

WORKING WITH SELF CONTROL UNDER COVID 19 AT FIREHØJESKOLEN

SHORT INTRODUCTION

Our goal was to work with the theme of self-control. Originally in the form of a series of scheduled physical meetings and activities with parents and children. However, the challenges with Covid 19 meant that we instead had to continuously adapt the planned activities to what was possible under Covid 19. It meant a mix of physical meetings and online activities, just as it meant that the test phase was longer than originally thought. (Approx. 1 year)

The starting point for our activities was that we already had some experience of working with the WCO Methods. Teachers have completed a special WCO education (HSO) at SSP Vejle. This is continuously refreshed, just as new teachers are doing the training.

Therefore, the process started in connection with an annual refreshment of the teachers' competencies, where, among other things, work was done on how to develop a special DNA for the school and to turn this DNA into concrete activities.

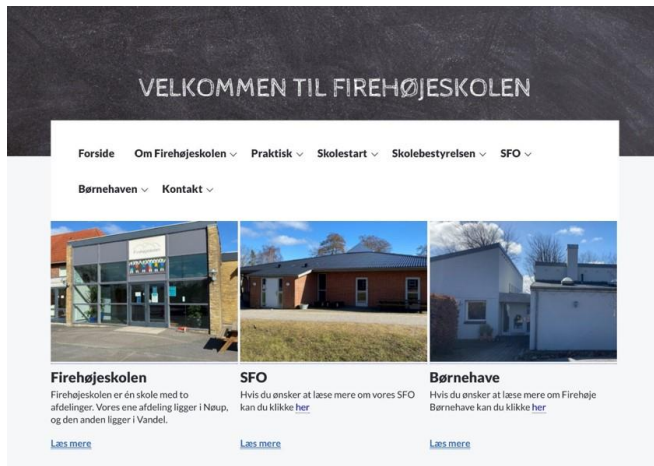
As part of the work, a working group was set up to monitor and coordinate the work.

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STEP BY STEP

Overall: The test was done over a period of a year and divided into several activities



The Firehøjeskolen webpage. Among others with a short introduction to the school's dna/values inspired by WCO.

1. Start up activities

a. Start up with teachers:

Starting the planning of the WCO test activities. Including discussion about the development of a special DNA and possible activities you can do with children and parents.

b. Start up with Parents involving:

Through the Parents' Board, the parents were involved in the planning of the work. This included supporting the development and adoption of the special DNA for the school and how to best inform about the WCO method and the school / daycare institutions work with it.

c. Establishment of a work group to ensure a common thread in the work:

Describing what to work with in the future, pick up on whether the different activities were connected. This meant creating systematics and progression: What do they start with in kindergarten and what about the 9th grade. This was done at regular meetings and gatherings. A process that is still ongoing.

2. Examples of Activities



Examples of activities: Material for Open Village day, Exercise about trust and a Video about WCO

In practice, there have been a large number of activities across the year and across age groups at school and in day care. The following is just a selection to show you the different options. One of the approaches has been to do the WCO activities as part of “other activities”

- a. Knowledge sharing and activities at an annual event in the local area. In this case, “The Open Village Day in May.
- b. Development of an Video Introduction on WCO in Collaboration with SSP Vejle
- c. Ongoing information and dialogue about WCO / HSO at Parent Meetings in the various school levels.
- d. Testing of ideas. Among other things. a specially developed set of conversation cards at parent meetings.
- e. Involvement of Parents in the production of videos about activities at school. Among others shared via the school's Facebook page, as well as the intranet platform.

3. Final activities



From an online event with parents including presentation about self control and introducing “The Marshmallow test”.

a. Online event for parents

Topic: Self Control

- Short introduction to the common thread in the school's work with WCO
- Short introduction to the background for working with WCO

- Introduction to “the marshmallow experiment” at home

Presentation on Self-control by expert: Rune Kappel

- Including Questions for parents as part of the presentation
- Questions from the parents and closing of the event: How do continue the work from hear?
- What can you do at home and at school.

b. Follow up activity after the Online Meeting: The Marshmallow Experiment

Do the marshmallow experiment at home. The children report back on how it went in class.

c. Follow up meeting with parents

(Note: Will be done as soon as we can meet in real life)

Follow up on the Online Meeting and the topic of Self-Control:

- What discussions at home did the lecture give rise to afterwards?
- How did the marshmallow experiment go?
- Discussion about what activities you can do at home and at school
- What is the next thing you / you could wish for from school / kindergarten in the continued collaboration on the use of WCO for your children?

SHORT EVALUATION

In general it was a challenge to do a test in the middle of the Covid 19 epedemic. So it took a lot flexibility to do the test phase.

However, this could also be seen as a way of learning to work with the unforeseen, which is important when working with vulnerable children.

An important thing when it comes to flexibility, is that you have some kind of backbone and in our case it was that we tried to develop a “DNA” for the school and a common and consistent approach to how we work. In Danish we call it “En rød tråd”. In English “A common thread”. We try to have the same approach whether it is preschool children or 7th grade children.

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The WCO test phase in Italy was managed by CSCI with the public primary school "Tanzio da Varallo" in Varallo (Piedmont).

It involved 7 teachers and 20 parents of 6 to 10 year old pupils.

The school is very attentive to children's well-being and has been organizing over the years several extracurricular activities (theatre workshops, walks in the nature, sports activities, etc.) to involve families.

Nevertheless, the relationships between teachers and parents are often difficult, due to the low participation of some families and their frequent conflicting attitude.

The test activities were aimed at facilitating open discussion between teachers and parents following the WCO model.

STEP BY STEP

Overall: The test phase was divided into four meetings and lasted two months.

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Parents and teachers writing their thoughts to be later discussed together.

First meeting, with teachers

Presentation of the WCO project; introduction to the *Questionnaire* especially designed as an educational tool on relationship, than filled in by teachers.

Second meeting, with teachers

Presentation of some WCO good practices; introduction to the exercise "Listening circle" to be used with the pupils and discussion. Teachers commented on their relationship with the parents in view of the next meeting.

Third meeting, with teachers and parents

Short presentation of the project. Explaining the positive parenting and long-term goals model and open discussion. "Listening circle" game: each parent wrote on a card what they expect from the school, while each teacher wrote what they expect from parents to improve communication. Once

collected, the cards were read and discussed together.

Fourth meeting, with teachers and parents

“Listening circle” game: reading of cards and comments. Proposal and discussion on initiatives to be implemented in the future to continue the open and respectful discussion between teachers and families and on the WCO tools to be used.

SHORT EVALUATION

The test phase was successful, with a very high level of attention and cooperation in each meeting. On one side, teachers sincerely shared their discomfort and difficulties with some parents, on the other parents really appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss with teachers in a new way. Both groups suggested to organize other meetings to continue the dialogue in a constructive way. However, they would like to be supported again by an external expert as a facilitator/mediator.

The box of requests/questions will be kept at school even after the test period: this tool can help the dialogue among teachers and parents, taking advantage of the anonymity of cards, to reduce the initial frequent fear of judgement.

Along the test phase, it was very useful to propose the participants a simple feedback form at the end of each meeting, to collect comments and suggestions for the following activities.

Both teachers and parents realised that the WCO project laid the foundations for better communication.

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SHORT INTRODUCTION

Yavuzlar School is a public school located in Adana, Turkey

Operating with 36 classes, 102 teachers and 1688 students (mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds)

Age Range: 10-13

WCO project team at the University of Cukurova worked with two teachers and two groups of students at Yavuzlar Secondary School on the issue of Self-Control, particularly on inhibition control and activation control.

The Challenge:

Students' inability to exercise self-control in English classes

Inhibition Control: Inability to abide by prohibitions i.e. Using the native language rather than the target language

Activation Control: Inability to do something that they basically do not want to do i.e. Unwillingness to participate actively in class)

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The Procedure:

STEP 1: Giving voice to the students (The teachers had a brainstorming session with the students where all students threw in their ideas in order to solve the problem)

STEP 2: Collaborating with the parents

-Introduction of the WCO project,

-A short presentation on the four fundamentals, with an emphasis on self-control,

-Presentation of the problem-their children's inability to exercise self-control in class,

-A brainstorming session with the parents where they threw in their ideas to solve the problem with their cooperation

STEP 3: Discussions on the proposals with the teachers, students and their parents and preparing an action plan

STEP BY STEP

The two classes decided to organise outings twice a month and to work with rules through specific games on these outings.

The aims of the outings were twofold:

- Educational (teaching self-control and practising the target language)
- Social (activities outside the school so the students, teachers and the parents get to know one another).



Students working in the park.

First outing: To a riverside park

Aim:

To encourage students to practise the language presented in class through comfortable activities

Examples:

- Practising numbers in English while jumping on a trampoline
- Answering the teacher's questions while having fun in the park
- Playing hide-and-seek by following the teacher's instructions in English

After the educational activities a picnic with the teachers, the students and the accompanying parents beside the river.

SHORT EVALUATION

The test phase was reported to be successful.

- **Teachers:** They had the opportunity to share the problem with the parents and to collaborate with parents to solve a problem in class.
- **Students:** They had the opportunity to exercise self-control while having fun. They were happy to be actively involved in the decision making process.
- **Parents:** They were offered the possibility of proposing activities and felt happy about being involved in the decision making process.

Future activities planned

- The teachers are planning to organize similar activities to enable more discussion with the students and their parents about the problems they face in class and to involve them more actively while designing home-school collaboration activities.

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SHORT INTRODUCTION

A Hole Day of coexistence between teachers and parents with a great variety of activities focused on the four fundamentals: morality, relationships, environment and self-control. Children were also included, since they are our main target group.

STEP BY STEP

Overall: The test took a hole day and was divided into two parts: An introduction to the Four Fundamentals and upbringing and early childhood. And a part with short workshops about Yoga and Music Therapy .

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Workshop with parents and teachers carried out by an expert in upbringing and early education, and group activity with kids giving them voice.

1. Morning session: We begin with a **workshop** carried out **by an expert in upbringing and early education**. It is directed to both, parents and teachers, in a mixed group and it lasts 4 hours. During this workshop the speaker can deal with the four fundamentals:

- The ways in which **parents can be involved in the school** activities right from the beginning of the pre-school, for example in the adaptation phase of the infants to pre- school: it is important to include parents within the classroom until infants develop a bonding with their new referents (teachers) so as they feel prepared enough to separate themselves from their parents.
- Debates about **morality** in upbringing: *limitations of the educational system vs real necessities of the kids*.
- A *group activity with kids*: kids are asked which things they think should be changed by the adults in the **school and family environment** and which elements are very welcomed by them. Kids always give great ideas, that afterwards the speaker can introduce in her debate with teachers and parents. Giving voice directly to the kids can turned out to be very inspiring!
- And finally, carrying out *corporal activities* that facilitate relaxing and emotional expression of the participants (**self-control**).

In the meanwhile, educators are carrying out **group activities with the children** focusing in group strengths and cooperation.

2. Lunch break: Organized as a **picnic**.

3. Afternoon Session: After the Lunch break other experts carry out activities with the teachers and the parents, or also with kids. Participants are divided into two groups and alternate both workshops:



Yoga in family and Music therapy workshop.

- a) **Yoga in family:** it is an activity carried out with parents and children, as well as with teachers and their own children, all of them together in a mixed group. The expert in charge of it uses tales, music, movement and respiration exercises in order to practice the ability to relax, find peace and reach more constructive ways of thoughts. It lasts about 50 minutes and focuses to **self-control**.
- b) **Music therapy workshop** focused on the **family – school relationship**. It also lasts 50 minutes.
 - In first place, we divide the group in two small groups: the one of the *teachers* and the other one of the *parents*. We ask each group to think about the **rules and values** that should exist in the other **environment** (teachers are asked to think about family environment, and parents are asked to do the same, thinking about school environment). Each group write it down in a paper – board.
 - At this point, a music therapist explains the use of **music to self-control and expression of emotions** and each participant of the workshop chooses a musical instrument.
 - Then we invite each group to look at its own brainstorming, put themselves in the position of the other group and think about the difficulties carrying out the rules and values themselves had mentioned. That is, families have to consider the difficulties teachers usually have when trying to fulfill the expectations of the families and vice versa. This part is a great **exercise of empathy between teachers and parents**.
 - Afterwards, they are invited to talk about these difficulties expressing them by words as well as by music. This way we are able to do a lot more than an intellectual debate. We are able to **feel together**.
 - Finally, the music therapist asks everyone to express by music the **main feeling he/she had in the end of this event**. Musical sounds are being added one after the other, and although in the beginning it may be a great noise, finally it can sound like a melody. In our experience, school and families have been able to syntonize themselves in order to play music together. Therapists conclude that this was a great **metaphor** of the family-school relationship: when each one of us calms down his/her own emotion and is able to listen and take into consideration the emotion of the rest of the persons implicated, melody is possible!

SHORT EVALUATION

This case were great and intensive experiences of coexistence. The evaluation of families and teachers were very positive.

Nevertheless, this case was a **long day**, so it is important to take into consideration that not all families will be able to attend the whole day. In our case, some of the families left for lunch and did not return for afternoon workshops.

Another aspect to take into consideration is the **availability of the parents due to work or caregiving of their kids**. It is important to plan it out on weekend and have some educators in charge of kids carrying out group activities while parents are attending workshops. That also makes possible include kids in some of the workshops.

And the last aspect to take into consideration is the **space**: a great hall for the workshop for parents and teachers is required as well as plenty of space outdoors for the activities with kids.

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SHORT INTRODUCTION

A short 3 hour session of coexistence between teachers and parents with a great variety of activities focused on the four fundamentals: morality, relationships, environment and self-control. Children were also included, since they are our main target group.

STEP BY STEP

Overall: The test took 3 hour and was divided into 2 parts.



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Workshop about the use of tales in education and family with parents and teachers

Activity: A Morning (or afternoon) of coexistence between family and school:

- a) We begin the day with a **workshop about the use of tales in education and family** carried out by an educator, expert in children’s literature . The target group in this case are the teachers and the parents and lasts 1 ½ hour. The expert recommends special tales in order to deal with the four fundamentals and explains how to use them in order to begin a constructive conversation with the kids about those themes.

In the meanwhile educators are carrying out group activities with the children focusing in group strengths and cooperation.

- b) The next activity, “**tale laboratory**” is directed to parents and children as well as to teachers and their own kids. Three different spaces are organized:
- i. A corner with a great variety of tales about family **relationships** and friendship were families can spend some time reading the tales they wish.
 - ii. An educator or a teacher reads a story about the **environment** of kids and the main contexts that surround them: family, school, neighborhood... After that, kids get a cardboard, put a figure of a child in the middle and then **paint “the world around me”** with the elements and colors they wish.
 - iii. An educator or a teacher reads a story about the expression of anger and the importance to have a **space** where **anger can be unleashed in a controlled way**. After that, kids and families can make their own **pillows** (cut the clothing for it, paint it and sew it up) in order to prepare their own material for unleashing the anger.

The “tale laboratory” lasts 1 ½ hour and families can move around the different spaces and spend the time they wish in each one of them.



*Tale laboratory": Storytelling between parents and children and Paintig of "The World around me".
Preparing pillows for the controlled unleashing of anger.*

SHORT EVALUATION

This case were great and intensive experiences of coexistence. The evaluation of families and teachers were very positive.

An aspect to take into consideration is the **availability of the parents due to work or caregiving of their kids**. It is important to plan it out on weekend and have some educators in charge of kids carrying out group activities while parents are attending workshops. That also makes possible include kids in some of the workshops.

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Primary School Projects

School family collaboration activities



- ✓ **Children's Environmental Parliament** a project run annually with Year 6 children research a school based environmental issue and make a final presentation in the council chamber.
- ✓ **Eco-School awards** achieved by a number of schools with participation from children on Eco-Committees/Clubs.
- ✓ **2nd year** of successful [Mudlarks Project](#). Outcomes included a music video, campaigning song, banner, bird feeders and a series of eco-family activities.
- ✓ **ECO project** ([English Chamber Orchestra](#)) – climate and ecology musical workshops for teachers, children and families.
- ✓ **Primary Education Network** meets termly to share good practice amongst teachers.



Summer In The City – Climate and Ecology Workshops for Children and Families

LBHF worked with a variety of agencies to develop and manage a range of family and school collaboration activities in 2021.

