



OECD STUDY ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

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Introduction

The OECD is soon to launch a Study on the Social and Emotional Skills of students to help cities and countries improve social and emotional skills amongst school-aged children and young people. The Study will shed light on the development of social and emotional skills of students within each participating city or country.

This paper provides an overview of the Study for cities and countries who are interested in participating, detailing what is involved and how they will be supported during the course of the Study.

The paper outlines:

- The critical importance of social and emotional skills
- The rationale for the OECD's involvement in this area of skills development
- The objectives of the OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills (the Study)
- The scope of the Study
- Implementing the Study in cities and countries
- An indicative timeline
- How the Study will be monitored
- The expected outcomes that the Study will have
- Information on how to get involved in the Study

The critical importance of Social and Emotional Skills

In an increasingly globalised and diverse world, the role of social and emotional skills is ever more important. Development of these skills is important not only for the well-being of individuals but also for the functioning of wider communities and societies as a whole. The ability of citizens to adapt, be resourceful, respect and work well with others, and to take personal and collective responsibility is increasingly distinguishing those communities and societies that are building improved social cohesion and economic growth and those who are not.

We use social and emotional skills every day and live in a highly interconnected world where 'who you know' and 'how you interact' matter. Developing social and emotional skills allows children and young people to navigate this complex environment, shaping their everyday interactions with friends and family.

Children and young people learn social and emotional skills through interactions with their close circles of friends and family, 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.

When social and emotional development is hampered, the consequence can be severe, especially in stressful, urban environments, greatly affecting:

- Mental and physical health, resilience and well-being
- Inter-personal trust and tolerance
- Education levels, employment and entrepreneurship
- Levels of community engagement, volunteering and social cohesion
- The prevalence of crime and other anti-social behaviour

- Political engagement.

Rationale for the OECD's involvement in this area of skills development

The OECD's work on social and emotional skills was initiated following earlier analysis on the types of skills needed for broad positive outcomes at a societal and an individual level. This work identified the inter-related nature of cognitive skills and social and emotional skills. While we have developed deep knowledge on the development of cognitive skills over many years, this is not the case in the field of social and emotional skills.

The OECD Secretariat developed a conceptual framework to better understand the dynamics of skills formation and the impact of social and emotional skills on individuals' socio-economic outcomes. This involved conducting extensive literature reviews; undertaking empirical analyses of longitudinal data; evaluating available measurement instruments; and, synthesising existing policies and practices.

The above work concluded that social and emotional skills are critical not only for the well-being of individuals, but also for families and communities, and that these skills impact on overall levels of social cohesion and prosperity. The outcome of this work is summarised in "[Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills](#)," published in March 2015.

While this area of research is increasingly gaining attention and momentum, further research is needed about:

- How social and emotional skills develop across childhood and adolescence
- Robust, reliable and valid measures of social and emotional skills across cultures, languages, and diverse educational, national and local settings, which would enable jurisdictions learn from each other to improve these skills amongst children and young people
- The policies and practices that work in enhancing these critical social and emotional skills
- How, when and under what conditions such policies and practices should be applied to best support students.

To address these gaps in research, the OECD is soon to launch a new Study on the social and emotional skills of students.

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. The Study aims to build further on this knowledge and understand social and emotional skills better.

Objectives of the Study

The overall goal of the project is to assist cities and countries to focus on and better support the development of critical social and emotional skills amongst students.

The purpose of the study is to:

- Provide participating cities and countries with robust and reliable information on the social and emotional skills of their students
- Provide insights on individual, family and school determinants that foster or hinder development of these skills
- Demonstrate that valid, reliable, and comparable information on social and emotional skills can be produced across diverse student populations and settings.

The Study will also identify the policies, practices and other conditions that help or hinder the development of these critical skills.

The Study will focus on two age levels, which will provide additional information to understand:

- The differences in social and emotional skills between two different age groups
- The extent to which these differences are associated with individual characteristics, family background, home learning environment and school climate
- The extent to which social and emotional skills influence (hinder or foster) other domains (such as educational attainment) between the two age groups.

This information will provide huge value-add to participating cities and countries in terms of how best to support their students, and will contribute to learning about how to measure the social and emotional skills of diverse populations in diverse settings, learning what is important and relevant at a global scale.

Scope of the Study

The OECD Secretariat intends to carry out the Study across 10-12 cities or countries. The rationale for offering the Study to cities, in addition to individual states, provinces and countries, reflects the increasing role that some cities are taking in the education of their citizens. While this is not the case across all jurisdictions, a number of cities now have relative autonomy over their education systems. There may also be particular pressures and imperatives that face cities in relation to the development, or lack thereof, of citizens' social and emotional skills. From the early phases of the work, interest has been expressed directly from city representatives, in addition to that from country representatives.

The Study will take a single snapshot of two age groups, most likely students that are aged 10 and 15. Assessment at age 10 would provide information on how students are progressing in school and what may be needed in the next years of schooling. Assessing students at age 15 is the last point in which “nearly all” young people are in some form of easily accessible formal education setting and is a relatively sound point to assess the “learning outcomes” from different education contexts. As noted in the previous section, the advantage of including two age levels is that it will enable participating cities and countries to better understand the likely development of social and emotional skills between two points in students' schooling.

Each city or country participating in the Study will sample a number schools and students, to ensure the results are robust and reliable. The final numbers of schools and students will be confirmed once the design of the Study methodology is complete. In cities that have fewer than the required sampling size at age 10 and/or age 15, all students will participate in the Study at those ages. The Study will use a two-stage stratified sample model. The first stage will select a random sample of schools and the second stage will select a random sample of individual students within the selected schools. The same sampling procedure will be applied for both age cohorts.

The Study will gather information on:

- Students' social-emotional skills
- Family, school and community learning contexts
- Background characteristics of students and their parents.

The Study's broad assessment framework has three major components to obtain the above information. Firstly, the social and emotional skills of students through self-report questionnaires, which will be administered online. This will be complemented by an indirect assessment of the students' social and emotional skills by teachers and/or parents. Lastly, the collection of relevant contextual information will be obtained from teachers, parents and school leaders or administrators.

At the highest level of abstraction, socio-emotional skills constructs can be classified into five broad domains:

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

Implementing the Study in cities and countries

The principles guiding the development of the Study are that such a study should:

- Have policy relevance, i.e. enabling changes in policies and/or practices to be made
- Be practicable, i.e. able to be implemented
- Be reliable, valid and comparable across countries, languages, cultural contexts and over time
- Ensure the well-being of students in the Study is paramount in all decisions
- Limit the burden on practitioners and parents, as well as on students
- Be affordable for a range of cities and countries.

The overall management of the Study will be led by the OECD Secretariat. This section sets out the expected roles of the OECD Secretariat and other key players which include; the Advisory Group, Study Project Managers (SPM), the International Contractor and the Technical Advisory Group.

The OECD Secretariat

The OECD Secretariat is responsible for the overall management of the Study. The Secretariat will work collaboratively with the participating cities and countries to ensure their priorities and interests are reflected in the design and implementation of the Study.

The OECD Secretariat will participate actively during the development of all instruments, protocols and procedures, documents and reports and will approve all documents before they are publicly released.

The OECD Secretariat will also be responsible for:

- The active engagement of the participating cities and countries in the development and implementation of the Study
- Keeping the OECD's governance bodies regularly updated on progress and issues arising
- Ensuring a project management approach is agreed with the International Contractor and is applied to managing all aspects of the Study
- Oversight of risks, issues and deviations from timelines, and ensuring risks and issues are regularly monitored and appropriately mitigated and managed
- Providing a central point for resolving any debates between the International Contractor and Study Project Managers over responsibilities, workflow and timelines that have not been resolved through the processes of communication set up by the International Contractor
- Monitoring the budgets and milestones of the International Contractor and resolving budgetary or contractual issues
- Establishing and maintaining an archive of all project resources, documents, materials and databases
- Providing additional support to SPMs, obtaining regular feedback from SPMs, and dealing with queries or problems that cannot be resolved by the International Contractor

Advisory Group

The Advisory Group consists of representatives from the cities and countries who are participating in the Study, as well as others who are interested in the development of the project. The Advisory Group will provide advice and other input to the OECD Secretariat on the Study as it develops from an individual city or country perspective. Two face-to-face meetings of the Advisory Group will be held each year, each over two days, in addition to shorter webinars and conference calls.

Study Project Managers

Each participating city or country will be required to appoint a Study Project Manager (SPM), to implement the Study in their jurisdiction. Study Project Managers are hired by each participating city or country, and are managed by the International Contractor, described below.

SPMs will be the primary means of day-to-day contact between participating cities/countries and the International Contractor for the implementation of the Study. SPMs will play a vital role in ensuring that the Study is a high quality project with results that can be verified and relied upon.

The SPM will be responsible for the translation of assessment items and other documents, if required, and any adaptation to the local context, supported by and following procedures set out by the International Contractor. The SPM will also be responsible for contracting and training local staff, such as assessors, and for liaising with School Co-ordinators.

The International Contractor

An International Contractor will be selected by the OECD Secretariat to design, develop and implement the Study. The International Contractor will develop the overall design of the Study to meet the objectives of the Study. As part of its management role, the International Contractor will prepare and maintain an overall project plan for each stage of the Study, including implementation timelines for participating cities and countries.

Following the development of the overall design and project, the International Contractor will be responsible for developing assessment items in the domains agreed and for developing

instruments for gaining information from parents and teachers. Thus, the International Contractor is responsible for assessment design and development, as well as for sampling requirements, manuals and other tools, training Study Project Managers in assessment administration and for analysis of the findings.

The International Contractor shall be responsible for supporting and overseeing the preparations and implementation of the assessment in participating cities/countries – from first phases of the translation, adaptation and field testing, to implementing the Study. The International Contractor shall establish tools and procedures for effectively communicating with SPMs, for collecting and collating regular progress updates from SPMs, and for keeping the OECD Secretariat regularly updated on progress and issues arising.

The International Contractor shall be the main point of contact and communications with SPMs. The International Contractor shall specify and implement procedures that promote excellent communication with SPMs. The International Contractor will be expected to maintain a communication portal, where SPMs can communicate about tasks and where SPMs can find manuals, guidance and regularly updated information on progress with the Study.

The International Contractor will call, organise, and host meetings of SPMs. Participating cities and countries will bear the costs of their SPMs participation in these meetings.

Technical Advisory Group

A Technical Advisory Group of international experts will be established to provide advice to the Secretariat and the International Contractor on technical and cross-cultural aspects of the Study. This Group will be established in consultation with the International Contractor and participating cities and countries. The Technical Advisory Group is made up of international leading experts in key parts of the Study, such as sampling and student assessment instrument development.

Indicative timeline

The roles and responsibilities of the OECD Secretariat, the International Contractor and Study Project Managers are set out in the following table:

Milestones	Timeline	International Contractor	Study Project Manager	OECD Secretariat*
Task 1: DEVELOP INSTRUMENTS	2017-2018			
Overall concept-design	July/August 2017	✓		
Develop assessment framework	August/September 2017	✓		
Design and develop instruments	August 2017 - April 2018	✓		
Task 2: ESTABLISH PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES	2017-2018			
Determine sampling requirements	July-September 2017	✓		
Set assessment and data handling procedures	July-September 2017	✓		
Complete and submit sampling forms and frames	September-November 2017		✓	
Draw samples and release to schools	November-December 2017	✓		
Translation to local languages and contexts	September-November 2017		✓	

Task 3: DEVELOP MANUALS	2017-2018			
Develop and release of the SPM Manual	July-September 2017	✓		
Develop and release field trial guidelines and School Coordinator (SC) and Quality Monitor (QM) manuals	November 2017-February 2018	✓		
Update the Study Project Manager manual for the main study	July-September 2018	✓		
Develop and release main study guidelines and SC and QM manuals	October-December 2018	✓		
Task 4: FIELD TEST INSTRUMENTS	2018			
Communicate with sampled field test schools	January 2018-March 2018		✓	
Oversee preparations with SPMs	January 2018-April 2018	✓		
Administer the field test	April - May 2018		✓	
Process field test data	June-July 2018	✓		
Psychometric analysis	August-September 2018	✓		
Produce Field Test report	October-November 2018	✓		
Task 5: IMPLEMENTATION	2018-2019			
Develop survey procedures	June 2018 -June 2019	✓		
Communicate with schools	December 2018-March 2019		✓	
Contract and train in-city/country staff	December 2018-March 2019		✓	
Administer the assessments	April - June 2019		✓	
Code results	July-September 2019		✓	
Data cleaning and weighting	September 2019- February 2020	✓		
Produce Implementation report	March-2020	✓		
Task 6: ANALYSIS	2019/2020			
Develop reporting template	September 2019			✓
Adapt reporting template to national contexts	October-November 2019			✓
Translate reporting template	December 2019-January 2020		✓	
Psychometric analysis	February 2020 - April 2020	✓		
Secondary analysis for populating templates	April 2020 - June 2020	✓		
Brief cites/countries	June 2020			✓
Brief media and provide other communications	July-August 2020			✓
Finalise database	July-August 2020	✓		
Final submissions, including technical report and database	August-October 2020	✓		

*the OECD Secretariat will oversee, monitor and provide approval of all activities and deliverables within the table

Monitoring

The Study will be both monitored and include a number of reporting lines:

- Quarterly reports by the International Contractor to the OECD Secretariat against milestones and activities set out in the project implementation plan
- Twice yearly reports by the OECD Secretariat to the Advisory Group of cities and countries participating in or interested in the Study
- Formal reporting twice a year by the Secretariat to the OECD Committee on Education Research and Innovation (the OECD formal governance body for this work)
- A report on the findings of the Study, published by the OECD
- A technical report on the measures and methodology used in the Study, completed by the International Contractor and published by the OECD.

Expected Outcomes

The Study will have anticipated outputs on:

- A set of validated international instruments to measure social and emotional skills of school-aged children
- A cross-sectional dataset with information on students' social and emotional skills and basic demographics
- An improved understanding amongst policy-makers, education leaders, teachers, parents and other stakeholders on the critical role of social and emotional skills and the types of policies and practices that support the development of these skills.
- An improved understanding of whole child development, specifically as it relates to the development of social and emotional skills of children and youth.

Involvement in the Study

Cities and countries may join the Study by indicating their interest to the OECD Secretariat, paying a share of the international costs to design, develop and oversee the Study and hiring a Study Project Manager to implement the Study. The cut-off for cities and countries to participate in the Study will likely be around mid-2017.

To date, we have interest in the Study from a diverse range of cities and countries, including from:

- Latin America
- North America
- Europe
- Asia.

After participating in this first OECD-led Study on Social and Emotional Skills, cities and countries 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.

If you would like any further information or would like to get participate in the Study, contact Rowena Phair (Rowena.Phair@oecd.org) or esp.contact@oecd.org