMA model, focusing on Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. These five pillars capture the essence of human flourishing and can be applied to both students and teachers to foster resilience, intrinsic motivation, and holistic development.

However, while PERMA defines *what* constitutes well-being, the question of *how* these elements can be consistently implemented at the school level remains. For this reason, the project also draws selectively from the **School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)** framework (Sugai & Horner, 2002). SWPBS does not redefine the conceptual foundation of well-being but offers *practical tools, routines, and systemic supports* that make the application of PERMA sustainable across the whole school. In this sense, SWPBS complements PERMA by providing the “*how*”—the systemic conditions that enable PERMA’s principles to be embedded in daily practice. SWPBS is an evidence-based framework designed to promote positive behaviors through prevention, consistency, and reinforcement (Sugai & Horner, 2006). Within the Thriving Schools Framework, SWPBS is not adopted in its entirety but rather selectively adapted to complement PERMA by providing the following systemic supports:

- **Common philosophy and purpose:** Creating a shared school vision for well-being.
- **Clarifying and teaching expected behaviors:** Establishing routines and explicit lessons.
- **Encouraging positive behavior:** Reinforcing strengths-based actions.
- **Ongoing monitoring and assessment:** Using data to track progress.
- **Professional development:** Supporting teachers in embedding well-being practices.

By drawing on these components, the intervention ensures that the abstract principles of PERMA become daily practices embedded into school routines, policies, and classroom climates.

### 3.1 Adapting School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) Elements for PERMA Implementation

#### 1. Clarifying Expected Behavior

- PERMA link: *Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment*
- Adapting SWPBS, schools can co-create with students a values-based behavior matrix that explicitly reflects PERMA.
  - Example: Expected behaviors could be framed positively around PERMA pillars, such as “*Show kindness and gratitude*” (Relationships), “*Try your best and*



*celebrate progress*" (Accomplishment), or *"Find joy in learning activities"* (Positive Emotions).

## 2. Teaching Expected Behavior

- PERMA link: *Engagement, Relationships*
- SWPBS emphasizes explicit teaching of social behaviors. Within a PERMA context, these lessons can focus on practicing gratitude, active listening, or growth mindset strategies.
  - Example: A weekly "gratitude circle" (Positive Emotions + Relationships) or structured role-play on active constructive responding (Relationships).

## 3. Encouraging Positive Behavior

- PERMA link: *Positive Emotions, Accomplishment*
- Reinforcement strategies from SWPBS can be reframed to highlight PERMA. Instead of simple reward systems, encouragement can focus on celebrating progress, effort, and strengths.
  - Example: Recognition systems where students earn "PERMA points" not for compliance, but for demonstrating perseverance (Accomplishment) or helping a peer (Relationships).

## 4. Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment

- PERMA link: *Engagement, Meaning*
- SWPBS provides structures for data-driven monitoring. In a PERMA-based model, this could include tracking well-being indicators alongside behavior data.
  - Example: Class check-ins using simple PERMA self-assessment scales ("How engaged did you feel today?" "Did you experience something meaningful this week?").

## 5. Training and Staff Development

- PERMA link: *Meaning, Engagement*
- When combined with PERMA, professional development can include strength-based coaching, positive psychology interventions, and strategies for creating classroom climates that foster flourishing.
  - Example: Teacher workshops on integrating character strengths into lesson planning (Engagement + Meaning).



### 3.1.1 Integrative Example of PERMA + SWPBS in Action

Imagine a school introducing the PERMA pillar Positive Emotions. Teachers design activities such as a “What Went Well” *Wall* for students. SWPBS contributes by establishing routines: every Friday, each class dedicates five minutes to this practice, ensuring consistency and sustainability. Expected behaviors (“Celebrate successes,” “Listen respectfully”) are taught and reinforced, while monitoring tools track both participation and students’ reported well-being.

Moreover, consider a school focusing on **Positive Relationships**. The PERMA framework defines the goal: nurturing trust and belonging. SWPBS ensures systematic implementation by:

1. Establishing **behavioral expectations** (“Show empathy,” “Help peers succeed”).
2. Providing **explicit teaching activities** (role-playing constructive communication).
3. **Reinforcing positive interactions** (teachers actively praise and record examples of prosocial acts).
4. **Monitoring progress** (tracking incidents of peer conflicts and improvements in relational climate).

In conclusion, the integration demonstrates how PERMA provides the *vision* of flourishing, while SWPBS ensures the *structures* that make it sustainable. Through this dual approach, schools can create environments where teachers and students experience joy, purpose, belonging, and accomplishment—core outcomes of PERMA—while SWPBS provides the mechanisms to maintain these conditions consistently across the whole school.

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## Annexes

**Note:** Annexes 3, 4, 5, and 6 have been adapted from materials developed during the implementation of the previously funded SWPBS project. These annexes were selected for their alignment with the goals of the Thriving Schools initiative and their proven effectiveness in supporting the structured teaching of expected behaviors and routines in primary education settings.

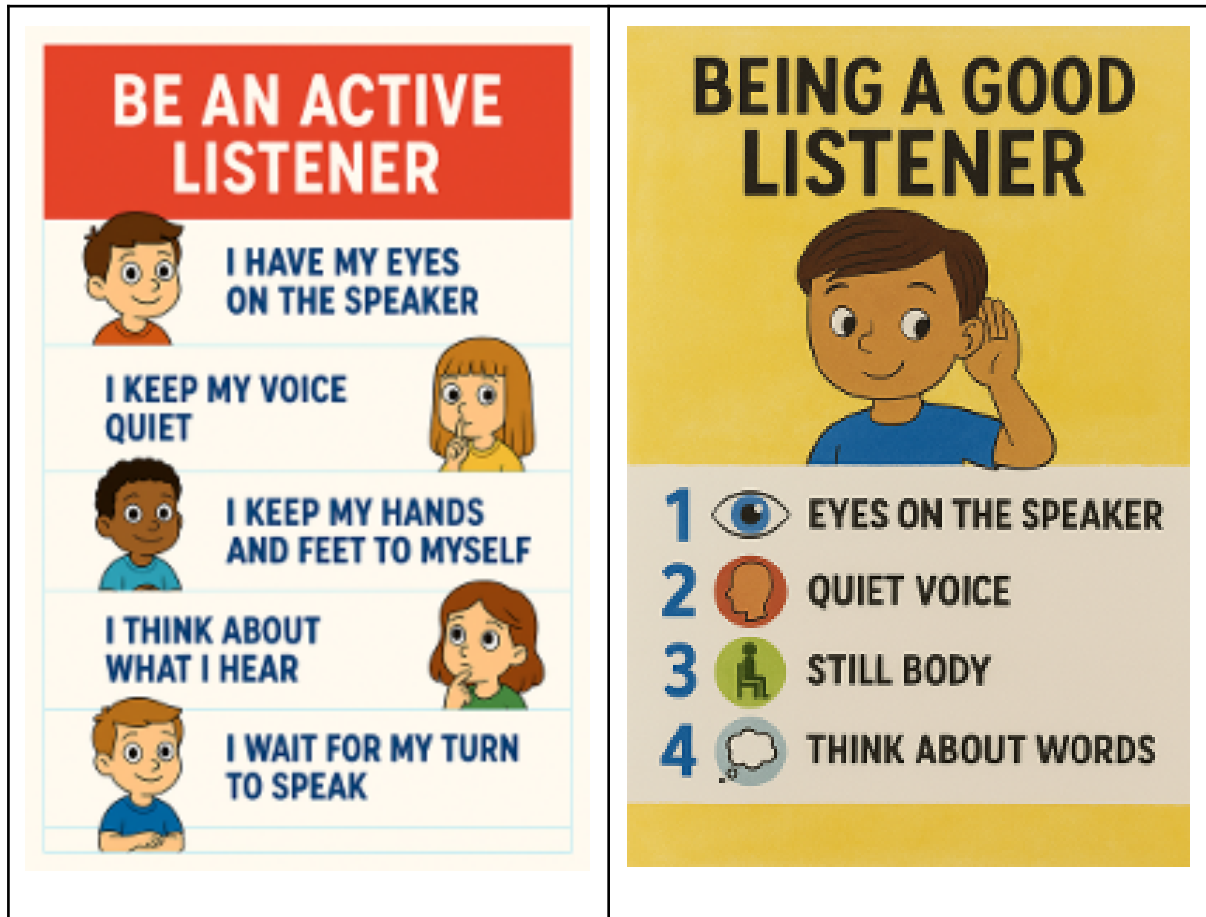
### Annex 1. Sample matrix of program rule and expected behaviours

<b>SCHOOL BEHAVIOR BOARD</b>				
Setting/ Routine	School Expectations			
	Classroom	Stairs	Canteen	Toilets
 <b>Safety</b>	Sit properly	Walk on the right	Keep area clean	Use equipment properly
 <b>Responsibility</b>	Be ready to learn	Stay in line	Wait your turn	Flush the toilet
 <b>Respect</b>	Raise your hand	Hold the door for others	Use polite language	Give others privacy

## Annex 2. Sample Visual Poster – Expected Behavior: Be an Active Listener

**Value:** Respect

**Rule:** Be an Active Listener



**Display Instructions:** This poster should be printed in A3 or larger size, laminated, and displayed near the front of the classroom or in a learning area where group discussions occur. Teachers can refer to the poster during instruction and transitions to reinforce expected behavior. Posters may be co-created with students using drawing, photography, or collage to increase engagement and ownership.

### Annex 3. Lesson plan template (social skill – acquisition phase)

LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS – EXAMPLE (Acquisition phase)	
Course Content	
<b>Value:</b>	<b>Respect</b>
<b>Area:</b>	<b>Classroom</b>
<b>Social Skill (procedure or routine):</b>	<p><b>“I am an active listener”</b></p> <p><b>Goal:</b> The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To <b>name</b> the main steps of the social skill: “I am an active listener” in the classroom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. I watch the person who is speaking</li> <li>ii. I keep my mouth shut</li> <li>iii. I keep my feet and hands to myself</li> <li>iv. I think what the other person says</li> <li>v. I wait for my turn to speak</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>To <b>perform</b> the basic step of the social skill</p>
<b>Material:</b>	PowerPoint presentation, active response cards (optional) [card with the green G, card with the red X]
<b>Assessment:</b>	The teacher applies <i>generalisation</i> strategies to encourage the maintenance of the skill <u>during all day</u> in different school environments with different people and in different teaching periods.
<b>Teaching duration:</b>	40 minutes
Teaching	
<b>Reflection:</b> (I mention the social skill to the student)	I name the rule to the students: “Today we will learn how to be active listeners during a lesson”

<p><b>Purpose and Necessity:</b> <i>(I discuss with students the reasoning and social usefulness of the skill)</i></p>	<p>I discuss with students the reasoning and social usefulness of the skill.</p> <p>“Everyone at school cares about you and wants you to advance your learning. For this reason, we want you to listen carefully during the lesson, so you can understand as much as possible what your teachers and classmates say”.</p> <p>“When we are active listeners, we show <u>Respect</u> in the class. What do you think we gain if we are active listeners in the class?”</p> <p>“What do we lose when we are not active listeners in the class?”</p> <p>I provide immediate and specific positive feedback to the answers of students.</p>
<p><b>Modelling:</b> <i>(I show the steps via teaching aids e.g., poster and in practice)</i></p>	<p><u>1.</u> PRESENT the steps of the rules through a PowerPoint presentation</p> <p>The presentation includes the steps to be active listeners in a simple and comprehensible way.</p> <p><u>2.</u> DISCUSS with students about examples and non-examples of desired behaviour</p> <p>I provide immediate and specific positive feedback to the answers of students.</p>
	<p><u>3.</u> I present two short videos (an example and a non-example of the rule) for comprehension/recognition of the rule’s steps. I ask the students to recognize what the child did in each scenario.</p> <p>In the ‘good example’ scenario, we ask students to identify and report the steps of the desired behaviour. In the ‘non-example’ scenario, students report the behavioural problems and teacher guides them to identify which step was not taken correctly and what the child should do.</p> <p><u>4.</u> I PERFORM the steps of the rule by <u>explaining each step out loud</u> as students watch. That is, I imitate the student SHOWING and ANNOUNCING what I do.</p> <p><u>5.</u> WE PRACTICE the steps of the rule. Students apply the behavioural steps. The teacher shows the non-example(s) and children correct him/her.</p> <p>I provide immediate and specific positive feedback to the answers of students.</p>

<p><b>Independent Practice:</b> <i>(More scenarios are presented. Role playing between students and students-teacher)</i></p>	<p>I summarise the steps of the desired behaviour with students.</p> <p><b>“Today we have learnt how to show respect during the lesson, by listening to the person who speaks. Let's read the steps you need to take in order to be active listeners”</b> (we present the slide of the presentation to the students and we all read it together). <u>Today, we will look into these steps.</u></p>	
<p><b>Generalisation and maintenance:</b> <i>(provide opportunities throughout the day to retain skills through reminders, active supervision and positive feedback)</i></p>	<p><b>Reminders</b> <i>(I predict which activity children will find difficult to apply and I will remind them of the steps)</i></p>	<p>“Students, in 5 minutes we will go to the theatre to listen to the Principal. I remind you what it means to be an active listener”.</p> <p>As I remind children of the rule, I can show the teaching aid (poster) that presents the behavioural steps.</p>
	<p><b>Active Supervision</b> <i>(after giving a reminder during the lesson, I move between children, hear and observe carefully, hold eye contact and interact positively with them)</i></p>	<p>As soon as the instructions are given to the children, the teacher monitors, looks closely at how the children move, and gives positive and immediate feedback.</p>
	<p><b>Feedback</b> <i>(I provide positive specific feedback, verbal and non-verbal. When children make mistakes, I provide immediate corrective feedback)</i></p>	<p>"Thank you Victor for being an active listener to your team. As your classmate was talking, you had your voice at 0. That shows respect. "</p> <p>“Peter, I'm glad you are an active listener in the lesson. You waited for the instructions and then you answered the questions. That's how you show respect. "</p> <p>The teacher provides non-verbal feedback such as a tap on the back, a gesture or a smile to the child.</p>

**Re-teaching:**

*(I provide additional opportunities to re-teach the skill throughout the day. I SHOW and ask to PRACTICE through reminders, active supervision and positive feedback)*

- I ask the children to give me examples of how to be an active listener in the classroom.
- I introduce 2-3 example scenarios to students and do role playing. The non- examples are made by the teacher and gives students the opportunity to practice the desired behaviour by correcting the non-example.

I mention cases of other students who performed this behaviour and how it helped them to achieve a positive result (e.g. George was an active listener when the teacher read the text during the lesson of Greek).

### Annex 4. Lesson Plan template (social skill – maintenance phase)

LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS – EXAMPLE (Maintenance phase)		
Course Content		
<b>Value:</b>		
<b>Area:</b>		
<b>Social Skill (procedure or routine):</b>	<u>Goal:</u> The student to perform the basic steps of the social skill.	
<b>Assessment:</b>	Teacher applies generalization strategies to encourage the maintenance of the skill <u>during the day</u> at different school areas with different persons and at different teaching periods.	
<b>Teaching duration:</b>	10-15 minutes	
Teaching		
<b>Reflection:</b> <i>(I mention the social skill to the student)</i>		
<b>Modelling:</b> <i>(I show the steps via teaching aids e.g., poster and in practice)</i>		
<b>Practice:</b> <i>(I present 3-4 scenarios of examples and non-examples via videos and in practice. <b>Inappropriate behaviours are always performed by the teacher and corrected by students.</b>)</i>		
<b>Generalization and maintenance:</b> <i>(I provide opportunities during the day to encourage the maintenance of the skill)</i>	<b>Reminders</b> <i>(I try to anticipate in which activity is difficult for the students to apply the social skill and I remind its steps)</i>	

	<p><b>Active Supervision</b> <i>(After giving a reminder during the lesson, I move between them, I hear and observe carefully, I hold eye contact and positively interact with them)</i></p>	
	<p><b>Feedback</b> <i>(I provide positive specific feedback, verbal and non-verbal. When children make mistakes, I provide immediate corrective feedback)</i></p>	
<p><b>Re-teaching:</b> <i>(I provide additional opportunities to re-teach the skill throughout the day. I SHOW and ask to PRACTICE through reminders, active supervision and positive feedback)</i></p>		

## Annex 5. Lesson Plan (Routine)

LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING ROUTINES – EXAMPLE (Acquisition phase)	
<b>Routine:</b>	Attention signal
<b>Routine steps:</b>  (Accountable, Observable behaviours)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher gives the signal: clap twice and raise the hand up</li> <li>2. I stop what I do</li> <li>3. I keep my hands and feet to myself</li> <li>4. I keep my voice volume to level 0</li> <li>5. I keep my eyes to the teacher</li> </ol>
Teaching course	What I say and do
<b>1. Present</b> (I say to students how to perform)	Teacher presents the rule to the students. “When you listen claps and see my hand risen up, you should stop anything you do and look at me keeping you voice to level 0”
<b>2. Show</b> (I show to the students what they need to do)	Teacher shows the attention signal to students. “I clap twice and then I raise my hand up. You stop what you do and immediately sit at your chair. When you do so, you raise your hand up for me to realize you are ready.”
<b>3. Guided practice:</b> (I show examples and non-examples. Students correct the mistaken behaviour. I give specific positive feedback)	<p>Teacher asks from students: “Turn your backs and make groups to work. When I give the attention signal you do what we learned.”</p> <p>Students do what they learned. Then teacher shows non-examples and asks students for corrective feedback.</p> <p>Teachers provide specific positive feedback.</p>

<p><b>4. Repeat</b> (I repeat the steps of the routine)</p>	<p>Teacher repeats the attention signal various times to be clearly understood.</p> <p>Repetition is made when they sit on their personal desks, as well as working in teams.</p>
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## Annex 6. Teaching Schedule

Social Skills Teaching Calendar		
Academic year:		
School:		
Social skill #1		
Class	Date	Teacher
e.g. A1		
e.g. B1		
e.g. C1		
e.g. D1		
Social skill #2		
Class	Date	Teacher
Routine #1		
Class	Date	Teacher



<b>Social skill #3</b>		
<b>Class</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Teacher</b>



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