

# ALLiES eGuide

## Experiences of Smiley

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*“Attention to the child’s wellbeing is one of the central nodes of the model with which we have experimented. To know how the child experiences her/his stay in the school and which emotions accompany her/his day, a survey grid has been prepared that offers the child a choice between four possible moods, corresponding to four emotions: happiness, sadness, anger and tranquility. The children indicate their state of mind at the beginning and end of the school day; the teachers also indicate their state of mind on the grid, both in the morning and in the afternoon.*

*In the first weeks of school it was necessary for the teacher to invite the children one by one to the survey grid hung in the classroom to indicate their Smiley choice. Now the children manage it independently in the morning: after taking off their jackets and coats, they approach the survey grid and put a cross on the Smiley that best represents their state of mind; the same happens in the afternoon before preparing to go home.*

*The presence of a survey grid hung in the classroom where the teacher can get, with a quick look, a general idea of the students’ mood is definitely a good starting point to interact with them when they are welcomed. Many students, for example, spontaneously declare their state of mind, saying they are happy or sad, and they even express their reasons. In this way they prove to have acquired the ability to identify and name their emotions.*

*Most of the children showed the ability to identify happiness, anger and sadness, but at the beginning they were not able to recognize the “tranquil” or “normal” emotions. When talking to the children, the teachers discovered that many of them claimed to be sad, but proved to confuse sadness with fatigue. They came to a more complex level of awareness about the difference between being tired and being sad only later, establishing a causal link: “I’m sad because I’m tired”. The function of the ‘paper’ Smiley has a double value: one for immediate use directly by the teacher in the classroom when the child expresses her/his mood, and one for subsequent use when the teachers collect monthly data about each child’s choices.*

*Systematic tabulation of Smiley data allowed teachers to identify three particular students experiencing difficulty and to activate a series of actions aimed to identify the source of unease for these children: a checklist, interview with the psychologist and a talk with the parents. This is certainly one of the strong points of the model: it allows teachers to identify students in uncomfortable situations earlier.*

*The monthly Smiley data tabulation was also given to the parents during a special school/family interview. The parents were eager to know this aspect of their children’s lives and happy to exchange views with teachers concerning the wellbeing of their child, not just on aspects related to her/his learning.*

*The Smiley trends thus provide an opportunity to give the parents and teachers a better idea of the child’s mindset, which has resulted in one-to-one exchange of valuable information. In the parents’ opinion, an awareness is taking shape that a good relationship within the group is a prerequisite for good learning: good relations enable good learning.*