An invitation to cities to better understand our youth’s social and emotional development
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Dear City Leaders

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) would like to invite you to join with other cities in developing a study to better understand what cities can do to improve their youth’s social and emotional development.

Children are continuously developing social and emotional skills up until early adulthood. When this development is hampered, the consequences can be severe, especially in stressful, urban environments, greatly affecting:

- the prevalence of crime and other anti-social behaviour
- levels of community engagement, volunteering and social cohesion
- education levels, employment and entrepreneurship
- mental and physical health, resilience and well-being
- inter-personal trust and tolerance
- political engagement.
Cities may not have reliable data to inform them on the policies that best support young people. The OECD has an established track record for carrying out robust studies on students’ learning and development. We will work with you on designing this study and ensure the information produced is reliable and can help to improve how children and young people learn social and emotional skills.

If you are interested in learning more, the attached brochure provides detailed information regarding the study and how to register.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Andreas Schleicher
Director for Education and Skills
OECD
Using OECD experience in developing international studies

The OECD has led key international studies on education and skills for many years including:

- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), assessing the skills of 15-year-old students in reading, maths and science
- The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), on literacy, numeracy and problem solving.

From studies such as PISA and PIAAC, the OECD has built up a body of knowledge on students’ skills, including on student well-being.

Over the last 3 years, the OECD has undertaken significant evidence-based analysis in preparation for a study on social and emotional skills. The outcome of this work is summarised in the report titled "Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills," published in March 2015.
Importance of social and emotional skills

We use social and emotional skills everyday …

Children and adults live in a highly interconnected world where ‘who you know’ and ‘how you interact’ matter. Developing social and emotional skills allow children to navigate this complex environment, shaping their everyday interactions in the workplace, with friends and family.

Defining social and emotional skills can be challenging, but for the purposes of the study they are classified into five broad domains:

- Emotional regulation (emotional stability)
- Engaging with others (extraversion)
- Collaboration (agreeableness)
- Task performance (conscientiousness)
- Open-mindedness (openness).
Social and emotional skills are learnt

Children learn these skills through interactions with their family and friends, at school, during extracurricular activities and later on in the workplace. Even though social and emotional skills are easier to develop at a later age than cognitive skills, early and continuous development achieves the best results.

And have a direct impact on the quality of life

The combined social and emotional skills of citizens in urban environments can positively or negatively influence:

- Social cohesion
- Prosperity and growth
- Well-being.
Young people with strong social and emotional skills are:

- 4 times more likely to finish college
- Twice as likely to be happy

*: Sample limited to white males with at least a high school diploma
- Half as likely to be obese
- One third more likely to behave lawfully


An invitation to cities

The role of cities is increasingly critical

Each city is unique, with characteristics that define them and set them apart from other cities or regions within the same country. A snapshot of a country does not always accurately reflect every city within the country.

Across the globe, cities are continuing to grow, in relative size and as important contributors to their countries’ economies. Today, cities’ inhabitants are also presented with more opportunities and face more pressure than ever before.

Therefore, many cities are focusing more and more on the social and economic well-being of their citizens by evaluating factors such as education systems’ effectiveness in supporting citizens’ cognitive, and social and emotional development. By working together on designing and implementing policies that support citizens’ well-being, cities can learn what works and what does not.
This international study on social and emotional skills, tailored to cities, is the first of its kind

While networks of cities already exist, there is no comparative evidence on what helps and what hinders the social and emotional development of the people who live in cities. This new study draws attention to the importance of developing these skills, and what can be done to improve them. As it is an international study, cities will be able to learn from the experiences of other cities and, more importantly, understand the different approaches taken to achieve particular results.

This study will enable cities to gather data on ways to help improve the social and emotional development of their citizens by benchmarking and tracking progress over time and seeing where the relative strengths and risks lie.
By participating in this study

Participating in this study will give you an in-depth understanding of how young people’s social and emotional development can vary depending on gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, migration background and other factors relevant to each city. With insights gleaned from this study, you will be able to evaluate the strengths and areas for improvement, and risk factors when developing or implementing new policies.

Cities can learn from each other…

An international study benefits participants in two ways. First, the overall cost of designing and developing the study is lower because it involves more than just one or two jurisdictions. The design will also be more sophisticated because the OECD and participating cities will have more resources at their disposal than if only one jurisdiction conducted the study.

Second, the data collected will be more robust because multiple cities around the world are participating in the study. Cities can also learn from other cities’ experiences to make improvements to achieve better outcomes for citizens.
... and monitor progress over time

After benchmarking the level and distribution of skills, cities may choose to monitor progress over time. This will be particularly relevant for cities that wish to monitor the effects of recently implemented policies. Cities may choose to do this individually, using the measures developed in this study, or they may choose to participate in the next phases of this work on social and emotional skills. The former would allow cities to gauge progress at their own pace while the latter would provide information on the progress of all participating cities at a specific period. Some of the most effective learning across jurisdictions has occurred from seeing how significant and sustained improvements are achieved over time.
Scope

The study will take a single snapshot of two cohorts of students, most likely aged 10 and 15.

The study will gather information on

- Children’s social-emotional skills
- Family, school and community learning contexts
- Background characteristics of children, teachers and parents.
Timeline

The meeting to finalise the design of the study on young people’s social and emotional skills is:

- 30/31 March 2017
  OECD Headquarters
  Paris, France.

The study will begin in mid-2017 and be carried out over a three year period.

A further meeting will be held at the OECD Headquarters on 20/21 November 2017. During the study, meetings will be held twice a year.

Cities should confirm their participation by mid-2017.
Get involved

Contact Rowena Phair (rowena.phair@oecd.org) for further information on the study, including:

- Cost
- The time and resources involved in participating in the study
- More detailed timeline and scope
- More information about the meeting in March 2017.
Find out more about OECD work on social and emotional skills

Please see the following:


OECD and the Directorate for Education and Skills

The OECD provides a setting where governments compare policy experience, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices and co-ordinate domestic and international policies. It brings together countries committed to democracy and the market economy from around the world to:

- support sustainable economic growth
- boost employment
- raise living standards
- maintain financial stability
- assist member and non-member countries’ economic development
- contribute to growth in world trade.

In today’s globalised economy, education is a major driving force for growth and development. The OECD Directorate for Education and Skills focuses on current key challenges facing education systems including how to improve the quality of teachers, teaching and learning in order to provide the knowledge and skills needed in the 21st century.
For more information, visit:
www.oecd.org/edu/leri/social-emotional-skills.htm

If you have questions, you can reach us at:
esp.contact@oecd.org