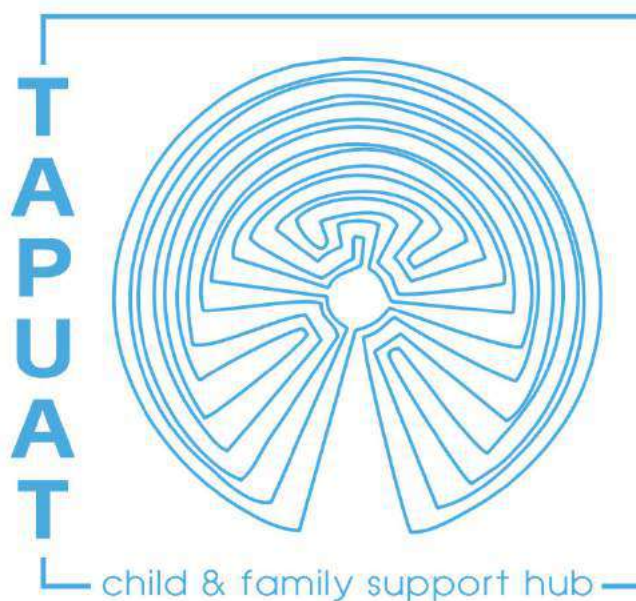


INTRODUCING SEL IN THE CLASSROOM

TAPUAT CHILD & FAMILY SUPPORT HUB,





NFE-SEL DEBRIEF REPORT

2018

This report covers the introduction of SEL methodologies at TAPUAT and resulting work with refugee and asylum seeking children, aged 6-18 years old, living in Moria camp.

TAPUAT was launched in April 2018 and is implemented by Iliaktida AMKE in partnership with Better Days, with funding from UNICEF.

Prepared by:

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A DEBRIEF REPORT FROM **BETTER DAYS** INTRODUCING SEL IN THE CLASSROOM

THE AUTHOR

Myriam Correa is a social educator from Spain, specialized on social emotional learning, addiction, peacemaking culture and photography. After working for several years with children with behavioral and mental disorders, she came to Lesvos with the intention of applying her skills and expertise in the field of emergency education for refugee children and populations in transit.

MAIN CHARACTERS

The Social Worker as a trainer,
The Educators as observers and practitioners,
The Students as subjects of impact.
The NFE Coordinator & the Programme Director as the guiding force.

PRINCIPLES

We chose 12 main principles which today guide our curriculum
We are guided by Social Emotional Learning methodologies, and by the intuition of Free Schools Pedagogy and Education of Peace.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of our program are to restore human dignity by accompanying the children through this learning journey and the process of social and emotional development as a means to cope with traumatic experiences and enable learning.

COMPETENCIES

Emotional awareness and regulation, cognitive development, acquisition of positive social skills, emotional growth, and self-knowledge

CONCLUSION

Promote the use of SEL to enable deeper communication in the classroom, subsuming academic goals to the creation of a safe and healing medium in the classroom (which in turn enables learning and development).

From the foundation of built-up human competencies (positive social skills, emotional regulation, and self-knowledge), building curricula that meet academic objectives in linguistic acquisition, literacy, and numeracy.

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CONCLUSION

TAPUAT'S JOURNEY TO CREATING ITS UNIQUE PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

TAPUAT is built to resemble a school. From architectural plan to interior design, a great deal of thought went into its creation. We firmly believe that, when providing education for children living in camps and in transit, physical spaces play a fundamental role in promoting healing and allowing learning. TRAUMA wears down those afflicted by it, profoundly influencing their cognitive schema, affecting their self-awareness and self-understanding, as well as their sense of reality as they know it. The resulting habits and beliefs can seriously disrupt every day living at a conscious and subconscious level. This understanding informed the design and building of TAPUAT, so as to facilitate access to a safe space for cross-cultural communication and education as a positive and healing process.

At TAPUAT, teaching methodologies and content are constantly customized to respond to the needs of the target population. They need to be fun and practical, to teach life-skills, to transcend ages, gender, and prior schooling levels, and enable integration and cross-cultural learning.

In September 2018, we consolidated a curriculum built on the foundation of a 'project-based approach' to learning. Language lessons and art activities, and Math and SEL whenever possible, are woven around a specific monthly theme. Specific objectives vary according to whether each activity is focused toward sharpening academic skills or toward buttressing resilience and psycho-social health.

TAPUAT caters to 100-200 children per day. The students all reside less than 5km away in Moria, among the most notorious transit camps in Europe, and visit TAPUAT 5 days per week. Our students are aged 6 to 18 years old. They are asylum seeking and refugee children from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, West Africa, and myriad other countries.

The NFE Program is hosted within a 200m² space on the upper floor of the TAPUAT center, and includes three mixed-gender classrooms: C1 (ages 6-10), C2 (ages 11-14) and C3 (ages 15-18). Each classroom is managed by a lead educator whose primary task is to teach while also being attentive to the students' behavioral, mental, emotional and physical state of being. The educators are trained to identify and refer protection concerns and are supported by a team of protection officers.

Further on, skill-specific volunteers from around the world support the full-time educators with subject- or level-specific tutoring. Interpreters take on assistant roles and an experienced SEL educator and social worker works with the team of educators to introduce alternative and SEL methods to implement 'performance' teaching.



ABOUT SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social Emotional Learning is a way to bring education to life, making it an experience rather than a routine. SEL manifests itself via empowerment, by shifting control from the teacher to the student. The student, in traditional education, is considered the object whereas in an SEL-oriented classroom the student becomes the subject. In others words, SEL breaks through the stereotype of the teacher teaching in front of a whiteboard, and recognizes the power of the student as a significant stakeholder in a classroom; encouraging the impact of voice and of felt experiences. The classroom becomes a place to build learning partnerships, where the teacher and the student co-create content and guide the curriculum together. SEL methodologies encourage the student to participate at parallel levels; not only by paying attention but also by expressing needs and emotions.

MODUS OPERANDI

Lesson plans for every age group include a routine check-in exercise, and one to three activities to develop throughout the session.

All activities are designed to be attractive to the children, who are after all the lead players in the activity—the subjects and objects of education, those who experience and experiment with the freedom to talk, invent, express, improvise, and be respected and listened to throughout the session.

At the same time, the guiding principle of these activities is to reinforce positive behavior while modulating disruptive behavior and transforming it into constructive energy.



STEP 1

SEL-Training: a live-training approach.

From October to December 2018, our main objective was to train the educators on both the sensitivity and methodologies of Social-Emotional Learning. We ensured that they knew to use these tools with care for their own well-being and that of all their students.

Better Days social worker Myriam Correa started offering SEL training to the three lead educators of TAPUAT. The training lasted 11 weeks, with weekly 4 hours of SEL per classroom, for a total of 132 hours of SEL, (at least 44 hours spent with each educator). Myriam dedicated an additional 11 hours to resource research, receiving and processing feedback, debriefing, and preparing further sessions. Children were provided individual PSS support upon request.

Although each educator received the same mentoring, each processed and progressed through the mentoring at her or his own pace. The mentoring was designed to familiarize the educators with SEL tools and methodologies, help them embed these within the context of TAPUAT's teaching practices, and help them shift their habits and their ways of being and of thinking about educating children suffering trauma and still living in camps.

We believe that the mentoring had a fundamentally positive impact on SEL training, which slowly affected the culture of TAPUAT, its pedagogical philosophy, its curriculum, its program design, and the self-awareness of the entire educator team, consciously and subconsciously.

Aligning with Tapuat's two daily shifts (morning and afternoon), SEL sessions took place through 2 periods per shift, with a snack break in between. The snack break gave the educators time to reorganize the class and prepare the new session. In each session a different group of 15 children took part.

Each educator received a 4-hour in-class training per week. In the first session, the trainer conducted the SEL session with the trainee teacher in an observing and assisting role. During the second shift, the trainer and the trainee switched roles, with the trainer assessing and evaluating the trainee's progress and lingering challenges.

In some cases, the trainer conducted both groups in the morning, and the educator took over SEL for the entire afternoon shift. The facilitator/trainer would then take on a background role.

Occasionally, the trainer stepped out of this background role, becoming more active to support the group and the activity. Over time, however, her interventions became less necessary and less frequent as the educators grew confident and better able to conduct the sessions alone.

This experience taught us that the presence of a social worker or the support of a psychologist is highly recommended throughout the training and development of SEL pedagogy.

The 'ball of power' is present in almost all activities and is one of the two ever-present leit-motifs of the sessions. The ball of power is a brain-toy that the facilitator passes to the participants with criteria guided by five purposes:

1. working on speaking turns (basic social skills)
2. modulating behavior and showing respect at all levels
3. creating a safe and equal environment
4. generating a fluent rhythm in the activities
5. encouraging the students to participate, especially when dealing with a difficult subject or when they are shy to participate.

Circle work is the second leit-motif of our SEL Program. It helps equalize the group to have all children sit in a circle, breaking any hierarchy and promoting group cohesion and a sense of belonging. We use the circle to highlight a feeling of community within Tapuat's classrooms, and to lay down the roots of a more healing a supporting space.

"We believe mentoring had a fundamentally positive impact on SEL training which slowly affected the culture of TAPUAT, pedagogical philosophy, curriculum, programme design and the unconsciousness of the whole of the TAPUAT team"

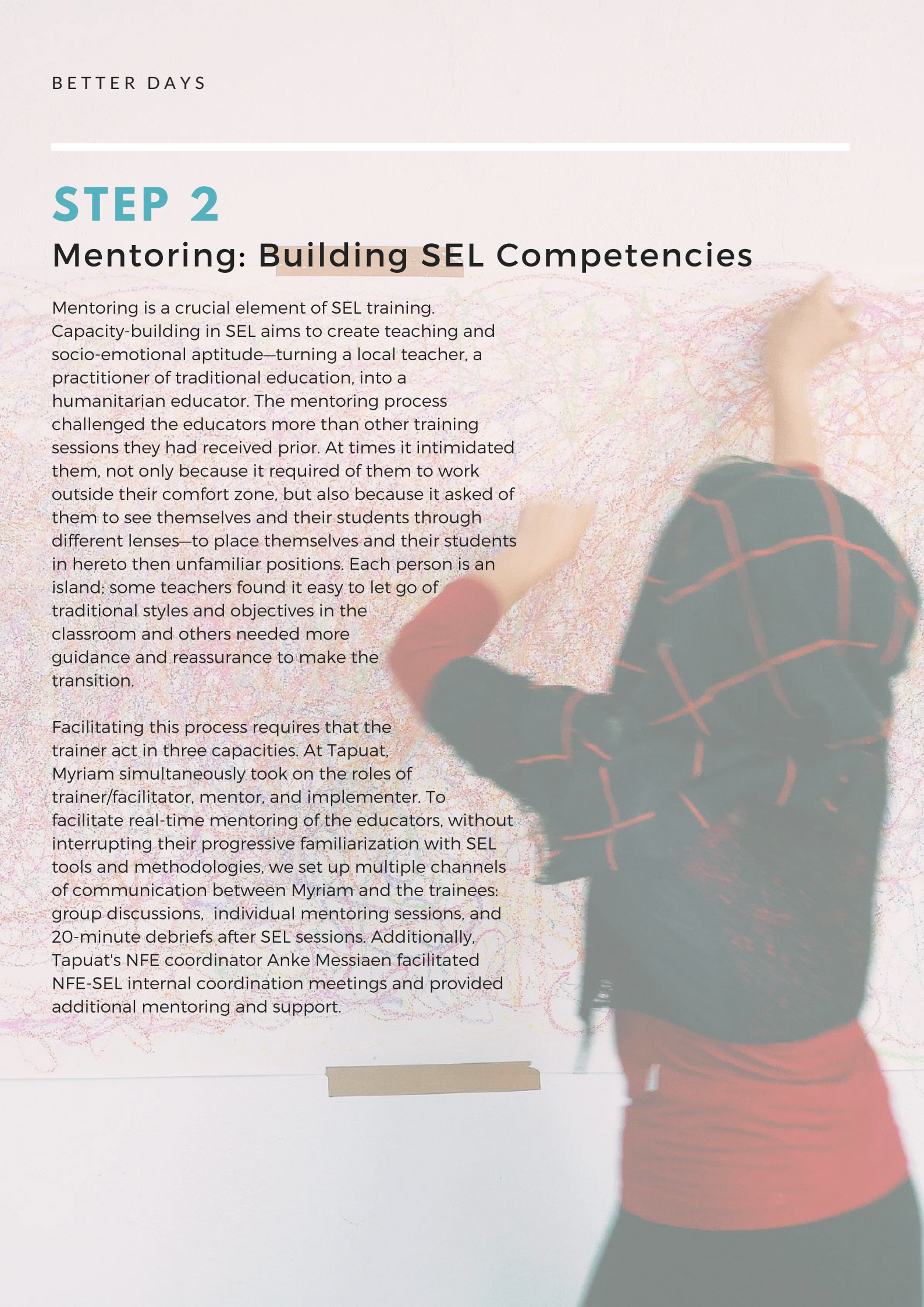


STEP 2

Mentoring: Building SEL Competencies

Mentoring is a crucial element of SEL training. Capacity-building in SEL aims to create teaching and socio-emotional aptitude—turning a local teacher, a practitioner of traditional education, into a humanitarian educator. The mentoring process challenged the educators more than other training sessions they had received prior. At times it intimidated them, not only because it required of them to work outside their comfort zone, but also because it asked of them to see themselves and their students through different lenses—to place themselves and their students in hereto then unfamiliar positions. Each person is an island; some teachers found it easy to let go of traditional styles and objectives in the classroom and others needed more guidance and reassurance to make the transition.

Facilitating this process requires that the trainer act in three capacities. At Tapuat, Myriam simultaneously took on the roles of trainer/facilitator, mentor, and implementer. To facilitate real-time mentoring of the educators, without interrupting their progressive familiarization with SEL tools and methodologies, we set up multiple channels of communication between Myriam and the trainees: group discussions, individual mentoring sessions, and 20-minute debriefs after SEL sessions. Additionally, Tapuat's NFE coordinator Anke Messiaen facilitated NFE-SEL internal coordination meetings and provided additional mentoring and support.





TESTIMONY BY KATERINA MAVRIKOU

"In general SEL is progressing really well. We are now teaching SEL for the fourth month. During this time we covered many different topics, such as brain games, social and behavioral skills, self-esteem, emotions and feelings... Some children have shown satisfaction with these topics. They wanted to talk about a variety of issues that concern them, about their families and the problems they face in Moria.

"C3 students are slowly starting to get used to SEL and that following the training, I feel more comfortable performing SEL in the classroom"

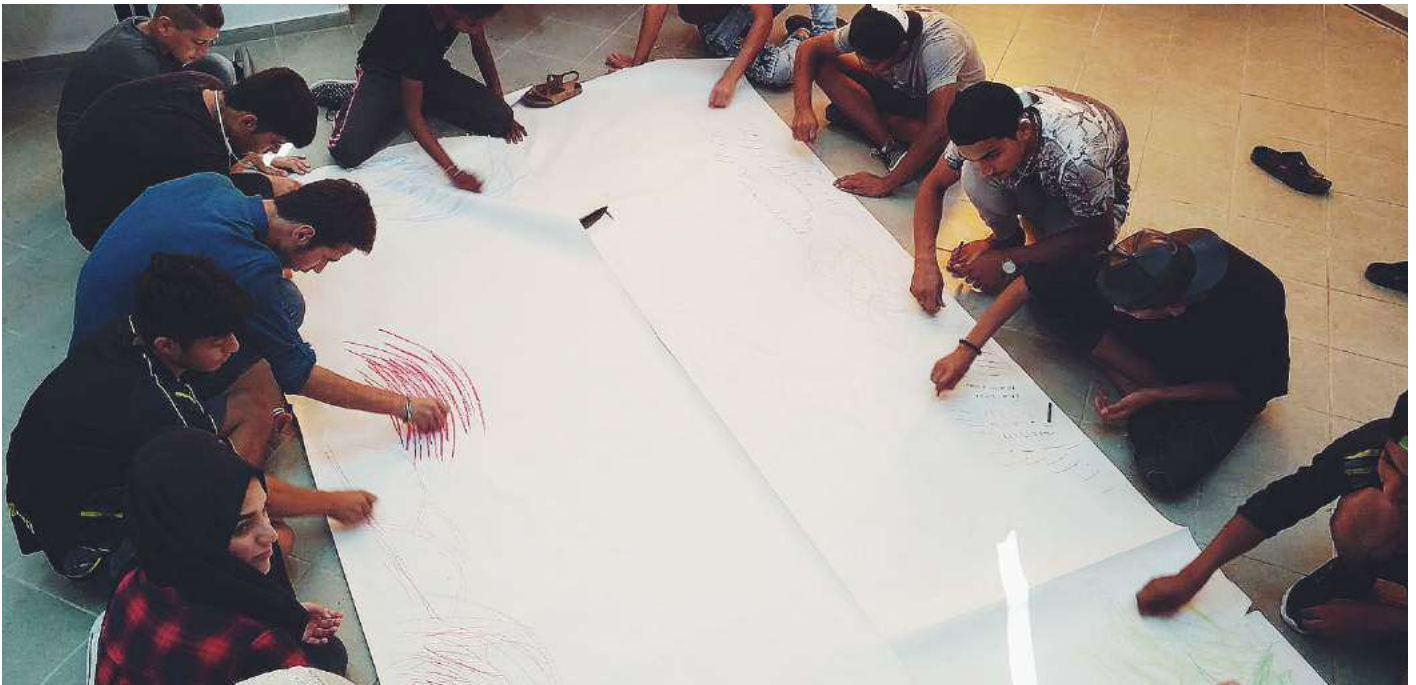
But there were also some children who did not want to talk and participate. They didn't like SEL, they were not fond of the idea of SEL every week for several reasons and were asking about more language lessons. However some activities have made them re-think and review their behaviors. With Myriam we also did mentoring. We have seen what kind of activities the children like or not and customized a SEL-curriculum for C3 taking into consideration their feedback too. I also specifically asked for more help in covering certain themes. Children liked the brain games a lot, the role playing and the activities which included emotions and feelings. To conclude, I would like to add that C3 students are slowly starting to get used to SEL and that following the training, I feel more comfortable performing SEL in the classroom"

STEP 2

Mentoring: Building SEL competencies

Mentoring objectives:

1. Familiarize the educators with the theory and practices of SEL,
2. Provide the educators with case studies (research and applied studies in relevant fields),
3. Suggest methodologies and identify tools to approach the different types of situations that can take place in the classrooms (with customized approaches for each classroom),
4. Provide the educators SEL materials to study,
5. PSS support: encourage feedback, opinions, doubts, and concerns about SEL from educators,
6. Build adequate SEL professionals, helping them become confident users of SEL methods, able to create a safe environment in the classroom for all students, and to promote fundamental societal values,
7. Train the educators to recognize trauma and refer protection cases,
8. Advise the educators on the educator-beneficiary relationship and on ways to set boundaries from positive perspectives,
9. Build PSS-awareness and sharpen their ability to identify protection concerns,
10. Equip educators with new tools and methodologies which they can incorporate in the classroom.



Key Resources

'Brain Games for Building Brain Powers' by IRC.

'Sample SEL Activities' by IRC.

<https://www.edutopia.org/video/5-keys-successful-social-and-emotional-learning>

<https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/role-of-empathy-in-teaching-social-emotional-skills/>

'My Safety my Well-Being' by UNICEF

[-https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_teaching_mindfulness_to_kids](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_teaching_mindfulness_to_kids)



TESTIMONY BY VALIA MAIDONI

"SEL has assisted me in a way that no one can truly understand. I have become a better person and teacher and as a result my students have opened up, talked with me and their classmates about their stories, dreams, traumas, feelings, ambitions, culture, religion, family, everyday life, beliefs and opinions, ethics and rules, their life in Moria, their past, present and future. In week 2 i realized that the students became hostile during the sessions and I did not feel supported either. Myriam and I redesigned the SEL curriculum with their input. Since then my students were happy and calm during SEL and no major incidents occurred.

"SEL has helped me a lot to build a true and genuine relationship with my students"

During the sessions some of them became sensitive and sentimental, some of them even cried but we made sure we made them feel safe and cared about. SEL has helped me build a true and genuine relationship with my students and for them to feel closer to me. They have told me numerous times that I am not only their teacher but also their sister, their mother, their friend. I am so proud of them and of the progress we made together. We evolve-develop each other through this and that is the best thing in this job. They behave better in classroom. Of course some of them are still not fond of the idea of SEL but i am confident they will soon get used to it. Not everyone likes tapping either but through conversation and explanation they are feeling more confident about it. Finally, yesterday some children told me that they do not feel comfortable when other people observe our SEL sessions. They need privacy."

STEP 3

IMPLEMENTING AN SEL CURRICULUM: A LEARNING CURVE

We designed our SEL programming, and defined realistic and tangible objectives based on our experience implementing NFE at Tapuat over the prior 6 months. Upon launch of the 1st training period of SEL, in October 2018, we set out to achieve the following:

- Develop on basic social skills.
- Relate levels of stress, anxiety and/or nervousness.
- Identify emotions and become aware of them.
- Share feelings and emotions with classmates and educators.
- Provide a safe space for connecting with one's inner self.
- Work on the word shift and active listening.
- Increase empathy levels towards one's classmates.
- Cope with anxiety, frustration, sadness, and anger.
- Create a sense of belonging.
- Promote participation on positive leisure.
- Unblock non-verbal language.
- Activate the psychomotor system.
- Develop skills to smother spikes in anger and frustration.
- Contain disruptive behavior.
- Improve attention and concentration skills.
- Improve individual coping mechanisms.



To meet those objectives, the SEL curriculum was designed to cover five thematic areas, complemented by two parallel and additional routine activities:

1. Emotional Education and Regulation.
 2. Social skills and Social Education (self-control, empathy).
 3. Self-knowledge: self-esteem and self-concept.
 4. Brain Building (memory, reasoning, cognition).
 5. Conflict resolution and assertiveness.
- A. Check-in activity: Tapping and Harvesting Techniques.
B. Reset: Constructive Play.

STEP 3

IMPLEMENTING AN SEL CURRICULUM: A LEARNING CURVE

By the end of 2018, we had concluded over 116 hours of SEL with 1998 6-18 year-old participants. We chose and focused SEL lesson plans on 12 principles, drawn not only from Social Emotional Learning, but also influenced by the concept and values of Free Schools Pedagogy and Culture of Peace. Those are:



Freedom,
Autonomy &
Empowerment,
Creativity
Integration
Communication
Cooperation & Solidarity,
Boundaries
Coexistence & Equity
Respect
Positivity
Active & Experiential
Learning
Resilience.

Program Guidelines

- Each area is explored for a month.
- Weekly SEL sessions per classroom take place in each classroom.
- Group size: 10-17 children per group, depending on the activity.
- Social Worker oversight.
- Mentoring.

STEP 3

IMPLEMENTING AN SEL CURRICULUM: A LEARNING CURVE

Listed below are 11 weeks of reporting (29 days of SEL) with details on the context of the SEL activity as well as feedback on the implementation of the classroom sessions. Qualitative and quantitative data has been captured to help us monitor process and assess the success of the training program. The below table expresses the results in numbers, and offers a snapshot of SEL in numbers:

	C1	C2	C3
Number of sessions	28	44	44
Assistants	420	740	838
Content	Tapping/Havening: 28 Emotional Regulation: 18 Brain Building: 8 Social Skills: 10	Tapping/Havening: 8 Emotional Regulation: 18 Brain Building: 4 Self-knowledge: 22 Socials Skills: 30 Conflict Resolution: 4	Emotional Regulation: 12 Brain Building: 6 Self-knowledge: 14 Social Skills: 14 Conflict Resolution: 20

When SEL started, the children did not understand the role of the social worker as trainer and facilitator. Little by little, by implementing these activities, she encouraged experience and exploration of freedom of expression, of the idea of boundaries, of safety and personal space, of encouragement and creativity. Over time, the children grew first curious, then fond of the SEL activities. Consequently, and with time, a bond of trust was created between them and the facilitator.

By week 3 the children were able to understand that every time the social worker entered the room, tables and furniture were no longer of use in their space, so they would make a circle and move physical obstacles to the back of the classroom, showing excitement to the idea of the next SEL activity.

By week 8 children who had systematically participated in most sessions were able to accept and respect the basic rules of each SEL activity, sit in a circle and respect the rules of the talking piece. The culture of working in a circle, built on a foundation of respect and non-judgement, had fully imbibed itself across these children. They felt safe and started opening up, expressing concerns and doubts about themselves and other frustrations and sadness, and sometimes even shared traumatic stories.

STEP 3

IMPLEMENTING AN SEL CURRICULUM: A LEARNING CURVE

“It is the first time that a person gives me space to think and talk about myself, my feelings, my fears, my family...the first time someone cares about how I feel”.

Habib - 15 years old, Afghanistan

By week 8 it was evident that the children had developed a bond with the facilitator and the educators—relationships that were safe and professionally monitored, with equal doses of care and protection. SEL gave the educators the opportunity to look deeper into their students' psyche, and relate further with their feelings and struggles. This brought them closer together.

Among the educators, Anna K., who left in the middle of the training, could identify PSS cases; Valia M., who got to understand a lot of the children's reality during SEL lessons, started caring daily about them and monitoring their individual processes; Katerina M. found new pedagogical techniques that she could use all through the week in other lessons; Vaggelis found a way to set boundaries in a kinder way. At the end of their training circle, Katerina M. & Valia M. got to see a different version of the children and teenagers they once met, which gave them a new vision and new tools to relate to them, to approach them, and to teach them.

We have observed that many of our students had little or no emotional education in their origin countries, which added to the complexity of their psychological journey, and at times potentially made them more vulnerable. Dealing with the cultural shock of being in a different continent, living under different social rules and emotional codes, is extremely challenging. The SEL activities sparked group counselling and individual sessions, as most of the beneficiaries have been approaching both Myriam and their educators to ask them for advice and support. The children became comfortable discussing personal issues and family concerns with them, and even to ask them for systematic counselling to help them deal with nightmares, phobias, stress, identity struggles and other issues. This became the highlight of the learning curve.

Many beneficiaries, especially from C2 & C3, have personally thanked the staff for bringing SEL to the classrooms. SEL proved that 'classroom culture' can influence the process of healing and learning and should be taken into consideration at all times as an influencing factor.

STEP 4

Rethinking the NFE Curriculum: The emergence of an integrated approach reconciling SEL Principles and Academic Objectives

With SEL's Emotional Regulation and Emotional Education sessions, we aim in improving the teachers' & students' emotional intelligence and to equip them with life skills and the ability to cope with trauma at a mental and emotional level. Notably, the kids have been able improve their attention span, memory, and concentration, all of which can make them better students and improve their future prospects. Applying SEL in the classroom puts the focus back on sharpening fundamental social and behavioral skills—or allowing their emergence. These skills form a base on which to become a good citizen and positive members of their new host society.

Following three months of SEL, students had learned healthier ways to express themselves. The educators reported feeling more comfortable performing SEL activities and had observed positive behavioral changes among the children—in spite of the fact that some children had avoided participating while others had arrived later and were still trying to catch up.

During this period, TAPUAT students have been expanding their mind's limits with highly participative and often funny brain-building activities. These activities focus on assertiveness, problem solving, and conflict resolution. They learned to have routines and retain normalcy for as long as they were within the safe environment of TAPUAT. We have found ways to deal with stress and anxiety facilitating sessions, by focusing on building upcoping mechanisms and grieving processes. Tapping, Havening, and Mindfulness exercises were extremely beneficial to check-in and de-stress upon arrival from the camp.

Teenagers in C3 didn't receive those techniques in SEL sessions because they had shown well-structured behavior and social skills to cope well with rules from the get-go; they were fond of the SEL program from day 1, because it allowed them to have a space to talk about themselves, something they respected and were deeply grateful for. Considering how hard they were working through these sessions, we decided not to take that time from them, and instead offered a one-hour space to achieve more limited goals in smaller groups. In groups of 5 or 6, they practiced Mindfulness techniques to close the sessions.



STEP 4

Rethinking the NFE Curriculum: The emergence of an integrated approach reconciling SEL Principles and Academic Objectives

How do we assess the success of this training program? By remarking the positive change in children's emotional regulation and behavior, the attitudinal improvement and professional development of Valia M. and Katerina M., the emotional bond and monitored development of teacher-student relationships in way that promotes safety and care for all stakeholders, the number of protection concerns referred to the PSS department, and the spike of positive learning outcomes and academic progress.

Myriam concluded the SEL training with only two of the four educators who participated in the first SEL training in TAPUAT. Valia M. and Katerina M. today continue to conduct weekly SEL activities on their own. They submit weekly SEL reports to Myriam, who continues providing PSS support, mentoring, weekly check-ins, and occasional supervision to ensure safety, maintain a standard quality of SEL activities, facilitate feedback, and support further capacity growth and personal development.

A new educator was hired to replace Anna K. in C1, where Vaggelis Kalfopoulos is now the lead educator. His training began in December and is expected to complete his SEL training by the end of March.

It is evident that SEL had positive results on the students' and teachers' emotional well-being. It marked a turning point on Better Days' NFE programming, and has shifted the direction of NFE programming towards a more balanced and integrated pedagogical approach in which academic, creative, and social-emotional domains co-exist and reinforce one another.

Besides it all, the most important thing is that at TAPUAT students found a space where they can be children, sharpen their skills, co-exist in multi-national classrooms and teams, relate to themselves, and learn about life—sometimes by having fun, sometimes by being serious and attentive, but always with empathy and through understanding and cooperation. It is worth saying that since SEL training was introduced to TAPUAT, the rate of incidents of aggression and fights incurred on site has dropped substantially. Educators reported a de-escalation of trauma in classrooms and a visible improvement in children's behavior and happy faces.

MEASURING IMPACT

At TAPUAT, promoting group cohesion and a sense of belonging in the classroom became the key ingredients to creating a healthy and positive educational environment for both the student and the field educator. The learning process is dictated by the individual or the group, and as such has an impact at two levels, which one needs to recognize before setting strict academic objectives. At TAPUAT we deployed SEL to enable communication and open dialogue, overruling the primacy of didactic teaching to a secondary importance. Our observations allow us to conclude that to build successful curricula for refugee children in transit, we should aim to build human competencies first (positive social skills, emotional regulation, self-knowledge, and brain-building) and only then focus on meeting academic objectives (language skills, literacy, and numeracy).



TRAINEES

Staff & volunteers exposed to the training, supporting or interpreting, during the sessions



CHILDREN

The student-participants of the SEL activities during the SEL training period



PROGRAM EVOLUTION

The NFE program shifted over time toward protection and the creation of an integrated and simultaneous approach to teaching and healing.

STEP 5

Diving into the world of SEL

The 2019 quarterly curriculum will launch by the 14th of January, and will conclude at the beginning of April. By the end of this three month period, we will complete an organic integration of the SEL methodology and activities into the NFE programming, as endorsed by all stakeholders.

Following the Easter break, we hope to offer a second training (shorter in time, deeper in context) to dive further into the world of SEL and the possibilities this approach creates when used in the refugee context. The goal is to train field educators to be able to use these methods in the classroom more naturally and frequently, rather than only during the SEL-sessions alone, as they currently still do. This process requires time and space to organically emerge and mature. With a second training, the trainer can facilitate and strengthen the process of teaching development and equip the educators with more tools to understand both the methods and intuition of SEL.

Better Days is also looking for accredited partners to certify TAPUAT's personnel with SEL training certificates.

We continue pursuing this journey with hope and with humility, with ambition and with care, with the utmost respect for the ability of our teachers to learn and re-invent themselves... and with nothing but awe and admiration at our students' resilience and strength.

