

**Editorial Note**

Dear PSCD teachers,

Welcome to the second PSCD Newsletter for this year.

We cannot but congratulate and thank all those who have shared good practice by sending in articles for this edition.

In spite of the COVID safety measures in place, so many of you continued with energy and enthusiasm and went that one extra mile to create the activities and initiatives that one can read about in this edition of the PSCD Newsletter.

The primary PSCD teachers, in particular, had another very challenging year, due to the replacements they had to support the schools with. From our end, to support, as per their own suggestion, we prepared a short clip, filmed, edited and produced thanks to Mr John Attard EO at Drama Unit. This clip has been produced to support PSCD teachers when communicating with parents/carers before tackling the topic of Sexuality and Relationship Education in Years 4-6. One can watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMEchQsMY3w&t=112s

Those primary PSCD teachers who also requested Always packs for their Year 5/6 female students had these delivered to their schools. We also took care of distributing BSO and SRE workbooks (available on students’ tablets) where we had hard copies still available.

In the case of secondary, Years 8 and 10 PSCD teachers are being given Be Smart Online Resources, in line with the PSCD syllabus, and posters to display in class. Their distribution will continue next scholastic year. Year 10 PSCD teachers were also given leaflets re correct condom use for distribution to their pupils, thanks to the Health Promotion Unit.

Let us hope that next scholastic year will see PSCD lessons again on a regular basis in Primary and with PSCD methodology in place in all Years, with everyone sitting in a circle.

Thanks to all for your efforts in favour of the pupils. Enjoy the summer.

Stephen Camilleri and Dunstan Hamilton
EOs PSCD
Black Gold: So called because Compost, the mixture of decayed organic matter, is valuable as a nutrient-rich soil additive.

Instead of throwing organic waste in the normal school bin, why not think of making your own Black Gold (Compost)? Our school has invested in two compost bins in which garden organic waste and some other organic wastes are being collected and gathered from the Home Economics rooms and other places around the school and placed in our school garden compost bin.

What To Compost:

Fruit and vegetable peels, eggshells, coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, nut shells, shredded newspaper, cardboard, yard trimmings, grass clippings, houseplants, hay and straw, leaves, sawdust.

What Not to Compost and Why:

• Black walnut tree leaves or twigs—Releases substances that might be harmful to plants

• Coal or charcoal ash- Might contain substances harmful to plants

• Dairy products (e.g., butter, milk, sour cream, yogurt) and eggs*- Create odour problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies

• Diseased or insect-ridden plants - Diseases or insects might survive and be transferred back to other plants
• Fats, grease, lard, or oils* - Create odour problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies

• Meat or fish bones and scraps* - Create odour problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies

• Pet wastes (e.g., dog or cat faeces, soiled cat litter)* - Might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens, and viruses harmful to humans

• Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides - Might kill beneficial composting organisms

Benefits of Composting

• Enriches soil, helping retain moisture and suppress plant diseases and pests. Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.

• Encourages the production of beneficial bacteria and fungi that break down organic matter to create humus, a rich nutrient-filled material.

• Reduces methane emissions from landfills and lowers your carbon footprint
Posters for Peace - an activity organised by the PSCD Department, as part of the St. Benedict College Community Campaign in Aid of Malta for Ukraine.

PSCD teachers delivered sessions about the current situation in Ukraine. Students then discussed the impact it is having on the whole world. Many students felt confused, anxious, angry and uncertain, even about the immediate. At the same time they felt that they should really be pro-active and help those who are suffering.

As part of the activities organised at school, students designed posters portraying messages that promote peace, both during PSCD lessons and at home. These posters were displayed in the main school foyer throughout the whole school campaign.
Caring for animals, looking out for strays, thinking of sick and vulnerable animals is not part of the syllabus which we cover at GEM16+. However, empathy, concern for others and looking out for those less fortunate than us are all topics which indirectly, but often, come up during lessons with my young adult students. I believe these altruistic traits make us more complete as individuals, especially currently where technology often distracts us from the world around us. Nowadays, people tend to fall into the trap of focusing too much on the virtual world behind the screens which they all carry inside their pockets. I often encourage my students to look away from their screens and try to focus more on the world around them.

At the beginning of this scholastic year my students and I decided to start collecting copper coins inside a jar. I told them that no matter how much or how little we collect, we would donate it towards a good cause. Some students mentioned a page they follow on Instagram ‘kittyguardiansmalta’ and on Facebook ‘Kitty Guardians for Strays’. I spoke to the Head of GEM16+ Mr. Aquilina and the Senior Management Team in order to get their approval. They suggested I set up a small committee of students to help organise the collection. I had Michea Maria Zammit and Kayleigh Bird keeping count of the money we collected. I thought that I would end up collecting something under a tenner, but the generosity of our students was far greater than I anticipated, and we ended up collecting close to 70 euro in coins. When some students started turning up with cans of soft cat food and little bags of dry food and cat treats, Thomas John Meli and Shelomi Galea were put in charge of organising and keeping a record of the food donations. Before I knew it, we had filled a large box with food to donate to Ms. Miriam Borg Debrincat - the founder of Kitty Guardians for Strays. Apart from the students some members of staff also donated towards the cause.
This activity ended up teaching me a lesson and what I learnt came as a bit of a twist. Whilst I was telling students that technology often alienates us from the world around us, I realised it was the same technology and social media which led us to the ‘Kitty Guardians’ page and which put us in touch with Ms. Borg Debrincat. There is indeed good in everything if we learn to seek it.

Once my students finish their Matsec Examinations at the end of May, we plan to meet Ms. Borg Debrincat to give her our donation in person.

I hope that this activity leaves as much of a positive impact on my students as it did on me. I hope it shows them how little acts of kindness from our end make a huge difference in the lives of others. Above all, I hope it teaches them that when we shine, we light up the world for others and for ourselves too!

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE SO BRIGHTLY THAT OTHERS CAN SEE THEIR WAY OUT OF THE DARK.

Katrina Mayer
This activity was an extension of Goal Setting, whereby the students were invited to create a vision board based on their short-term and long-term goals. Lessons prior to this included the following learning outcomes:

- To identify personal goals and reflect on ways which can be achieved
- To balance between short and long-term goals
- To understand the main characteristics of SMART Goals
- To apply the principle of SMART goals in setting one’s personal goals
- To become aware of Apps which may help students set and maintain personal goals
- To learn about vision boards and their significance

First, students researched what vision boards are used for and different ideas to create them. This was followed by creating their own vision board incorporating their goals and shared with the class during a PSCD lesson. As can be seen, students focused on various goals in different areas of their life, ranging from school, personal qualities, spirituality, social relationships and career goals. Finally, during the processing part of the lesson, students were invited to think about how they could achieve their set goals.
Sensitivity Training for the PSCD and Guidance Teachers in both Primary and Secondary schools, was supported by the Church Schools Children’s Fund, a funded project through the Training Initiative Support Scheme offered by the Malta Council for Voluntary Sector. Both PSCD and Guidance Department within the Secretariat for Catholic Education worked together with the CSCF to apply for the funds and coordinate the project.

Thirty-four teachers were able to benefit from these funds and attend 4 sessions of Sensitivity Training with a qualified mentor. In total, there were 4 groups. One group was held in Gozo.

The aim was to enhance insight in relation to the impact that certain topics dealt with during guidance sessions individually or as a group during PSCD lessons may have on the children and adolescents. Other aims are to encourage the participating educators and volunteers to prioritise and preserve their own well-being, improve their self-awareness, foster sensitivity to students and colleagues, as well as increase insight and perceptivity to students’ issues.

At the end of the session some teachers gave their feedback on Sensitivity Training:

“Our increased self-awareness of various personal intimate areas that need to be worked upon for personal growth and maturation, and professional development that ensues automatically.”

“Being more aware of your own emotions gives you more insight about yourself.”

“The beauty of relationships especially related to work.”

“The importance of sharing experiences.”
Every year, during our PSCD lessons, our Year 11 students are introduced to an array of skills with the intention of preparing them for future internships or jobs interviews. Throughout our lessons the students painstakingly work their way through gaining confidence and basic experience of what is expected of them. This will be an asset to them later in life.

Staff from the KPMG People Performance and Culture Department, are invited to school to give the students a taster of what it is like to sit for an interview. Prior to these interviews, we focus on preparing the students on how to present themselves: maintaining eye-contact, being aware of their facial expressions, body posture and how to express themselves verbally in a confident way. Each student is assigned a 7 min, one-to-one interview and feedback is given there and then by the interviewer.

The restrictions during the pandemic were not a deterrent to continue such good practice. Students had to adapt to virtual interview skills. They were taught how to project their voices loud and clear to accommodate the demands of being online. They were made aware that they needed to ensure having a good connection, free from any interference and when necessary, not hesitating to ask for clarification.

We are proud to say that our students have always taken this very seriously and have consistently been met with very positive feedback.
How can we help students understand themselves and the environment in which they live so they are better equipped to decide on their education, training and/or work pathways?

This framework, developed by Dorianne Gravina, EO, Career Guidance and Stephen Camilleri, EO, Personal, Social and Career Development was published by Euroguidance Malta and can be accessed on https://euroguidance.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Career-learning-and-development.pdf

The Framework is intended to be a referral point for schools and colleges to help professionals support the planning, design and delivery of career education and career guidance. It aims to establish guidelines for career learning and development in compulsory schooling and achieve better co-ordination between all educators involved – hence acknowledge and encourage a whole school approach to career learning. It also aims to serve as a tool which helps evaluate and improve the quality of career learning in our schools.

The framework is based on different international models but reflects the needs of Maltese schools and colleges. It adopts a student-centered approach to career learning – thus emphasising the importance of providing the right space where students can gain understanding, knowledge and skills but also opportunities for reflection and evaluation that help students make better sense of what they have learnt, link new knowledge with previous knowledge, question previously taken for granted assumptions and thus accommodate new ideas and beliefs. The framework identifies 9 competences within 3 areas of learning to facilitate learners’ personal and career development, namely:

1. Personal exploration and management competences
2. Learning exploration and management competences
3. Career exploration and management competences
The 3 learning areas are applicable for the following learning cycles:

1. The Primary School Years (Year 3 – 6)
2. The Middle School Years (Year 7 – 8)
3. The Senior School Years (Year 9 – 11)

The framework also includes a set of benchmarks for effective career learning and development. It provides schools with a practical tool for self-assessing careers provision and also opportunities for developing an action plan for improvement. The aim is that of assisting service providers to reflect and evaluate their work by adopting a ‘reflective practitioner’ approach.

The four categories that need to be reflected upon are:

1. The Career Education Programme
2. The Career Guidance Provision
3. The Whole School approach
4. The teachers and career guidance practitioners

This framework was discussed during a Conference held in April 2022 financed by Euroguidance Malta in collaboration with the National School Support Services and the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes. College Principals, Heads of Schools, PSCD teachers and career guidance practitioners from the education and employment sectors were present. Together with Dr Anthony Mann, an OECD expert in the area of career guidance, who was the keynote speaker for the conference, and participants, we discussed the value of the framework, how it complements the already existing structure of career education and guidance and how to encourage input from the different stakeholders. The Directorate for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning & Employability, the Malta Union of Teachers, Jobsplus, the Malta Chamber, the Malta Employers’ Association, the Chamber of Engineers, the career advisor from the Gozo College and a PSCD teacher from St. Margaret’s College were invited to discuss this framework during a panel discussion and to explain their involvement in the process.

Following this Conference, 4 workshops will be held to discuss in depth how the framework can be implemented in the schools. These workshops are planned for November 2022.
Dear PSCD fans,

Educators have asked how best to prepare our children and youth for successful adulthood in the twenty-first century for a long time. PSCD teachers agree that a strong Socio-Emotional Learning Framework is imperative for holistic education, and such a need has become more pressing with the Covid-19 Pandemic.

This collective experience has seen schools changing rapidly in such a short time, with the overall priority to safeguard the physical health of its members. This experience has bent all social norms and expectations that could have impacted the school climate and the well-being of our students. At St Paul's Missionary College (SPMC), we wanted to ensure that we create enough support structures to deal with the pressing risk of the Pandemic on the emotional well-being of our students. In the following write-up, I shall present our work with the Finnish software: Mightifier.

**Ensuring a Healthy School Climate**

Mightifier is an application that allows a class teacher to have immediate information about their classroom climate. The teacher can choose the well-being option from Mightifier. From a simple ten-question questionnaire, the teacher will be altered of actions needed with particular students at risk of isolation, bullying, and a lack of self-efficacy. Our experience has shown us that our 9, and 10-year-old boys appreciate being asked how they feel about their class. We are at times taken by surprise that we did not manage to pick up a particular feeling from one of our students, and therefore we can appreciate the role of technology for our students to seek help. When alerts are highlighted from Mightifier, an action plan is drafted where either through PSCD, Guidance or in class, the matter is handled promptly.

**Sociometric Testing to inform the teacher's work**

To consolidate the results from this well-being test, the Mightifier offers the option of sociometric tests. In the sociometric test, we want to ensure that our Junior 5 and Junior 6 students have one reciprocated relationship. We want our students to have at least one solid friendship where he is sought, and in turn, he seeks to invest in that relationship. Yet this is not enough. Through Mightifier we are supporting the build-up of a community of friends.
Sharing feedback for Self-confidence

We are building communities through another function of Mightifier - what we refer to as 'rounds'. Our students are challenged to seek the positive in every one in their classroom. Every two weeks, they get a 'round' where students are matched up with someone else from the class to exchange positive feedback. The students are challenged to recount where they saw the student behave that way and share how this action made them feel. All this feedback is recorded in a student's portfolio, and this 'happy place' can be accessed any time if the student feels upset or has issues with self-confidence.

Challenging the comfort zone

In sharing feedback, we challenge students to acknowledge the positive over the negative. We highlight the importance of a growth mindset in dealing with life situations and that there is always room for growth. We also challenge students to show love by sharing positive feedback and we hope to challenge the macho/proud stereotypes that usually define boys. We are also getting into conversation with students individually about the importance of challenging labels that some students got because of their challenging behaviours.

How are students prepared to give feedback?

Mightifier contains a SEL program that provides training on Seligman's 24 character traits well identified in literature that helps each person to thrive. I have combined these traits with related lessons in my scheme of work. The SEL program is also being used in a parallel SEL program delivered at school. Hence students are challenged to put into practice what they learn in PSCD. Every PSCD teacher's dream is to see Kolb’s learning cycle complete, and Mightifier offers more of this opportunity. Students are challenged to practice what is being learnt in class, and others have to testify where they saw such behaviour taking place.

To summarise, Mightifier is a great tool that helps us educators ensure that all our students feel safe to make mistakes in a safe school climate. The student is also challenged to practice skills for life and discover new strengths, and put them to practice. It also reinforces the SPMC’s ethos with its emphasis on community building as students share positive feedback. Finally it is important to stress that although this program is appealing for any PSCD Teacher, all the school community should come together for its successful implementation.
The Learning Objectives were: to teach the children that there are other ways of reacting; to discuss that we may have different opinions; to understand how our actions can affect us and those around us. Whilst the Learning Outcomes were: I can recognise the feelings of the characters; I can explore the different choices we have; I can find a different way of how to react.

The resources used were, Friendship Cards, Interactive white board, Picture of the story, friendship card power point. The story ‘The Fox and the Stork’ by Aesop.
This activity has been carried out in a CCP Class ages 11-12 years old. The class was a mix of mainly Muslim refugees and autistic students. I started off by showing them the picture of the story first on the interactive white board. I asked them to explore what they were seeing and the expressions and feelings the pictures elicit. Following the exploration of feelings I proceeded in telling them the story behind the pictures. I then invited them to pick which animal they would have liked to identify with. They chose the stork so we then proceeded on exploring how the stork was feeling in the first situation and how the stork then reacted. The students were then asked to find an alternative way of tackling the situation. The students were very drawn to the alternative – the ‘what ifs’ of the good moves. They created a whole scenario on how things could have been if the stork was assertive enough and would have voiced his displeasure in having a low plate as a container for the soup. The students were asked to pick a card or used the PowerPoint on the interactive white board to show their sequence of the new moves and to retell the story in another way that would fit this sequence.

This session seemed to tick all the boxes for the different needs of the students. The students explored the feelings each situation elicited, they were excited and engaged in both using the laminated cards and the all-in-one. For them it was like using a virtual game too. They immediately wanted to form a story on how the stork could have behaved better to be more assertive with her friend and help in cultivating their friendship. I was particularly surprised how the autistic students went straight to the all-in-one rather than picking the laminated ones and spent time engaging in the virtual cards, choosing which fits their choice and also forming the story line. Due to their visual and playful nature, the Friendship Cards made it easier for the students to identify the emotions that were experienced and for the students to play around with the different what ifs and scenarios presented. They helped them explore different narratives and offer them a variety of experiences, challenging behaviours and choices which might have till then been fixed in their normal go-to behaviour. The activity promoted the exploration of different choices in an experimental, playful manner thus helping participants integrate them more in their daily choices in life.

The second activity, led by Ms. Fabri, was carried out with Year 8 middle schoolers. The theme of the activity was Never Give Up On Friendship and it focused on the use of the Friendship Cards to deal with conflict in relationships.
This activity explored how students can manage and solve conflict in a safe and correct way when they find themselves in situations where they have an argument with a friend. The activity commenced with an explanation of the Feeling Cards which were laid on the table’s surface in view of the students. The students were shown a video clip on the friendship of two best friends who had an argument and how they finally forgave each other. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aBUwSjuPQ&t=7s

The video clip was first stopped where the two boys conflicted with each other and did not reconcile. The students had to choose the Feeling Card which expressed the feelings of the two boys and a discussion took place. This was repeated at different stops through the video clip, where processing questions took place, the Bad and Good Moves Friendship Cards were shown, followed by a discussion. This served as a way for students to reflect on the bad and good choices and correct their way of thinking when dealing with conflict situations such as an argument.

The video clip ended where the two boys reconciled and made-up, at which point students had to choose from the Making Up Cards. The lesson was finished off by showing the students the Feeling Cards again. To keep the discussion going, the students were asked some final processing questions.
The Friendship Cards were found to be extremely helpful and valuable for students to reach the learning objectives and outcomes in this PSCD class activity. In this activity the students learned that the friendship breakup of the boys exhibited hurtful and sad feelings. The students were able to understand the feelings and empathize with the two boys. The Feeling Cards helped the students to express and understand other people’s emotions in different situations. In addition, with the help of the Good Moves cards they learnt the need to stay calm during an argument, rather than fighting or retaliating. They understood that allowing negative emotions to take over during an argument will prolong the conflict rather than subdue it. The Friendship Cards also helped the students to realize that a friend is important and that they should not act impulsively during an argument but reflect on the situation. They understood that talking through the issue with themselves, rather than letting negative feelings cloud their judgement, could resolve the conflict. This way, the theme Never Give Up On Friendship was reflected throughout this activity.

The resources used included the Interactive white board, Friendship Cards and the video clip https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aBU-wSjuPQ&t=7s

In conclusion, the Friendships Cards are a valuable resource for Emotional literacy and PSCD classes. This was observed following the two different activities that focused on the meaning of friendship. The students were kept engaged through the activities. Their responses during processing showed that with the help of the Friendship Cards they were able to become aware of the possible ways they can lose a friend with their actions and uncontrolled emotions. The students were able to explain the differences they encounter in their friends, but also know about the same interests they share. With the help of the Friendship Cards, the students were able to understand that feelings can affect others. They understood the meaning of friendship and were able to manage emotions when in conflict.
To commemorate Safer Internet Day, our school encouraged students to reflect on how to use technology safely. During our PSCD lessons, we discussed how to show respect online by minding what we say and post. We also emphasised how to use technology responsibly. This is done by keeping a balance between the time spent online and offline, changing the password regularly and never sharing passwords and personal information. Being critical of what one sees and hears is also important.

On the other hand, we also discussed the advantages and opportunities that technology offers. It helps people in their studies and research, to chat with friends near or far, to listen to music, etc. Activities such as discussions, BeSmartOnline video clips and case studies were used to promote better reflection. Students also prepared creative work to consolidate their learning. Agencies for assistance, where students can be supported when they encounter difficulties or abuse online, were also highlighted.
The PSCD group was split into two groups where the students worked together to create a name, slogan, and a manifesto with several points which had to be backed up with a concrete plan.

They chose a spokesperson and delivered a speech in front of the whole group and later in the class a voting process was performed.

During this activity, the students practiced public speaking, time management, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and teamwork. They also realized how sometimes people vote not for the best ideas but for the people they know or people whom they relate with the most. This was later translated in voting skills since most of the students were about to vote for the first time in the coming election.
Considering the characteristics of programmes that work:

Research into the efficacy of a range of drug education programmes has shown that results are mixed [1 – 4]. While some programmes have made a discernible difference in reducing the incidence of risky use of alcohol, cigarettes and cannabis, others have not demonstrated any measurable effect, and others again have been associated with an increased use of drugs or increased delinquency among the target participants.

Reviews of the evidence-base suggest that when drug education programmes include a combination of knowledge, social and life skills, normative approaches and negotiation skills, they can produce significant reductions in drug use. These programmes appear strongest when delivered as part of a broader health and personal development curriculum that incorporates a focus upon other social and mental health issues and in schools with a positive relational climate [8]. Effective programmes employ highly interactive pedagogies engage students in problem solving and critical thinking and assist students to relate their learning to real-life situations [3]. They incorporate messages which indicate that participation in risky drug use is not the societal norm. The teachers leading the programmes to understand the rationale of the programme and have received professional training that includes an emphasis on how to run the interactive component of the programme. The programmes are supported by coherent school policy [10]. They are responsive to the cultural and social needs of the school community. Programmes are strengthened when accompanied by community and media initiatives They are most effective when they are delivered in a longitudinal fashion, so as to provide age-appropriate education prior to exposure to drug use situations, and additional activities during early encounters and in later phases, as young people begin to negotiate the increasingly complex issues that older teenagers encounter.

If the teacher adopts a scare tactics approach, rather than a critical thinking approach, this will subvert the design of a harm minimisation or harm reduction programme which aims to involve the students in critical and normative education. ‘Normative education’ strategies have been identified as critical in the context of effective school-based drug abuse prevention programmes. Within a normative approach, one aims to actively dispel myths that everyone uses drugs in a risky manner. Young people commonly assume that peers use drugs at greater levels that the prevalence statistics indicate. They also assume that use is more widespread than it is. The teacher can perpetuate or augment these myths inadvertently by using more extreme scenarios as the basis for information-giving, discussion or problem-solving. The selection of the material sends an implicit message that the narrative represents the commonplace.
Sharing an Article on Connections the PSCD Newsletter

Whilst taking the opportunity to thank all contributors for sharing their activities with all of us. We would like to share with you a link to a form https://tinyurl.com/pscdmtnl

This link will help you share with us any initiatives to be included in any future edition of Connections.

Feel free to send in your articles at any point of the scholastic year.

Thanks in advance for your contributions!

Jahel & Melanie