

Foreword

Children and adolescents need a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills in order to succeed in modern life. Cognitive skills, including those that are measured by achievement tests and academic grades, have been shown to influence the likelihood of individuals' educational and labour market success. They also predict broader outcomes such as perceived health, social and political participation as well as trust. In turn, social and emotional skills, such as perseverance, sociability and self-esteem have been shown to influence numerous measures of social outcomes, including better health, improved subjective well-being and reduced odds of engaging in conduct problems. Cognitive and socio-emotional skills interact and cross-fertilise, and empower children to succeed both in and out of schools. For example, social and emotional skills may help children translate intentions into actions, and thereby improve their likelihood of graduating from universities, follow through healthy lifestyles and prevent engaging in aggressive behaviours.

Some of the important social and emotional skills are malleable during childhood and adolescence, allowing opportunities for policy makers, teachers and parents to provide the right learning environments to accompany them at those stages. While everyone acknowledges the importance of social and emotional skills, there is often insufficient awareness of “what works” to enhance these skills and efforts made to measure and foster them.

This report synthesises three years of analytical research conducted under the auspices of the Education and Social Progress (ESP) project at the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). It includes literature reviews, empirical analyses of longitudinal data and a review of policies and practices in OECD countries and partner economies. The report identifies promising avenues for effective social and emotional development. They include promoting strong relationships between educators (e.g. parents, teachers and mentors) and children, mobilising real-life examples and practical experience in existing curricular activities, and emphasising hands-on learning in extracurricular activities. Improvements in learning contexts and practices do not necessarily require major reforms or resources. We can start this process by adapting the ways in which existing curricular and extracurricular activities are delivered.

Furthermore, this report shows that social and emotional skills can be measured meaningfully within cultural and linguistic boundaries. Such measures can be instrumental to help decision makers better assess children's current skill sets and their future needs, and thereby help teachers and parents to effectively adapt the pedagogy, parenting and learning environments accordingly. The OECD is committed to developing such measures in an international comparative framework. This includes continuing efforts made in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as well as the new phase of the ESP project. The latter will involve the enhancement of existing social and emotional skills instruments to better understand the levels and developmental processes across countries and cultures.

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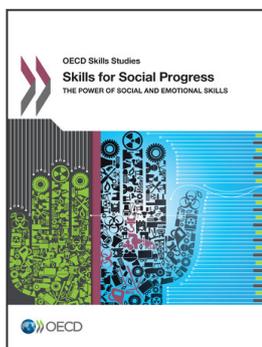
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