



# School Mental Health Training



**World Health  
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Eastern Mediterranean**

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## Lecture 4

# Mental health-promoting schools 1 (promotion and prevention)



# Learning objectives



**characteristics of  
a good teacher**



**characteristics of  
a good school**



**values of a  
MH-promoting school**



# Mental health-promoting schools



Schools should focus on the promotion of the **emotional well-being** of their students as an important variable influencing academic success

## **School programmes**

Social, emotional, and academic learning improve school attitudes, behaviour, and academic performance

**School support** buffers against the effects of child victimization and vulnerability to substance abuse, early pregnancy, and quitting school



# Mental health-promoting schools



Schools are positioned to play a major role in promoting mental health

**Teachers** educate students and serve as **role models** from whom students can learn important life skills such as emotional regulation, dealing with conflict and frustration, and modelling moral and ethical characteristics



# Exercise



Please divide yourselves  
into groups of four

**Take 10 minutes to discuss the following topic**

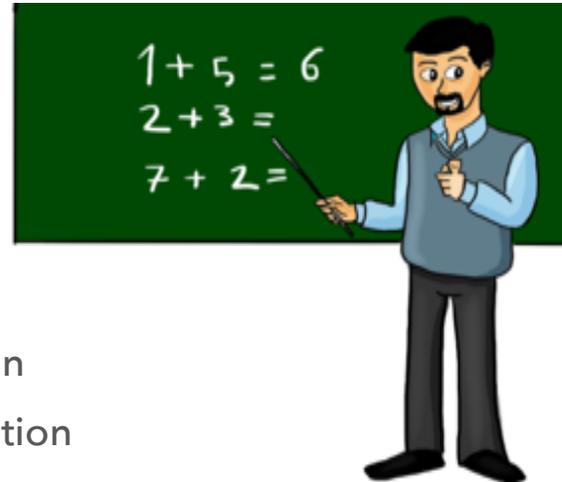
Identify the characteristics you think should be seen in a **good teacher**

**Have a representative report back to the larger group**

# Characteristics of a good teacher

(Minhas et al, 2008)

- Empathy
- Sets age-appropriate tasks and uses age-appropriate discipline
- Understands developmental stages of children
- Attuned to verbal and non-verbal communication
- Communicates effectively and clearly
- Makes expectations about children's behaviour clear
- Arranges the physical and interpersonal environment of the classroom in a way that supports teaching





## Exercise 2



Please divide yourselves  
into groups of four

**Take 10 minutes to discuss the following topic**

Discuss the characteristics you think should be present in a **good school**

**Have a representative report back to the larger group**



# Characteristics of a good school

(Minhas et al, 2008; Zins et al, 2004)



- 
- Caring relationships between students and teachers
  - The staff is involved in decision-making
  - Partnership between schools & families
  - The physical and interpersonal environment is safe and orderly
  - Student body is diverse
  - Strong leadership



# Characteristics of a good school

(Minhas et al, 2008; Zins et al, 2004)



- 
- Cooperative learning and proactive classroom management
  - Rules and limits are clearly defined and fairly enforced
  - Positive disciplinary style
  - Students are involved and given responsibility
  - Frequent assessment of students' progress
  - High academic expectations
  - Focusing not only on academic issues and results



# Mental health promoting-schools

## Core values



- 
- Caring for all
  - Valuing diversity
  - Building self-esteem
  - Building relationships
  - Ensuring safety
  - Encouraging participation
  - Fostering independence
  - Early identification and intervention to promote well-being
  - Support and training for teachers and other staff

# 1. Caring for all



It is important to foster a culture of understanding that views students who have difficulties as in need of help rather than a burden



# 1. Caring for all





# 1. Caring for all



**Practical steps to promote a caring environment**

**Communicate through actions that all students  
are valued**

**Create an environment that doesn't discriminate**

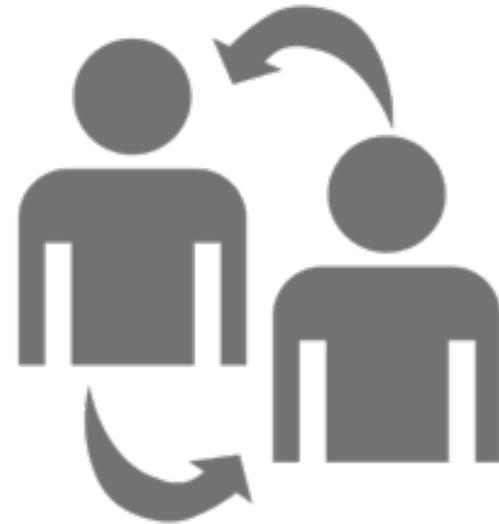
**Create mechanisms to deal with complaints**



## 2. Valuing diversity



**Appreciate how diversity (ethnic, religious, disability status) contributes to the education of all**



**Teachers should communicate positive attitudes to children with special needs so that other students follow**



## 2. Valuing diversity



### **Practical steps to promote diversity**

**Establish a buddy system**

**To have students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms has a positive impact on other students particularly in the area of developing social skills**

# 3. Building self-esteem



Schools have a fundamental role to play in the development of **positive self-esteem** in students

(Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998)

Being in situations where they consistently experience failure at school may have a detrimental impact on students' self-esteem



# 3. Building self-esteem



# 3. Building self-esteem

(Johnson and Johnson, 1999)



## Practical steps to build self-esteem

**Give children responsibility and leadership roles when possible**

**Use praise rather than reprimand**

**Foster cooperation rather than competition**



for older students



# 3. Building self-esteem

(Johnson and Johnson, 1999)



## Practical steps to build self-esteem

**Create activities that allow students to demonstrate competence ([www.connectability.ca](http://www.connectability.ca)) such as "I am special book", "Things I am good at", "My hand activities"**

**Use scripted role plays with puppets to develop feelings of self-esteem by brainstorming ideas about what to do when children feel sad**

**Use beads to have children make bracelets. Each bead should represent something they like about themselves**



for younger students



# 4. Building relationships

Good relationships are very important



**Greater cognitive and affective achievement** has been linked to more cohesive relationships within the classroom

Poor relationships can lead to **depression** and **absenteeism** among students and teachers (Weare, 2000)

Students must be valued for who they are  
Teachers themselves should model relationships  
Liaising with parents is of paramount importance





## 4. Building relationships



# 4. Building relationships



## Practical steps to build relationships

**Group work and activities provide a good opportunity for alliance building**

**Procedures should be in place for teachers to manage potential differences with colleagues and students**



## 5. Ensuring safety



It is of paramount importance that children feel **physically and emotionally** safe in the school setting.

This is even more important for students with disabilities (physical and emotional)

**Aggressive behaviour** may threaten students and cause them to **withdraw**

(Peterson and Skiba, 2000).



## 5. Ensuring safety





## 5. Ensuring safety



### **Practical steps to ensure safety at school**

**Establish a school wide policy for bullying**

**Deal rapidly and effectively with any form of threatening behaviour**

**Ensure teachers and staff are approachable**



# 6. Encouraging participation

Effective schools create a **positive atmosphere** based on a sense of community

Effective participation is facilitated when school staff **actively consult** with students and their parents (Weare, 2000)

Students are more likely to cooperate with regulations which they had a say in developing





## 6. Encouraging participation





## 6. Encouraging participation



**Practical steps to improve participation at school**

**Allow students a say in running schools through student councils and similar groups**

**Display students' work and call attention to their achievements**

**Ensure parental involvement**





# 7. Fostering independence



An important role of schools is to **empower students** to become independent

Learning is more effective when students are encouraged to **think for themselves** (Weare, 2000)



# 7. Fostering independence





# 7. Fostering independence



## **Practical steps to foster independence**

**Give students age-appropriate responsibilities**

**Provide opportunities to share views**

**Provide programmes that develop leadership, encourage debate and improve negotiation, like the model United Nations  
([www.un.org/gmun](http://www.un.org/gmun))**

# 8. Early identification and intervention



**Identify** and **address** problems  
at an early stage  
By **intervening** early more serious  
mental illness can be averted  
(Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998)

It is important for educators to balance the risk of **labelling a child at an early age** and the importance of **early identification**



## 8. Early identification and intervention





## 8. Early identification and intervention



**Practical steps for early identification and intervention**

**Schools should have policies and standard procedures for identification and referrals**

**It is hard at times to determine the extent to which a behaviour is problematic**  
**For example, pre-schoolers can be very active**  
**How do you determine if the child falls within the normal range of activity or is hyperactive?**

# 9. Support and training for teachers and other staff



Working with children who have mental health problems can be very challenging (Hanko, 1995)

Workload and student behaviour were found to be significant predictors for depression in teachers (Ferguson, Frost & Hall 2012)

Teachers who are overwhelmed have more difficulty supporting their students



## 9. Support and training for teachers and other staff





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### **Practical steps to support and train teachers**

**Create a culture that encourages teachers to discuss difficulties**

**Establish teacher support groups, allowing peer-peer consultations or consultations with school psychologists**

**Help teachers reconnect with why they became educators**

**Create an environment that is positive and fosters development**

**Train in behaviour management techniques**

**Help teachers understand that difficult behaviour by children may be a cover-up for circumstances the child is experiencing**





**Thank you**

