



WEEK OF

H A P P I N E S S

AT SCHOOL

21-25 MARCH 2022



Booklet prepared by
Pascale Haag and Sarah Nabeth
with contributions from Celia Cami, Clémence Gayet,
Sabrina Hamouri, Mika Jeanmichel and Laure Reynaud

PREFACE

Taking action to promote well-being at school is essential today. The scope of these actions goes beyond simply feeling good at school. Indeed, research shows that well-being allows for greater mental availability, which favors greater commitment to work and learning. Moreover, this mental availability also allows for a better quality of attention to others, increasing listening and empathy skills which, in turn, favor altruistic and supportive behavior. It also promotes the self-regulation of emotions and behaviors, which contribute to a calm school climate. Working on improving well-being at school thus contributes to a fundamental psychological need: the feeling of trust and social connection.

After two years of pandemic and in a period of international instability, the prioritization of well-being in schools reinforces the development of psychosocial skills necessary for the construction of a supportive society, which feeds democracy and the power of action of individuals. Thus, the work on the improvement of well-being and psychosocial skills is consistent with the values of democracy and comprises a useful way to increase equality of opportunity in school, as well as school inclusion.

Psychosocial skills have been defined by the World Health Organization as skills that enable people to deal with everyday situations in an adaptive and constructive manner, respecting and collaborating with others. These skills can be cognitive, such as the ability to make informed choices or solve problems; emotional, such as the ability to regulate stress and emotions; and social, such as the ability to empathize and cooperate. Recent surveys have shown that the child and adolescent population has been particularly affected by the health crisis and related preventative actions. The World Health Organization recommends strengthening the psychosocial skills of students to prevent stress, anxiety, depression and addictions. It also strongly encourages supporting parents to prevent exhaustion and the consequences that this can have on the child's development.

The Happiness in School Week initiative represents an opportunity for the educational community to promote mental health and thus contribute to the development of a school and a society more oriented towards "taking care" of others and the environment.

Rebecca Shankland
Professor of Developmental Psychology Head
of the Observatory of Well-Being at School DIPHE Laboratory
(Development of the Individual, Process, Disability, Education)
University Lumière Lyon 2

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INTRODUCTION

Why have a happiness week at school?

In 2020 the [BONHEURS laboratory](#) of Cergy University launched the week of happiness at school: a week of freedom and calm structured with initiatives to allow all the actors of the school to collectively invent the school of their dreams. In 2022, it takes place from March 21 to 25.

This dedicated time is an opportunity to federate energies around concrete projects on themes as diverse as the joy of learning and teaching or the cognitive, social, physical, relational components of well-being at school. It can be a moment of openness, experimenting with different ways of learning and living together at school.

This thematic week also allows us to share practices that promote the joy of learning and teaching, inspiring each other and enriching ourselves with a diversity of ideas and approaches while integrating all the stakeholders of the educational ecosystem, starting with the parents!

This year, two associations - the [Lab School Network](#) and [ScholaVie](#) - are joining forces with the BONHEURS laboratory to propose concrete activities and encourage exchanges between all those who wish to participate in this adventure. The [Observatoire du bien-être à l'école](#) also supports this initiative by contributing to its promulgation.

What is happiness at school?

Various expressions are used to refer to happiness, very often interchangeably, whether in everyday language or by researchers: "well-being," "quality of life," "school satisfaction," "optimal functioning" (Fenouillet et al., 2017; Florin and Guimard, 2017). Regardless of what it is called, a positive school experience affects students' self-esteem, self-perception, and behavior. It also has consequences on their health and life satisfaction, present and future (Currie et al., 2012).

Broadly, many studies indicate that when schools place a strong emphasis on well-being, students' academic outcomes are improved. Moreover, longer term, academic achievement is associated with academic success and a satisfying work life (Layard & Hagell, 2015). According to researchers, both individual factors and environmental factors are associated with happiness,

or well-being, at school. And amongst the firsts, emotional development is the best predictor of life satisfaction as an adult (World Happiness Report, 2015). This demonstrates the importance of taking into account feelings, well-being, and social and emotional development of children at school!

In 2014, the UNESCO organization launched a project called *Happy Schools* with the aim of promoting happiness at schools, fostering the well-being of learners, and taking into account their holistic development. A report based on a survey, literature review, and interviews with school-level stakeholders was published in 2016¹. It proposes a framework to foster happiness at schools that includes 22 criteria divided into three categories: people, processes, and places. These criteria can be levers for actions, tailored to different contexts. They are presented below².

People	Process	Places
Friendships and relationships in the school community	Reasonable and fair Workload	Warm and friendly learning environment
Positive teacher attitudes and attributes	Teamwork and collaborative spirit	Secure environment free from bullying
Respect for diversity and differences	Fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches	Open and green learning and playing spaces
Positive and collaborative values and practices	Learning creativity and engagement	School vision and leadership
Teacher working conditions and well-being	Sense of achievement and accomplishment	Positive discipline
Teacher skills and competences	Extracurricular activities and school events	Good health, sanitation and nutrition
	Learning as a team between students and teachers	Democratic school management
	Useful, relevant and engaging learning content	
	Mental well-being and stress-management	

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244140>

² Other theoretical frameworks also exist. For an overview, see Haag and Martin, 2021.

Happiness at school to foster democratic practices?

The Lab School Network and the École des hautes études en sciences sociales are involved in a European Erasmus+ project: [LabSchoolsEurope – Participatory research for democratic education](#). Within the framework of the Happiness at School Week, we have chosen to focus on a few practices that allow the development of children and help them become responsible, enlightened, autonomous, supportive and... happy citizens! Of course, such an ambitious objective is necessarily a long-term one, but the Happiness at School Week can allow us to take an additional step in this direction.

A growing body of research shows that a school environment that promotes, through explicit instruction, the attitudes and behaviors underpinning social justice and democratic citizenship also increases students' social awareness, respect for the rights of others, engagement, and even academic achievement over time (Kovell & Howe, 2020).

The classroom and the school itself are miniature societies in which children discover and learn about democratic institutions. Here, they develop social, civic and emotional skills needed to live together such as: cooperating, listening to each other, debating, resolving conflicts, and accepting differences and beliefs. Since the early 2000s, the links between these social, civic, and emotional skills and well-being at school have been the subject of numerous studies.

The effects of interventions designed to foster the development of social-emotional skills at schools around the world have been measured. Evaluations indicate that students on the receiving end of such interventions have higher levels of well-being than those who do not. Also social behavior and academic achievement are improved (Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

The Lab School Network and ScholaVie have developed a small Happinesses at School Week unit, with suggested short rituals or activities that are easy to incorporate into daily classroom life. Each activity is linked to a theme whose relationship with happiness and well-being is scientifically validated, themes that, in turn, evoke certain key values of a democratic society.

1. Monday - character strengths
2. Tuesday - attentive presence
3. Wednesday - gratitude
4. Thursday - altruism
5. Friday - growth mindset

In practice

Happiness Week at school is open to all schools, in France or abroad! There is no fixed program, no specific approach! It is simply an invitation to participate and contribute that can be adapted to the desire and capacity of your school. The BONHEURS laboratory has identified five axes from which a variety of initiatives can be deployed:

- Organizing philosophical debates in class on happiness
- Practicing relaxation or meditation activities (yoga, sophrology, micro naps, etc.)
- Reimagining the architectural design of common spaces
- Reflecting on the relational principles around self-confidence, benevolence, relationships between teachers and parents, relationships between adults and students, etc.
- Instituting "the joy of learning and well-being in the classroom" with either new rituals to encourage attention and motivation or reconceiving the place of arts and games in learning.

You were also invited to answer a short online questionnaire³. The objective is to get to know the participants so that the proposal can best meet your needs. We also hope to lay the groundwork for a future community of practice. Beyond this week, we hope to continue to exchange and reflect together on happiness at school and how to achieve it through transformations of the educational system.

For any questions or suggestions, please contact info@labschool.fr

We wish to thank warmly Chiara Piault and Sarah Nabeth for translating this booklet from French, as well as Dana Boulé and Hanna Fischer-Baum for revising the English.

³ <https://educ.sphinxonline.net/v4/s/6vlqni>

MONDAY, MARCH 21

Character strengths

What are character strengths?

Some psychological research focuses on the "optimal functioning" of individuals, groups, and society. Numerous scientific studies address the factors that determine physical and mental health, academic success of students, and their success later in life. Rather than focusing on deficiencies or weaknesses, this approach instead looks to strengths and resources that enable students to cope with adversity and overcome obstacles.

In the early 2000s, Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman led a team of 55 researchers from different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in the identification and classification of all the positive traits and strengths of human beings as they have appeared in literature, philosophy, and religions around the world over 2,500 years. This considerable work does not claim to be exhaustive and, like any conceptual effort, it is debatable. However, it does provide a common language for thinking about these fundamental human abilities: character strengths, defined as "the psychological mechanisms that define virtues" (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

Character strengths are pervasive, positively-valued individual differences that contribute to optimal development throughout life. They contribute to a natural way of functioning that generates energy and vitality. These character strengths are present in all cultures. Individual possess them from childhood. The study's conclusion classifies 24 character strengths into six broad categories, called "virtues" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; see table below)⁴.

Wisdom and knowledge	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Creativity- Curiosity- Judgment- Love of learning- Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bravery- Perseverance- Honesty- Enthusiasm	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Love- Kindness- Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teamwork- Fairness- Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forgiveness- Humility- Prudence- Self-regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Recognition of beauty and excellence- Gratitude- Hope for the future- Humor- Spirituality

The concept of character strengths promotes the development of the child's qualities, self-confidence, self-esteem and, generally, their well-being.

⁴ For more information: <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths-and-virtues>

(Peterson, 2006). Depending on the individual, some of these strengths are more developed than others; this is called the "personal signature". By focusing on one's strengths, individuals can build on their talents to be more successful, fulfilled and happy. These strengths contribute to healthy development throughout life and are an effective tool for optimal functioning (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997).

Why is this important at school?

Research has established that character strengths are already present in young children (Park & Peterson, 2006) and that there are strong links between character strengths and well-being across cultures (Ruch et al., 2014). Some strengths, such as kindness, social intelligence, and self-control, protect against the negative effects of stress (Park, 2009). Broadly, fostering the positive aspects of a personality helps to counter our negativity bias - which consists of favoring the negative aspects and dysfunctions over the positive. In turn, positive emotions are cultivated (Lottman et al., 2017).

Furthermore, authors highlight a link between the use of character strengths and academic success, as well as positive learning experiences (Wagner & Ruch, 2015). Focusing on a child's strengths is not the same as ignoring areas for improvement. It simply acknowledges the importance of positive learning experiences to both well-being (Stiglbauer et al., 2013) and academic outcomes (Engeser & Rheinberg, 2008). Knowing one's character strengths is a powerful means to support a student's overall functioning and well-being. In addition, character strengths help young people thrive and enable the development of other positive qualities such as tolerance, kindness, and altruism (Park, 2004), thus forming a virtuous circle of well-being. Helping each student discover his or her own positive qualities and teaching them to cultivate these qualities throughout life is an important goal for schools.

Suggested activities

1. The Tree or Garland of Strengths

Objective: understand the concept of character strengths and identify one's own

Pre-requisites: none

Duration: 30 to 60 minutes

Organization: large group or small group

Materials:

- A chart and markers
- Paper (preferably colored)
- Scissors
- Colored pencils and markers
- Duct tape or masking tape

Procedure:

First, the teacher explains to the students the concept of character strengths in a dialogue format. For example, the students can be asked to describe the strengths of their favorite heroes. A list of strengths is compiled on the board for reference.

Second, each student chooses a sheet of paper and draws the outline of his or her hand, flat on the paper, with fingers spread out. They write on each of the fingers of the paper a strength that they recognize in themselves (for example, humor, perseverance, curiosity, kindness and creativity). They cut out the hand.

At the end, all the hands are displayed in a tree, garland or other display. Students can present their key strengths to each other.

2. The Gift of Strengths

Objective: to identify, express and celebrate strengths in others

Prerequisite: understanding of the concept of character strengths

Time: 15-30 minutes

Organization: large group or small group

Materials: a list of character strengths projected or inventoried beforehand by the students.

Procedure:

Each student is asked to describe and “give” at least one strength in each of his or her classmates, describing that strength and how that classmate demonstrated it. For example, a student might choose the strength of kindness and explain how his or her classmate has been kind to him or her or someone else recently and how that helped.

The strengths are written on slips of paper and placed in a cup with the student's name on it: their resource cup. To avoid frustration and to increase the fun, you can invite students to offer strengths to peers outside their group, including the teacher and other adults. The cups can remain on a shelf or desk for a period of time — a day or week— and strengths can be added. At the end of the allotted time, everyone leaves with their gift of strength.

It is important to fully illustrate and describe the strength in question. Also, expression of emotions experienced while offering or receiving the strength— through words or gestures— should be encouraged as much as possible. Each student is thus recognized through the prism of his or her strengths, which he or she receives as gifts. In turn, the student consolidates his or her self-knowledge.

This work on strengths can also be organized on a collective level: what are the strengths of our class, of our school, of such and such a project? What strengths will we need to carry it out, how can we develop such and such a strength in class or in a team, etc.? As we go along, we can organize a tree of strengths with the names of the strengths in the trunk and illustrations of these strengths on the leaves, etc.

TUESDAY, MARCH 22

MINDFUL PRESENCE

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a state in which we pay attention to the experience of the present moment —through physical sensations, thoughts, emotions—intentionally and without value judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Mindfulness has been gaining momentum since the 2000s. Its practice can significantly improve quality of life and health through innovative and effective techniques. Initially applied in the health field, it has spread to other fields, such as education, where it has proven beneficial for both children and adults (Bishop, 2022). It is the subject of much research and it is today a scientifically validated practice (Gregoire et al., 2016).

Why is it important at school?

Just like adults, children face difficulties and challenges at school, at home, and in their social relationships. Grades, expectations of parents and teachers, conflicts with peers, and school orientation can all be stressful to different students to varying degrees.

Evaluation of school-based interventions shows that mindful presence can be an effective resource for students to cope with stress (van de Weijer-Bergsma, 2014; Zoogman et al, 2014). This practice would thus be "relevant to the prevention of various psychological problems in children and adolescents, including depression and anxiety" (Theurel, Gimbert, & Gentaz, 2018, p. 9). Children can better identify and welcome their emotions and, thus, promote their regulation. It also encourages better intellectual availability, which is useful during classroom learning and exams. In this sense, these interventions encourage well-being and school engagement in turn supporting academic success (Felver et al., 2015).

Furthermore, research shows that the practice of mindfulness has beneficial effects on high-level cognitive abilities, such as executive functions (Flook et al., 2010). The latter refers to a set of processes responsible for the cognitive, emotional and behavioral control necessary for coping responses (Compas et al., 2009)⁵. Studies have demonstrated the improvement of attention

⁵ They allow individuals to adapt to new situations and generate solutions to problems (Barkley, 2001). They include planning, problem solving, decision making, cognitive flexibility, conceptualization, attention, etc (Chan et al., 2008).

capacities, emotional regulation, or working memory, all of which constitute essential functions in learning (Eustache and Guilery-Girard, 2016; Cosnefroy, 2011).

Working on these capacities can be particularly beneficial in key stages of development: childhood and adolescence. Indeed, some authors argue that this practice would benefit children more than adults due to the significant developmental and neurodevelopmental changes (Roeser & Zelazo, 2012) that can result, such as greater brain plasticity (remodeling of brain structure).

At what age is it possible to begin practicing mindfulness? Can children comprehend this family of activities? According to psychiatrist Christophe André, meditation for children was, until recently, an almost unexplored field. The approach seemed "too difficult and too 'intellectual' for such a young audience" (Snel, 2013). The complexity of an intervention is not a guarantee of effectiveness. It has now been established that attentive presence is a simple and effective tool, particularly because it relies on bodily sensations, natural vectors that are easily accessible to children. Implementing this practice in the school setting is not difficult, but requires the teacher to feel comfortable with the practice in order to accompany the students in its discovery.

Moreover, the practice of mindfulness can be beneficial for teachers themselves. The methods put in place for students also have a positive impact on the mental health of teachers, who are also subject to many stressors (Weiss et al, 2020). Further, a teacher in a serene emotional state positively influences the classroom climate, as well as the quality of learning (Lestage et al., 2019).

Thus, the practice of mindful presence is of undeniable interest in the field of education as it allows for an overall improvement in the academic skills of students and as well as their well-being (Flook et al., 2010), as well as that of teachers (Taylor et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, this approach also generates reticence, generally linked to a lack of knowledge. On the far end of the spectrum, it is sometimes, wrongfully, considered a sectarian practice. While some aspects of mindfulness are indeed rooted in the Buddhist tradition, detractors maintain a confusion between religious and secular meditation. Notably, this confusion led to an attack of mindfulness practices in schools by the League of Human Rights (LDH) in 2021 and by other associations in 2022. It compared mindfulness practice to a "soft lobotomization likely to induce a conditioning with loss of critical spirit". These allegations do not reflect either the state of scientific knowledge or the practices in the field. Researched-based

responses have been provided by recognized scientists, for example, in an editorial published in the newspaper Le Monde on February 1, 2022 and signed by more than 150 scientists⁶. In addition, some research shows that by playing on inhibitory control⁷, mindfulness can improve critical thinking, which refutes the main objection to this practice (Noone et al., 2016).

As to be expected, the mindfulness activities offered in the education sector are free of religious connotations, based on scientific knowledge. They meet the secular requirements of the school setting. It is a mind-body practice that aims to promote general well-being at school and to improve the cognitive and emotional skills of students. It is proposed here with that intention.

Suggested activities

1. Spaghetti Activity

Objective: to feel emotions and sensations. To learn to relax.

Duration: 5 to 15 minutes.

Organization: in groups or alone.

Materials: a poster. If this option does not suit you, you can use a media such as a mobile application or audio (see resources below).

Procedure :

First, the teacher explains the benefits and interest of this practice: relaxation, concentration, calm, stress reduction. The instructions on the poster can be read slowly, in a quiet place conducive to relaxation. For example, with mats on the floor and dimmed lights. Children are invited to close their eyes or not, depending on what is most comfortable for them, and to let themselves be guided by the voice of their teacher.

The activity should not be mandatory. Students who do not want to participate can simply observe, without disturbing others. Some children need to become familiar with these practices first.

⁶ « La méditation de pleine conscience est très loin des images ésotériques et des odeurs d'encens » https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358266736_La_meditation_de_pleine_conscience_est_très_loin_des_images_esoteriques_et_des_odeurs_d'encens

⁷ Inhibitory control is the ability to suppress a dominant response in favor of another, more relevant response or no response (Sanne et al., 2013). It is involved in controlling attention, behaviors, thoughts, and emotions, while suppressing internal or external distractors, to do what is most appropriate or necessary (Diamond, 2013).



Once the activity is complete, take the time to share impressions and feelings. Ask them under what circumstances they could do this exercise by themselves. For example, could they do the exercise when there is a conflict with a friend or when they are apprehensive about a challenge?

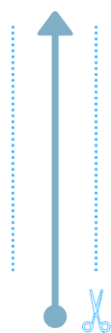
The poster can be hung in a visible place so that the children can use this exercise independently, when they need it. The exercise can be repeated regularly to maximize the impact and to familiarize the students with their body sensations.

2. The Attentional Break Wheel (ScholaVie)

See example of breaks and instructions on the tool directly.

THE WHEEL OF ATTENTIONAL BREAKS

Spin the wheel to take a
break!



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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23

GRATITUDE

What is gratitude?

Gratitude is both the "bond of appreciation to someone for whom one is indebted for a benefit received or a service rendered" and the "feeling of gratitude and affection towards someone⁸". Rebecca Shankland reminds us that gratitude is an emotion that emerges spontaneously when we receive attention. Expressing gratitude is a way of offering something in return: appreciation (Shankland, 2016). But gratitude goes beyond the simple reciprocation of the gesture: it provides a pleasurable emotion, the benefits of which have been shown repeatedly by researchers (Emmons and McCullough, 2003).

Research shows that it is one of the main determinants of people's overall happiness (Froh & Bono, 2008) and that it helps them experience more positive emotions, happiness and hope in their lives in general (Watkins et al., 2003). Benefits to psychological well-being (positive emotions, alertness, reduced depression and anxiety) and social well-being (generosity, forgiveness and better interpersonal relationships) have been observed (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Why is this important at school?

Some researchers have studied the experience of gratitude in specific areas of life such as school. Several studies have suggested that it is conducive to the development of students' psychological well-being (Wood et al., 2010) and promotes optimism, positive emotions, life satisfaction, vitality and psychological adjustment (Froh et al., 2008, Wood et al., 2010, Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

More than just an emotion, gratitude represents a general state of mind towards life. It runs counter to hedonic adaptation, which represents the observed tendency of humans to quickly return to a relatively stable level of happiness despite major positive or negative events or significant changes in their lives (Rosenbloom, 2010). Gratitude allows one to savor the moment and be grateful for what one has. Because of this, gratitude may also help prevent or limit symptoms related to depression or anxiety (Disabato et al., 2017).

⁸ <https://www.cnrtl.fr/portail/>

In addition, feelings of gratitude influence interpersonal relationships and play a role in meeting relational needs at school (Doll et al., 2014). In this sense, students who exhibit high levels of gratitude are more likely than others to appreciate their teachers and peers, and to develop satisfying social relationships (Wood et al., 2010). Furthermore, the gratitude expressed by students toward teachers serves to contribute to teachers' sense of social worth and well-being. Beyond the simple effect of emotional contagion, gratitude then leads to the improvement of social relationships, to which well-being is closely related (Shankland, 2016). This dimension can easily be cultivated in the school setting and allow children to counteract negativity bias by directing their attention to the positive events of their days rather than the negative ones.

Finally, gratitude promotes school progress and better academic performance through achievement motivation. Indeed, there is a relationship between motivation and gratitude (Bono & Froh, 2009). The latter promotes goal achievement and thus encourages students toward greater academic success, especially among adolescents (Bono et al., 2017; Mofidi et al., 2014).

In conclusion, gratitude reveals multiple individual and collective benefits, thus strongly encouraging concrete applications in the field of education.

Suggested activities

1. The Wall of Gratitude

Objective: to express gratitude

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Organization: in large or small groups

Materials: internet access to a padlet on which all educational actors who wish to do so are invited to share their gratitude.

If this option is not possible, you can design and organize a gratitude wall in the lobby of your school or classroom.

Procedure

The concept of gratitude can be introduced with a riddle, a hangman, a moment of gratitude (you thank your students for...).

You invite those who wish to do so to express their gratitude(s) through a photo, a text, a poem, a song, a phrase, a word, a drawing, etc. You then invite them to share them with others.

Then, you invite them to share on the virtual or real wall.

THURSDAY, MARCH 24

ALTRUISM

What is altruism?

Altruism is a motivational state with the goal of increasing the well-being of someone else (Batson & Shaw, 1991). To engage in altruistic behavior, the individual must engage in a dynamic that doesn't take into account its own self-interest, objectives or pleasure. The dynamic does not have a specific objective other than focusing on the external environment and the intention to help or benefit one or more people. To be altruistic is to feel concerned about the fate of all those around us and wanting to act for their good (Ricard, 2013). The difference between egoism and altruism is not the pursuit of pleasure (which is the purpose of both egoism and altruism), it is the direction chosen for the behavior that provides pleasure (Durkheim, 2012).

Examples of altruistic acts include volunteers serving a cause or an association, a person spontaneously donating blood or money, or a student helping a struggling classmate finish an exercise or sharing a snack with someone who has forgotten theirs (Rose, 2020).

Research on altruism has been the focus of many disciplines, from philosophy to psychology. Cultivating these affective and motivational capacities is a fruitful way to participate in the development of a more caring society (Böckler et al., 2018), while promoting individual well-being (Ricard, 2013).

Why is this important in school ?

Various studies show that behaviors identified as altruistic influence the mental health of individuals, regardless of their age. Moreover, those who are more altruistic are less likely to show signs of depression and are less likely to be aggressive toward others. (Weinstein, 2021).

Studies therefore highlight that altruism and well-being come in pairs and create a virtuous circle: A happy person tends to engage in more altruistic behaviors than an unhappy person and the more altruistic one's behavior is, the happier he or she becomes (Shankland, 2021).

Quite logically, children who are kind and caring towards others have better social relationships (Guo, 2018).

What's more, encouraging such prosocial behaviors leads to cognitive benefits (Battistich et al., 1989). Indeed, as the authors of the latter showed; implementing a program of mutual aid activities in the classroom during the elementary school years has improved social decision-making skills. It has also increased children's consideration of others' needs.

Finally, the children who volunteer to help peers with homework improve their academic performance (Werner Bierhoff, 2002).

As social, emotional, and academic skills are intertwined, schools have the leading role in the development of childrens' prosocial behavior (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). The scientific studies broached throughout this chapter, along with the studies of Valois, Zullig, and Huebner (2001) confirm that there is a link between the feeling of happiness and prosocial behaviors. Hence, it is of great importance to integrate altruism into children's daily school lives. An enlightened education, encouraging altruism and mutual aid, allows children to acquire a holistic vision of the world around them. This will enable them to contribute constructively to the society in which they live while cultivating their well-being.

Suggested activities

1. Philanthropic Challenges

Objective: to develop altruism

Time: about ten minutes

Organization: large group or small groups

Materials: small cards and pens

You can suggest that students write challenges for themselves or for their peers, parents, teachers, etc.

Together we can invent challenges that cultivate our ability to work for the good of those around us, our ability to serve others without expecting anything in return. We can invent individual or collective challenges to be taken on during a given period. Challenges could be shared as they inspire us to plant seeds of philanthropy.

Examples:

- I prepare a surprise for my friends or family
- I pick up the things that are lying around
- I help a fellow student who is struggling in a subject I enjoy
- I do some shopping for an elderly neighbor
- I write a poem to a teacher

2. The Carer

Objective: to develop kindness, benevolence and altruism

Duration: about ten minutes

Organization: large group or small groups

Materials: small pieces of paper on which the names of the pupils are written beforehand.

Each participant is secretly given the name of a person who will become their carer for one day or one week.

During this period, they are invited to take special care of one person they have been ascribed to. The special carer would give (discreetly) attention to the person he or she is ascribed to, express encouragement, highlight his or her strengths, support him or her in difficulties, etc. Everyone has their own 'carer'.

Feedback: at the end of the set period, the pupils discuss the experience. They can tell each other whether they recognised the identity of their 'carer' and what they thought of the experience.

FRIDAY 25 MARCH

THE GROWTH MINDSET

What is the growth mindset?

The growth mindset is a concept developed by the psychology researcher Carol Dweck, who argues that "anyone can become competent in any field, if he or she works hard enough". The starting point for her research was to understand how children cope with the challenges they face. She starts by describing what she calls 'the qualities' that guide learning, namely: having some kind of thirst for knowledge, to be seeking challenges, valuing effort and perseverance in front of difficulties. She shows that children tend to adopt two types of attitude which she calls the 'fixed mindset' and the 'growth mindset'.

In the first case, when facing a challenge, the fixed mindset attitude consists in showing less perseverance, less effort in front of obstacles, and a tendency to express doubts on its own capacities. People with a 'fixed mindset' question their intelligence and may become defensive when they do not get it right the first time (Murphy and Dweck, 2010). In contrast, people who adopt a 'growth mindset' view effort, practice and perseverance as important and see difficulty or adversity as an opportunity to learn (Kwok and Fang, 2022). When facing a challenge, they are more likely to stay engaged by trying new strategies and mobilizing all of what is available to them (Dweck, 2010).

In her article *Even Geniuses Work Hard*, Carol Dweck (2010) makes a number of recommendations to create a developmental classroom climate:

- Praise the learning process rather than students' abilities or intelligence; praise effort, the use of strategy, the choice of perseverance; encourage students who seek challenges, persevere in front of difficulties and show improvement over time.
- Explicitly teach the concept of the growth mindset to students.
- Convey a love of learning, the joy of tackling problematics, complete tasks and be resilient when facing difficulties.
- Illustrate this concept by asking students to talk about the fields in which they have been successful in making progress.
- Ask students to choose an area in which they would like to improve, and then set achievable growth goals. Students could then explain to their peers how they managed to improve and what was their learning process .

- Get students to write a letter to a struggling peer explaining the growth mindset and giving advice on improvement strategies.
- Add the sentence 'not yet' or 'not at the moment' whenever a student says that they cannot do a task or that they are not good at something.
- Teachers can also remind students that their role is not to judge who is smart and who is not, but to work with students to develop all of their intelligence.

Why is it important in school?

The development and growth of students is the very heart and purpose of education. The mission of a school is to develop the skills that improve lives and enable us to contribute more to society.

How can we motivate children to learn? How can teachers assess their students' work and encourage them to try harder? How can we foster a developmental mindset in every classroom, every school and for every student?

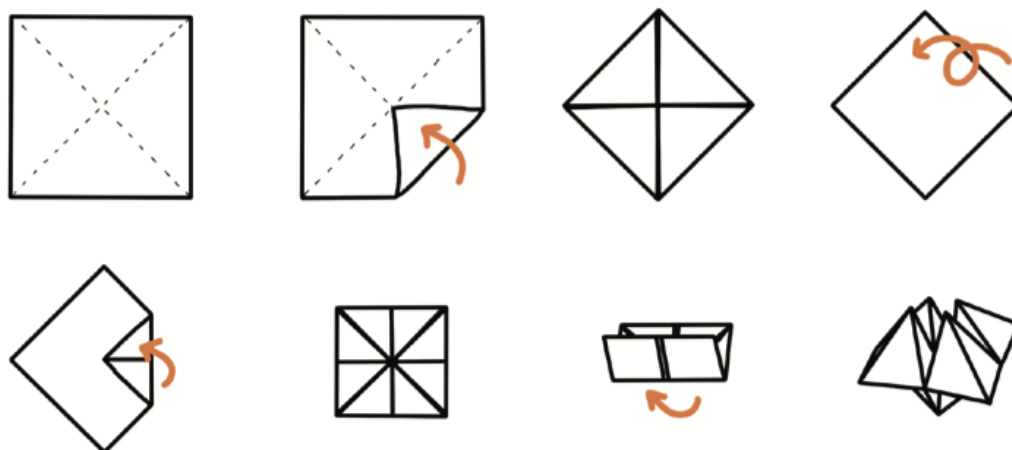
Dweck's (2006) mindset theory is a key model in the context of school performance and motivation. Carol Dweck and her colleagues have conducted a large body of studies that aim at understanding how mindset influences intelligence and motivation. This work has shown that a developmental/ growth mindset is associated not only with greater academic achievement (Dweck, 2010), but also with higher levels of well-being (Kwok and Fang, 2022).

Students face challenges as they progress through school and the education system must help students to overcome them. Success in school is not just about children's innate intellectual abilities, but also about effort. It is the development of a developmental mindset that will enable children to reach their full potential as students, but also as citizens who can lead successful and fulfilling lives.

Suggested activities

1. The Cocottes

The Mindset Cocottes (elementary version, secondary version), which you can download for free on ScholaVie website [by clicking here](#).



2. The Power of Words

Sometimes we say phrases or words that freeze things, contribute to a fixed state of mind or a pessimistic discourse. Phrases such as "I'm not good", "I'll never make it", "It's always the same story with you" destroy little hopes of evolution and enclose us. It is useful to be aware of this and to reformulate these kinds of statements in order to foster a developmental mindset in ourselves and others.

You can invite your students to identify and record these phrases and words that they say or hear, and then have fun reformulating them in a way that nurtures a developmental mindset. This can be done individually or collectively, in large or small groups.

Here are some examples, now it's your turn!

Pessimistic discourse that feed a fixed mindset:	Optimistic discourses, tinged with hope that nurture and foster a growth mindset.
I will never be able to make it	I can't make it just yet, what is the first step I can take ? Who can help me? Who inspires me?
I am too stressed and too shy to speak in front of the whole class	I think I should ask for advice on how to reduce anxiety before I do a presentation for my teacher or for my peers.

3. A Step Towards a Developmental Mindset

Put the developmental mindset into practice by sharing ideas around the table, discussing efforts, strategies, and learnings.

What did you learn today?

What mistake did you make?

Who taught you something?

TO GO FURTHER

Character Strengths

To go further in learning about strengths, other games and tools can be downloaded for free on ScholaVie website (for the 1st and 2nd grades) by [clicking here](#).

-> The card games "Around the Strengths" (kindergarten version and elementary-secondary version) which include about ten activities around the strengths.

-> The Strengths Puzzle

-> My Strengths or Superpowers Notebook

MINDFULNESS / ATTENTIVE PRESENCE

Many other exercises are possible, it can be through breathing exercises, games or role-playing.

Audio recording available for free :

Association Meditation Enseignement A.M.E. (2015, November 11). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFgKt8PeoXGaLjGFkeZVYDw>

The Frog, meditation for children. (2015, July 27). [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnxOoifQ398&t=149s>

Applications:

Mind. (2016).

Little Bamboo,. (2015).

Books :

Dorchy, A. (2022). *Calme et attentif comme une grenouille (Résumé et analyse du livre de Eline Snel) (Book Review) (French Edition)*. 50Minutes.fr.

Greenland, K. S., & Bury, L. (2014). *Un coeur tranquille et sage (French Edition)*.. ARENES.

Hanh, T., Ligneris, D. C., & Genot, B. (2021). *Les petits Cailloux du bonheur - La méditation au creux de la main*. POCKET JEUNESSE.

Other games and tools can be downloaded for free on ScholaVie website (for the 1st and 2nd cycle) [by clicking here](#).

- The Path of Attention
- The Attention Casserole
- A Primer for Taking Breaks
- As well as visuals by [clicking here](#):
- Tool for Re-connecting to Oneself
- Stop Tool to Take a Break

GRATITUDE

(It is possible to put subtitles in English for the videos)

To go further, you can organize a gratitude wall in the hall of your school, a gratitude box in the classroom, gratitude rituals at the end of the day/week/school period, keep a gratitude journal (individual, collective), write a gratitude letter, etc.

Here are:

- A conference of Rebecca Shankland – *Gratitude et lien social* :
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuTbFfne2BUett=47s>
- A video to explain the notion of gratitude to the youngest:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZRZBQJPr9E>
- A gratitude text book :
<https://apprendreaeduquer.fr/carnet-de-gratitude-enfants>

ALTRUISM

(It is possible to put subtitles in English for the videos)

- A conference from Sylvain Connac, a research-teacher in Educational Science.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Giim9M1Xaeo>
- Videos to explain the notion of altruism to the youngest:
<https://ecolepositive.fr/mini-videos-apprendre-a-vivre-ensemble-tolerance-part-age-altruisme/>
- A cartoon to think about friendship, altruism and differences with the children:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7vTP_Z3s6Y

GROWTH MINDSET

(It is possible to put subtitles in English for the videos)

- A short conference of Carol Dweck on the growth mindset.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiiEeMN7vbQ>
- Videos to explain the notion of the developmental mindset to children :
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1CHPnZfFmU>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUJkbWNnNy4>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfdoJxPjp1k>

POSTFACE

After two years of health crisis, marked by an upsurge of conflicts, violence and social inequalities, society has become aware of the structuring and protective role of the school, as a place for the personal and collective development of children, and not only as a place of study, closed in on itself and cut off from the movements of the world.

Organizing a week of happiness at school takes on a special meaning in this context, and must be warmly welcomed: this week can, in fact, serve as a catalyst for initiatives, more and more numerous but sometimes too little known. They aim at reconciling academic success with the pleasure of learning and being together to progress, to blossom, to find one's place among others and as a future citizen, enlightened and responsible in a democratic society. In this sense, this project, jointly led by researchers and teaching "practitioners", fully meets the approaches and values shared by the national education mediators, even if their objectives are not identical at the outset.

The mediator is a benevolent and facilitating third party who helps two people in conflict to re-establish a calm dialogue in order to find, together, a common ground and a solution to their dispute. From the perspective of a School of Happiness, this approach, which is based on the values of mutual respect and fairness, and on the skills of listening, caring, collaboration and empathy, is undoubtedly in line with the main thrusts of the initiatives promoted by the Happiness Week at school.

Encouraging children to become aware of their strengths and the resources they possess within them to grow, overcome their fears, manage their emotions and find their place among others; developing their capacity for attention and availability to the present moment, in order to devote themselves to the pleasure of learning in a "mindful" way; encouraging altruistic behaviors, leading to mutual aid, recognition of others and gratitude... It is to inscribe the children's journey in a positive dynamic of development, favorable to their equilibrium, their well-being and their happiness.

To implement this beautiful project, we must stop opposing the objective of academic success to that of well-being at school and free initiatives. Mediators observe every day the close link between the quality of human relations and the work environment, on the one hand, and academic performance, on the other. They know that for students, as well as for pupils, academic suffering, lack of attention and trust from adults, material and psychological discomfort, and conflicts with peers lead to a loss of self-esteem and a feeling of insecurity that paralyzes them and can prevent them from succeeding in their studies and, later, in their lives. This is a reality that needs to be brought to light and taken seriously if we want to improve the results of the school system, through a more global and human approach to individuals.

All the actors of the educational community will be able to benefit from the discovery and sharing of the initiatives presented in the framework of this "happiness at school week", and beyond that, we wish them to engage themselves in the invention and development of new projects that can be carried out at their level.

*Catherine Becchetti-Bizot
Mediator for National Education and Higher Education*

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