

GUIDE of BEST PRACTICES

„WELLBEING AT SCHOOL”

KA210-SCH-3F3437C0



Erasmus+

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Introduction

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1. Why this guide

2. Coordinating partners

1. This guide includes innovative teaching and learning methods using arts and technology, a selection of successful, concrete, individual experiences of the participants and their students following their own activities in relation to the arts, technology and wellbeing, different perspectives on the topic of wellbeing at school (on the particular way in which each of them perceives the link between technology and the use of arts as part of the teaching process with a focus on achieving a state of wellbeing capable of streamlining the whole educational process).

It proposes a number of potential solutions and encourages other educational institutions to embark in a similar journey, in order to improve the wellbeing at school.

The publication of this guide of good practices aims at supporting a comprehensive transfer of best practices in teaching and school development identified as a result of our KA210-SCH-3F3437C0 Erasmus project which took place between 01.03 and 01.12.2022.

2. This project has been coordinated by **Group Moraru / Languages.lu** from Luxembourg with a Romanian partner, **"Spiru Haret" National College**.

Group Moraru sàrl is a social enterprise founded in 2009 which offers lifelong learning training services in Luxembourg specialized in the field of personal development, soft skills, entrepreneurship and leadership, training people in both f2f and online environment. The enterprise provides since 2009 different training services under different brands, such as Languages.lu (for language courses and language camps offered during (working with children, teenagers and adults), Leadership Academy for soft skills (communication skills, teamwork, time management, problem solving, conflict resolution) and Inspiring Wo-Men for entrepreneurship and leadership. We have published 7 language learning materials, focused on a teach yourself approach, a mobile application "365 Days Luxembourgish", two books on leadership role models from Luxembourg and the Greater Region, and organised more than 100 conferences,

to promote the female entrepreneurship and leadership, as well as gender equality & equity.

Our social enterprise has been a great laboratory for testing new concepts & innovative teaching methodologies. A concrete example is the way we have been teaching languages for more than 10 years, by allowing the students to be immersed in the language, have fun and be involved in interesting and educational activities. Since 2019, we have introduced a mandatory cooking 1-day experience covering the topic of eating healthy and the impact of food on the way we feel. In addition, the children and teens were getting their first financial education (because they received a certain budget and had to plan the recipe and shopping list accordingly) and also were improving their team work, communication and conflict management skills. In addition to working on the relationship between a healthy body and a healthy mind, we noticed that the participants who were used to spending time playing video games, were opening to other people, gained a lot of self confidence and were proud of themselves.

We have been working with children and teenagers of 15 nationalities, either who live in Luxembourg, or who have families in Luxembourg and came specifically from abroad to attend our intensive camps from 9 am to 5 pm and in the same time to visit their families. Our students usually come from the European and international schools, and we have welcomed a lot of children in the first weeks after their arrival to Luxembourg, when their families were challenged to understand Luxembourg's multilingual educational system. In addition, we work as well with adults, especially new comers who needed to acquire urgently basic language skills in the official languages of the country. In this context, we also provided intercultural communication trainings to international companies based in Luxembourg, on the culture, customs and traditions of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, for their employees who moved from abroad.

''Spiru Haret'' National College (Galati county) is a state education institution which includes gymnasium and highschool levels, theoretical profile, with a Mathematics, Informatics & Science profile, as well as a Social Studies & Philology profile. The college has 64 employees, including 44 teachers, 8 staff in the auxiliary-didactic field and 9 people outside of the didactic field. Each highschool cohort is allowed to choose among 3 Mathematics & Informatics courses, one Science course, one Social Studies and one Philology course. ''Spiru Haret'' National College Tecuci is an institution aiming at achieving excellence in all activities and lifelong learning is an essential part of keeping the level of performance very high.

Colourful Spots on Wellbeing Canvas

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1. Conceptual delimitation. Happiness versus well-being

What is each of us aiming for when we act? What do we all want, regardless of age, gender, religion, professional specialization etc., through everything we undertake? Nothing else, in the last instance, than to give a certain meaning to one's own life, namely to give it the shades/spots of color intended to ensure a state long and intensely sought by humanity since forever: HAPPINESS. Happiness has been and continues to be the motive of all human actions. As Blaise Pascal masterfully said (and not only him), „All men try to be happy; without exception; whatever means they use, they all tend to this end. What makes some go to war and others not, is the same desire for happiness, present in both, but accompanied by different views. The will never makes the slightest move except towards this goal.”¹

Even if some of us have not asked ourselves what drives those around us to certain actions or what is the basis of certain gestures that they perform (what makes a student respond or not to a challenge given to him a teacher, what generates an attitude of valuing or disdain towards teaching or what makes a teacher give everything in the relationship with his students and colleagues, respectively what causes him to relate less reluctantly or even with indifference in these, etc.), the truth is only one: they all aim to reach *the state of happiness*. Consciously or not (because the person who acts does not always realize what determines him), man has as his motive in everything he does, this natural, natural need, inscribed in the laws of his human nature: *the need to be happy*. And *happiness* is nothing else, in the last instance, than *the state of well-being* considered from the perspective of the multitude of aspects that generate it - this second term being, in a way, an explanation of the first, as it follows from their definitions: happiness appears as „state of complete soul contentment”, „state of complete satisfaction”², and well-being can be defined as „feeling fulfilled and functioning well, on several levels: cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual. It is a broad biopsychosocial construct, correlated with life satisfaction, self-esteem, social involvement and a person's value system”³.

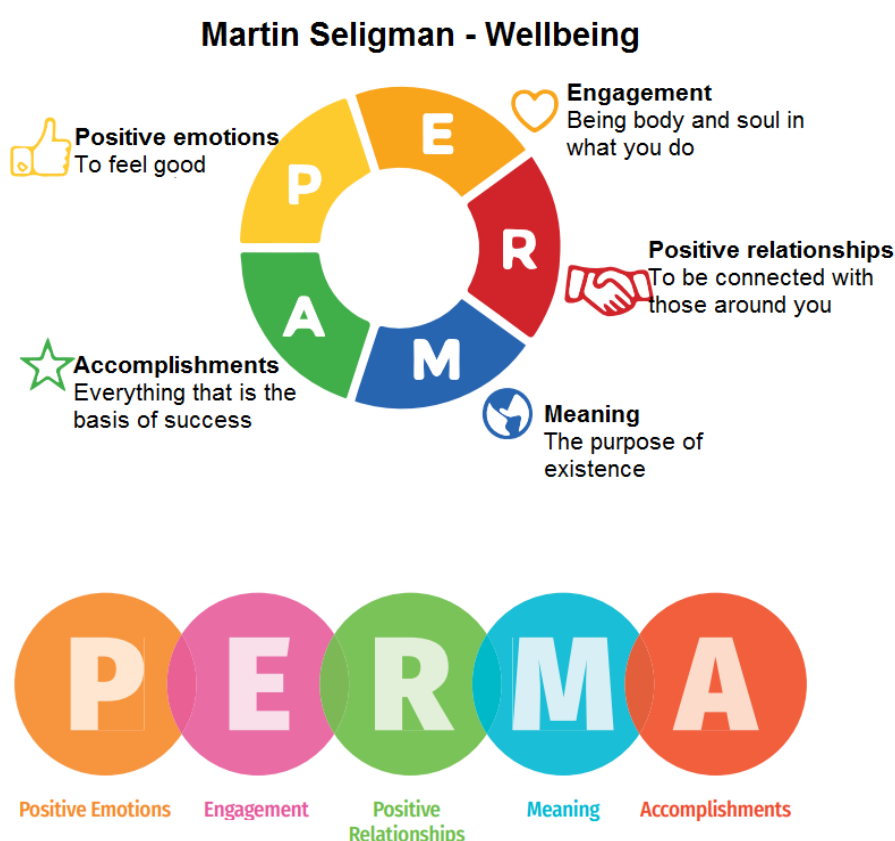
Neither of these two concepts, *happiness* and *well-being*, is of recent date, only that the last one really imposed itself in the Romanian public discourse (and everywhere else, for that matter) and acquired new valences and a special significance only in the current conjuncture, following the multiple and varied effects of the coronavirus pandemic and, more recently, the terrifying experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war on our biological/physical

¹ Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts*, AION Publishing House, Oradea, 1998, p. 318

² <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/fericire/definitii>, (link accessed on 02.05.2022)

³ Anca Tîrcă, Let's go to school with a good mood!, in *Well-being at school, fragment*, https://www.edituracorint.ro/media/attachment/file/s/t/starea_de_bine_la_scoala_fragment.pdf, (link accessed on 02.05.2022)

state and, above all, the psycho-social one. From now on, nothing will be the same, for any of us and in any field of activity - including (or especially) in the field of education, the paradigm of the quality of life registering major changes that implicitly require that *the state of well-being* be, in a way mandatory, *nodus et vinculum mundi*⁴ within the education system (orienting this system more firmly on the quality of the learning process and on maximizing the effects of this process, taking into account how each of the actors involved - students and teachers - filters the school reality). This implies that *positive psychology* and the lessons from studying Martin Seligman's *PERMA model* should be taken into account and applied in every educational institution, that is, that everywhere in educational institutions greater attention should be paid to the five basic elements that can generate well-being: *Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments*:⁵



Viewed in this way, *well-being* becomes a relevant indicator of the quality of individual and group life and details the feeling of *happiness* experienced, since: 1) the whole range of *positive emotions* experienced (joy, optimism, hope, gratitude, etc.) condenses in this supreme human feeling (happiness); 2) *involvement/engagement* in what gives us pleasure (and pleasure generates happiness) contributes to lasting learning, to higher value construction/self-construction, being an intrinsic and positive motivational stimulus whose strength and training capacity increase similar to the way it grows, by permanent additions, the clod rolled through the fresh and loose snow; 3) *the positive relationships* formed with others (of appreciation, respect, support, collaboration, etc.), through the security conferred by the feeling that when needed we are not alone, but together with peers who care about us (which, again, generates happiness) mentally support any endeavor, no matter how difficult it

⁴ lat. expression: *the knot and link of the world*

⁵ cited Anca Târcă

may be; 4) *the meaning of life*, respectively the purpose for which we engage in the activity allows the identification of the target that guides (but also explains) the action, acting as a guide and conferring finality to the entire personal evolution (and the essence of this finality is nothing but happiness); 5) *success, recorded achievements*, no matter how small they may be, have the role of consolidating personal construction, (according to *the law of effect in learning*⁶, an action followed by success is consolidated, being followed by new successes) and generating (what else but) happiness!

As such, summarizing, *the state of well-being* shows how satisfied someone feels (and is), how balanced they relate to themselves, to their peers, to the activity in which they are involved and to reality, in general. In addition, it also becomes an indicator for predictions regarding the future actions of the one who feels it, because *the state of well-being*, when it is experienced, is the basis for the best results, in all plans and in all fields of activity - including the school. If you are healthy and have the feeling that, in the institution where you study/work, you are exactly where you need to be, that you are appreciated and respected, that your professional and human potential is stimulated (in no way inhibited) by the relationships formed in the learning group/ thing, that everyone is with you and, as such, you feel accomplished, then you will give your best, you will be effective, and the results obtained will stimulate continuous overcoming and self-surpassing (and will be a source of inspiration for those around you).

2. Determinants of school well-being

For schools, more than for any other type of social institution, the problem of existence/ensuring *well-being* is not at all one to be neglected, but one of maximum stringency and actuality (it was like this before, but the current pandemic and security context makes it more acutely necessary than ever).

It is true, many of the aspects covered by such a problem are related to external factors of school organizations: no one can deny the fact that the level of salary and performance stimulation, the way of approaching the difficulties of the educational field by the management structures (of education, but and of society as a whole), the health system and the level of support and assurance of physical and mental health by it, the characteristics of the environment (urban-rural) in which the activity is carried out, the characteristics of the local community (especially openness to school and valuing granted to it by the local authorities) etc. they have a particular impact on the well-being experienced by school staff and students. It goes without saying that the satisfaction of obtaining really satisfying and stimulating salaries or scholarships, the provision of a certain degree of comfort (material, hygienic-sanitary, aesthetic, etc.) at work (for teachers) or learning (in the case of students) requires financial efforts on the part of society - efforts that are, unfortunately, far below what is needed in our country, underfunding being endemic and representing *the Achilles' heel* of the entire educational system.

But beyond these external, general factors, which are real weaknesses and which have their importance in the way everyone who has contact with it (students and teachers alike) feel within the school, we must recognize that what remains essential is it happens inside each individual school institution, especially the psycho-socio-cultural particularities of the teaching staff and the specifics of the concrete activity carried out in the classroom. As in the case of families, for which, most often, although it does not hurt to exist, the property owned is not the most important indicator of internal happiness and harmony, and in that of school organizations, the material endowment and the level of remuneration are not, despite

⁶ Simona Stan, *Laws of learning*, in <https://www.learningnetwork.ro/articol/legile-invataarii/5341>, online article published on 07.03.2020 (link accessed on 10.05.2022)

appearances , decisive for the well-being felt: there are schools with mediocre facilities, where, despite the difficulties/lacks, people feel great and come to work with pleasure, achieving enviable results, just as there are schools with very good facilities, but where it's as if all the evils in *Pandora's box* have nested, work being, for this reason, much more difficult and even impossible, in some places (as well as efficiency and progress, for that matter).

Who should be concerned about this condition? Who can be blamed for a possible deficiency in this chapter?

The most convenient answer: it all depends exclusively on the management of the unit. Of course, the director is one of the most important factors - on the one hand because, through the way of being, through the personality traits, respectively through the attitude towards the reality in the school and, above all, towards the office colleagues (empathy, respect, trust, openness, communicativeness, support, sincerity, etc.) he can set the tone and is one of the levers for supporting well-being in the school, and on the other hand, because he has a very important role in ensuring the material comfort at the workplace, the environmental conditions to enhance the dedication of each member of the organization, the desire of everyone to give their best in the specific activity carried out. There is an old Romanian proverb that goes like this: tell me who you hang out with, so I can tell you what kind of person you are!; paraphrasing, we can say: tell me who leads you, so I can tell you who you are!" - and this because, consciously or not, each school manager, through his personality traits, respectively through his way of being and through the management style practiced, leaves a substantial mark on those around him (colleagues in the chancellery and, directly or indirectly , students), especially if the interaction between the two parties is long-lasting.

The leadership style practiced is decisive in this case, the six management models (formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguity and cultural) and the ten leadership models corresponding to them (managerial, participative, transformational, distributed, transactional, postmodern, emotional, circumstantial, moral and training), highlighted by Tony Bush⁷, predisposing to different valuations of the valences of *well-being* in school.

Typology of management and leadership models⁸

Formal	Managerial
Collegial	Participatory Transformational Distributed
Political	Transactional
Subjective	Postmodern Emotional
Ambiguous	Circumstantial
Cultural	Moral Of training

Thus, *the formal-managerial model*⁹ (one widely practiced in Romanian education - and not only in it), through the emphasis placed on the organizational hierarchy and on the authority given by the position, as well as through the formal dimension of relationships in the collective and through the secondary placement of the individual contribution of teaching

⁷ Tony Bush, *Educational Leadership and Management. Actual theories and practices*, Polirom Publishing House, Iasi, 2015, p. 51

⁸ Table taken from Tony Bush, op. cit, page 51

⁹ Details on management models - in Tony Bush, op. cit., pp. 51-210

staff, through the prevalence of supervisory and control functions, does not seem to be the most open to the idea of optimizing the well-being of the unit.

The second model, *the collegial model* (with the three varieties of leadership practiced: participative, transformational, distributed), is based on democratic principles, implies the abandonment of the strict hierarchy of the previous one and participative approaches, with decisions being taken by consensus - a fact that one can glimpse permissiveness for actions to facilitate well-being in the school (reality proves that participation is dependent on the principal's support and takes, in some cases, the form of a consultative process, not a collegial one, not being attractive for the collective as it involves a volume of increased work and an allocation of additional time to school problems).

Although it seems a realistic and adequate description of school approaches, guiding the action by similarity with what happens in the political organizational framework, *the political-transactional model* is far from the optimal one, since its main characteristics are the increased emphasis on power relations, the prevalence of conflictual states, manipulation, pursuit of one's own interests, decision-making through a process of negotiation and understanding - all of this suggesting that the atmosphere in the collective (collective fractured by interest groups) can only be accidentally harmonious in the group and, as such, that feeling happy at work might be a long way off.

The subjective (postmodern and emotional) models, on the other hand, alternative to the formal ones, center the individual, with his own way of looking at the world, with his own values and aspirations, with his own way of understanding the meaning of reality, the emphasis falling on the beliefs and perceptions, respectively perspective, interpretation and goals of the individual; inevitably, in this case, the possibility of great differences of vision and conflicts both internally, between teachers and between them and management, but also externally - in relation to the hierarchically superior authority of the school, in the educational system (which, of course, diminishes the chance of an atmosphere conducive to well-being).

Ambiguity models (in this case the *circumstantial one*) seem to reflect, to some extent, the reality in many schools, respectively in those where there are uncertainties regarding the authority and responsibility of the leaders, regarding the results of the activities or even the teaching processes, with weak links in inside the organization, between groups or between their members (teachers and students), all correlated with uncertainties from an external environment marked by very rapid and, in some cases, even turbulent changes (to some extent, these characteristics can be identified in many school institutions, because there are always alternatives to choose from, there is a certain amount of chaos, decisions are not always purely rational). In this situation, *well-being* is also fluctuating, being called into question by the instability that defines the activity at all levels.

Finally, in *the cultural models* (moral and training) teachers are encouraged informally to get involved in change, in accordance with the cultural context and based on their own values and beliefs, which may be congruent with those of the organization; under the conditions of a quality, charismatic and moral leadership, it is possible to establish a unitary organizational culture, supported by the entire collective, without this being imposed authoritatively on it - which can also be translated by the possibility of promotion and reaching a status of good in the collective (otherwise, subcultures may develop between which dissensions and divergences may appear, influencing this state to a good extent).

Therefore, the way the school is run has a very important role, predisposing the manager/leader to a more or less favorable approach to a climate in which the teaching staff (but also the rest of the employees and the student community) feel at ease, to feel happy at work. It would be most appropriate for each director to make a conscious and constant effort in this direction, to aim to become the first speaker of well-being in the school community he leads.

„Create a pleasant atmosphere in the school so that the teachers come to work and feel good!”¹⁰ it should be a rule that every school principal should follow unconditionally and permanently. A list of tips on how the principal should act to make the school a pleasant workplace for teachers is offered to us by Prof. Anca Tîrcă (trainer, one of the most important activists in Romania for establishing a real well-being in schools¹¹). In Anca Tîrcă's opinion, the current directors (refers to those newly appointed to management positions following the recent competitions organized by the ministry, but we can consider the exhortation as valid for anyone in this position) should have „the courage to separate from the harmful management models before them and make decisions in favor of their school, and not the inspectorate [...], be inventive and creative, smile, be close to children, colleagues and parents, bring the well-being in school.”¹²

It should be noted, however, that the directors are not the only ones responsible for the feelings experienced by the collective. The reality is somewhat more complex, more nuanced, the existing state (good or bad) being an effect of the way of being and acting of all parties involved, principal and teachers alike, taking the „face” (or getting the „shades”) on which the respective parties allow him/her to brag about. So, sometimes the generating source is within the collective, in the attitudes and/or behavior of one or more of its members. There are, in some places, so-called accentuated personalities which, as a result of special psychological peculiarities (in general, a mixture of frustration, malice, contempt, lack of respect, associated with a superiority complex or, on the contrary, with an inferiority complex, sometimes having as support even springs or medical causes), they end up not being able to see happy people around and, as such, resorting to bullying behaviors, they maintain an unhealthy mental and even physical climate, in the long term: they become toxic to colleagues and rare are the cases in which they can be persuaded to give up this type of harmful/aggressive behavior; a more „diluted” form of the manifestations can be found in the character of the hater type called, with a specific Romanian formula, „Gică contra” (*an epithet assigned to a person who always adopts points of view different from those of the majority*)¹³, respectively a person who is always on the other side of the barricade, which finds pleasure in opposing, on principle, all initiatives, thwarting efforts to improve the situation and, implicitly, the hope for „better” in and for the collective.

¹⁰ Anca Tîrcă, *Teachers' well-being. Advice for directors*, 16.01.2022, at <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10227726822819583&set=a.10202505996354684> (accessed on 27.05.2022)

¹¹ Anca Tîrcă, *op. cit.*

1. „Don't chase the teachers, take care of their time, plan and organize work meetings and extracurricular events that are few and effective for participants, and give up everything that means formless activities.
2. Create a pleasant atmosphere in the school so that the teachers come to work and feel good!
3. Eliminate the burden of unnecessary documents that teachers have to fill in and create school-wide mechanisms to make data collection easy, for example electronic.
4. Give up autocratic behavior towards teachers, do not impose tasks, but consult with colleagues when planning and organizing an activity.
5. Achieve a good distribution of responsibilities at the organization level, by valuing the skills and potential of each staff member.
6. Regularly evaluate the activity of each employee and do not forget to give positive feedback.
7. Praise the achievements of the teachers and celebrate with them the success of the team.
8. Arrange the chancellery as a place to recharge your batteries, where teachers can relax and have a coffee.
9. Don't encourage gossip and unpredictable talk.
10. Never (even when they are wrong) humiliate colleagues with harsh remarks, screams, and insults.”

¹² *Ibidem*

¹³ Dexonline, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/gica%20contra/517780> (accessed on 26.05.2022)

So to the question „who is responsible for the well-being of the school?“, the truth is somewhere in the middle. A very important role belongs to the leader, who must assume a role as a catalyst of group efforts in this direction (to build a team capable of devising and applying a coherent plan of action), who must know the personality and recognize the uniqueness of each member of the chancellery, to respond concretely to everyone's needs, to be creative, communicative and transparent in decisions, to ensure the inclusion of everyone in the group. But each teacher, in turn, must support these efforts, be active-participative, have initiatives and accept that he has the same rights and obligations as others and that he must take responsibility for all his actions. Both sides, leaders and led, must assume a sincere involvement, based on respect and love for the teaching profession. This would ultimately be the recipe for *well-being* in the school organization.

It is true, most often (but not always), this state comes naturally, without any effort, being a result of a certain circumstance, an emanation of a happy matching of individual and group visions, aspirations and experiences, of a balance in the value orientation of the manager and the leadership in the unit, respectively in the roots they have, in the entire collective, love of fellow man, empathy, common sense and respect for oneself and for others - values that generate what

we could call *the joy of to be together*. This means nothing more than that *well-being* depends on how cohesive the group becomes and how compatible its members are. And where cohesion and compatibility are lacking, precisely because the effect is a state of affairs not favorable to the smooth running of the activity, measures must be taken to correct the situation, because the fate of not only the teachers is at stake, but also that of the students.

Just as in a family the well-being of the parents extends to the psychological well-being of the children, in the large family constituted by the school organization the well-being of the teaching staff is the starting point for the well-being of the students, conditioning them to adapt to the requirements and achieve learning performance. It broadcasts from the chancellery to the classes, becoming a dominant of the entire organization, and this because children are very receptive to everything that happens around them, they naturally imitate the attitudes and behavior of adults-teachers, everything they achieve by wearing the seal of the atmosphere in the school (that's right, and the one at home, but that's another story, the power of the school to intervene in the family plan is reduced, although the importance of what happens at home for the well-being of the child is overwhelming and, sometimes, the state felt at home can destroy any chance of the student to even enjoy well-being at school).

When in the classroom the students see optimistic, confident faces, full of the joy of meeting them, when they feel the well-being radiating towards them, they spontaneously enter the same game, *sing the same music* or... *paint on the same canvas*: that of *well-being*. And in this case, with the soul prepared to absorb (and at the same time spread) the good, the light, the happiness, the performance so much desired is a simple and natural effect.

3. Measures necessary to master the well-being in the school. Case study: „Spiru Haret” National College, Tecuci, Romania

a. Measures regarding ensuring the well-being of the teaching staff

On the one hand, the school management, on the other - the teachers must increase the effort to emanate a good mood in the school. Today, more than ever (not tomorrow, not another time, but today!). This present, which weaves a web of feelings with predominantly gray accents in schools, imposes that.

What measures can be taken to bring spots of the color of light and joy, respectively of the much sought after happiness on the canvas of well-being?

Obviously, the starting point in such an approach is ensuring the well-being of the teaching staff. The first measures, therefore, must target teachers. These (and correspondingly, those aimed at students) are quite numerous, as they relate to the multiple specific aspects of the school as a concrete institution, with particularities that make it singular, and must constitute responses to numerous disruptive factors: individual particularities matter of the institution - the internal environment (the ethos of the school, the seriousness of the problems identified, the managerial style practiced, the level of schooling, the profile, the number of students and teaching staff, the material endowment, etc.), but also the external environment, respectively the environment of residence (rural / urban) and the socio-economic particularities of the community (the availability of support from the authorities and the entire local community, the openness of this community - especially parents - to school issues, etc.) and, not least, the government's education policy (financial support, on his part, through a sufficient budget allocation, to be met both in the degree of endowment and modernization of the school and in the salary level provided to teaching staff).

The table of these directions towards which the measures must be directed is completed with those aimed at counteracting the effects of the health crisis represented by the COVID-19 pandemic (which has disrupted education all over the world for almost three years, not only in Romania) or how it is now the security crisis generated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Obviously, a brief analysis of all these disruptive factors shows us a certain amount of impotence in taking effective measures (especially when it comes to those factors related to the external environment). It is easy to intuit that the mission of ensuring or (as the case may be) increasing well-being is not an easy one at all. But this should not be discouraging, but even an additional motivation to take action: it is difficult, but not impossible, and whoever sets such a higher goal, whoever has such aspirations for better can overcome any obstacle (only to want and know how to act and surround himself with people who dream just as beautifully/ in just as bright colors).

For the success of the action to improve the situation, the first step is to know the actual situation.

Most of the time, an expert in psychology/sociology is not needed to give a verdict: the condition felt by a teaching team, especially if it is a small one, is visible to the naked eye. Of course, if the situation is uncertain, one can resort to sociological research - it is advisable to conduct *an interview-based* or *questionnaire-based investigation* (provided that, in both cases, for the accuracy of the result, the requirements for the composition of the questions are respected - both those regarding the type and their content, as well as those regarding their

formulation¹⁴, as well as the other norms of application and interpretation of the questionnaires).

In the case of the „Spiru Haret” National College, Tecuci, Galați county, Romania, where the group of teachers is a small one, the existing situation was clear, the need for measures to increase well-being being recognized at all levels, from the members to the teaching staff, to the managers, following the explicit statements made by the Teachers Council and the Administrative Council (non-compliant working conditions were complained of, which must be remedied), as well as by accumulating the data resulting from the simple analysis of the way in which communication is carried out, of interpersonal relationships existing in the collective and the behavior associated with them.

Once the problem is definite, clear, the plan to remedy the situation must be formulated. This requires the good intention and dedication of the school management (and/or, as the case may be, the informal leader of the group). The management, to the extent that it wants to remedy the situation, analyzes the problem it faces at all levels - because there are many differences between schools from this point of view, each having difficulties that make them particular and for which they must identify concrete solutions. In this case, each school in such a situation, in order to establish the necessary measures, must answer some questions:

- What is the cause / what are the causes of the lack of well-being (only by knowing and removing the concrete source, the problem can be fixed; to be preoccupied with it in a vague, general, allusive way is equivalent to acting for free and with no chance of a solution)?
- What are its effects, how deeply is the absence of well-being felt (the identification of all the consequences - the visible ones, as well as the most hidden ones, imperceptible at first sight, but important for the future -, constitutes a strong motivational factor in the attempt to remedy the situation)?
- In what ways can the phenomenon be combated? Which activities can be carried out successfully (otherwise, if irrelevant activities with no or negligible impact were proposed, everything would be in vain, unnecessary expenditure of energy and resources!)?
- What resources are needed (human, financial, informational, time)?

Following the analysis, various and adapted measures can be considered: *training programs/actions* can be used (to provide teachers with levers for action, skills, as well as benchmarks for involvement), *coaching programs*, *team-building* or to a multitude of other activities designed to bring the collective together, to facilitate an interaction beyond the office space, to allow an open, honest dialogue, a smoothing of the asperities and an individual and group behavioral repositioning (although outdated at first glance, *the excursions group*, *picnic* with the whole office, creating a tradition of *celebrating colleagues' birthdays*, celebrating together, in a special setting, including non-formal, *school days*, etc. can work wonders in such a situation - provided that neither in their case, nor in the other cases, for that matter, it is allowed to train only subgroups/„cliques” or „churches” existing in the collective). And if the problem were bullying behavior, it would be important, beyond training the collective in *training activities* (through which to develop individual and group skills to resist aggression and respond correctly to this, to develop the feeling of solidarity and the involving spirit, giving up the role of a mere spectator), *the call to people specialized in providing support* - psychologists and, why not, even psychiatrists (people who are asked to

¹⁴ See Septimiu Chelcea, Course. *Sociological research techniques*, National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 104-119, at <https://www.studocu.com/ro/document/universitatea-din-bucuresti/metode-si-tehnici-de-cercetare-sociologica/septimiu-chelcea-tehnici-de-cercetare-sociologica/7550395>, link accessed on 28.05.2022

intervene both for counseling the bullied, as well as for helping the collective with suggestions for intervention, to prevent the aggressor's actions), *organizing meetings with people who have been through bullying situations* and who can share examples of good practice in terms of response measures in such situations etc.

Through actions of this type, combined, which train the entire team (and not just one person, be he the most important in the school hierarchy), *the social environment* in the unit would be significantly improved (the well-being being dependent on the close relationships and the multitude of roles performed in the group, the multitude of „characters” played/embodied by those who interact in the school hierarchy) and, above all, *the emotional environment* in which the entire educational process takes place (the way in which the group achieves emotional validation, in which the needs of the members are understood and accepted in the group, where each is supported by the others being crucial in enhancing well-being).

Undoubtedly, in order to feel fulfilled at school, teachers need, in addition to the support of the manager and collaboration with office colleagues, support and prompt and continuous feedback from their own students and the satisfaction of their own needs in relation to them (because the students must become partners in this endeavor: *the canvas of well-being* will be harmoniously painted only in a happy collaboration of all those interested in the colors that dominate it). But teachers need to know (and if they don't know, then they need to learn) to ask students for help. In a well-being guide at school made by Liliana Chivulescu and the IMPACT Group¹⁵, numerous suggestions of advice/requests from the teacher to/from his student are reviewed¹⁶, so that the student is the starting point of the teacher's well-being; the list is worth analyzing, „filtered” by any teacher, because each one must ask himself not only what the student expects from him, but also what expectations he has from the students from this point of view, how he would like them to relate to the one in the classroom (it's an exercise that we don't really do, it appears as a matter of course: or, once

¹⁵ Liliana Chivulescu, members of the IMPACT club - The Unbeatable Foot of the Mountain, *Guide to well-being at school - From students to teachers*, June 1, 2021

<https://www.facebook.com/StareDeBinePtTine/posts/145923340911152>, accessed on 29.05.2022

¹⁶ Liliana Chivulescu, *op. cit.*:

- „To feel that you care about me”
- „To see me as a man, similar to you”
- „See me as a friend”
- „To feel that you want to learn, not just to get grades and be present”
- „To feel listened to and respected”
- „To see the mistake as a lesson”
- „To come up with relevant contributions”
- „Let there be reciprocity”
- „To collaborate”
- „Pay attention to homework”
- „To build your autonomy and independence”
- „Be brave”
- „To respect the school and class regulations”
- „Take care of others too”
- „To feel that you care about you”
- „Be well”
- „Give time to the people you enjoy being around, to your passions, but also to yourself!”
- „Don't overwork yourself!”
- „Enjoy the little things!”
- „Listen to good music!”
- „Don't forget: you are important and appreciated!”
- „Trust yourself! I, the teacher, already have!”
- „Check it out!”

done, we can have the surprise that the resulting panel has positive effects on the teacher's mood, through his role for self-clarification and as a guide for future action with the student).

The measures related to the psycho-social environment, the spiritual/soul area, must also be joined by some to improve the aspects of *the internal physical environment* (the material endowments and, in general, the aspects regarding the school's infrastructure, which can influence the way people feel). By ticking this category, all the prerequisites for a conducive, welcoming, tonic atmosphere in the chancellery and in the classrooms (and, implicitly, a very good quality, positive, constructive educational influence on the students) could really be ensured.

Finally, a way to achieve specific effects of all those already listed above and to complement them (by no means be the only one pursued), is *the application in European projects* that propose actions in order to obtain an increase in happiness in schools (or at least indirectly generating this). These, through the openness offered, through the facilitated exchange of experience/good practices, through the teachers (as well as the students) going beyond the border and making contact with realities and peers from educational systems different from their own and, not least row, even through the endowments that can come from external/European funds to directly support the achievement of the proposed target, are some of the newest and most stimulating measures that can be taken. It requires a lot of effort, but the punctual effects and the satisfaction of the results obtained can be truly remarkable.

Such an analysis was carried out, for example, within the „Spiru Haret” National College. She highlighted that additional efforts are needed to increase the well-being of the school.

Thus, taking into account the pandemic period we went through and its adverse effects on the mental state of everyone (teachers and students alike), a set of helpful measures was thought up to improve the climate in the unit; this is how it ended up that, in the *Institutional Development Plan* approved by the Teachers Council and approved by the Administrative Council on 12.01.2022, starting from the diagnosis of the internal and external environment, one of the four targets (strategic objectives for the next five years) explicitly target the well-being of the unit.

Specifically, **TARGET 3** of this *Development Plan* is: *Improving the well-being of the organization's members (teachers and students), in order to increase the efficiency of the ongoing activity.*

This target (strategic objective) is associated with the reasoning, the specific objectives and the proposed activities for each individual objective, as follows:

Argument: *approx. 40% of the teachers complain of syncope in the internal communication of the team, approx. 70% of the students and teachers complain of communication deficiencies in the virtual environment, and approx. 10% of the students were affected by situations of verbal, emotional and electronic bullying (cyberbullying) – all this affecting the smooth running of the activity.*

Specific objectives and the activities proposed to achieve them:

- 3.1. *Optimizing the communication act within the school, but also with the students' families, as support for satisfying the self-motivation and self-realization needs of the teaching staff and students*
 - 3.1.1. *Team building with teaching staff, to stimulate internal/organizational communication*
 - 3.1.2. *Team building with students, for the efficiency of didactic communication and teamwork*
 - 3.1.3. *Initiation and running of the „School Days Festival for Parents” project (two days, starting with the European Day of Parents, celebrated annually on the second Tuesday of October)*
 - 3.1.4. *Debureaucratic access to information, by streamlining secretarial activity and intra- and inter-departmental information flow*
- 3.2. *Ensuring, through well-being activities, an open, friendly socio-emotional climate for all members of the school community*
 - 3.2.1. *Organization of development programs at team level/group coaching, for conflict management at the level of the teaching staff*
 - 3.2.2. *Establishing the necessary infrastructure for practicing cycling at the unit level, in order to run physical well-being sessions (own bicycle park)*
 - 3.2.3. *Organizing physical well-being sessions, by turning cycling and hiking into a healthy lifestyle (teachers – students)*
 - 3.2.4. *The running of community wellbeing sessions, for teachers and students, through humanitarian actions/volunteering*

- 3.3. *Combating the bullying phenomena manifested in the student community, in order to improve their well-being and school results*
 - 3.3.1. *Identifying the extent and forms of manifestation of the bullying phenomenon in the organization*
 - 3.3.2. *Realization, dissemination and application of the antibullying intervention procedure*
 - 3.3.3. *Establishing and applying a program of school/extracurricular activities to prevent bullying*
 - 3.3.4. *Initiating a program for parents, for awareness and information on the difficulty of adapting students to the school environment and the characteristics of acts of bullying (forms, causes, prevention), as well as for training their capacity for correct intervention*
 - 3.3.5. *The conclusion of partnerships with NGOs and various institutions, for support in ensuring the well-being of students and a safe environment for them*
- 3.4. *Stimulating the increase of resilience at the level of the student community and the teaching staff*
 - 3.4.1. *Participation of teaching staff in training courses on stress resistance (staggered, one group each year)*
 - 3.4.2. *The realization and application of a program of school counseling of students on the topic of resilience*
 - 3.4.3. *Rewarding the results obtained by students and teaching staff in national exams, Olympiads and competitions*
 - 3.4.4. *Uniting the efforts of the entire collective in the realization of the anniversary project „CNSH - 125 years” (28.10.2023)*
- 3.5. *Increasing resilience and well-being at the school level by applying in Erasmus + projects and in projects to access non-reimbursable European funds*
 - 3.5.1. *The creation of project teams at the level of the teaching staff and the involvement in the realization of Erasmus + projects and access to non-reimbursable funds*
 - 3.5.2. *The conclusion of school partnerships between the college and schools in the country and in the EU*
 - 3.5.3. *Carrying out interschool exchange activities with schools in the EU, through the ongoing Erasmus+ projects*
 - 3.5.4. *Increasing the material base of the college, necessary for a qualitative increase in the level of activity conditions, through the European projects carried out¹⁷*

The program of activities proposed within the CNSH is ongoing. A stage analysis of it will be carried out in January 2023 and, following the feedback received, will have a corrective character: new directions of action will most likely appear (some generated by the degree of fulfillment of the proposed goals, others following the evolution in the political-military context generated by the war in the north and east of the Romanian borders), and some activities could be reconsidered, while others will be completely abandoned.

For the time being, with regard to the concrete measures aimed at teaching staff, substantial steps have been taken, which constitute the foundation/support for future actions:

- about 25% of these were involved in training activities on the topic of anti-bullying action and improving the degree of internal communication;
- six of the members of the teaching staff formed an anti-bullying action group (along with representatives of the students and parents), their efforts already generating positive results in the entire Haretist community;
- numerous celebratory activities took place (with a priority of those dedicated to the school, those specifically aimed at the members of the teaching staff, which will increase in number in the future);
- the modernization of the school space was achieved - so that, at present, it offers some of the best conditions for school activities in the locality - something beneficial for teachers and students alike (there is a modern gym and library, a museum space of its own, a gazebo and an attic under construction as a space for extracurricular activities, etc.);
- *has been applied, in recent years, in numerous Erasmus + projects, which means, for example, that this year the college runs no less than five such programs (with the specification that two were started before the pandemic and*



¹⁷ Grecu Ion, Olariu Eugenia, *Institutional Development Plan of the „Spi* 12.01.2022, extract - page 24-28

that only now, at the end of the restrictions, they could be resumed to put the final point):

- *Wellbeing at school* (WELLSCHOOL), 2021-2-LU01-KA210-SCH-000049031 (01.03.2022 – 01.12.2022): is the latest of the projects and aims to increase the well-being of both students and teachers in the school; as regards the latter, the following activities are dedicated to them through the project:

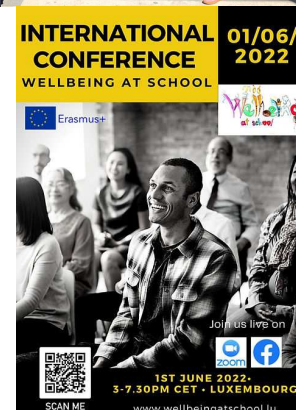
- a thematic training, entitled *Training on successfully using new technologies and innovative teaching methods*, which took place between 15-21.04.2022, in Luxembourg, and in which 10 teaching staff of the college were involved; the training was focused on the topic of successfully using new technologies and innovative teaching methods to integrate art while ensuring a high level of wellbeing at school; this training combined different techniques, e.g. presentations, field visits, working and testing different concepts and technologies in small groups etc.; it was really a high-impact activity both in terms of the accumulation of new data and skills, specific to the topic addressed, as well as the recovery of the well-being of the participants, who were also psychologically affected, like the entire school, by the difficult period they went through;



- *International conference* – 1st of June 2022, to symbolically mark the international Children's day. It was an opportunity to share details with other educators



and teachers about our project, the partnership between the two organizations from Luxembourg and Romania, about the the training activity



organized the previous month in Luxembourg and preliminary findings following the implementation of the school project. The activity has allowed an exchange of good practices between the partner organisations and other educational actors active in formal and non formal education in the European Union, but not limited to the EU.

- *Together to guarantee cyber-safety and prevent cyber-bullying in schools* / „Cyber Safety“, (2021-2023), 2021-1-HR01-KA220-SCH-000027712 – a project that happily complements the one specified above, explicitly contributing to increasing student safety and well-being (by providing levers of defense against cyberbullying);
- *Empowering teachers for a more interactive, efficient and appealing digital learning experience* / „Digit&Learn“, 2021-1-LT01-KA220-SCG-000027737 (2021-2023) – project with the effects of indirectly increasing the well-being of all those involved in the educational act, in that it aims to improve the digital skills of teachers in order to transform virtual educational tools into true windows to the minds of children;
- *Green Europe. Education. Abilities.* GEEEA / 2020-1-RO01-KA229-079887 (2020-2022) – project that has strong implications, indirectly, also in supporting well-being in the school, through the activities regarding the environment and through the proposed mobilities;
- *European Waves On The Internet Radio*, 2019-1-FR01-KA229-063141_3 (2019-2022) – through which there was also a revival in intra- and inter-school relations and an increase in well-being through the increase in communication;
- *We Are the World, We Are the Children*, 2014-1-LT01-KA201-000522_4, 2014-2016, through which well-being was implicitly targeted, considering that the purpose of the project was to sensitize students to the need for social involvement, tolerance, openness towards other European cultures.

However, what matters is that the desire to achieve this goal exists and is strongly asserted in the college. And those for whom we would like to do this are also our first allies: the students.

b. Measures regarding ensuring the well-being of students

Students must be trained to change the mood in the school, they are the most knowledgeable critics and evaluators of it, because everything that happens in the institution is filtered through their soul. Well led, possessing the skills to analyze the situation through exercises carried out over time (where and if they are carried out!), under the guidance of teaching staff, with the freshness and acuity of the mind specific to their age, they can identify hiccups in the smooth running of the school and provide ideas valuable for overcoming them.

The Student Council (SC), which is a body for self-organization of students, mediating their relations with the teaching team and defending the rights and interests of school students, must be supported to gain autonomy, to have initiatives, to dare to request the defense of the right students to feel good in school. Where SC is strong, students are well represented and have a greater chance of happiness. And if we add the good guidance of the teachers to the influence of SC, we can end up in a situation where the students, thus encouraged, know how to support their cause, with arguments.

An example of good practice in this sense is offered by the IMPACT group/club (made up of teacher-trainers and students) which also published a guide with advice and requests from students to teachers (well-targeted advice towards achieving the ideal of a school in which the state of well-being reigns)¹⁸. Arguing, among other things, that „we don't always know how to create a state of well-being for those around us, but we can learn from each other by listening to each other“, they state, in this second guide, in essence, that the student needs the teacher to care about him.¹⁹

¹⁸ Liliana Chivulescu, members of the IMPACT club – The Unbeatable Mountain Legs, *Guide to well-being in school. From students to teachers*, 06/01/2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/Imbatabilii/posts/3913456802084353>, link accessed on 05/29/2022

¹⁹ Liliana Chivulescu, *op. cit.*:

- „To feel that you care about me“
- „To be able to see you more as a friend“
- „To feel that you want to teach me, not just teach the subject“
- „Not to feel inferior“

What must be done for students to feel what is advertised above, to become happy in this school setting where they spend a significant part of their childhood and adolescence, but also outside of it?

Beyond the fact that a large part of the measures that are taken to increase the well-being of teachers also extend their effects to students (both directly and indirectly), it must be said that the attempt to bring light and joy to the souls of the students must benefit and a well-coherent plan of measures, explicitly dedicated to them.

And the beginning must be, also in this case, knowing the situation: how many students are happy, have a good tone at school, and how many feel that this place is increasingly alien to them? An answer can be found by *initiating open-ended discussions in each class, in counseling hours* (but it is expected that these will not provide very accurate data, given that some students cannot openly externalize, in the sight/hearing of others, from various reasons, real experiences). An answer can also be found by appealing to the careful and systematic *observation* of everything that happens in the classes (but here there is a risk that the observational data will not be very accurate, if the approach does not take on the appearance and features of a scientific method of collecting data, if all the rules specific to observational research are not respected), as well as by carrying out a case study or through a *documentary analysis* (but still respecting the scientific rules of such research methods). The most indicated and simple to administer remains, (also) in the case of students, *the survey based on a questionnaire*. If the rules of composition, administration and interpretation are respected and if the students are assured of anonymity, the results will give a measure very close to the reality of the situation (with a margin of approximation of $\pm 3\%$). And these results will correctly guide remedial action.

Such research addressed to some students in the pre-pandemic period would have led (and did, for all intents and purposes), to generally gratifying results (it is true, with variations depending on the specifics of the respective schools). But organized during and/or after this period of about three years of isolation, they generated, as was natural, downright worrying conclusions.

Thus, **a concrete analysis of the measures that were taken in order to counteract** a depreciation of the positive experiences of the students relative to the school, in the „Spiru Haret” National College in Tecuci, highlights that **even before the pandemic, numerous activities** aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the school, to determine an increased tone in the students (especially in the particular conditions of the unit, respectively, the existence of a strong competitive atmosphere, which tends to take away a lot of the student's free time and deprive him, to a certain extent, of the joy relationships, the happiness of being at school - especially if, compared to others, his results appear unsatisfactory for himself and for his family).

-
- „To feel included and accepted”
 - „Let the positive aspects also be taken into account”
 - „Not to hear meaningless screams”
 - „There should be no so-called favoritism”
 - „Let there be reciprocity”
 - „Teach using an easy-to-follow rhythm”
 - „To feel that my opinion is important”
 - „To understand me”
 - „Be well”
 - „Give time to the people you enjoy being around, to your passions, but also to yourself!”
 - „Don't overwork yourself!”
 - „Enjoy the little things!”
 - „Listen to good music!”
 - „Remember: you are important and valued!”
 - „Trust yourself! I, the student, already have! ☺”

Then, during the period of isolation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, when students suffered especially from physical distancing, being condemned to a dull existence and communication behind cold screens, a range of activities aimed at generating that closeness was tried of the students' souls, keeping that state of alertness, creative tension and participatory spirit (because the tendency to run away from devices connecting to online school activities was very strong at that stage), requiring a great inventive effort on the part of the teachers (themselves much tried by the same weaknesses that the students faced). From the free discussions with the students (*the teacher-student dialogue* being the first „weapon” in the fight to improve well-being in the educational process) it emerged the existence of some problems regarding the state they felt, the overwhelming majority claiming either communication difficulties - especially in the virtual environment, but not only - or situations of verbal, emotional and electronic bullying.

Finally, after the end of the pandemic restrictions and the physical return to school, realizing (following a questionnaire applied to students) the ravages left by the pandemic, the measures took on a much more pronounced outline and much more adapted to expectations.

The questionnaire applied to the students (see Annex 1) was intended to highlight the psychological effects of the pandemic, respectively to measure the degree of depression with which they returned from isolation (previous discussions with them and observations made indicating that there would be such problems / sequels). The test²⁰ applied, a „widely used one created by Lenore Radloff of the Center for Epidemiological Studies of the US National Institute of Mental Health [...] called the CES-D (from the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression)...”²¹, provided truly alarming conclusions regarding the depressed state of college students after the long pandemic period:

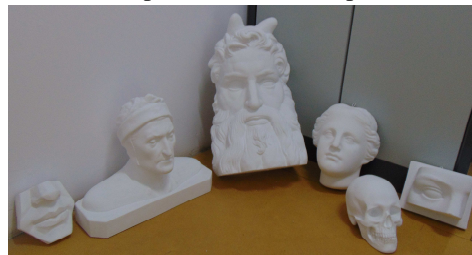
- 22% live in a wonderful state of well-being and are not depressed;
- 29.3% experience a mild to moderate state of depression;
- 48.7% are in a potential state of depression that can slip into more serious forms, in the absence of measures.

Such results, which exceeded any anticipation, required the taking of emergency measures - and these measures (currently in full force) come in continuation of others, carried out sporadically even up to and during the pandemic.

Thus, in the top of the most attractive such ways of obtaining well-being for the Haretist students in the period before, during and, especially, after the pandemic, were:

1. Involvement in Erasmus + mobility projects and the fruition of formative and invigorating values for the mental state of the students involved in them; six such projects took place in the school, three of them starting before the pandemic (see pages 12-14), all generating a special emulation among the students and contributing to the increase in well-being. The most important contribution to increasing the mental tone of our students is, at this moment, the development of the Erasmus+ project: *Wellbeing at school / „WELLSCHOOL”*²² (the one that, by the way, is the occasion of this conference); concretely, through this project, the following impact activities were carried out among students from the Haretist school community:

- **the activity of already existing school circles/clubs has been revived and new ones have been established**, so that, at present, students manage to relax and get rid of the tensions accumulated during the sad period of the pandemic; its beneficial effects are visible both in the extracurricular setting (through the students' participation in one of the five existing clubs (literature / storytelling, music, painting, video production, photography, gastronomy), as well as in the curricular plan - by introducing, within the lessons, of small well-being sequences carried out in these clubs or results from the experimentation, by the teachers participating in the training action occasioned by the project, of the developed skills; this aspect can be illustrated with examples from three of the existing clubs and with some sequences from the „extensions” facilitated in the curricular area:
 - o *the painting club*: it is one of the most appreciated; although it is not a new club, the infusion of materials received through the project (moulds, canvases, brushes,



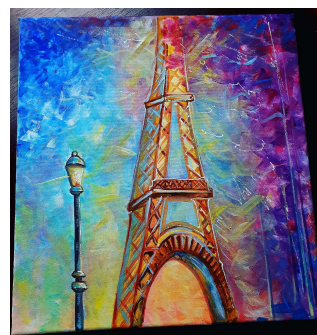
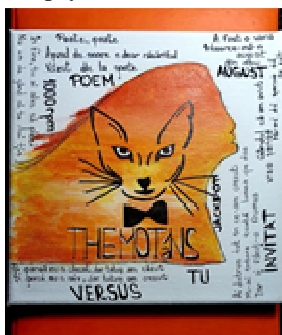
²⁰ Lenore Radloff, Center for Epidemiological Studies of the National Institute of Mental Health in the USA, apud Martin E. P. regarding the state of the students, in *Journal of the National Association of School Psychologists*, 2004, p. 42-46 (see Annex 1 – Test

²¹ Apud Martin E. P.

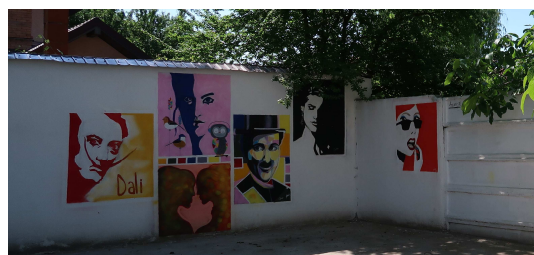
²² See also page 11



colors) has generated a special enthusiasm and creative impulse, which will translate, in the immediate future, into color spots in tones of the most vivid and more invigorating on the psychic canvas of their well-being:

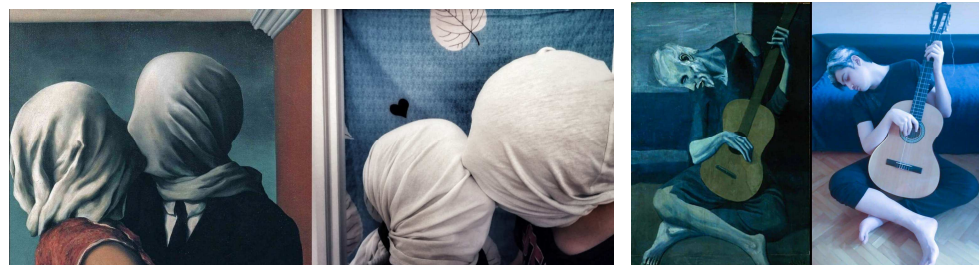
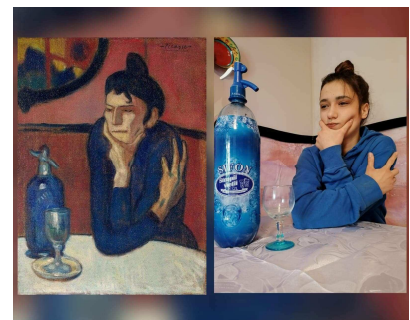
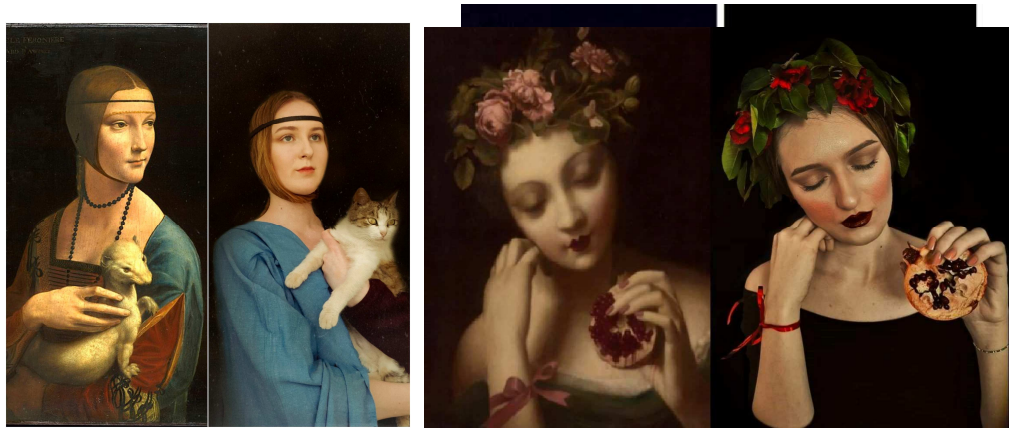


Within the same club, in the recent period, contributing to a substantial increase in the joy of coming to school and relating to its space, two large murals were created (on an annex of the school building) and a street art painting operation of the school's inner fence:



At the same time, prior to the involvement in the *Wellbeing at school* project, during the pandemic, in the painting club (as well as in the *Art Education classes*), an interesting and appreciated way of increasing well-being was realized - a very good example of good practice on this direction: the activity entitled „**Living paintings**”. This consisted in challenging students from the whole school to re-create famous paintings, transfiguring themselves into the characters of these masterpieces and using the props available at home; they were thus helped to overcome their limits, but also their anxieties, the positive experiences generated being remarkable; an emulation was created that lasted for days, the hundreds of resulting images were posted and voted for several weeks, they were widely distributed on Facebook pages (a top of the most successful ones was also made); with an illustrative role, below, some of the most interesting and appreciated such living paintings (*colourful spots on the wellbeing canvas* from the „Spiru Haret” National College in Tecuci, Galați county, Romania):





- *the music club* is newly established, thanks to the Erasmus+ Wellbeing at school project (through which four musical instruments were purchased – two guitars, an organ and a drum – and other pieces useful for the good functioning of the activity: microphone, stand, etc.); although these facilities have only just arrived, already a small group of passionate students have received them, laying the foundations of what will constitute one of the great attractions of the extracurricular activities area in the school (they will be pieces of resistance in maintaining an atmosphere of celebration at school festivities, at weekend activities - where students choose to come together to share their love of music, or in class - for small moments where, in the opening of a



certain topic on the class agenda, they will generate artistic, instrumental and/or vocal emotion);



- *the video production, photography club* benefits, through the project, from a Canon camera with which, by the way, a large part of the snapshots taken so far in the project were taken (from receiving the purchased materials, to carrying out some of the activities of the other circles) ; using the rest of the devices that already exist in the unit, the students of this circle captured photo/video and the celebratory moment of high school graduation by the class of 2022; there is a large number of photography enthusiasts, i.e. students who refresh themselves and live a state of well-being by capturing, with the camera, fragments of life (for them, a *photography and film competition* will be organized in autumn 2022 and a *exhibition* – with the award-winning photographic works);
- *the literature club and the gastronomic club* are already active and have many followers (the literary club has a tradition in the college, but the gastronomic club is new); both will be found with attractive proposals in the planning of project activities, once the next school year (2022-2023) begins;
- **the didactic activity** was also reinvigorated - because through the activities proposed in this project we wanted to create a sense of well-being also in the class hours (in as many of them as possible); this is how, without much effort, these classes became much more attractive, and the

students proved to be very eager to give and receive the full light/color of the smile, being, at the same time, an inexhaustible source of creativity and availability to participate; examples of situations that transformed classes into „other classes”, i.e. into classes different from the routine students were used to, following the application of the principles of this Erasmus+ project:

- *the use of digital didactic games*, for a greater attractiveness of the lessons - the most extensive means used in order to increase well-being (in the picture, sequence from *Geography*: geographical games from <https://www.geoguessr.com/seterra/ro>, on the topic „Broadening the horizon of knowledge; geographical orientation”);
- creating a unique introduction



to the new topics covered in class, by using the products of the activities carried out with the students in the school clubs: the presentation by the students, at the teacher's challenge, of some *thematic mini-essays* or *small poems* created and recited by authors, *of paintings, photographs or videos*, of small vocal or instrumental pieces of music (as an illustration, in the adjacent image, a sequence at the beginning of a *Psychology class*, on the subject of *Social Relations*: students performing a song about love relationships and of friendship - personal composition) or the surprise presentation of some gastronomic products with relevance to the topic under discussion (an example from this last category, also from the *Psychology* lesson: cookies - muffins made by students, with messages/suggestions to a healthy diet, used in the introduction to the „Self-image” theme);

- the creative approach of the evaluation moment, by the students, also at the challenge of the teacher, through a more unconventional/nonconformist presentation of the contents assimilated after a learning (without eliminating the scientific content, but in close connection with it); this



what happened, e.g., in *Psychology* classes, where students chose to transpose respective contents in moments like „*Top secret*” or „*Mystery box*”, in mini-plays, poems, caricatures, comics or in artistic moments in which they combined music and dance (illustrations – in the adjacent images); the same in the *Philosophy* class, in which the students had, for example, the group task of creating in 10 minutes (using digital skills as well), mini-integramas in which to use at least five philosophical terms from the lesson (illustration, in the image from the right: the winning

integrama from the *Crosswords in 10 minutes* competition activity) or in which they had the task of transposing, in a banner, the conception of life of the group (class), at the end of the year and of high school



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studies (illustration in the attached images); it should be noted, in all these cases, that the *different way* of running the lesson, following the application of the principle of stimulating the students' *well-being*, was the starting point for the strong connection of the students, for the improvement of school results and the increase in quality obtained; everywhere, the state of well-being was present and brought the students closer to school and the learning activity;

- another illustrative example of an activity that was used to generate *well-being*, but at the level of the entire school (not only during certain class hours), was, in the preface of June 1, 2022, the re-editing of the International *No Backpack Day*; the activity, which aimed to make the end of the school year and the final assessments carried out in the school less anxious (considering that they sometimes leave with rather toxic experiences), allowed students from all classes to come to school with satchels otherwise; the most unusual schoolbags and outfits adopted on this occasion depreciated the foreheads of teachers and students alike, making everyone's day better, more welcoming, more stress-free (in the adjacent image - the most unusual of these outfits and schoolbags);
- even **the exams held in the unit this school year bore the imprint of the initiative to arouse the *well-being* among the students**; e.g., at the 6th grade National Assessment exam, dated 25.05.2022, before the start of the test, the students (squeezed out of energy due to emotions) were asked to express their feelings on post-its, to do so also after the completion of the examination; only after the fact was over, the analysis revealed how much this simple gesture helped the students to relax and look more optimistically at the test they were about to pass (by externalizing their feelings, they partially got rid of the enormous stress they felt); you can easily see the difference between the two moments (beginning and end):



Before



I'm tired



I feel confident



God have mercy!



Sleepy and excited

National Evaluation - 6th grade

After



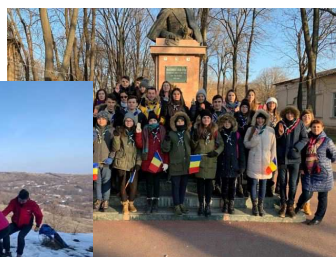
Bla, bla, bla...I'm happy

I think I knew everything about biology!



Delighted, relaxed

2. Equally beneficial to the students involved (as well as to the whole community) were and continue to be **the ongoing scouting activities** (for many years the college has taken a strong scouting option, a large number of students being active in the local organization "Oltea Doamna", whose coordinator is a teacher from the college); through the



open-air



actions (training camps, greenings, humanitarian actions, etc.), the scouting movement has an extremely healthy impact on the mental state of the students, being, like the other activities carried out, an example of good practice in the field);

3. Carrying out **greening activities** (other than those organized within scouting): these activities, involving outings in nature, training the feeling of gratitude for the good brought to life in general, are (similarly to scouting) a solution bringing balance and satisfaction psychological (the school yard, the city parks, the Tecucel stream that runs through the city or the Bârlad river that passes nearby, like many other spaces in the city benefited from the input of the school's ecologists);



4. **Realization of afforestation activities:** carried out regularly, year after year, these activities were not only promising sources of oxygen, but also energy providers for the brains concerned and tired from the learning effort of our students (so, with similar effects the activities already mentioned above and somewhat related to them);



5. **Flash-mob type activities** - carried out both in the school yard and in the community, they have proven to be extremely engaging and enjoyed by students, allowing the achievement of civic objectives and the development of the students' personality, along with de-tensioning and charging the souls them with the energy so necessary for an optimal school activity;



4. Conclusions

Well-being is one of those concepts that, while not new, are currently still insufficiently understood and put into practice, despite its special significance and proven role in increasing efficiency and in the smooth running of the activity in the entire society (including the didactic one).

We educate students for the present and, above all, for the future – for their future and for our future. And the way we do this depends on the face of this future, because if they live in a genuine state of *well-being*, this will become a habit that they will maintain and perpetuate, becoming themselves sources of love, trust, of valuing, of generosity and respect for others, for the fellows with whom they will interact in the near or distant future. By experiencing *well-being*, "the children [our students] learn that it is pleasant to live in the world"²³ and carry this message forward, drawing the canvas of their own becoming in refreshing, optimistic colors.

How could we not want to do that?

5. Post-scriptum

Because the message conveyed by Dorothy Law Nolte's poem is very powerful, and because this paper wants to be inclusive (and explicitly) an impetus to reflection and action to build *well-being* in the school, we leave the lines of this poem alone of encouragement and example of good practice. It deserves to be in the reference book of any teacher who wants a happy and fulfilled life for his students:

"Children learn what they live

If they live in criticism and nagging, children learn to condemn;
If they live in hostility, children learn to be aggressive;
If they live in fear, children learn to be anxious;
If they live surrounded by pity, children learn self-pity;
If they live surrounded by ridicule, children learn to be shy;
If they live in jealousy, children learn to feel envy;
If they live in shame, children learn to feel guilty;
If they live in encouragement, children learn to be confident;
If they live in tolerance, children learn patience;
If they live in praise, children learn appreciation;
If they live in acceptance, children learn to love;

If they live in approval, children learn to like themselves;
If they live surrounded by recognition, children learn that it is good to have a goal;
If they live by sharing with others, children learn to be generous;
If they live in honesty, children learn respect for the truth;
If they live in righteousness, children learn to be righteous;
If they live safely, children learn to trust themselves and others;
If they live in friendship, children learn that it is pleasant to live in the world."²⁴

²³ Dorothy Law Nolte, *Children Learn by Living*, apud Dorothy Law Nolte, Rachel Harris, *Children Learn by Living. Education that instills values*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, page 17-18

²⁴ *Ibidem*

Test regarding students' well-being/depression level²⁵

The test is anonymous and wants to identify the levels of well-being felt by CNSH Tecuci students. Please circle the answer that best describes how you have felt in the last week (select only one answer for each of the items below):

1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
2. I didn't feel like eating. My appetite has decreased.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
3. I couldn't get rid of melancholy even with the help of family and friends.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
4. I felt that I did not rise to the level of other peers.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
5. I had trouble concentrating.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
6. I felt depressed.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
7. Everything I did seemed like an effort.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
8. I felt that there was no hope for the future.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
9. I felt that my life was a fiasco:
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
10. I felt fear.
 - 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).

²⁵ Apud Martin E. P. Seligman, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-46

- 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
11. I slept restlessly.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
12. I was unhappy.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
13. I spoke less than usual.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
14. I felt alone.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
15. The people seemed hostile to me.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
16. I didn't enjoy life.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
17. I had crying fits.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
18. I felt sad.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
19. I felt that I disliked those around me.
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).
20. I couldn't keep myself "in functioning".
- 0 Rarely or never (less than a day).
 - 1 Sometimes or for a few days (1-2 days).
 - 2 Occasionally or a moderate number of times (3-4 days).
 - 3 Most of the time or all of the time (5-7 days).

The "Ingredients" of Wellbeing in School Activities

Lăcrămioara Țupu, English Language Teacher
Liliana Maxim, Romanian Language Teacher
Monica Tîrziman, Romanian Language Teacher
COLEGIUL NAȚIONAL „SPIRU HARET”, TECUCI

Our approach was configured as a case study in which we started from the premise that the student is at the center of the school activity, and the study disciplines revolve around him. As conductors, we, teachers, have a mission to guide students in this maze of learning. At the end of the journey, young people need to discover and discover themselves, but the road can be more interesting and attractive if the student has a good mood, called "wellbeing". How do you get to it? What ingredients does the "recipe" of well-being contain? We set out to answer these questions, both in this material and through the activities carried out in the school.

So, it is a well-known aspect in our country that the Romanian school has gone through and still goes through many transformations. It is now in the caterpillar stage from which a butterfly will evolve: strong, free, able to fly to heights, but the road is laborious and requires work and dedication.

In the European context, the role of the school is to educate young people, during school hours, but also outside them. Students socialize, interact, collaborate and discover themselves as individuals, with different personalities and interests, with common concerns and passions. Of course, there are cultural, ethnic, religious differences between all students, and those in Romania are Europeans with Romanian interests: they correspond with young people from all over the world, writing in English, but composing poems in Eminescu's language; listen to foreign music on youtube, but spend religious holidays with their own families; they visit museums in the country or abroad, but also Romanian monasteries and medieval fortresses. Even if we want an educational system as the one in Europe, these features give children uniqueness and help define their personality.

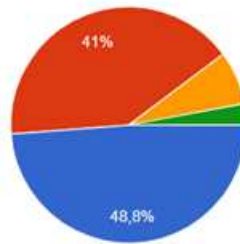
Man is constantly concerned with his life, well-being and happiness. Within the family, the child learns that good is the opposite of evil, forms his personality, which, later, he develops and completes in school. With the entry into the community, the student experiences new connections, new situations that influence his well-being.

What is Wellbeing? A state of fulfillment, contentment, security and balance, complemented by happiness. A student who experiences this state will be a fulfilled and emotionally balanced adult. In contemporary society, people are living fast, and the pace of children's development is slower, precisely because of technology. In this context, the school can not only be a provider of educational services, but must be the place where the heart learns to resonate with other hearts, and the mind develops, constantly enriching itself.

Do students like to come to school? Do they find here the proper environment for their development? Do we, the teachers, manage to reach their souls? These are some questions that formed the basis of a questionnaire that we set up and distributed, for the beginning, in our college, and the results are as follows:

How do you feel at school?

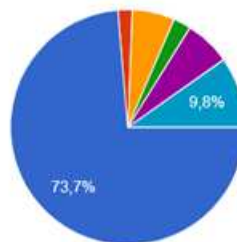
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- well
- pretty well
- very well
- excellent

What makes you feel better?

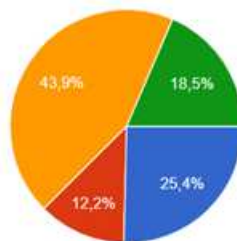
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- listening to music
- taking photos
- cooking
- painting
- dancing
- reading

Does school offer you the possibility to feel well?

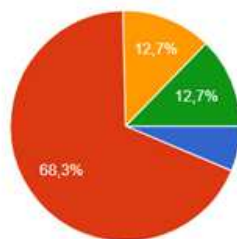
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- yes
- no
- just a little bit
- It is enough for me

The wellbeing at school is created by ...

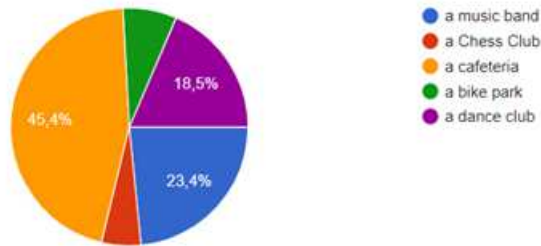
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- teachers
- my classmates
- friends from other classes
- myself

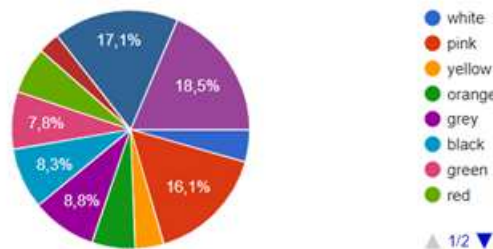
You are the Head for a day. What would you do for creating the students' wellbeing?

205 răspunsuri



Choose a colour to describe your mood in this moment.

205 răspunsuri



We also conducted opinion polls, and the results revealed some of the "ingredients" of well-being: music, dance, chromatics, healthy eating, humor, and the list is open.

In very general terms, well-being can be described as a person's quality of life. "Well-being" consists of two general components: (a) judgments about life satisfaction, and (b) emotional balance or the extent to which the level of positive affect exceeds the level of negative affect in the life of the individual.²⁶ The literature establishes a series of contexts in which well-being is experienced. They recognize that well-being is multidimensional in nature, including cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual.²⁷

The well-being of students is a complex, multidimensional construct that refers to the quality of school life. Thus, the idea of students' well-being incorporates psychological, physical and social dimensions, including objective and subjective data of their lives. In detail, we can say that this concept gathers elements related, among many others, to the psychological and emotional development of children (identity and trust, self-management, initiative, resilience), social behavior (empathy, care and respect for self and otherness, civic involvement), relationships (friendship, equity, prosocial attitudes, respect) or the ability of the learning environment to be friendly, supportive, to promote collaboration, diversity or availability for development. Well-being can mean pleasure, satisfaction in life, positive emotions, a meaningful life, or feelings of contentment. All these directions and many more are fundamental to support the student to learn, to be successful in learning, to become a competent and able person to actively participate in school life and, subsequently, in that of society. Every student can develop properly, if they are seen as an autonomous person, if they benefit of a favorable environment for the development of quality relationships with teachers

²⁶ Andrews & Withey, 1976; A. Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Diener, 1984, apud <https://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Sinteza-stare-de-bine-in-scoala-2019.pdf>

²⁷ <https://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Sinteza-stare-de-bine-in-scoala-2019.pdf>

and colleagues, they are treated fairly, if all elements of the school environment enhance his growth. Well-being can be achieved by:

- an increase in self-esteem
- promoting relationships of respect, fairness and tolerance
- recognition and reward of effort
- resolving conflicts in a positive and constructive manner
- encouraging creativity
- promoting and recognizing the initiative

Some remarks on the "ingredients" of well-being identified by students:

1. **Music** produces effects on well-being, and psychologists have included music therapy in their procedures. In addition to the basic role of "entertainment", music can have a strong positive role on the psyche and emotional state.²⁸ Some experts believe that music is, in itself, simply created to describe certain emotions or feelings, while others argue that music generates emotional reactions for the listeners. When it comes to music, the therapeutic effects are often due to the way in which attention, emotion, knowledge, behavior, communication and perception are modulated when participants engage in musical activity. Music can also generate happiness and help in mental or physical relaxation. It can distract, it can generate introspection. It regulates the level of stress, anxiety and depression, and scientists have found that people who sing or listen to music have lower scores in terms of depression or nervousness due to the positive effects of music on their mood or condition.²⁹
2. **Movement through sport or dance.** As a result of dance therapy, applied to various people, remarkable health benefits have been recorded, among the most common being: improved joint mobility and muscle coordination, and relaxation; increasing self-confidence; expressing the most intimate emotions; strengthening the immune system; reducing and eliminating stressful feelings of isolation, loneliness, anxiety, depression, anger, sadness.³⁰
3. **Humor.** Scientists believe that people who always seem to be in a good mood are naturally "endowed" with higher amounts of certain substances - a type of hormone called endorphins, and neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. These are released by the brain and make us feel good when we do or witness something pleasant.³¹
4. **Chromatic.** Colors have a significant impact on us - from the impact that the color of a food has on its taste to how the colors in a room can affect our mood and to the colors we wear that influence how we are perceived and so on. Usually, most of the colors fall into a category and lead to certain emotional states and effects. Colors can be warm or cold (as we find in most art courses and textbooks) - warm colors are often stimulating, cold colors are perceived as soothing.³²
5. **Healthy eating.** Nutritionists' studies have shown that some foods tire the brain, while others "feed" it. Wellness can be stimulated by eating foods such as nuts, avocados, eggs, tomatoes, dark chocolate, but excessive consumption of sugar and energy should be avoided. Some studies have compared the traditional diet (Mediterranean and

²⁸ <https://www.edpost.ro/muzica-si-rolul-ei-in-starea-de-bine/>

²⁹ idem

³⁰ <https://www.sabon.ro/ro/blog/dance-therapy>

³¹ <https://www.ccsint.com/ro/noutati/45-starea-de-bine>

³² <https://www.paginadepsiologie.ro/psihologia-culorilor-si-cum-o-putem-folosi-pentru-starea-de-bine/>

Japanese diet) with the modern western diet, showing that the risk of depression is 25-35% lower for those who eat traditionally. The reason? The traditional diet is rich in vegetables and fruits, unprocessed cereals, fish and seafood, with meat and dairy products being consumed much less. On the other hand, the modern Western diet involves a high consumption of processed and refined foods, sugar and unhealthy fats³³.

The experimental part aimed to highlight the extent to which the well-being is influenced by the "ingredients" of food, music and dance. In Romanian folklore there is a saying: "Happiness passes through the stomach", so that the first activity was performed by **Lăcrămioara Țupu**, English language teacher, under the title: "**How can a pancake change your mood?**". According to the opinion poll, music is the soul food of any young person. Some of the students of the college created a pleasant atmosphere during the class, through rock and house rhythms, under the interpretation of the students Tudor Trifan, Octavian Turcu and Alexandra Damian. The gastronomic moment was the pretext for the class itself, creating a good mood and encouraging students to think and express their opinion in English. Obviously, because every hour must be a learning opportunity, the students first documented the content of calories, protein and vitamins of the products from which the pancakes are made: eggs, flour, milk, jam, honey. The students were actively involved in the process of making the pancakes, but also in the discussion generated later.



Another activity was conceived and carried out by **Monica Țîrziman**, Romanian language and literature teacher. The question from which she started is: "**What does well-being mean in education?**" Because she understood and valued this concept of well-being in school, because she was convinced of the need to promote this approach, she initiated a series of activities, as an integral part of the classes, where she and her students launched unique challenges: cooking with the classics, who knows wins something sweet. These actions, which visibly generated a good mood during the classes, took place in the 11th and 9th grades. Because she understood and valued this concept of well-being in school, because she was convinced of the need to promote this approach, she initiated a series of activities, as an integral part of the classes, where she and her students launched unique challenges: cooking

³³ <https://nativebox.ro/alimente-stare-de-bine/>

with the classics, who knows, wins a sweet. These actions, which visibly generated a good mood during the classes, took place in the 11th and 9th grades.

It is known that the physical, social and emotional environment in which students spend a large part of each day, can affect their physical, emotional and mental health and well-being, so in certain classes, we detach ourselves from the clothes of didactic formalism and we wear that of well-being. In the 11th grade, the case studies do not create the expected emotional comfort, so she proposed to the students that at a time chosen by mutual agreement, to "cook with the classics". The idea was received with enthusiasm, thus starting an intense research "in the recipes of the era of the great classics". That's how their foray into the world of classics began. Thus, the group to which the author Ioan Slavici belonged, the case study "Stylistic, thematic and visionary diversity in the work of the great classics" discovered that the author's favorite cake was the chocolate muffin. However, in order to maintain the audience's attention, taking into account the formal approach of the didactic act, the moment of delight was preceded by a series of questions related to the theoretical and scientific presentation based on those presented by the group members.



Because Creangă's world is also about gourmets, they thought that the class which started at 7 a.m. would start with a sandwich called "Flămânzilă" (The Big Eater). Subsequently, the members of the group presented, respecting the steps of the project, the literary activity of the great storyteller and his work. As an evaluation of the activity, she proposed to the students to draw a playing card on the back of which was a thematic question, and the person who gives the correct answer to receive a sweet - a lollipop made by the team - Ion Creangă. There was a visible feeling of well-being among the students generated by the satisfaction of their own work, their effort being crowned by emotion, joy, merriment, gratitude, enthusiasm, pleasure.



If for the teacher these “pills” and “ingredients” of well-being generated delight, relaxation and a good knowledge of the students, here are some of their impressions:

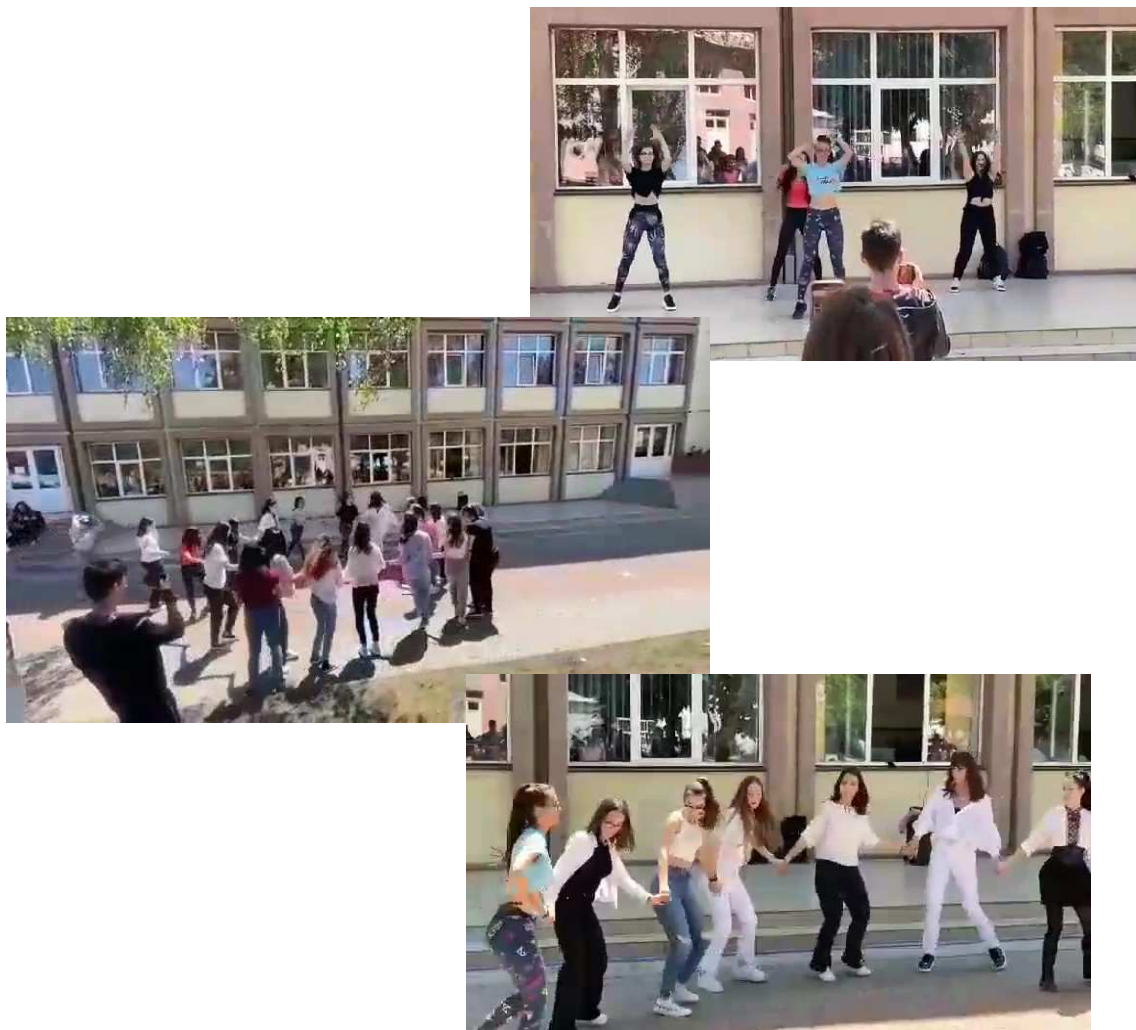
1. **Bujor Elena:** It was a very dear experience for me, because I went out of the comfort zone of the usual hours, interacting more with each other. Thus, through these case studies we not only assimilated new information, but we managed to develop our abilities and we had the opportunity to go from being a student to being a teacher, standing in front of the class and explaining. It was very interactive and I wish there were more such projects, due to the atmosphere created previously and due to the sweets received as rewards. I had sweet classes.
2. **Clipici Alexandra:** The Romanian lessons have always been interesting and have generated interest. The purpose of the case studies was to generate new knowledge and well-being. The friendly atmosphere in the classroom brought with it our involvement during class. It was a wonderful experience that I would repeat anytime.
3. **Oprea Diana:** The case studies were a moment when we managed to conduct ourselves in our personal way. We contributed to them creatively, we put in the work and at the same time we had fun introducing small educational toys rewarded by cakes. It was a moment when we proved what we can do when we join forces and in the end something beautiful came out in which the contribution of each of us could be noticed.
4. **Ariton Maria:** The case studies in the classroom were a much more effective and interactive exercise in memorizing information about the Age of the Great Classics, but also a challenge to students' creativity, which seems to have paid off, especially in the idea of combining literature with the culinary arts. It was a unique experience during which I had many beautiful things to learn!

The practical activity of our colleague, Liliana Maxim, Romanian language and literature teacher, followed the impact that music, food and chromatics have simultaneously on the mood of the students. Intending to do a transdisciplinary class, Romanian language, religion and folklore, the teacher wanted to present customs of Ascension, a religious holiday of great importance. In the houses of Christians, the cake is baked, the boiled eggs are colored and they collide symbolically. Folk music is not absent from the homes of Romanians, and the student Elena Sălăvăstru, from the 11th A grade, performed an award-winning song at profile competitions. The students reconstructed this scenario, guided by their teacher, and then enjoyed the dishes.



The other activity followed the music-dance syncretism. An attempt was made to stimulate the well-being of the students and, before the classes started, the students of the college were trained in a Zumba flashmob and folk dances, the coach being a student of the 11th grade F, Ștefania Tănase, who danced with other classmates. The outcome? The students

expressed their desire to form a dance club in the school, to relax dancing, especially on busy days.



Beyond the whole process of promoting well-being among students, I noticed that there is an influence on the well-being of teachers. Their joy becomes our reward and the motivation for the next actions, because we are all partners on the path of school education.

Webography:

1. Andrews & Withey, 1976; A. Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Diener, 1984, apud <https://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Sinteza-stare-de-bine-in-scoala-2019.pdf>
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The 21st century competences in improving educational literacy

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How many windows are there in your house? The answer is easy: there is one in every room so that the light of the day can come in. But... if you stay and think it through, there are many more hidden windows which stay opened forever, waiting for you to come closer. I have 5000 such windows in my house, one behind every book in my library. I haven't opened all of them, which is a shame, but I know that they are my way out, my instrument of escaping this world, so absurd and stressful all the time.

There aren't many things we know in life, but this is surely one of them: education overcomes reality and helps you improve your knowledge of the world and of yourself. This is a lesson that I've learned from my teachers and one that I try to teach my students. Behind scientific content, analytic skills of interpreting society, education helps you achieve social and cultural literacy.

How can we define *literacy*? According to *The National Literary Trust*, literacy is "the ability to read, write, speak and listen well. A literate person is able to communicate effectively with others and to understand written information." Also, the *UNESCO Institute for Statistics* defines it as "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."

Literacy is more than just being able to spell – it is being able to interpret, react, articulate and express across a range of mediums. Education is the process of planting trees for the future, for our educators, our students and our education so that we make sure we are doing our best as the world changes around us. The 21st century competencies *imply the fact that today's* students are the leaders of tomorrow. Nowadays, education is less based on memorizing facts, and much more on learning to adapt to the rapidly changing world. That is why they have to adapt and tolerate differences, to use innovation and the new technologies in order to succeed. On the other hand, both teachers and students should use technology very thoughtfully and not just for the sake of using technology, because, very often, we apply it everywhere, thus digitalizing *the status quo*. All these new and powerful tools need to be used wisely in the teaching and learning process because, otherwise, we would be limiting our ability to take advantage of other natural tools like collaboration, problem solving or project-based learning.

I think we all agree that these are skills that cannot be achieved exclusively in the classroom. Home education plays an essential role in this process because parents can be considered as informal educators who need to teach their children to become successful adults who can think critically and come up with innovative solutions to the complex problems facing society today.

In 2002, the partnership for the 21st century skills, a coalition between the business community, education leaders and policy makers created the framework for the 21st century

learning. This framework presents a holistic view of the 21st century teaching and learning process. That is why nowadays, instead of us needing to focus on content knowledge, we need to develop a set of skills so that our students can be productive, can be professional and efficient members of present society. This is what we call the 4 C's, defined as the best qualities that we see in people and have the greatest impact in the present world.

Why are the 21st century 4 C's so important as the key skills in education? Because today's education has changed seriously if we are to compare to the 20th century one. During those hundred years, large wars emerged, the industrial revolution took place and people needed to develop different skills compared to the ones today. Their reality imposed a mass education, but, with the development of technology, the free movement of information and the digital economy, the needs of education have changed.

We can say for sure that the 21st century skills are those that prepare our students for the future. In developing them, we encourage them to think, to be creative and improve the way that they work. If we want them to succeed, our learners need to achieve **critical thinking, communication, collaboration** and **creativity**. These are the 4 C's considered the critical elements in the future of learning.

1. **CRITICAL THINKING** helps them solve complex problems. Students can apply this 21st century skill to the problems that they encounter in everyday life, including those that they find at their workplace. They don't need someone to offer them solutions when they are dealing with an issue because they can solve it on their own initiative. Giving the amount of information that we are dealing with every day, especially the fake one, having a critical view, being able to objectively evaluate and draw conclusions is very important.

In the 20th century, education was more about using information for its content. Now, our students need to learn how to select information from multiple sources that seem credible, and yet, can be conflictive. This is useful not only in school work, but also for their future working activities because those are skills they have to have to be productive. Being a critical thinker implies the ability to discern truth from mystification and finding the best and correct way of solving a task, whether it concerns family or professional life.

2. **CREATIVITY** can be defined as a way of thinking outside the box. It is not something that you find only in arts or music classes, but it is a skill that can be applied on a wider variety of situations, both in school and in working places. A marketing director needs to be creative in increasing the income of the company. If you associate creativity with these circumstances and to many more, it becomes clear why you don't have to put it in a box, but encourage students to think about their learning process or about their day-to-day life in ways that they may not have not considered otherwise.

The student's ability to take advantage of what they've learned and create something new, is a skill they have to have, beyond the balance that has to do with us teaching kids how to consume and how to create. The ability to create for purpose, to solve problems, to be artistic, to attempt things and fail is extremely valuable.

The key element of creativity that we have to teach is that failure is admissible, because it is part of the learning process. Why? Because life is not always about exams. The ability to be creative helps our students develop their capacity of dealing with future falls.

3. **COLLABORATION** can be defined as the act of working together to achieve a common goal because, no matter what field of activity they will be working on, our students will, nevertheless, work in groups. That is why we need to expose them to that environment before they get to their work place. That way, they will be prepared

to stand for their beliefs or to make compromises for the sake of the others in their team.

All in all, collaboration is a complex process and the best way to achieve it is to practice because education has always included group projects. We tell our students that they need to understand where they fit best in the group dynamics. But the big issue is collaborating when they are asynchronised, or around the world or when you have an undefined task. I believe these are also very important skills that you have to have for the future of education and that of society.

4. **COMMUNICATION** can be defined as the practice of your ideas and thoughts quickly and professionally. It's the easiest skill to practice and the hardest one to master and students can achieve a better understanding of the concept when they learn how important is the way they speak, especially in front of their peers. If a student constantly adapts his or hers means of communicating to different circumstances, it becomes clear that they are conscious about the way their message can be interpreted by the ones who receive it.

This is not a skill that concerns only the 21st century education, but one that has preoccupied educators since ancient times. The world of communication, the tools and impact have changed drastically because technology has removed barriers between countries, languages, nations, cultures and has added a set of tools that demand a level of articulation and understanding of those tools that go far beyond what students used to learn at school. The former language study used to be based on writing, whether it was expository or creative, on verbally communicating with people, on argumentation and so on. Nowadays, this process is much more complex, to say the least, because it is related, for example, to the ability to use a vlog to transmit information or to send an instant email or a text message in such a way that they are fully adapted to your audience is critical.

That is why, a student's ability to get his ideas across, regardless of the medium, or the audience, or the time that communication takes place, is essential. You have to be a proficient communicator, you have to understand how to communicate and why you're communicating.

All in all, the 21st century competences provide the necessary skills for our students to better understand the world, the others and, most of all, themselves, so that they will be able to become efficient adults both in their personal and professional life.

Wellbeing – a necessity of learning

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*“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*
(Maya Angelou)

This work makes reference to the concept of wellbeing, to the impact which it has over emotional, cognitive and social development of students and the way in which school can ensure the wellbeing through learning activities.

The wellbeing, also known as the quality of life, is a common concept in health psychology. It is a dynamic state that can be enriched by adopting some healthy behaviors. Most of these behaviors are formed during school through school culture and interpersonal relationships built in the school environment. In order to achieve wellbeing, this must be approached from 5 different aspects: physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual wellbeing. Wellbeing is “a broad biopsychosocial construct correlated with life satisfaction, self-esteem, social involvement and a person’s value system”³⁴.

The wellbeing is considered as an indicator of the quality of the educational process. This is why more and more schools are interested in ensuring a school climate that maintains the wellbeing of students.

There is a close link between the student's wellbeing and academic results. Wellbeing refers to positive attitudes towards school but also towards life in general. You feel good - you learn well. The student's wellbeing influences his motivation and involvement in learning and the result is seen in the academic success. Neuroscience has shown that wellbeing stimulates the cognitive process and influences success. That’s why we have to bring our students to a level of wellbeing that has an impact on their cognitive, social and emotional development.

For the student to be successful in learning, he needs support in learning, which involves psychological and emotional development, social behavior, relationship, learning environment. The development of wellbeing must be done while the student is learning.

„Friendly environment and creative learning are values that define the school of happiness”³⁵. Interpersonal relationships between students, between students and teachers are very important.

Factors that influence the wellbeing in school:

- A.** A first condition for ensuring wellbeing in the class, in learning activities and a pleasant atmosphere would be that the teacher is in a good state.

In Romanian schools, the wellbeing of the teacher is threatened by a high level of stress (relationships inside the school, excessive workload, student behavior, school environment). If he is stressed and angry, the teacher will transmit a negative emotion,

³⁴ Tîrcă, Anca, *Let’s have well-being in school!*, Ed. Corint Educational, 2021

³⁵ UNESCO, *Happy School* - project implemented in Bangkok, 2016

a state of nervousness and helplessness among students. The enthusiasm is the key to contributing to students' wellbeing. It is not enough to go to class and teach, it matters the impact you have on the students. If the teacher is doing well then he will bring the wellbeing in the classroom and he will convey to his students a state of joy and peace. As a teacher, what can I do on an individual level to be in a good state? I can be aware of the value I have, I can find effective tools to manage stress levels, I can improve my communication skills.

What can the school do? Teachers need a friendly school environment, a staff room with lots of plants, colorful paintings and photos, a recreation area, team building activities.

- B.** The school environment has a „very important role in shaping the student's wellbeing”³⁶. It is both about the physical school environment that will provide learning resources but also about the atmosphere in the school that must be one of collaboration, without bullying.

Social and emotional wellbeing and the ability to learn are influenced by a friendly, pleasant, safe school environment that transforms learning, promotes cooperation and less competition, allows open communication, encourages creative activities and promotes positive, non-violent interactions.

- C.** Another dimension of the wellbeing of students is that of the relationship between them and the teacher.

Positive relationships between teachers and students have an emotional effect on students. Also, the teacher will be influenced by the quality of relationships with the students. Good relationships with students will generate positive emotions and satisfaction and will carry out teaching activities with more passion. Students receive enthusiasm and the learning process is positive for both parts.

Love, compassion, acceptance, tolerance and respect are values that allow building positive relationships, will induce a state of wellbeing and the student will be easily involved in the learning process.

- D.** Another main factor of wellbeing is the feeling of belonging, the student must feel that he is part of a group, that he can work in that group. Cooperation and teamwork promote a friendly attitude.
- E.** The student's wellbeing also depends on his self-confidence. The teacher can find solutions to increase students' self-confidence. The teacher should address the student according to the emotional states they identify with. Even if students don't excel at a certain subject, the teacher's attitude should be one of encouragement and not a critique one. Praise rewards work, while encouragement recognizes effort, involvement.
- F.** The wellbeing depends on the relationship between the school and the student's family, on the way in which they collaborate when decisions are taken in the interest of the students. Therefore, the teacher can adapt its learning methods in a way in which it won't overstep the family's values.
- G.** Wellbeing among students is also ensured by the opportunities that the school creates for them to participate in making a decision. Knowing that the student can make a contribution to the way the school is organized will become much more responsible and will make the school much more attractive.

³⁶ Gutman Leslie, *Children's wellbeing in primary school: pupil and school effects*, 2008

Examples of good practice

1. The presentation of a learning unit / learning lessons is done in the form of a concept map, story, film, soundtrack. All of these are challenges for students, that will encourage them to learn, arouse their interest and make them to enjoy learning. Music inspires and why not choose to inspire our students, too?

Example: The triumphal march from the opera "Aida" by Verdi can be used in lessons about ancient Egypt and the choir of slaves from Nabucco is integrated into the lesson when students study about the slavery of the Jews in Egypt. The song "Wind of Change" by Scorpions is integrated into the study of the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

The song "Danger, Danger High Voltage" by Electric Six can be used in the electricity chapter and "Me and My Shadow" by Various is a song that can be used in lessons about lights. When we are studying the lessons about sounds and musical instruments, we can audition from symphonic concerts.

2. The teacher must ensure the most interesting and attractive learning experiences possible to make the students feel good at school. Student-centered learning cannot be complete without focusing on one's wellbeing.

And because a dimension of wellbeing is provided by emotions and poetry brings so much emotion, in physics classes there are moments of learning in which poetry is used as a pretext to explain some physical concepts. Students learn that science is not the only way to access the truth and the picture of reality, seen through the window of science and that of artistic creation, is a much more complete one.

Physical concepts such as reflection, refraction of light, dilation of time, and theory of simultaneity can be described using verses from the poems of Mihai Eminescu. The Latin poet Lucrețiu explains in verses the structure and movement of matter and notions of balance and inertia can be understood with the help of Alecu Donici's fable, "Cancer, the frog and a pike" and the poem "Nunta Zamfirei" by George Coșbuc.

In history, in the lesson about Stephen the Great, can be used the poem "Muma lui Ștefan cel Mare" by Dimitrie Bolintineanu and the sacrifice of the Romanian soldiers in the War of Independence are captured in the poem "Peneș Curcanul" by Vasile Alecsandri.

3. The teacher must show originality and innovate to help students get out of their daily routine. Thus, moments of relaxation and at the same time learning are also created by using elements of gastronomy. Gastronomy is part of a country's culture, and the proposed activities allow the formation of the key competence in terms of cultural awareness and expression.

On the theme "Communist regime", students will have the opportunity to get to know and prepare the childhood sweets of their parents and grandparents (The recipe of yesterday's and today's childhood: homemade chocolate, biscuit salami). To mark the role of women in World War I, the students remake the "soldiers' biscuits", the ANZAC biscuits that were trained for the soldiers enlisted in the Army Corps of Australia and New Zealand. The biscuits become a symbol of the sacrifices of the soldiers in the ANZAC corps, but also the permanent bond between those on the front and their families.

Through these types of activities, skills are developed, collaborative learning opportunities are created, positive relationships are created between students.

4. In the lessons one can use school theater as a method of learning, both from a cognitive but especially effective perspective, of managing relationships with others

and one's own emotions... The scene creates a favorable framework for the development of self-confidence, creativity, and a state of well-being.

In history classes, students have the opportunity to stage different moments in history: "Santa Ioan Roată și Unirea", "Scouts in the First World War", "The Holocaust – a tear of history", "Chrissoveloni Mansion - story in pictures",

In the physics classes, the sketches can be used: "Archimedes and the golden crown", "Volta and Napoleon".

5. The teacher can overcome the boundary between the cognitive and emotional dimensions through a transdisciplinary approach to concepts, and events within projects. Project-based learning influences students' wellbeing and develops students' intrinsic motivation.

Examples of transdisciplinary projects: "Water in a transdisciplinary vision (in mythology, in literature, in painting, in music)", "Earth in a transdisciplinary vision", "The great religions of the world: Islam", "The conflict of civilizations – transdisciplinary aspects".

The wellbeing of the students comes from the freedom to establish their own teams, the topic addressed, but also the way of organization.

6. Another educational approach is where teaching is done outside the classroom. Through outdoor activities, the wellbeing will be intensified, both at the level of students and teachers.

We have arranged in the school a place of learning, an unconventional space, where students can meet in a relaxed atmosphere for different debates, cultural activities, viewings, activities of the drawing club, chess, and debate.

A school that promotes wellbeing must provide its students with places in which they can spend time together, develop their creative abilities. The school yard is arranged by creating spaces that allow students to work outdoors. Game markers can also be made. Music can also be provided at school during breaks. We want to make school a desired place.

7. Choosing a motto, a slogan for the school that refers to the importance that the school attaches to ensuring wellbeing creates a unique vision for the institution: "Be a child with dreams and let's make a happy school together."

"Spiru Haret" National College Tecuci aims to create and promote this new educational model that emphasizes the wellbeing of students. Starting with 2021, CNSH has set as its strategic goal "Improving the wellbeing of the members of the organization in order to increase the efficiency of the activity carried out"³⁷ through team building activities for students and teachers, wellbeing projects ("Quality education, an education made with love", "School days festival for parents", CNSH-125 years").

8. And why not an hour of wellbeing in the school schedule? Counseling classes can be turned into hours where students learn how to use their potential and resources to create a state of wellbeing, develop skills to help them cope with certain situations in which they may find themselves. The topic of such classes can be: how to maintain your health, how to relate positively to those around you, how to develop a way of thinking so that you can overcome certain obstacles, how to get involved in what you chose to do, how to give meaning to life in general.

³⁷Grecu Ion; Olariu Eugenia, *Institutional development project, SHNC Tecuci, 2021-2025*

9. The school must provide opportunities for learning arts, training skills in clubs where they no longer feel the pressure of performance or evaluation. In our school there is a painting club, a chess club, a dance club, a gastronomy club, a debate club.
10. The teacher must understand that the wellbeing of the students is achieved mainly by accepting the distinct personality of each student. A student's wellbeing can be encouraged by promoting their own autonomy. Each student should be treated as an autonomous person, who can set simple learning objectives, types of activities, teammates, rules, place and time of work. The student must know that he can express himself freely, without fear of making mistakes.
To motivate him, praise his positive behaviors. Ask him about his mood, at the beginning and as well at the end of class.

Conclusions

Ensuring wellbeing is a topic of interest, especially when it comes to promoting quality education. Education must be serious and enjoyable. Concern for the wellbeing of students must be a priority of all education systems. The school must provide not only intellectual education but also social and emotional education. „Let's learn to value happiness more than performance.” (T. Walker)

The school must grow and become a framework that provides a state of wellbeing. If he's feeling good and motivated, the student will also have academic results and at the same time will learn to adopt positive behaviors and attitudes towards himself and those around. "By promoting wellbeing in school, we obtain an effective, integral, balanced educational act with special results for the students both intellectually and in terms of their personality."

By having a great state of mind, students can learn more easily and the teacher can pass on the positive energy that students need so much. I am convinced that when wellbeing dominates, curiosity, enthusiasm, fascination and performance appear naturally in the teaching process.

Wellbeing must be induced and cultivated. If we make our environment as pleasant as possible, if we surround ourselves with things and people that inspire us, if we remain calm and involved in our activities, then we can say with certainty that we have achieved wellbeing.

And if we still have to choose what to pass on to others, why not pass on happiness?

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