



ALLiES eGuide

Good Practices

Pal classes

Pal classes are scenarios in which social and emotional skills are practiced. The lessons are planned together with a bigger group of staff members (in our case 10-20). Each pair of teachers takes a turn being in charge of planning and producing the material, which is produced by the group and shared between everyone. The same lesson is taught in all the child groups.

The structure of each lesson is the following:

- A common greeting, noticing and acknowledging children who are absent
- Handling of the theme in question
- Relaxation or 'An angel walk' (this means that the children walk in pairs, while the child in front has his or her eyes shut and the child walking behind provides guidance with a gentle touch on the shoulders)

One aim of the 'Pal classes' is to introduce and teach something of the social or emotional skill that is topical in the ongoing period, which can also be practiced and deepened in the own group during the week. Getting familiar with adults and other children of different ages in a shared environment increases community and a safe ethos in the cell. The smaller children commented that after becoming familiar with the older pupils, they did not feel timid or unsafe in everyday situations in common space. At the same time, this was one concrete form for multiprofessional collaboration among the staff, and the children became familiar with the other adults of the cell as well. Special attention should be paid to the grouping of the children. They can be divided into different size groups; according to age (children of age 6, 7, and 8 in each group); level of social and emotional skills as well as according to temperament and learning style.

Music box

The Music Box moments are designed to deepen community in the school. A Music Box moment begins by organizing the children into one big circle or spiral while listening to live music played on the guitar, drums and/or piano. Children and adults sing and play 3-4 songs, with the same opening and closing songs every time, while the other two are changed once a month. In addition, some drama play or performance by a child group can be included in the Music Box moment. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to join these communal Music Box moments.



Pal moment

Pal moments are lessons that are organized once a week. In Pal moments, interventions are developed for problematic everyday situations. When any social problem arises within a child group, adults write down or find a short story or drama play that centers around the basis of that situation, in a discreet manner so that the situation and parties to it are not mentioned in the story. Examples of these 'Pal moments' can be found in following link in Finnish: (<http://www.oulu.fi/naistutkimus/projektit/allies/materiaalit.htm>). The skill that is being dealt with in each moment, could be assigned as a task for the week that the children are encouraged to practice in everyday situations.

Magic Corner

In the class room, the Magic Corner is a soft and cosy corner that is very simply furnished using curtains, some pillows and a carpet. In the Magic Corner, an individual child can come in and stay for about ten minutes. We have had very good experiences with this bound and determined space where children can be alone, playing with games they find there.

This particular space can be customized by each child who can bring there what s/he likes. However, each child has to agree that the other classmates can play with or observe what s/he brought there. Children can come in this space when they want by asking the teacher for permission, except during the structured activities. When a child comes in the Magic Corner the teacher marks her/his entrance on a



Immediately children appreciated the opportunity to use this place wholly created for them. At first they paused over it just to explore it, then they told about it as a happy experience; afterward some children brought there some books, games and drawings there. We have several children to whom The Magic Corner is a place to stop and relax. Some of them leave their drawings there, or objects that represent significant aspects of their personal history. So the teacher gets an opportunity to know the children better, because this space is built directly by them, speaks their language and shows, even through small objects, their inner world. The teachers noted that the more restless and aggressive students especially ask to join this exclusive and protected space. Some of them come to the Magic Corner several times a day. Once they leave, they resume working with the rest of the classmates with a more relaxed attitude. Now the children learnt to write spontaneously and even their first written words began to appear on the drawing papers in the Magic Corner. The Magic Corner is a prime example of the model. It turned out to be a space really enjoyed by children; it has a direct positive effect on the well-being of the group and of each child. The teachers have been able to point out this beneficial effect of the Magic Corner since its first introduction.

The Pal room

The 'Pal Room' is a space in which two children can play together with someone they want to know better. Children who have practiced a skill to be decent friends can have permission to play in the 'Pal Room'. Usually it is the teacher who appoints the pairs, in order to offer children the chance to make friends with different classmates, but on some occasions children might also choose the pairs themselves.





Yoga

Children's
the pilot:

yoga was piloted in one of our pilot schools. Here are some experiences of



The children's yoga has been an amazing experience. At first the teachers were a little uncertain, as they had not had any time to practice before the Allies project started. We decided to begin with by focusing on just a few exercises. So in the beginning we did not have actual yoga times with relaxing music, but did a little yoga almost every day. Yoga for children is mostly about playing animals.

When we were getting good at these first yoga animals we started to have actual yoga session once a week for each group, with varying. As well as doing yoga once a week, we sometimes do exercises when the whole class of two groups is together. When we do this with the whole class together, we sometimes get the feeling of that the whole yoga session has been a great success. So the teachers find that yoga sometimes works as a stress-reliever.

There is a lot of interest in children's yoga in the school and we are currently having someone trained as a teacher's trainer in children's yoga. We have also hired a staff member who has special education as a children's yoga teacher. Those two will be in charge of developing children's yoga further for our school.