OECD STUDY ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Introduction

1.   The OECD has launched 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.

2.   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.

3.   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 and the skills to be included in 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

4.   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.

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

6.   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.

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

- Education attainment

- Transition from school into the labour market

- Job satisfaction

- Mental and physical health

- Levels of civic engagement, volunteering and social integration

- The prevalence of crime and other anti-social behaviour

- General well-being.

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

8.   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.

9.   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.

10.   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.

11.   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.

12.   To address these gaps in research, the OECD launched a new study on the social and emotional skills of students.

13.   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.

- The Teacher and Learning International Survey (TALIS), providing a voice to teachers and school principals.

14.   From studies such as PISA, PIAAC and TALIS, 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

15.   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.

16.   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.

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

18.   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.

19.   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

20.   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.

21.   The Study will take a single snapshot of two age groups: students at age 10 and 15 years. Assessment at age 10 will provide information on how students are progressing in school and what may be needed in the next years of schooling. At age 15, nearly all young people are in a formal education setting. Thus, this is an appropriate point to assess the learning outcomes from different education contexts. 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.

22.   The Study will assess students' social and emotional skills through direct assessment of students, and indirect assessment via reports from parents and teachers. Background characteristics of students and their parents will also be collected, as well as information on family, school and community learning contexts.

23.   Each city or country participating in the Study will sample a number of schools and students, to ensure the results are robust and reliable. The sample size for the Main Study will be around 3000 students for each age cohort, unless a city or country has fewer students in either cohort. In this case, all students at that age level will be surveyed.

24.   The Study will use a two-stage stratified sampling 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.

Skills to be included in the Study

25.   The Study draws on a well-known framework in the field of social and emotional skills – the Big Five model – to provide a general outline of how these skills should be organised. Social and emotional skills in this model are arranged hierarchically, with five general skill categories that can be split into narrower, lower-order skills. The broad categories of the Big Five are:

- Openness to experience (open-mindedness)

- Conscientiousness (task performance)

- Emotional stability (emotional regulation)

- Extraversion (engaging with others

- Agreeableness (collaboration).

26.   Each of the categories encompasses a cluster of mutually related social and emotional skills. For example, task performance includes achievement orientation, reliability, self-control and persistence. Apart from demonstrating their mutual similarity, these groupings also ensure systematic, comprehensive and balanced consideration of individuals' social and emotional skills.

27.   The study also includes the so-called "compound" skills. These skills represent combinations of two or more individual skills. For example, self-efficacy represents a combination of skills from the conscientiousness, emotional stability and the extraversion categories of the Big Five. Compound skills are found to be useful for describing and understanding certain aspects of behaviour and in many cases they are shown to affect important life outcomes.

28.   The Study will assess 15 social and emotional skills spread across 6 broad domains – the "Big Five" dimensions and the compound skills. The project used a number of criteria to decide which skills to include in the study. In particular, the skills included need to:

- Provide a **broad and balanced coverage** of the entire domain of social and emotional skills

- Be **predictive of success** in a wide range of important life outcomes and events

- Be **malleable** and susceptible to possible policy interventions

- Be appropriate for 10- and 15-year-olds

- Be **comparable** and relevant across different cultures, languages, social and school contexts

- Be **relevant for the future.**

29.   Figure 1 lists the 19 skills that will be included in the Item Trial and the Field Test. Results of the Field Test will be used to provide an empirical basis for the final selection of skills for the Main Study, in consultation with city and country representatives and the technical experts we have engaged on the Study. We expect that for the Main Study, 15 skills will be included for 15 year olds and 10-12 for 10 year olds.

Figure 1. Social and Emotional Skills Framework
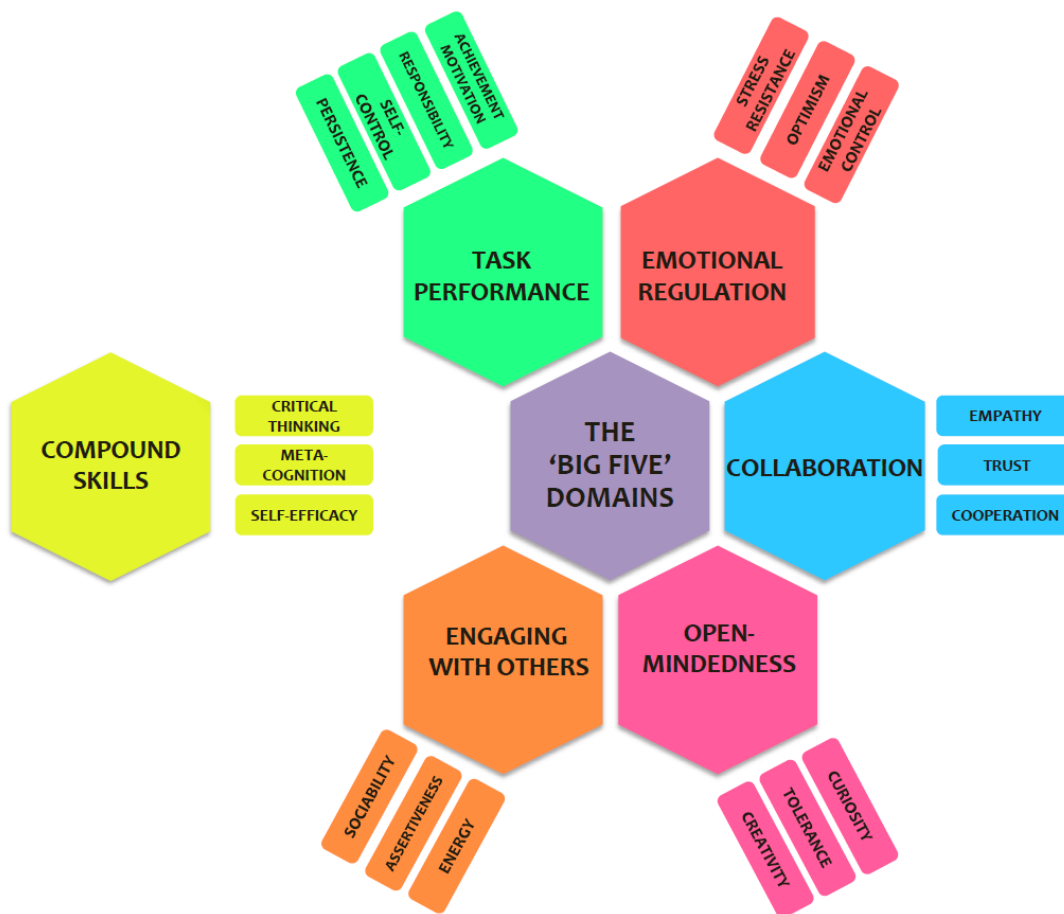
Implementing the Study in cities and countries

30.   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.

31.   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

32.   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.

33.   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.

34.   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

35.   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 additional to shorter webinars and conference calls.

Study Project Managers

36.   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.

37.   SPMs will be the primary means of day-to-day contact between participating cites/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.

38.   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

39.   An International Contractor has been selected by the OECD Secretariat to design, develop and implement the Study. The International Contractor in collaboration with the OECD Secretariat developed the overall design of the Study to meet the objectives of the Study. As part of its management role, the International Contractor maintains an overall project plan for each stage of the Study, including implementation timelines for participating cities and countries.

40.   The International Contractor is 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.

41.   The International Contractor is 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.

42.   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.

43.   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

44.   A Technical Advisory Group of international experts has been established to provide advice to the Secretariat and the International Contractor on technical and cross-cultural aspects of the Study. This Group was 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

45.   The current timeline of key stages for the Study is set out in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2.Timeline of key stages for the Study

8-9 March 2018	Informal Advisory Group meeting in Paris
April 2018	Item Trial
30 April 2018	**Deadline for cities/countries to join the Study**
30 May 2018	Study Project Managers appointed (but preferably earlier)
11 July 2018	Webinar for the Informal Advisory Group
October 2018	Field Test
8-9 November 2018	Informal Advisory Group meeting in Paris
May 2019	Informal Advisory Group meeting
October 2019	Main Study
July 2020	Briefing to city/county representatives on the Study findings (IAG meeting)
September 2020	Public release of results

Monitoring

46.   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

47.   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

48.   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. Decisions by cities and countries to participate in the Study should be made by 30 April 2018.

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

- Latin America

- North America

- Europe

- Asia.

50.   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.

51.   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 .