



ALLiES eGuide

Wizard School

The Wizard School is an innovation developed in Allies with the Ritaharju Child Welfare Team. The idea is that a multi-professional CWT team not only discusses the problems of individual children once a week, but is also involved in everyday practices to work with children who need extra support in learning and growing to enhance their wellbeing. A wizard school is meant for children who need support in social and emotional skills.

Methods used in this activity are a combination of solution-based therapy (a special method called "Muksuoppi" in Finnish), learning social and emotional skills (materials such as Step by step, "Askeleittain" in Finnish, can be used) and relaxation.

The group of children (4-6) is chosen together with teachers, parents and the CWT from among the 6–8-year-olds. A special skill that each individual child will develop in the wizard school is chosen with help of a DVD program in which 'the children's wizard Bam' ('Muksuvelho Bam') leads the child to select the skill s/he wants to develop and also to choose the persons who might be her/his supporters for learning that skill. After that, the whole group meets once a week during the semester.

The supervisors in the wizard school can be members of the CWT, like the special teacher and school counselor. It is a good idea that supervisors wear wizard hats which stimulates the children's motivation and interest in the group meetings. It is important that enough adults are available for the group to ensure that each individual can have sufficient support. With children needing support in social and emotional skills, one adult cannot supervise the whole group effectively. The six children and/or adults that each child has chosen as her/his supporters will encourage the child in the everyday life of school/preschool and/or at home every time s/he tries to practice the skill s/he is learning. They can also remind the child with a special gesture or 'secret word' about practicing the skill, if they see a need to do so. Below is an example of a lesson at the wizard school.



Example: lesson 1

Theme: Recognizing feelings

Materials: Place cards; Step by step material (or something similar); things for relaxation: Strauss Waltz CD, playing cards, brushes, balls, etc.; balloons, flour and funnel if you make the relaxation balloon; structure cards (picto)

1. Welcome

Mark a place for each child in a circle on the floor. Welcome each child by her/his name, with a handshake and a good morning greeting. Use the structure cards to show how the lesson will proceed:

- welcome
- learning of wizard skills
- relaxation

2. Learning of Wizard Skills

Rules: ask for children's thoughts on how to make conversation in a group smooth and easy for everyone. Aim to focus on the following points:

- stay in place when it's time for conversation
- ask for permission to speak by raising your hand
- look at the person who is talking
- speak in a friendly manner to others

Skill to practice: tell the children that each child has chosen a skill that s/he is going to practice. The idea is that you are each other's supporters in learning that skill. There can be supporters outside the group as well; family members, teacher, friends, etc. Ask each child about the skill s/he is going to practice and also how the child wants the others to show support for her/him when s/he proceeds in practicing. Also ask them how they want to be reminded if they forget to practice the skill.

Recognizing feelings: show three basic feelings by acting or by using cards: joy, sorrow and anger, and ask the children to name them and to show each other a glad, sad and mad face. Discuss with the children:

- which of these feelings feel good and which feel bad?
- in which part of your body do YOU sense the feelings? In your stomach? In your heart?
- All feelings are valuable and we have to learn ways how to express them, but without harming others - how would you be able to express your feeling of anger to another person?
 - for instance by saying: That feels bad to me, please stop it! instead of just saying, for instance, 'You are stupid'.
 - If you have 'Step by step' materials, use the 'Recognizing feelings' cards



3. Relaxation

- If you have time, let the children make relaxation balloons for themselves: fill the balloon with flour. The flour balloon can be used for relaxation by massaging another child's back with it or by simply squeezing it in hand.
- "Let's find joy!" Dance with children to a Strauss waltz!
- Ask the children to lie down on the floor and listen to the music. Brush or stroke children's back with a flour balloon, playing car, ball, brush or hand.

