SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING MATTERS
Newsletter of ENSEC (European Network on Social and Emotional Competence)
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Welcome!

On behalf of myself, my four co-chairs and our two founding chairs, I would like to welcome you to the 6th ENSEC newsletter.

Even though it seems that the 2013 Conference has just been held and that 2015 is still far away, a call for hosting the next ENSEC conference was announced and we are happy to have received several expressions of interest. As those of you who were involved in conference organisations may know, it takes a lot of time to prepare for such an event, and we will be updating you soon about the decision on the next ENSEC Conference venue.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this newsletter. We would appreciate your comments on it, please bearing in mind that the work of ENSEC is being done by chairs who are all volunteers, and on top of busy jobs.

We would love some interesting features for the next edition. Please send any contributions to me (Carmen_huser@web.de) as a Word document so that it can be cut and pasted – no logos please. And please stick to the 500 words max!

Anxiety and Bullying in Children: Is there a Connection?

Bullying: The impact

Adolescence and childhood are developmental stages marked by rapidly changing and increasing social demands. Shifts in the relative importance of family and peer relationships highlight an increasing emphasis on the acceptance and positive feedback of the peer group (Nestman & Hurrelman, 1994; Cauce, Landesman & Gonzales, 1990).

Bullying historically has been considered to be a normal, frequent part of these early developmental periods (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2009), but more recently has been associated with increased mental health problems (Tolan, 2004). Prevalence rates indicate that bullying experiences peak around ages 12-14, becoming less frequent in later adolescence (Arseneault et al., 2009). Despite the trend of reduced bullying as children age, research suggests that bullying is a stressful experience that negatively impacts both physical and mental health across childhood and adolescence (Due et al., 2005; Tolan, 2004).

Bullying is related to poorer academic, social and relational functioning, regardless of whether the child may be acting as the bully, the victim or both bully and victim (Tolan, 2004). The pattern of problems in functioning differs depending on the role as bully or victim, with behavioural issues more common to bullies and emotional issues more common to victims (Tolan, 2004).

Bullying victimization experiences range from being teased, being pushed or shoved, to being insulted or repeatedly humiliated over the Internet. The experience of cyberbullying may be similar to physical, social or verbal bullying in that the peer group may witness the cyber exchange, and the cyber threat is grounded in an intention to harm the victim (Oakes et al., 2013). However, cyberbullying differs in that the exchange follows the child home (the child reads postings to Facebook, text messages, etc.), can be continuous (Oakes et al., 2013) and in turn, may increase feelings of helplessness for the child (Tokunga, 2010). Cyber, and other social forms of bullying are more often used by girls, while physical bullying is more common for boys (Salmivalli, 2010).

All children involved in bullying, regardless of their role as perpetrator or recipient of bullying, are more likely to have a social and emotional disorder (Kumpulainen, Räsänen, & Puura, 2001). Girls are at particular risk for self-harm behaviours, as well as suicidal ideation and attempts (Arseneault et al., 2009). Children who are chronically victimized are at an increased risk for adopting the roles of bullies themselves (Arseneault et al., 2009). A consistent, strong, graded association has been found across children worldwide between physical and psychological health symptoms and bullying victimization (Due et al., 2005). In

particular, bullying victimization experiences have been found to have considerable negative impacts on social emotional functioning (Tolan, 2004).

The rates of disorder in social-emotional functioning parallel the increasingly complex social spheres and interactions children must navigate into their adolescence. Anxiety disorders are widely acknowledged as the most highly prevalent mental health problem during these developmental periods, and rates of anxiety symptoms steadily increase from childhood through adolescence (Merikangas et al., 2010). Lifetime prevalence rates of anxiety disorders range from 3.8% (Goodman et al., 2002) in ages 5-15, to 31.9% (Merikangas et al., 2010) from ages 13-18.

Anxiety: a unique relationship

The effect of bullying victimization on anxiety appears to be bidirectional (Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010). Children exhibiting anxious, withdrawn behaviours are more likely to become victims of bullies. In turn, children who become victims are more likely to develop internalizing symptoms. This can be a vicious cycle, with anxiety contributing to ongoing victimization experiences (Reijntjes et al., 2010).

Not surprisingly, children who experience social anxiety and those who are victims of bullying share behavioural symptoms, and may be most vulnerable. Symptoms of social anxiety include having few or no close friends, losing interest in or avoiding school, being excluded from social events, and feeling closer connection with adults than peers. Physically, these socially anxious children might express somatic complaints, have sleep problems, and display irritability. Unlike the prevalence rates of bullying which peak at ages 12-14, rates of social anxiety continue to increase from 8% from age 13-14, to 10% from ages 17-18 (Merikangas et al., 2010).

Heightened anxiety is one of several identified risk factors in children for bullying victimization (Arseneault et al., 2009; Reijntjes et al., 2010). Research suggests that bullying victimization can be predicted through a number of individual and family factors (Arseneault et al., 2009). Recognition of the frequency of bullying behaviours, and their contribution to mental health problems has been paralleled with a growing concern from children themselves, their parents, teachers and local authorities (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). This public concern is compounded by the growing body of research on the downstream, long-term consequences for bully victims (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011). Efforts to target bullying through preventative programs in childhood and adolescence are well warranted (Arseneault et al., 2009).

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The Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programme

The Anti-Bullying Ambassador programme is run by the youth charity, the Diana Award. Set up in 2012 the Anti-Bullying Ambassador programme aims to give staff and young people the skills, knowledge and confidence to take a lead on tackling bullying in their schools and communities. Our team visits schools and youth organisations to train young people and staff up to help ensure that the 11,000 hours young people spend at school are safe, happy and supportive. Since April 2013 the programme has trained 4,961 young people in over 436 schools across England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Bullying affects almost half (46%) of children and young people at school at some point in their lives (Tellus4 National Report 2010). Despite an increasing number of young people reporting cyber-bullying (Childline 2013), the programme takes a holistic approach to tackling bullying and recognises that other forms of bullying such as verbal and physical are still rife amongst young people and need just as much attention.

The Anti-Bullying Ambassador programmes believes that young people are the best agents for change and thus adopts a peer-led approach. By showing young people what bullying behaviour looks like, what the different types of bullying are, and giving them tips to reduce bulling they go back to their schools and work to shape the behaviour and culture of their peers, and the school as a whole.

The programme works hard to provide ongoing support to young people and schools after they have been trained including offering resources and opportunities for them to showcase their Anti-Bullying work. You can see some great examples of the programme's Anti-Bullying Ambassadors work here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0oNlrPxXZk Drew Primary School
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wjp7YOgv8z8 Magna Carta Secondary School
tackles homophobic bullying
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6BC-pEDD0A Coombeshead Academy helps
vulnerable students

If you would like to find out more about the Anti-Bullying Ambassador programme, or
find out how you can get involved please email the Information and Support Officer,
Ellie Cooper Eleanor.cooper@diana-award.org.uk. You can also follow the
programme on Twitter @antibullyingpro or visit our website www.antibullyingpro.com

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**Ethical Research Involving Children:
Charter, Compendium, and Interactive Website**

One of our ENSEC members from Australia, Professor Anne Graham at Southern
Cross University, has been working collaboratively with colleagues from UNICEF's
Office of Research, the Childwatch International Research Network and the
University of Otago, to produce very accessible print and web-based resources to
support and improve ethical research involving children and young people. Anne has
provided the following update about this project:

Methods of research involving children are expanding rapidly and changing the way
we think about children and what they have to tell us about issues relevant to their
lives. But how can we ensure these research approaches are ethically sound,
children are respected and their views and perspectives gathered and reported with
integrity? Faced with dilemmas and challenges, researchers often struggle to find
adequate guidance and strategies.

The Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) project brings together the best
thinking internationally about key ethical issues and how these might be addressed
in different research contexts. This extensive evidence is underpinned by an explicit
emphasis on the important role of reflexivity, rights and relationships in progressing
ethical research. Nearly 400 members of the international research and NGO
communities have contributed to this project that has developed a range of
resources to provide clear guidance on ethical issues and concerns that can be
applied in multiple research contexts. The resources include:

- An International Charter for Ethical Research Involving Children;
- A Compendium on ethical issues and challenges, including a collection of
over 20 case studies as well as structured questions to guide ethical research
involving children (called 'Getting Started');
- A website www.childethics.com specifically designed to provide a rich

repository of evidence-based information, resources and links to journal articles to guide and improve research involving children and to provide a platform for further critical reflection and dialogue.

We hope that these resources will support you and your organisation to further develop, enrich and sustain high quality, ethical research that will contribute to improving the lives of children. Please join us in this effort and share your ideas and experience on www.childethics.com

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A European Masters in Social Emotional Competence

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On 18th and 19th November 2013, the University of Malta hosted a meeting where ENSEC members from 5 European countries discussed the possibility of developing a Masters in the area of social emotional competence. Participants were Lii Araste and Kristjan Klauks from Estonia; Davide Antognazza from Switzerland, Aurora Colomeischi from Romania, Carmel Cefai and Natalie Haber from Malta and Knut K. Gundersen from Norway. In addition Kathy Evans from UK, Paul Cooper from Hong Kong, Maria Poulou from Greece and Josipa Mihic from Croaita are also interested in the project but could not join the meeting.

The conclusions from the meeting were:
- In January 2015 the consortium (the 9 partners) will submit an application for EU funding to develop a European Masters in social and emotional competence; Knut K. Gundersen presented a 2year post graduate diploma from Diakonhjemmet University College that may serve as a basis on which to develop the Masters. Malta has offered to lead the project which will start at the end of 2015 and run for two years.
- A preparatory meeting amongst the 9 partner countries will take place in the second week of September 2014 in Romania, making use of pre application EU funds.
- In 2017, once the project is completed, the Masters will then be launched by the consortium at one venue (University of Malta) with the 9 partners contributing to the teaching either face to face or via distance learning (mixed mode learning). This will be international masters and tutors will be paid from the students' registration fee. These include fee, travelling and accommodation expenses.
- All face to face lectures will be in one venue.
- Supervision of dissertations will be by tutors from the different partner countries.

- It is possible that this Masters would be recognized and recommended by ENSEC as the European Masters in Social and Emotional Competence.
- In 2017 a parallel process could be an application for an Erasmus Mundi (Erasmus +) project to hold the Masters for international students (usually third countries), this could be coordinated by a different partner country from the one running the Masters described above.
- Individual partner countries (also other than the consortium) may also in the meantime enter into a bilateral agreement with Diakonhjemmet University College to organize the PG Diploma in Social Competence in their own country, and do a joint research to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes.

Individual partner countries may also enter into bilateral agreements with each other, such as Erasmus staff and student exchange mobility. It was also agreed that there is a need to make use of ENSEC to disseminate information on SEL programmes and packages, with members sharing knowledge and expertise from their own countries. Each member of the consortium is to complete the questionnaire being developed by Paul and Carmel on SEC in Europe.

Interested members of ENSEC can ask Knut to send the curriculum of the postgraduate study. Contact: knut.gundersen@diakonhjemmet.no

TOPIC: "Children, Mental Health-Resilience and Schools: New Trends and Challenges in the Years Ahead"
VENUE: Rethimno, Crete, Greece
DATE: Saturday May 3, 2014

On Saturday May 3, 2014, the University of Crete, the Research Lab of Psychology and the School Psychology Unit of the Preschool Education department are organizing a Spring Conference in Rethimno, Crete, Greece with the title "Children, Mental Health-Resilience and Schools: New Trends and Challenges in the Years Ahead".

The esteemed invited speakers of the conference come from the US, Europe and Greece and they are leaders in mental health, resilience, school psychology, psychoeducational interventions with the youth, community interventions, bullying and violence prevention.

The detailed program of the spring conference will be announced in the website www.edc.uoc.gr in late March 2014.
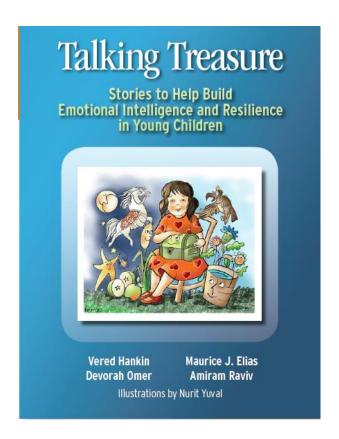
Conference chair: Anastassios MATSOPOULOS,
Ph.D., Ass. Professor of School Psychology and Director of the School Psychology Unit, University of Crete, GREECE
contact email: matsopoulos@gmail.com

Hankin, V., Omer, D., Elias, M.J. & Raviv, A. (2012) *Talking Treasure: Stories to Help Build Emotional Intelligence and Resilience in Young Children*. USA: Research Press

Stories help us make sense of the world, give us hope when we feel down, give us wonder and excitement when our lives seem ordinary, and help us find fairness in a world that sometimes seems unfair. The ten stories in this book are timeless—and each one is followed by a "Parent and Teacher EQ Guide" to help children explore their inner thoughts and feelings.

The guide includes questions and comments to provide insights about the meaning of the story and raises relevant psychological issues, help children think about how the story applies to their lives and sharpen their emotional intelligence, and describes activities children can do so the themes of the story are not only heard but also experienced.

More publications by our members:

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