**שם הקובץ: תפיסות של מורים לגבי פיתוח כישורים חברתיים**

**Teachers as professionals in supporting shy students**

Teachers teach classrooms comprising students with diverse social characteristics, including shyness. Shyness is defined as a temperamental trait characterized by increased anxiety, concerns, and self-awareness in social situations (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009). Because communication, teamwork, and initiative are considered essential life skills, shy people may find it difficult to achieve their personal and professional goals, and may develop feelings of loneliness and missed opportunity. At school, shyness inhibits students from active engagement in learning processes.

School is a social setting that students attend on a daily basis. Teachers therefore have an ongoing opportunity to support shy students and increase their social engagement. For this support to occur, teaching must be oriented towards all students. Teachers need to perceive students holistically, and teacher training should develop teachers’ effectiveness in supporting shy students.

To better understand teachers' perceptions of shy students, 15 interviews were conducted with educators (Korem, 2016). One main finding that emerged from the subsequent thematic analysis was that teachers' perceptions of shy students did not correspond with the definition of shyness proposed by Rubin et al, in that teachers did not adequately consider this trait in terms of shy students’ internal experiences. Instead, they mainly referred to the behavioral aspects of shyness—in particular the quiet, passive behavior exhibited by many shy students. As a result, teachers tend to favor behavioral support strategies, e.g. those that encourage shy students to participate in class discussions. In contrast, teachers who focus on shy students' inner experiences tend to favor support strategies that reduce their anxiety and concerns in the classroom.

In teacher training programs, student teachers should be presented with information about shyness, and offered teaching strategies to reduce shy students’ anxiety in the classroom. This will help teachers develop professional skills to support shy children and foster essential cooperative social skills within this cohort.

**The socio-culturally diverse classroom: how can teachers foster students’ competence to cope with teasing?**

The classroom is a diverse socio-cultural context, where teasing among students can be common. Frequent exposure to teasing impairs a student’s sense of security and safety, damages the learning process, and may negatively affect self-image. The tendency of teachers in these situations is to protect the teased student and ask the perpetrators of the teasing to apologize.

Here, a different strategy for dealing with classroom teasing is proposed: fostering the competence of students to deal effectively with teasing. This proposal is based on the need to develop students' social competence outside the classroom, through fostering vital social and life skills. According to this approach, teachers support students' personal lives on an emotional-social level.

To empower teachers to act as support professionals in these situations, a three-stage thinking framework was developed, based on a review of the existing literature and practice-based knowledge obtained from educators. This framework does not seek to replace the importance of fostering a positive social classroom climate, but rather to complement it. The thinking framework corresponds to the model presented by Hill and O'Brien (1999). In the first stage of the framework, expression is given to the teased student’s hurt feelings. The second stage relates to cognitive processing regarding those aspects of the self that increase the teased student’s vulnerability. The third and final stage involves helping students acquire an effective response repertoire in classroom teasing situations. The presentation will explain and illustrate these different stages, and the importance of the order in which they are organized.

Teacher training should incorporate discussion of this framework with role-playing and lesson plans, thus building teachers’ effectiveness. Such training is part of teachers’ professional development, and enhances their ability to support students holistically and help them develop effective competencies for coping in diverse socio-cultural classrooms, and in wider society (Ten Dam & Volman, 2007).