



# School Day Application and Creativity to Support the Wellbeing of a Student

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## School Day Application and Creativity to Support the Wellbeing of a Student

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**Abstract** 

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The purpose of my thesis is to study how special education students with different disabilities in learning and/ or behavioral issues can be supported by using different exercises in teaching of social and emotional skills, social emotional learning, creativity and School Day Application. The thesis consists of a theoretical framework of social relationships, understanding social problems, crisis and traumas together with different teaching skills. My target group for the thesis is 4th grade special education students. My aim was to explore different ways to support the students` learning by using different activities such as the School Day Application, social and emotional skills exercises and creativity to help the students` to help the students` learning and wellbeing. My thesis was descriptive.

Literature review in form of qualitative research. My research questions in my thesis were: How can I help special education students learn better by using creativity and School Day Application in my teaching? How can I support the wellbeing of special education students by using different exercise in teaching? The information research for my thesis was done by using different social services books from the library and through School Day Application data basis. Analyzing content was done by reviewing literature. By overviewing the results, I found out how to help special education children to get better wellbeing and learn more by using different exercises and School Day Application. The students develop more when teachers support the child's own wellbeing, curiosity and the way the students learn their best. An important factor was to take the students learning progress into consideration individually. The co-operation between families and school is very important to support the students `individuality and development.

Keywords: Special education, School Day Application, Social and Emotional Skills, Learning, Creativity

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#### 1 Introduction

In my Thesis I researched how the School Day Application and creativity helps a special education child to improve their wellbeing, learning, social and emotional skills and social relationships throughout the school semester. I will examine how the application helps me as an instructor at work to see the main points where help is needed the most.

Wellbeing at school helps children in their studies as they are more motivated, their stress level is lower, they are more efficient at working with their studies. A student who feels good with themselves gets better results in their studies. It is easier to cope with a lot of schoolwork as they feel better. Creativity helps the child to get their emotions out of their system, so it is easier for them to work more peacefully and get their work done.

Better social relationships, wellbeing, learning and social and emotional skills are improved as we know more what every pupil needs. Wellbeing of a child is a very important issue. We can help the pupil to feel good about themselves by having good co-operation within their families and school. It is said that many children suffer of distress during this time of the Covid pandemic. Loneliness and depression as well as more violence, school bullying, drug abuse and inequality has grown among young people as seen from the advocates eyes from big cities as Vantaa, Turku, Tampere and Jyväskylä (Ilta-Sanomat 11.2.2022).

Therefore, I wanted to study children's wellbeing, learning, social and emotional skills and social relationships by using the School Day Application as well as how creativity makes a pupil feel better with themselves.

#### 2 Theoretical framework

#### 2.1 Wellbeing of Students

Wellbeing is a very important issue in everyday life but especially in schools where there are lots of young people in a crowd and children from many different cultural backgrounds. Wellbeing helps the pupil's self-esteem to grow and the way the pupil sees themselves in front of others. Wellbeing is the key issue in good mental health and learning. When the pupil feels feel good about themselves, it is shown to others as well and their social relationships thrive. Loneliness, depression and school bullying for example have grown and it's been seen by the eyes of advocates. Terveyden-ja hyvinvointilaitos has made a questionnaire every other year in municipalities. The questionnaire shows that almost every 20th pupil suffers of bullying weekly in schools, especially girls, who are fourth- or fifth graders. Bullying has grown in the

last two years it now being 8 %. (THL-kouluterveyskysely, 2021. Ilta-Sanomat/ Kotimaa 1.4. 2021. Lauri Nuoska & Timo Paunonen)

THL head of development Jenni Helenius is saying that Corona is one reason of why bullying has grown. The questionnaire tells us that many students feel much worse than before. They have been feeling lonelier, it has been harder to study, and they have had mental problems. Jenni Helenius thinks that the pupil's own insecurity and bad feelings of themselves can be shown as bullying others. Girls seem to be left outside more from groups of friends than boys. Girls get more insults through face expressions and spreading lies. Bullying can be more of a silent way and happening through the internet.

Boys tend to suffer of bullying more when they get to upper school than in lower school. As girls feel more that they are left alone, boys feel more physical threats, about 17 %. Girls feel about 11 % physical threats. Helenius is telling that bullying of boys is showing more because it's kicking, threatening, stealing and pushing or using violence. The study shows that the percentual numbers differ more in small municipalities. Places such as Kuortane, Kaavi, Petäjävesi, Tervola and Urjala are municipalities where bullying has grown about 10 % or even more.

This questionnaire has got delightful feedback from example Alavieska as they have been using a program called Kiva school, which is an antibullying program used in several schools. It efficiently intervenes in bullying and monitors the bullying situations.

The head of local education and wellbeing, Tuulia Säkkinen from Alavieska, is saying that antibullying starts from home. The whole family should do co-operation. 200 000 students answered the questionnaire in 2021 of THL. (THL-kouluterveyskysely, 2021. Ilta-Sanomat/ Kotimaa 1.4.2021. Lauri Nuoska & Timo Paunonen)

#### 2.1.1 Why Wellbeing is Such an Important Thing in a School?

We could look at this question in many ways, think of the disadvantages and positive things in this procedure of what is going on in schools and social relationships of the teachers and staff as well. Wellbeing is important because of the students at school and children everywhere. Teacher should try to get the best out of the students by helping and encouraging them as well as they can. Try to find different ways to maintain a positive way of learning and wellbeing at school. Caring teachers help students feel better of themselves. (Dewey, J. 1987, 77-80)

Traditionally schools have focused on the current needs of the student's graduation or terms. These short-term things fall short when thinking of how the pupils benefit of these as we

should think of wellbeing's advantages for their whole future. Research shows that happy people live longer, have less illnesses, do not do so many crimes, are productive with good ideas, have good jobs and work hard, earn more and help other people. (Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R. 2011, 20)

As school is a place for everyone at some point in our lives, school has all the potential to share wellbeing issues through educating the pupils. Motivation towards learning increases through wellbeing, fewer problems with conduct, communities and nations. (Buecker et al., 2018. Buecker, S., Nuraydin, S., Simonsmeier, B., Schneider, M.& Luhmann, M., 83-94) Wellbeing has been found to make academic learning better in many different areas. Gratitude and hope give the students positivity and they overcome negative failures in a better way. As a student is happy in school and gets along with teachers and make themselves goals to reach, they adjust to school peers and wellness is more assured. (Furlong, Gilman, & Huebner, 2014. Furlong, M.J., Gilman, R.& Huebner, E.S. 2014, 366)

Wellbeing is an issue that also teachers would wish for their students as the results of learning are better as wellness is higher. Students get more done, are more efficient, more motivated, interact more with teachers. They face fewer challenges as wellbeing is higher. Both students and teachers are more likely not suffering from distress as they feel better. (Bentea, 2017. Bentea, C. 2017, 1128-1136) Wellbeing is not growing by itself. We need to norture wellbeing so that students know that they can control their own wellbeing. (Shawn Achor. 2010. Achor, S. 2010, 17-18)

#### 2.1.2 Mental Health is the Foundation of Wellbeing

Mental health is wellbeing as it gives meaning to life, joy, self-confidence, good feelings and relationships. The Worlds` Health Organization, WHO (2010) defines wellbeing as a person who can see his own abilities and can face challenges and cope with them. The person can be in contact with his community and work well. There are many points that affect the persons mental health that can be cultural, social, individual or societal. As heritage and temper are given by birth, the way a child is raised up influence the persons self-confidence and identity.

The mental health of a student goes hand by hand with the co-operation of school, home and environment. The pupil-student law (Oppilas-ja opiskelijahuoltolaki 1287/ 2013) helps the students to get different services for mental health issues. There are a school psychologist, social services worker, and school nurse that the pupils can go and talk about mental health problems and get the help needed in time.

Mental health is said to be a two-way thing. (Herron & Mortimer 2000, Heiskanen 2006. 44) have done a model of mental health, where there are two different ways to look at mental health. The other model talks about mental illnesses and the other model shows how mental

illness increases mental health. A person has either more mental illness or more of mental health. The model shows that a person can have both mental health and mental illness at the same time and mental health can differ through life. (Hannukkala, M., Korhonen, E., Ruuskanen, U., Törrönen, S. 2011, 160)

As a student feels good about himself, it is easier to study. Having good emotional health, a student is happy, full of life and feels good about many areas in life. He listens to himself and what he needs both psychologically and mentally. He knows his own strengths and can express feelings. Through psychological wellbeing a student knows the meaning of life, his own student growth, accepts who he is and feels he can live according to his own norms. He knows he can affect in many areas of life and controls his own living. He has a good everyday life, friends, good self-confidence and knows how to cope in all situations. He can express his own opinions. Corey Keyes (2005) feels that a person can be kept healthy from his mind as he feels good psychologically, socially and emotionally. As all these sides influence a person's health. (Keyes. 2007, 95-108. Keyes, C.2005, 539-548)

Social wellbeing of a student is shown as he has positive thinking towards all kinds of people regardless of the student's background. The student participates to the school community and is active in groups. The student is interested of social life and his environment. He has good relationships with friends.

#### 2.1.3 Inner and Outer Factors of Mental Health

In the book Mielenterveys voimaksi by Erkko, A. & Hannukkala, M. (2013. 49-62), mental health is defined by safe factors and risk factors. These factors are still defined by inner- and outside factors. Inner safe factors for a student are taking care of himself, express feelings, be able to solve problems, maintain good friendships, accept himself and feel accepted by others, heritage and social relationships.

Inner risk factors would be vulnerable self-confidence, bad relationships towards others, feeling helpless, isolating oneself, biological factors and illnesses. Outer factors that would be safe factors are that the student goes to school, family and friends the ability to seek for help when needed, safe environment, work and being heard by others. Outer risk factors are bullying violence, losses, drug abuse, bad living environment, psychological dis factors or exploitation.

#### 2.1.4 Promoting of Mental Wellbeing at School

Promoting of mental wellbeing at school is to try to prevent issues like bullying, violence, conflicts and mental bad feelings. World Health Organization (WHO) defines schools that promote good mental health to be a school where all the teachers and staff work together towards better health issues. The preventing work should show through the whole school community, whole class and preventing the risk factors of individual students. School should work more towards a safe environment, communality, good relationships and complicity. At school, teachers can keep classes of good mental health. The School Day Application promotes better wellbeing at school as the students can give their own side of view and opinions about schoolwork. In schools are taught subjects that support better mental health example arts and crafts.

As the school brings routines and stability to the student's life, a teacher can promote good wellbeing by keeping the classes atmosphere cozy and nice. The teacher can give time to discuss about conflicts and disappointments at school. The student keeps up the joy of learning and coming to school as the environment is trustworthy and emotionally safe. The teacher is a significant person to the student. WHO. (2012). Prevention and promotion in mental health. Geneva: World Health Organization. WHO. 2010. Mental Health: Strengthening our response. Geneva: World Health Organization. WHO.1986. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Geneva: World Health Organization.

A school has many chances to promote the wellbeing of a student. The community of the school, health care group for the students, parents and other significant people around the student have a big impact on the student's life. School can support the wellbeing of the student by giving support, by co-operating with families, take care that school has a safe learning environment and if bullying occurs, school staff immediately intervenes in the situation. Offers creative ways to learn for the students. The teacher can practice skills for good mental health and social-emotional skills with her class. Enough support should be given to all students. (Mielenterveyden edistäminen kouluissa, 2013. Työpaperi 24/2013. MHP Hands Consortium ja THL)

A very important issue are adults' problems, children's misery, childhood and later wellbeing. When children are born, they are usually the healthiest in the world, when they are born but as young people, they are not feeling so good anymore. Youngsters seem to have more problems. Poverty, inequality, unemployment and the number of children as clients in social services have grown after the year 2000. It is said that the problems of adults are also problems of children, issues do effect on a child's life. Wellbeing of a child is created as children are young. Biological, psychical and social environment as well as heritage have a major impact to the child. As children learn things from their family and from school, we should be good

role models to them. As problems get big can a pupil be socially excluded. Therefore, we should see at school that the child feels good and try to help them in early days when seen that their wellbeing is going to the wrong direction. The more risk factors a child has, the more they fall from their studies and might get mental problems, which can affect a student's life even later in life. As looking at the problems of a child in wellbeing from any angle, it is seen that there are always the same risk factors found. (Reivinen J., Vähäkylä L. Kansan Terveys, Yksilön Hyvinvointi. 2012, 37-51)

Mental wellbeing is very important. Physical and psychological wellness is something we need to be keeping in balance so that even the children that suffer of poverty and do not have so good basis from early childhood, would still be able to keep their wellbeing and studies in progress. (Paananen.R, Eriksson.J, Santalahti.P, Solantaus.T, Taanila.A & Gissler.M. 2012, 37-51)

As it is said that the child's mothers' depression and drug abuse is affecting the lives of many children and therefore also students' wellbeing suffers. I can see this is places of social services and schools where I have worked. Children seem to have many different mental health issues from a very young age on. We do need more workers in schools who can deal with the issues the students have before they get too huge. Many schools do not have enough psychologists for example in Vantaa city schools and the ques are very long to mental care health stations. There are many students who do well but many who seem to be not wanting to go to school as seen from the side of social services. There are many issues going worse at children's homes that have a bad impact on them. We should work harder to get children's wellness better. (www.vantaa.fi)

#### 2.1.5 Wellbeing Chart of Finland

Finland has been listed in a chart where there are fifteen top countries of societies wellbeing-index from the year 2005 until year 2010. In the Quality-of-Life index (2005) Finland is 12th, Satisfaction with Life (2006) 6th, United Nations Development Index (2009) 12th, Happy Life Years (2009) 9th, Prosperity Index (2009) 1st, Competitiveness Index (2010) 7th and Sustainable Society Index (2010) 5th.

Finland is doing well in many different charts but still we see that not all are doing so well in real life. These lists have been made with different research groups example United Nations indexes. Satisfaction with Life-index has been done by the University of Leicester about the wellbeing of people. In Finland many do well but we still have a lot of inequality and differences between the wellbeing of our communality. (Saari, Juho (toim.) 2005, 62-68)

Wellbeing and health have been said going together hand by hand. They might be giving wrong results for us as they are close to each other when they have been researched. Laaksonen & Silventoinen (2011) have done research of differences in health, as at the same time wellbeing has been researched less. (Laaksonen, M & Silventoinen, K. 2011, 11-25)

#### 2.1.6 Research Projects of Wellbeing in Finland

As Finland went to the European Union (EU) in 1995, there has been two different research projects made, one of Turku University of social politics in 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010, which has a wide questionnaire of the wellbeing in Finland. It has been called KONSE- material, which measures poverty of people. These materials give researchers many chances to do researching of poverty and unwellness. (Kangas, O& Ritakallio, V-M.2005. Köyhyyden teoria ja käytäntö. Teoksessa Saari, Juho (toim.), 28-62)

Social- and Health Organization and Research Unit, STAKES from year 2010, THL has been collecting wellness material since year 2002, which has knowledge of wellbeing. It has been important material of wellbeing in Finland from the beginning of 2010. These wellbeing research give us fine knowledge of wellbeing of students as well from a wide aspect and of many years onward. (Vaarama, M., Karvonen, S., & Moisio, P. (toim.) 2010, 30-43)

Martha Nussbaum, the newer of Aristotelian ethics says: if we are going to survive as species and as a planet, we must check wellbeing and justice multiculturally and combined with each other. She feels that the way justice is seen as it is not taken seriously and if the frame of references not taken into review, is the understanding of justice incomplete and somehow left behind. (Nussbaum, Martha C. 1990. Aristotelian Social Democracy. Teoksessa Douglass, B., Gerald M. Mara & Henry S. Richardson (toim), 207-208, 203-252)

I feel that we must think of wellbeing as a part of the whole world. We should take care of everyone's needs and look after each other. From the student's side of a view, us educators we must give one all the knowledge to try to help the students feel better and try to shine in school life just the way they are.

#### 2.2 Social and Emotional Skills

Social and emotional skills are very important when talking about mental health. It helps a student to create and maintain good co-operation skills with others as they can express their own feelings in a good manner. It is known that when students are not allowed to express their feelings, it can cause them stress and psychical illnesses. When a student has emotional

intelligence, he usually has social intelligence and cognitive skills. He recognizes his own feelings but also other students' feelings and can easily solve problems that might overcome. A student with good social and emotional skills can easily express his feelings to others. When having good social and emotional skills, it is easy to be with others. It is easy to listen, do cooperation, help others and build contacts. (Isokorpi, T. 2004, 129)

Emotional intelligence is divided by four different competence areas.1) Self-awareness, where the student recognizes his own feelings and has confidence towards himself.

- 2) Self-management, where the student can handle his own feelings, is flexible, has optimism and ambition.
- 3) Social awareness, the student has empathy and is happy to help others.
- 4) Relationship management, the student is an inspirational leader in a group, wants to do cooperation with others and make changes and can control conflicts. (<a href="https://explorinyour-mind.com/salovey-mayers-emotional-intelligence-theory/">https://explorinyour-mind.com/salovey-mayers-emotional-intelligence-theory/</a>, Mayer, J.D, & Solovey, P, 3-31, Goleman, D., Boyatzis. & McKee, A. 2002, 40-48)

Students can be taught emotional skills in schools. Skills can be practiced with different tasks. The student should be able to knowledge his own feelings and express them with words. These tasks can be taken further to knowledge other students' feelings, listen to others, create empathy and try to know how to control all different kinds of feelings the child's own or others. (Kullberg-Piilola, T. 2005, 12-16, 64-66)

As educators we can teach the students better when we can easily express our own feelings and name them. Students can be pushed further to face their own feelings. We should get to know why a student behaves like they do when their expressions are rough, what is behind these feelings. We must take care of our own wellbeing and control our feelings also in cooperating with the students and their families. We must know when to guide a student-to-student welfare services and get us enough guidance from our work to be able to give teaching of social and emotional skills to the students. (Salovaara, R.& Honkonen, T.2008, 14), (Lankinen, M. 2011, 121)

Social and emotional skills can be taught in schools by using different exercises. These practices are especially good to use with special education children, who might have lots of problems with their conduct. The student understands that all emotions are accepted but he should be able to control his own feelings.

#### 2.2.1 Throw A Smile

I have tried different exercises with my student's example Throw a Smile. The aim of this exercise is to practice how to express feelings. The students and teacher sit in a circle. The teacher catches a feeling on her face ex. happiness. After a while she wipes the feeling away and throws it to a student, who does the same as the teacher first did. The game is continued if we want to change to another feeling.

#### 2.2.2 Emotions in an Elevator

The aim in this exercise is to get happiness and be free to express everyone's own feelings in a group. The teacher puts on music and students freely move with the music on. When a bell rings or music stops, the students go to small groups and make a still-position of emotional happenings in an elevator. The emotions can be anything ex. a student, who has had misconduct and has to go to talk to the principal or a happy student, who is getting a stipend. This exercise can be played if wanted with different tasks of emotions. Feeling can also be taught by music and painting for example. (Salovaara, R& Honkonen, T.2008, 14)

Suomen Mielenterveysliitto has a chart of emotion clouds that have different feelings. These can also be used in teaching emotions, social skills and feelings towards other children ex. Sadness, happiness, anger, hate, embarrassment or surprise. (https://mieli.fi)

#### 2.2.3 Feelings Diary

I have done an exercise with students called Feeling Diary from a book called Tunnetaidot voimavarana opas Sosiaali-ja terveysalalle. We did it with the class for a week, diary like. The students wrote about their feelings into a diary. After the week we looked at the results, which feelings came up often and in which kind of situations the feelings came up with. Which feelings seemed to be hard/easy. Which feelings were easy to recognize and express and which were not? Which were hold back, which helped the students to express different changed feelings. This was a good reflection of the child's feelings. Also, colors could be used for this kind of diary, if words are hard to write down or use. (Seppänen, M. 2021, 46-47)

I also did an exercise with a 45-minute lesson plan for grade 4 of emotional skills. We discussed who had felt stressed this year and how children could control their stress. We made a mind map on the whiteboard, and everyone could throw out ideas. We talked about different options we could use when we feel stress. Many students said that nature and animals help them to lose stress. The lesson went well since all students could say out loud, what stresses them, and all could give ideas how to avoid stress. (www.schoolday.com)

#### 2.3 Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional skills can be taught in many ways by using different exercises. According to Kanninen & Sigfrids (2012) there are five steps to face the child's feelings.

#### 1) Facing and Recognizing Feelings

The educator should recognize his own feelings first, then observe how the student expresses his feelings with facial expressions or body movement. Feelings can be shown through play or exercises. The student can express feelings by acting them out. The teacher can put himself in the position of the child and think how the student would think in situations. Recognizing feelings is the base for the next step.

#### 2) Environment for Feeling Expressions

The teacher approves the students' feelings and honors them. The educator is near and available for the child. The teacher encourages the student to talk about his feelings and teaches the child to name, explore and understand his feelings. The educator teaches ways for the students to calm down when needed. The teacher anticipates situations before they start arriving. Good co-operation is the way to deal with situations occurring.

#### 3) Listening and Strengthening the Students Feelings

The teacher stops to listen to the student with empathy and tells the child in his own way what he heard the child say. He must breathe, relax and focus. He must put himself on a position of the child and let the child talk until the end. He must look at the students' eyes, nod and still listen to extra questions.

#### 4) Naming and Finding Solutions that Work

Name the students feelings, it makes the child calm down. Figure out what's behind every feeling. Tutor and help the student understand that feelings can change, and he can have more than one feeling at a time. Talk about feelings and give examples in everyday school life.

#### 5) Negotiating and Finding Solutions that Work

When the student is acting badly in a way that he shouldn't, help the child to recognize his feelings. Tell the child that it's not the feelings that are the problem in this situation but the behavior that the child chooses in this moment. Explain why the student's act is forbidden and is not acceptable. Think together with the student, what kind of behavior is accepted and try to figure out solutions and choices for different behavioral problems. You can estimate

the functionality and effects of the choices together, which works for the student. (Kanninen, K.& Sigfrids, A., 2012, 180-190)

Through positive pedagogy children can be taught in a good way. Leskisenoja (2019, 19) reviews positive pedagogy by PERMA-theory, where positive emotions, commitment, caring relationships, meaningful activities and experiences of succeeding are the basis of good wellbeing and learning. (Leskisenoja, E. 2019, 19) Uusitalo-Malmivaara, L&Vuorinen, K (2017) feel that strengthening pedagogy is important as the child learns better when he is understood more by personality traits. (Uusitalo-Malmivaara&Vuorinen 2017,19).

Defined positive pedagogy used in teaching children as five suppositions.

#### 1) Communality and Positiveness

They strengthen the social relationships of the students and support the wellbeing and learning of the students.

#### 2) Complicity

The child is understood as an active member of his own life.

#### 3) Positive Thoughts

It is thought that positive feelings support the learning, motivation and wellness of a student.

#### 4) Strengths

To strengthen the child's own strengths, should promote the students learning and develop the student's co-operation and social relationships.

#### 5) Co-Operation with Parents

Co-operation with families develops understanding of the students learning, growth and development. Support and modes of operation that take the child's strengths into account are the key for good learning. (Kumpulainen, K., Mikkola, A., Rajala, A., Hilppö, J. & Lipponen, L. 2014, 224-242) Within research is found out that the use of problem-based pedagogy has developed students' co-operation skills in a group. (Karttunen 2008, 34).

Research results show that giving support and cheers in groupwork is felt to be important. (Rowan, McCourta, Bicka & Beakea 2007,131-138), (Jauhiainen, A.& Pulkkinen, R. 2009.PBL yhteisöllisyyden ja työnilon lähteenä. Negotiating Problem-Based Learning. The 9th Finnish Problem-Based Learning Conference 3.4.2009.), (Karttunen, P. 2008. Opiskelijoiden kokemukset ongelmaperustaisen oppimisen eduista ja haitoista. Teoksessa Tuomi. (toim.) Kokemuksia

ja tutkimuksia ongelmaperusteisesta oppimisesta hoitotyön koulutuksessa. Pirkanmaan ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisusarjaa. Tutkimukset ja selvitykset. NRO13. Tampere: Pirkanmaan ammattikorkeakoulu, 225-235.), (Jauhiainen, A. 2012. Yhteisölliseti oppien parempiin tuloksiin. Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulu. Kopijyvä 2012.)

I have tried self-studying with my students. A lesson plan was made through <a href="https://www.schoolday.com">www.schoolday.com</a>. The core competences practiced were self-awareness and self-management. The students got to participate to the lesson so that I drew a vertical line down the middle of the whiteboard, wrote Positives of studying at home on one side and Negatives of studying at home on the other side. We discussed the questions and wrote the answers to the correct heading. The students answered good environment and no bullying for example to positives and for negatives were loneliness and boredom. We discussed these situations.

Individual work was to set weekly self-studying goals and see after the week whether the goals got achieved. The students drew jars and labeled each goal about studying by themselves. They colored in the jars if they achieved their goal.

After the week we talked about the set goals, how it's easier to focus on studies and learn how they can best study individually. Every week we then set new goals. We reflect on other students' goals as well and got more out of learning. We discussed the questions and wrote the answers to the correct heading. The student answered a good environment, no bullying for example. Negatives were loneliness and boring. We discussed these situations.

Individual work was to set weekly self-studying goals and see after the week whether the goals got achieved. The students drew jars and labeled each goal about studying by themselves. They colored in the jars if they achieved their goal. After the week we talked about the set goals, how it is easier to focus on studies and learn how they can best study individually. Every week new goals. We reflect on other students' goals as well and get more out of learning.

#### 2.4 Social Relationships of Students and Teachers

Samuli Ranta has made a VEPP-circle to define more about the positive pedagogy for daycares and teaching. This Vepp, Varhaiskasvatuksen ja esiopetuksen positiivinen psykologia helps also educators and adults to see the positive things in building good relationships. I could use this VEPP-circle in my teaching. With positiveness we get better results in wellbeing and relationships. Using VEPP-circle, which is a tool for estimating in positive psychology, we can think of our own way of acting in our relationships. Vepp-circle could help us in daily life at schools as well. (Ranta, S. 2021, 22, 191)

As discrimination is an issue in many schools, VEPP could help the students to see each other in another way. Behind discrimination can usually be that student's character or appearance differs from others example ethnic background, opinions, social class or sexuality. In schools the other children might bully in different ways like using facial expressions or physical violence. The student who is bullied can feel unworthiness or doesn't want to participate in activities because of unsafetiness. (Flowers, N. 2012,112-114)

Many times, ignorance and prejudice are found behind discrimination. Students, who have difficulties in learning or social relationships might more easily be bullied. A shy student can be unsure to offend himself. The students that bully quite often don't understand what kind of effects their bullying might do to others. The educator is in a big role that bullying wouldn't happen or at least continue. (Souto, A.-M. 2011,114)

#### 2.5 Creativity

Recent books that describe art-based research by social work scholars and those in other professional human service fields, such as education and psychology (Heinonen, T., Halonen, D., Krahn, E. 2019, 27) Demonstrates the many ways in which visual and other expressive art methods can be framed and applied and how such methods can offer new perspectives and insights in research (Heinonen, T., Halonen, D., Krahn, E. 2019, 27) Creativity can be used in teaching students in many ways. It can be more than arts based. Creativity can be shown in a person himself and we can create creativity using almost anything.

In the book Hyvää Mieltä Yhdessä, Käsikirja alakoululaisen mielenterveyden edistämiseen (Nurmi. R, Sillanpää. A & Hannukkala. M. 2014). It teaches educators to use music in teaching wellbeing and controlling feelings, sports to support wellbeing, social skills and social relationships, about movies to keep up good mental health, arts for mental health and storytelling for mental healthiness. (Nurmi. R, Sillanpää. A & Hannukkala. M. 2014, 150-165)

Music is being played at and listened to in all cultures. Feelings can be shown through music, and it brings joy and happiness to people. Some music can also bring thoughts of fear. Many people can handle their emotions better through music and it helps students to face and cope in hard situations. Music develops wellbeing and it gives our brains work so that it helps our memory and relieves stress. Through music a student can get in touch with the inner part of himself. Music is a way to bring people together by expressing everyone's own feelings and understand other people's feelings better.

Music can be used in the class with special education children because it helps the child to focus and relax to what he is doing, so he can concentrate better. Music can be songs, playing and practicing social and emotional skills. Sports is important for a special education student. It supports the growing of a child, but it also helps the students to concentrate in learning

new things. Sports helps the students to sleep better, find good social relationships and it's good for motor skills, which improve balance of a child with special needs. (Nurmi. R, Sillanpää. A & Hannukkala. M. 2014, 154)

Movies help students to reflect their own lives, make a deep dive to different emotions. Movies are very good to help the practicing of emotional skills. They help to figure out what is fair and good in life and what isn't so appropriate. Wellbeing can grow as students watch nice teaching movies. Arts is very creative, and it consists of many different things as moving pictures, symbols, metaphors. It can cause different emotions and feelings. Through arts, sadness, grief, happiness can all be dealt with. Arts can be made by drawing, writing, painting, crafts and they help a special education child with motor skills of hands and brains, and it helps them to relax. ((Nurmi. R, Sillanpää. A & Hannukkala. M. 2014, 158, 163)

Story telling as a creativity method can help dealing with issues of mental health and emotional skills. Stories help special education children to learn reading and writing skills. Stories can help to clear the mind of a child when having misery and they make them feel safer. Stories give a child comfort and wellness, strengthen their coping in life. Stories help to solve issues when having conflicts and calms a student, helps them to deal with questions brought up example if bullied. ((Nurmi. R, Sillanpää. A &Hannukkala. M. 2014, 164)

Arts can help people through arts therapy, music therapy, dance and other forms of therapy. Meta-analysis which views different forms of arts therapy do reduce example depression, anxiety, pain and improve the way of life of a cancer patient. This shows us that different kinds of creativity help us in many ways. (Puetz., Morley., & Herring. 2013, 960-969)

#### 2.6 Special Education Students

Special education students in schools are in small groups of children, who have either special needs in learning, behavioral issues or both. Some illnesses make it hard for the student to sit down in their own place and concentrate. It is harder to learn when the child can't relax well in school and feels unsure of himself. Usually, a special education class has about 6-10 children with a special education teacher and a school assistant but not all classes get an assistant.

The children that go to special education class usually have a lack in motor skills, social skills, cognitive skills, language- and communication skills or everyday life skills. Every child is made up with their own HOJKS, learning program, together with families, teacher and other staff for example speech- or physiotherapist, arts therapist, school social worker, psychologist, nurse and principal. (https://sivistysvantaa.fi)

The children might have Add, Attention deficit disorder or Adhd, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A student with Adhd has inattentiveness, impulsity and hyperactivity or might be a combination of these.

ADD student is often distracted, forgetful, can't pay attention, is hard to concentrate on things, has trouble understanding instructions, has difficulties in managing time and staying organized. His daily routines should be in order. (<a href="https://www.webmd.com/add-adhd">https://www.webmd.com/add-adhd</a>) A nepsy-child might have problems with learning, behaving, challenges with motor skills and sleeping. He can have mood-swings, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder and sensitivity in senses. (<a href="https://www.tampere.fi/sosiaali-ja-terveyspalvelut/lapsiperheiden-palve-lut/nepsy/vaikeudet.html">https://www.tampere.fi/sosiaali-ja-terveyspalvelut/lapsiperheiden-palve-lut/nepsy/vaikeudet.html</a>)

Autism- autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disorder with symptoms that appear within the first three years of the child's life. It's a developmental disability, which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. (<a href="www.autism.org/what-is-autism">www.autism.org/what-is-autism</a>)

#### Multidisciplinary developmental disorder

When a child has problems in many different areas of development and it's hard to give a sure diagnosis, the child often gets a diagnosis of multidisciplinary developmental disorder. (<a href="https://www.hus.fi/hoidot-ja-tutkimukset/kehityshairiot-ja-oppimisvaikeudet">https://www.hus.fi/hoidot-ja-tutkimukset/kehityshairiot-ja-oppimisvaikeudet</a>). Students with any of these problems get help in learning in a special education class.

#### 3 School Day Application

School Day application was taken into use in every school in Vantaa this year 2022. The online training was done on the 31st of August. It is supposed to offer current knowledge of the well-being of students (pipsa.tilli@vantaa.fi). First School Day application was introduced to the leaders/ principals of the school. They had online training as a virtual kick-off with the School Day team. The principal then introduced the School Day application to the teachers and other staff example the school councelor, social workes, psychologist and school nurse. The teachers got virtual guidance of the School Day application and what is the meaning of this application. They got to find out how they can use this application in their daily work routine as a teacher.

The principal needed to arrange a time with the teachers for training. From my work place only a few teachers took the training course and filled us all others in of how to use this application. We got the guidance material for the School Day application into our email. We

then decided the date when we all started to use this application. The principal can always contact the <a href="mailto:support@schoolday.com">support@schoolday.com</a> or <a href="mailto:sww.schoolday.com">www.schoolday.com</a> if needed in any issues or problems using the application.`` The motto of School Day Application is Be Well, Learn Better.``Then we introduced it to our students by watching a virtual guidance introduction of the application. It taught us all how to use it.

#### 3.1 School Day Information Sheet for The Teachers And Staff

We teachers and staff got an information sheet before starting to use the School Day application. It said that we have decided to start using this School Day Wellness service at our school. The School Day application will be asking questions of the pupils wellbeing, analyzing the given data and will offer knowledge that is current and solutions to improve the wellbeing of the child that is easily exploited. The principal will tell you the date when we are starting to use this School Day application in our school.

You can familiarize yourselves with this application and get instructions for use, which will be going step-by-step from <a href="www.schoolday.com/resurssit">www.schoolday.com/resurssit</a>. It will take you about 15 minutes to take this application into use as you follow the instructions. The first feedback and instructions will be showing to you right away on the becoming Monday on the Insights-service.

If you should have any questions or you think you need more help, we recommend to get to know the webpages of School Day from <a href="www.schoolday.com">www.schoolday.com</a> or be in contact by email to the customer support, <a href="support@schoolday.com">support@schoolday.com</a>.

#### 3.2 School Day Information Sheet for The Guardians

We sent an information sheet talking about the School Day application to the families, which said. We have started the use of School Day Wellness Service at our school. This application is a tool for us teachers to improve the wellbeing of the student and to help the pupils and the teachers to understand how wellbeing has an effect in learning. The main goal of this service is to get better understanding of how our students are doing and what we could do better to develop the environment of the school, which helps learning.

The students will be answering different questions of wellbeing through the School Day application. They will be picking up the best fitting emoji of how they are feeling during the answering phase. It is easy and quick to answer these questions once a week. Teachers are leading the answering lessons.

The questions will be from different themes: Learning, Social-Emotional Skills, Social Relationships and Wellbeing. The themes of the questions will be based on the School Day Wellness model, which is the result of a 30-year scientific research of student's wellbeing.

The answers are always anonymous. Property of the school and they are safe on the Microsoft Azure cloud, which is information secure. It depends on the rights based of an individual in this service as the staff of the school can analyze the given data either as a whole class or the whole school. Nobody will have access to the personal data of a student.

The School Day application can be downloaded to the pupils own phone or can be used with a protected website with any computer. The students will be using their own given emails from school to enroll themselves to this application.

We are looking forward to getting to advance the wellbeing of our school even better! ( <a href="https://www.schoolday.com">www.schoolday.com</a>)

School Day asks questions of your student's wellbeing and analyzes the answers and offers real-time knowledge of their wellbeing. This service makes groups wellbeing to be seen and known and gives pedagogical solutions and contents to improve wellbeing. This School Day Application helps students, teachers and school community to create a better wellbeing environment for learning. School Day Leader has the key numbers and analytics through the state and school of the School Day Application.

School Day Teacher gets the key numbers and pedagogical solutions to improve wellness. School Day Student gets the wellbeing questions and feedback.

We will start using the School Day Application to understand and teach the students how wellbeing has an impact on learning. We will see and understand better how the students are doing daily. By using this application, we can improve social and emotional skills in the class and different groups. We can solve challenges by using different pedagogical solutions and contents.

School Day works so that the students get questions of their wellbeing in four categories:

- 1) Social and Emotional Skills
- 2) Social Emotional Learning
- 3) Wellness
- 4) Social Relationships

#### 4 Portfolio Format Thesis

My thesis is made in the form of a portfolio. Laurea explains the portfolio as research where the student can immerse oneself in studies that interests her the most (Laurea). The student can start the collecting of materials for the becoming portfolio at anytime of her studies. I was first doing a different kind of thesis together with my classmate, which was supposed to be a functional-based thesis done with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade special education students. It was meant to consist of a Lapland theme involving nature, northern lights, reindeer and relaxing by a fireplace in a way of a multisensory space but because Corona kicked in hard, we had to change our plan. We then decided to nature walks with dogs and cooking through internet, which would have done together with Laurea Espoo as a project work. There were not enough participants to get the project started as we hoped so then we decided to a literature review thesis. It was super hard to find time to do the thesis together with children and work hours that didn't fit to us well so we decided to do the things by ourselves. I like to do things in a creative way so a portfolio thesis suite me well. I wanted to do my thesis involving special education children, creativity and a quite new application School Day, which some schools in Vantaa have started using to get more information about students` wellbeing, learning, social and emotional skills and social relationships. My portfolio consists of pictures and knowledge of School Day Application, games and about wellbeing issues. I used Bulb Portfolio website to finalize my portfolio thesis. Bulb Portfolio is quite simple to use and after publishing the portfolio, everyone can find the portfolio from the website. My portfolio is found from https://www.bulpapp.com.

#### 5 Reflection

The aim of my portfolio was to introduce the use of School Day Application and the many sides of creativity to use in teaching special education students. To get to know how social-emotional skills and wellbeing help in learning. My plan was to use different websites and books to make a package as a literature review, but I used Bulb-portfolio instead because it was quite easy to use, and I had heard of it before I started to write my thesis. At all times of my process of making the portfolio I have been in contact with my close ones and got good ideas to use from them as well.

I had many pictures that I had taken in the last half-a-year in my phone, but it just broke down before I started to make my portfolio so all the creativity-based photos couldn't be used so I had to change the way of making my thesis. As making my thesis I found out that because the School Day Application is such a new thing in Vantaa schools, not many had heard of it before and there isn't much material to use. Wellbeing, learning, social-emotional skills and social relationships have been researched a lot before so there was much material to use

for those. As I have been working fully at the same time as I have done my thesis, I had to cut out the material so, that I collected all the material that interested me the most. In my thesis I have used research material, theoretical framework, posters, articles and links to the School Day Application for instance.

The making of my thesis has been a long process with all kinds of feelings going on. I am now waiting to get started with my new job in the field of social services as I just get myself graduated.

#### 6 Development Proposals

- 1) Schools should have more career-based workers to overcome lack of good wellbeing example more school psychologists and social services workers.
- Schools should do more co-operative working with families to improve the student's wellbeing.
- 3) More antibullying processes should be used daily in schools.
- 4) Schools should be more supportive and have a good atmosphere so that it would be easy for the students to talk outload of their issues.
- 5) Every school should have a walk-in space where students could go at anytime of the day to chat about anything is bothering them. It would be easier to find out whether a student suffers of stress, anxiety, depression or something else. The walk in would be held by a social services worker.

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Annex 1:/https://bulpapp.com/Chrisu1976/portfolio