

PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Syllabus for Primary Schools

RATIONALE

THE PERSONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

For Primary Schools

Mission Statement

“Personal and Social Development aims at empowering individuals to develop skills that enhance their well being, by identifying and developing their potential, thus enabling them to participate effectively in their social environment.”¹

Rationale

Together with promoting children’s spiritual, moral , social and cultural development, a school curriculum should prepare all children for all opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life (Mason, H. 2001). PSD involves providing children with skills and processes involved in becoming happy and fulfilled individuals in a healthy and supportive environment.

Through their socialisation process, children should begin to take more responsibility for their behaviour. According to Kohlberg (1979), children younger than nine years of age are in the Pre-conventional level of moral reasoning. This stage describes children as wanting to abide with rules as a means of avoiding punishment. Thus they can begin to understand that there are consequences to behaviour (Clarke-Stewart, A. 1985). Therefore, for effective PSD methodology to take place, information and skills development pertaining to behaviour management should start at this stage. It is with this in mind that establishing Ground Rules is of the utmost importance when developing a PSD syllabus. This will also help to cater for the child’s need for stability (Erikson, 1963). Moreover, children at this stage, should be made aware how to take responsibility for their own behaviour, their immediate environment and the needs of others.

¹ Abela, G., Azzopardi. A., Camilleri. K., Ciantar, M., Zammit Pulo, S., & Vancell, J. (2001). *Developmental Programme for P.S.D. Teachers*. Unpublished: Malta

Children in their early years at school, embark on a journey whereby they begin to learn about themselves as developing individuals. For this reason, the first part of this syllabus reflects this. Topics are centred around the self and the skills taught pertain to the necessary tools required for this developmental stage. These topics include amongst others – Being special, Self-esteem, and What makes Me Special. In this way children are acquainted with skills pertaining to the self.

At this stage, children should also be developing a feelings vocabulary. They can now be taught how to feel positive about themselves, learn to recognise what they have achieved and how to celebrate this achievement (Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B., 1969). This feeling of self-worth is crucial for the development of a healthy life-style. Moreover, once this process has been started, they can be encouraged to identify other people's feelings and needs. They will also be able to respond to them accordingly.

Another basic milestone that children need to overcome is that of acquiring necessary skills to build healthy and satisfying relationships. At this stage, children's primary socialisation process moves to secondary socialisation through school and other extra-curricular activities engaged in by the child. Consequently, skills pertaining to forming relationships both with peers and adults, need to be developed. Therefore, topics such as – Friends, The Family, Sharing, Trust need to be covered. At this stage, it is important that children also develop the necessary skills to keep themselves safe and free from danger. It is for this reason that skills pertaining to forming relationships need to be followed by skills about safety issues. With this in mind topics such as Identifying Danger, Personal Details and Whom To Give Them To, and Safety at Leisure have been included.

Inter-linked with Safety is the idea of Healthy Living. At this stage children start to take up some responsibility for developing a healthy life-style. Furthermore, the cultural context is of the utmost importance in the planning and implementation of topics. Therefore culture must be given due consideration when preparing lessons.

Other social skills are imparted through the PSD methodology itself. Skills such as listening, turn-taking, responding, resolving simple moral dilemmas, and dealing with feelings of injustice, are developed. Primary PSD specialists should be also be aware of Thinking Tools, being delivered by Thinking Skills teachers. As with all other primary subjects, the PSD specialist should apply and integrate Thinking Tools into the PSD methodology as a way of reinforcing the tools.

According to the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), children mimic behaviour and thus form their own morality on the basis of their culture and society (Clarke-Stewart, 1985). Through modelling by the PSD Specialist, a number of skills are demonstrated. This puts into

the limelight the role of the PSD specialist, who, through his/her behaviour introduces basic skills, especially those related to Listening, Turn-taking and Empathy.

Children should also try to understand basic political processes that shape their daily lives. The PSD Syllabus provides activities where children can learn skills about democratic decision making and deciding on how to support others.

As the children grow older, they embark on a new journey, whereby they are seeing themselves as changing and as growing individuals. They can begin to explore social and interpersonal issues such as independence, self-confidence and maturity. It is essential that at this stage children consolidate ideas and skills pertaining to relationships. The children's relationship building process is analogous to the concentric circles formed when a stone is thrown into a pond. At pre-school level, they only have the family as their sole point of reference. Through primary school, another circle is formed. The socialisation process then continues to grow so that during the late primary years, their circle of socialisation is expanding concentrically. Therefore, children need to be equipped with the right skills to anticipate possible needs. In PSD this will be done by assessing the future developmental needs of children and equipping them with the necessary skills.

It is essential that children during the late primary years begin to understand more about the effects of their own choices and behaviour on local, national and global issues. Therefore it is of utter importance that PSD specialists help students develop skills related to these themes. During the late primary years, children are faced with major transitions in their lives, namely puberty and transition to secondary school. Children require skills that will help them navigate through these transitions, in a smooth way. Apart from information on how to deal with changes that occur during puberty and the transition to secondary school, children should be given skills on how to deal with transitions as a component of every day life. Linked specifically to this are basic skills on how to make decisions, which will influence the children's future. Consolidation and reinforcement are important for an appropriate accumulation of knowledge, together with development of skills and abilities. This is why at the end of each year through closing sessions and throughout the whole syllabus, topics and objectives are reviewed from time to time. In this way children are given the possibility to acquire new skills and compare them to those already assimilated, thus building a strong foundation for new competencies.

References:

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General Aims

Years 1 – 3

Group Building:

Children need to belong and feel accepted. Consequently at the beginning of each year a set of four lessons has been allotted to cater for this need. It is of the utmost importance, in PSD, more than in any other subject, for children to know themselves and those around them.

Moreover this contributes to the development of a positive and healthy atmosphere in the group. Therefore, through these lessons, children are given the opportunity to get to know each other and get acquainted with their teacher, with the aim of also building a sense of safety, care and respect towards each other, their class and school.

Myself:

For children to grow into healthy individuals they need to develop a positive sense of self. At this early stage of development, through PSD lessons, this is achieved by emphasising the importance of knowing ‘Who I Am’ and appreciating special qualities and achievements. A particular focus is also placed on identifying feelings and to the how, when, who and what is related to them. Through this theme, children are given an opportunity to develop skills related to communication of self and communication when relating with others.

Relationships:

This theme focuses on empowering individuals to recognise and understand other people’s feelings and opinions. Throughout these lessons the child comes to terms with the concept of acceptance and recognising his/her impact on significant others. Special consideration is also given to the transmission of particular lifeskills, such as assertiveness and listening skills. These enable the child to build healthy relationships, essential for his/her development. Similarly the issues of responsibility in dealing with others is also a recurrent topic in this specific theme.

Health and Safety:

Instilling into individuals a sense of health and safety from a very young age is crucial. This is achieved through a special focus on children's everyday life experiences and environment. Particular importance is given to issues related to safe people and safe places, together with the importance of personal hygiene and healthy eating. Moreover, a situation where safety is at times taken for granted, together with the possibility for personal harm, is also considered. Consequently significant emphasis is placed on considering safety at home, the street and play.

Closure:

The final four lessons of the year are dedicated to closure. The aim here is to reinforce those lifeskills children are exposed to during the year and allow them to reflect on their experiences and consider any changes they have gone through. Moreover, considering that self-reflection is recognised as one of the main components for PSD, particular attention should also be placed on feelings. Finally closure should also help to establish a healthy parting atmosphere for the group.

Group Building:

At the beginning of each year a set of four lessons are being allotted for children to get to know each other better, thus catering for their need to belong and feel accepted. From this year children will also start to feel the pressure associated with streaming and subsequently competition. Dealing effectively with these issues at the beginning of the year will contribute to the development of a positive and healthy atmosphere in the group. Therefore through these lessons children are given the opportunity to get to know each other and get acquainted with their teacher, with the aim of also building a sense of safety, care and respect towards each other, their class and school.

Citizenship:

The citizenship themes developed over the three years emphasise the children's developing sense of community. Key issues, which children are starting to notice about the world around them are discussed. Appreciating differences and what makes individuals unique are addressed. Through this awareness and recognition, the children can build on their common strengths so as to be able to co-operate productively in a team.

Leadership within a group and the roles people in authority have are subsequently explored. A strong emphasis is placed on the children duties within society. Such duties are related to respecting rules, their voting rights and the environment.

Growing Up:

Children are now at an age of rapid physical development and a growing consciousness of the way they are changing. This theme aims at exploring the physical, emotional, and sexual changes that they are experiencing or will be experiencing shortly. Furthermore, children are becoming aware of the different ways in which society treats males and females and gender expectations placed on them. Therefore, discussing gender equality from the point of view of the children is crucial at this point. Moreover, by linking Love with Having Babies, issues of intimate relationships and pregnancy are tackled in a safe and healthy environment. In turn thus, allows a smooth link with Children's Rights and Personal Safety directly linked to abuse.

Practical Skills:

This theme addresses basic living skills which are essential to students' life. The starting point is problem solving where children have the opportunity of identifying various problems and the skills required for solving them.

Decision Making tackles the choices that children make and how these effect them. This is followed by responsibility for their learning and how to take decisions related to their study environment and time management.

The concept of transitions is subsequently explored before moving on to the final module dedicated to closure. Transitions and change are linked to positive and negative feelings, and their management.

Closure:

The final four lessons of the year are dedicated to closure. The aim here is to reinforce those lifeskills children were exposed to during the year and allow them to reflect on their experiences and consider any changes they have some through. Moreover, considering that self-reflection is recognised to be one of the main components of PSD, particular attention should also be placed on feelings. Finally closure should help to establish a healthy parting atmosphere for the group.

General Aims

Year 7

Group Building:

Children need to belong and feel accepted. Consequently at the beginning of each year a set of four lessons has been allotted to cater for this need. It is of the utmost importance, in PSD, more than in any other subject, for children to know themselves and those around them. Moreover this contributes to the development of a positive and healthy atmosphere in the group. Therefore through these lessons children are given the opportunity to get to know each other and get acquainted with their teacher. Greater consideration will be given to this issue in those classes where children are not acquainted with each other. Furthermore, here children will be able to work on skills related to teamwork and co-operation.

Self:

For children to grow into healthy individuals they need to develop a positive sense of self. At this stage of development, through PSD lessons this is achieved by emphasising the importance of appreciating special qualities and abilities. A particular focus is also placed on expressing feelings and on the importance of being in touch with one self. Through this theme, children are given an opportunity to develop skills related to dealing with negative emotions and their feelings as year seven children. Special emphasis will be given to the issues of self-esteem and positive self-image. This is particularly important in light of the children's perception of being "failures."

Practical Skills:

This theme addresses basic living skills that are essential to children's life. Learning styles are the starting point, as these help children identify skills, which will prepare and assist them in their forthcoming exam period. These skills are further reinforced through the identification of various study methods, time management skills, and stress management techniques.

Relationships and Citizenship:

This theme focuses on empowering individuals to recognise and understand other people's feelings and opinions. Throughout these lessons the child comes to terms with the concept of acceptance and recognising his/her impact on significant others. Special consideration is also given to the transmission of particular lifeskills, such as assertiveness and conflict management skills. These enable the individual to build healthy relationships, essential for their development as an important member in the community within specific social groups. Similarly the issues of responsibility in dealing with others is also be a recurrent topic in this specific theme.

Growing Up:

Related to growing up, the starting point of this theme is gender, that is exploring one's gender identity and what influences one's way of thinking. As children have now reached puberty, their feelings and mood changes are explored with ways being identified as to how to manage these feelings. The physical and sexual changes are tackled in the last lesson, with emphasis being placed on personal hygiene.

Safety:

As already stated, instilling into individuals a sense of health and safety is crucial. This is achieved through a special focus on children's everyday life experiences and environment. Once again particular importance is given to issues related to safe people and safe places together with identifying ways of how to take care of themselves. Moreover, situations where safety is at times taken for granted, together with the possibility for personal harm, is also considered. Consequently, significant emphasis is placed on increasing awareness of the consequences related to dangerous play and ways of reducing these dangers.

Closure:

The final two lessons of the year are dedicated to closure. The aim here is to reinforce those lifeskills students were exposed to during the year and allow them to reflect on their experiences and consider any changes they went through. Moreover, considering that self-reflection is recognised as one of the main components for PSD, particular attention should also be placed on feelings. Finally closure should also help to establish a healthy parting atmosphere for the group.