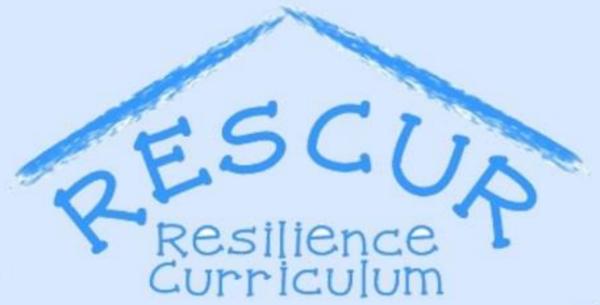


# Promoting life skills through a European Resilience Curriculum



for Early Years and Primary Schools in Europe

VALERIA CAVIONI<sup>1</sup>, MARIA ASSUNTA ZANETTI<sup>1</sup>, CARMEL CEFAL<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA - DEPT. OF BRAIN AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES – PSYCHOLOGY (ITALY)

<sup>2</sup> UNIVERSITY OF MALTA (MALTA)

## Introduction

TODAYS' SOCIETY IS CHARACTERIZED BY SEVERE CHANGES DUE THE ECONOMIC CRISIS, GLOBALITAZION AND COMPLEX SOCIAL ISSUES. BECAUSE OF THE CURRENT CHANGES FACING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY, IT IS CENTRAL TO DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE CONTEXTS TO HELP THEM TO FACE THE SETBACKS AND CHALLENGES IN THEIR LIVES. ONE OF THE MAIN CHALLENGES IS TO ENHANCE CHILDREN'S COMPETENCES TO OVERCOME DIFFICULTIES AND DEVELOP HEALTHY AND SUCCESSFULLY. THIS CONTRIBUTION PRESENTS A PROGRAM AIMED TO DEVELOP CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE IN EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY SCHOOL IN EUROPE.

Further information

WEBSITE

[HTTP://WWW.RESCUR.EU](http://www.rescur.eu)

VALERIA.CAVIONI@UNIPV.IT  
RESCUR.ITALY@GMAIL.COM

**RESCUR** IS A THREE YEAR LLP COMENIUS PROJECT (2012-2015) TITLED *A RESILIENCE CURRICULUM FOR EARLY AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EUROPE* COORDINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA AND INCLUDING UNIVERSITY OF CRETE (GREECE), UNIVERSITY OF LISBON (PORTUGAL), OREBRO UNIVERSITY (SWEDEN), UNIVERSITY OF PAVIA (ITALY), AND UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB (CROATIA). IT IS AIMED AT DEVELOPING A RESILIENCE CURRICULUM FOR EARLY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION IN EUROPE THROUGH INTERCULTURAL AND TRANSNATIONAL COLLABORATION. THE CURRICULUM SEEKS ALSO TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN SUCH AS ROMA CHILDREN, CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, GIFTED CHILDREN, AND CHILDREN OF REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES.

## Resilience

SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION AND GROWTH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS (MASTEN, 2011)

## Themes of the curriculum

- DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET
- BUILDING ON STRENGTHS
- DEVELOPING SELF-DETERMINATION
- DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES
- ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

*"RESCUR ACTIVITIES REPRESENT A REAL AND USEFUL SOURCE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ENRICHMENT TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE NOT ONLY FOR CHILDREN AND TEACHERS, BUT ALSO FOR FAMILIES AND THE WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY."*  
[TEACHER]

## Steps of the project

- DEFINITION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN THEMES OF THE CURRICULUM
- CREATING RESILIENCE ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS DIVIDED IN MANUALS USED BY TEACHERS ACCORDING TO 3 DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS OF CHILDREN. TEACHERS' TRAINING COURSE TO RUN THE ACTIVITIES. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSES OF TRAINED TEACHERS.
- REVIEWING THE ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' FEEDBACK WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT. REVIEWING THE ACTIVITIES BY TWO INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF RESILIENCE AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL. WRITING A PARENTS' MANUAL BESIDE THE TEACHERS' ACTIVITIES MANUALS THAT INCLUDE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE. PUBLICATION OF THE CURRICULUM AND DISSEMINATION OF MANUALS

## Method

ACTIVITIES WERE WEEKLY IMPLEMENTED OVER 6 WEEKS INVOLVING 35 CLASSES FROM KINDERGARTEN, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH OF ITALY WITH A TOTAL OF 738 STUDENTS. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM WAS ASSESSED BY:

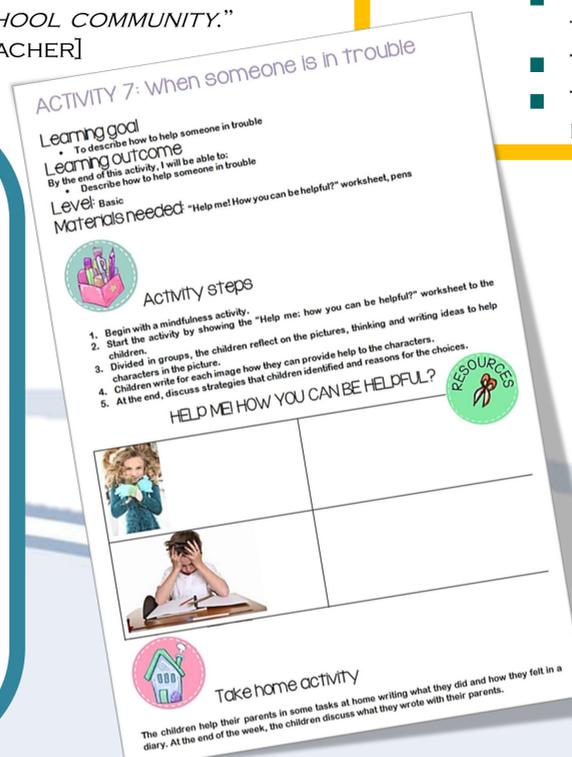
- QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR
- FOCUS GROUPS WITH CHILDREN
- TEACHER INTERVIEWS
- TEACHER NARRATIVE DIARIES

## Results

THE RESULTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS WITH CHILDREN, TEACHER INTERVIEWS AND TEACHER NARRATIVE DIARIES SHOWED THAT BOTH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS GREATLY APPRECIATED THE ACTIVITIES AND FOUND THEM VERY USEFUL.

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THE BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN IN THE LAST SIX WEEKS?

	1	2	3	
NOT AT ALL	3,0	,0	3,0	1. MAKING AND HAVING FRIENDS
SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE	24,2	27,3	21,2	
VERY MUCH	54,5	54,5	54,5	
	18,2	18,2	21,2	2. PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR
NOT AT ALL	,0	,0	3,0	
SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE	6,1	33,3	30,3	
VERY MUCH	51,5	48,5	54,5	3. NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE
	42,4	18,2	12,1	
NOT AT ALL	,0	,0	3,0	
SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE	6,1	33,3	30,3	
VERY MUCH	51,5	48,5	54,5	5. EMPATHY
	42,4	18,2	12,1	
NOT AT ALL	,0	,0	3,0	
SOMEWHAT ADEQUATE	6,1	33,3	30,3	
VERY MUCH	51,5	48,5	54,5	



- SUB-THEME 1: ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.
  - TOPIC 1: MAKING AND HAVING FRIENDS
  - TOPIC 2: PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR
  - TOPIC 3: NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE
- SUB-THEME 2: DEVELOPING COOPERATION SKILLS AND EMPATHY AND ENGAGING IN RESPONSIBLE AND ETHICAL BEHAVIORS.
  - TOPIC 1: SHARING, COOPERATION AND TEAMWORK
  - TOPIC 2: EMPATHY
  - TOPIC 3: ETHICAL, RESPONSIBLE AND MORAL BEHAVIOUR

## Conclusion

THE RESCUR PROJECT IS CURRENTLY THE ONLY EUROPEAN PROJECT TO CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM TO PROMOTE RESILIENCE IN SCHOOLS. THE RESULTS INDICATE THAT BOTH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ENGAGED FULLY WITH THE ACTIVITIES AND FOUND THEM MEANINGFUL AND USEFUL. RESCUR IS THEREFORE A PROMISING TOOL FOR EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE RISKS OF FAILURE AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND PROMOTE THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING.