**RESCUR Curriculum Rationale**

**Developing A Positive Mindset**

**Malta (Carmel, Paul, and Katya)**

Developing a positive mindset to life’s challenges is a key competence in managing such challenges successfully and turning them into opportunities for growth and development (Seligman, Parks and Steen, 2004; Peterson et al, 2007). A quality education that proactively promotes such a mindset in children prevents and minimizes damage when there are threats to the child’s healthy development (Masten & Reed, 2002; Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh, & DiGiuseppe, 2004). A postive mindset as construed in this curriculum includes cognitive processes such as optimistic thinking and positive thinking and self talk, emotional processes such as expressing positive emotions, and behavioural processes such as a sense of humour and mindfulness.

**1. Optimistic thinking.**

Optimism can boost one’s mood and morale, perseverance, problem solving, academic achievement, and health, and has been linked to long life and freedom from trauma. Pessimism, on the other hand, has been tied with depression, passivity, failure, social estrangement, morbidity, and mortality (Peterson, 2000). Optimistic thinking can help students cope more positively with setbacks and adapt to new challenges. *Dipositional optimism*, the expectation that good things will happen and that things will work out, can lead to self-regulated behaviour and the confidence to persevere in the face of adversity (Scheier & Carver, 1992). Seligman and his colleagues speak about an *explanatory* style. When individuals attribute bad events to external, unstable, and specific causes, they believe they have a sense of agency in their lives as opposed to a feeling of helplessness (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995).

**2. Positive thinking and self-talk.**

Self-talk refers to the internal dialogue that one has with oneself (Beck, 1991). Students can be taught the skill of positive self-talk and, in this way, learn how to regulate their positive efforts towards desireable goals. Positive thinking and self-talk have been found to help in the achievement of goals and academic success, and can promote better health, wellbeing and longevity (Seligman, 2011). Teaching optimism has also been found to protect at-risk children from developing depressive symptoms (Jaycox et al., 1994; Seligman et al., 1995).

**3. Appreciating and enjoying one’s positive emotions.**

Positive emotions such as joy, pride, and interest broaden awareness and build persons’ personal and social resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions and adaptive coping strategies are important to live a satisfying life and can be protective against the development and increase in the severity of psychological problems (Compton, 2005). Positive emotions can be cultivated about the past (such as gratitude and forgiveness), the present (such as mindfulness), and the future (by for example, developing hope and optimism) (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). Positive affectivity can enhance individuals’ ability to think positively and to problem- solve and make decisions that are flexible, creative and innovative (Isen, 2001, 2003). In experiencing positive emotions, students can build on their capacity to learn and connect with others (Fredrickson, 2002).

**4. Developing mindful attention.**

Mindfulness is a state of attention and self-awareness to present thoughts, emotions, and behaviours (Kabat- Zinn, 2004; Siegel, 2007) which can improve attention and concentration, learning and achievement, decision making, and classroom relationships. Learning mindfulness can result in self-regulation, positive emotions, better engagement during learning, empathy, perspective taking and prosocial behaviour. Developing a state of mindfulness can diminish negative affect, anxiety, and depression as well as boost positive affect, optimism, and self-actualization (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, & Schubert, 2009). Mindfulness has also been effective at enhancing optimism, social competence behaviours, and positive self concept in primary school students (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).

**5. Humour.**

Humour may contribute to positive appraisal of stressful life events (Cameron, Fox, Anderson, & Cameron, 2010), and is also linked with less stress and anxiety (Abel, 2002) and a lower risk of depression (Kuiper, Grimshaw, Leite, & Kirsh, 2004; Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). Moreover, research tied to a resiliency perspective shows it can also enhance life experiences (Kuiper & Olinger, 1998). A personal sense of humour can make a positive difference in psychological well-being, life satisfaction and self-esteem (Peterson, Ruch, Beerman, Park, & Seligman, 2007), making it an important factor to be included in the building of resiliency in children.

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