



Together Against School Violence

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

For Teachers



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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The present methodological guidelines are developed based on an extensive international research conducted in Bulgaria, Turkey and Italy. The research examines different aspects of the ecosystem in which violent and aggressive child behaviour occur bringing insights from the actions of different stakeholders – the legal framework, the community, the school perspective and the existing mechanisms for tackling the problem.

The present methodological guidelines target school teachers in primary schools and thus **the model is teacher-centric.**

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

According to the model, **the teacher is seen as a core engine and driving force for tackling the issue.** The teachers are the initiators and the visionaries in its implementation but they are not the only players. They communicate the message of the methodology and find the appropriate ways to implement it into their own environment, considering the cultural, regional, legal specifics, operating within the limitations of their systems.

THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology provides a conceptual framework based on universal values and successful practices. The methodology pretends to be an integrative model which includes best practices and considers the main findings from the conducted international research. It includes three main components (action vectors) which can be built gradually and consequently but it is important to work simultaneously.



The nature of the problems of school violence and aggression is complexed and multi-layered and individual for every case. The present methodology is not dealing deeply with private cases but aims to provide the teachers with tools and help them create **a safe and healthy school environment, educate good and active citizens with well developed social skills and sense of belonging.**

ACTION VECTORS

There are identified three action vectors for tackling the problem of school violence and school aggression: Prevention; Intervention; Community Building.

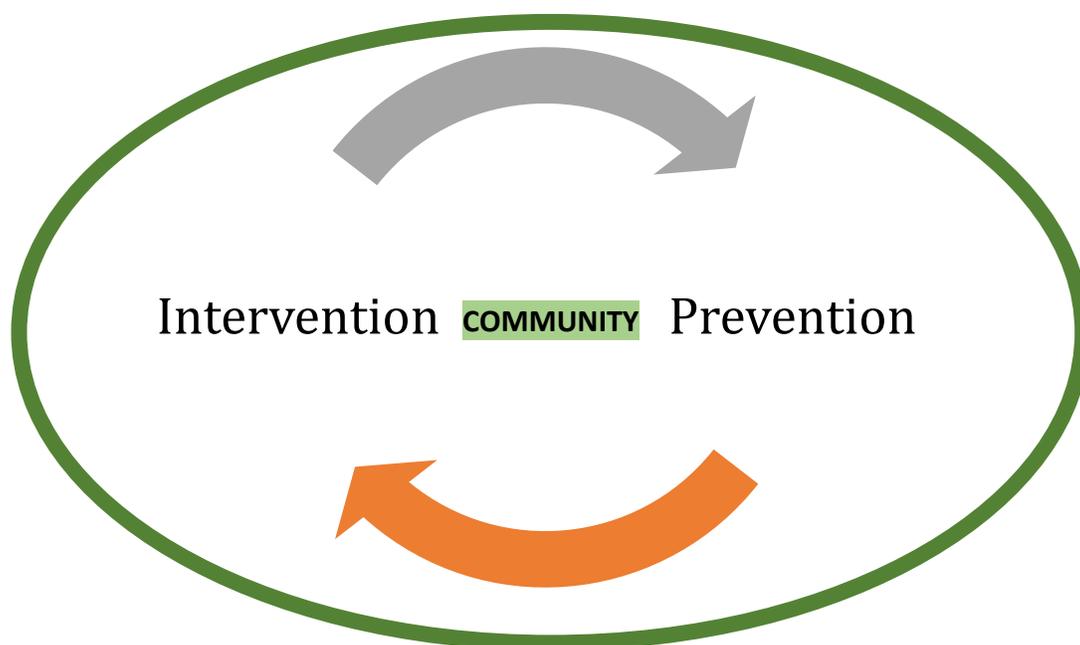


Figure 1 Action vectors of the TASV Methodology

The preventive measures are the core of the methodology and their success is measured by the lowering number of cases for intervention. They include different type of initiatives. This vector serves several aims:



- To build understanding about the risks and dimensions of violence;
- To bring awareness about the existing mechanisms, their protected rights and the reaction mechanisms;
- To educate in social and compound skills needed for problem solving and conflict resolution, helping the kids better express themselves;
- To provide working tools for practical problem-solving and conflict resolution and reaction;
- To enforce active involvement of the pupils in the intervention process;
- To involve the parents as key players and collaborators;

The intervention mechanism tackles existing or occurring problems of violence and aggression at school. It serves several purposes:

- To identify aggression cases;
- To help solving the issue in a positive way with careful treat of the aggressor and the victim;
- To unfold in action the skills and tools learned in the prevention phase;
- To provoke active involvement of the parents.

The community system is a crucial part of the model. It is proposed with the understanding of constantly changing reality, the nature and the expressions of aggression. The community vector can be developed in two dimensions: either to engage the close community in which the particular school exists or to engage/create a professional community dedicated to the cause of reducing the levels of school violence. There is growing amount of literature and practical tools, good practices and emerging trainings which can be used for continuous updates in terms of preventive and interventive actions. The professional community is supposed to be a dynamic platform for open-source sharing and interaction between pedagogues, pedagogic counsellors and psychologists on local/national level. The community vector can be modified as per the needs and be developed for building a local community, parents' community, etc.

The successful implementation of the methodology relies fully to the good understanding, dedication, creativity, flexibility, experience and self-motivation of the teachers.

Thank you for being part of this!



HOW TO USE THE METHDOLOGY

Step 1: Examine the environment – try to build the picture of the environment in which you work and assess the gaps and the areas you need to put more attention

Below, it is proposed a sample of table which aims to support you in the analysis. In the beginning of each school term, try to make as deeper and broader analysis of the factors which affect the presence of violence at your class. This table is just an example and does not pretend to exhaust all factors but rather direct your thoughts during the analysis. It can be enlarged according to your experience and if there are culture specific factors which you consider influential according to your practice.

After describing the dimensions of the factors and understanding how exactly they affect your work towards violence prevention in your class, in the column “Status”, try to evaluate what is the current status on each factor Then, you need to evaluate how the status on each factor is affecting the peace in your class. You can evaluate it using a 5-level scale where 1 and 2 would have low impact, 3- mid impact, and 4 and 5 you should put if you identify high impact of the present status on the indicator.

Example: “Culture of honour” is well established, developed and preserved in some societies. For them, honour is considered to be of highest value and any measures for defending the honour are accepted (including physical fight, murdering, etc.). Thus, it is likely for the pupils who belong to such societies to follow the models accepted in them and to have violence triggers not understandable for the other children/parents. This means that you need to consider this factor, and if you have pupils belonging to the “culture of honour” societies, you need to plan preventive measures accordingly. Then, in the “Status column” you describe how many such children you have in your class and what is typical for this culture. Then evaluate the level of impact this may have to the violence level in your class and plan mitigation measures. For example, to dedicate a class to explaining the characteristics of the different cultures presented in your class and teach mutual respect.



Table 1 Assessing the environment (Sample)

Level	Factor/Indicator	Description	Status	Impact 1-5	Mitigation
Society	Culture	The perception/ acceptance/ tolerance about violence			
		Level of tolerance of the different			
		Culture of honour			
		Role models			
	Related stakeholders	Activities by other stakeholders			
	Media	Materials about violence in the media to which the pupils have access			
Legal Framework	State Policy				
	Legal framework				
	Protection/ Intervention Mechanisms				
Internet and technologies	Cell Phones	Access to internet of the pupils in your class			
	Knowledge	Knowledge about the risks in internet			
	Social media platforms	Platforms used by the pupils in your class			
		Viral trends in the platforms of the pupils in your class			
	Gaming	Trending virtual games			
Family (individual)	Divorce	Number of children with divorced parents in the class			
	Communication in the family	Patterns of family behaviour			
	Domestic violence	Signals for home violence			
School	School Policy	Measures/ activities/ events organized by the school to tackle problems of aggression			
	School environment	Cases of violence at your school			
Class	Class discipline and rules	Established rules and culture of your class			



Level	Factor/Indicator	Description	Status	Impact 1-5	Mitigation
	Temperature	Too High/ too low temperature affects behaviour			
Individual	Knowledge	Ability to identify violence			
		Knowledge on rights and rules			
	Social skills	Which social skills need to be developed better			
	Extracurricular activities	How many of the pupils attend extracurricular activities			
	Coping mechanisms	Typical patterns of behaviour in case of violence (being victim/witnesser)			

The table will also help you to better understand your degrees of freedom – what to what extend you are allowed to do.

Step 2: Identify the most delicate issues. Once you create the general picture, you should start planning the mitigation measures. Consider the Pareto rule: **roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes** so start planning your strategy with the idea to tackle firstly those issues which you evaluate with high impact (4 and 5).

Step 3: Using the methodology, create your own customized plan and program which you will apply during the school term – think of the resources you have, the people you need to reach, the time you should dedicate and the activities you will develop.

Step 4: Run, Assess, refine and re-run

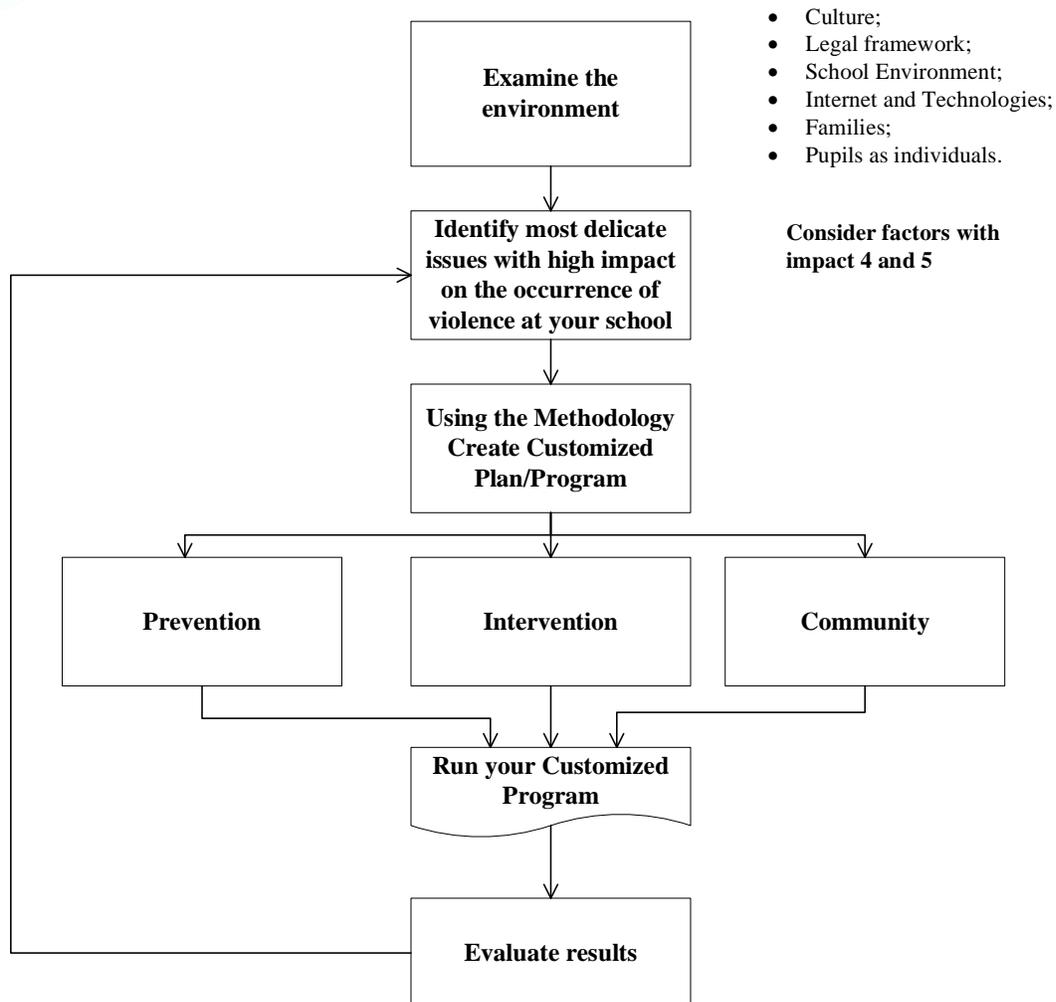


Figure 2 How to use the methodology



PREVENTION

1.1. AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

THE CONCEPTS OF APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE

It is believed that the children in primary school age are unaware of the abstract words and events which just happen to them. In this regard, depending on their age and class shall be adapted the content aiming to bring awareness on the problems of violence and the roots of it. These campaigns aim to help children self-identify violent behaviour and understand the consequences of such.

Task: Make the kids understand how to identify violence!

Practical ideas:

For this task you can dedicate a lesson to speak about its different forms and why it is not healthy. Ask them if they ever witnessed aggression. For the younger pupils you may not label (cyber bullying, gossiping, physical aggression, sexual violence, racism) but rather use symbolic words based on the known categories for their age. Your task here is to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, how you name is not important. Don't let the things get forgotten. Make a positive reminder of what is appropriate. Together with the kids build the rules in your class. You can use some creative ways by the kids and ask them to do some teamwork writing the rules on a big poster which will be hanged in the classroom. May everyone participate and feel her/his contribution to the order which is build.

In some countries there are developed resources which enable also to support you in this process. In Turkey, they developed an evaluation scale which can help you identify gaps in the concepts understanding.



WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

After understanding what is violence, the kids should know about the existence of mechanisms which can protect them. Establish an awareness campaign about the children rights and the existing methods to exercise them.

Task: Make the kids feel protected and understand their rights!

Practical ideas:

Adapt for the age the most important parts of related documents like the Convention on the Rights of the Child or National Child Protection Act. Inform about the existing mechanisms to exercise them – for example national hot line for signals of child abuse, the role of the policemen, resource centres for work with abused children, UNICEF activities etc.

It is a good idea if you can bring representatives from such institutions to your lessons so the kids can see them, speak with them and build a positive concept, feel them familiar and free to contact them in case they need. There is large number of resources on the topic, so you can just google for materials (example). For the older pupils, you can ask them to make as a homework their own design of an informational card with their rights and important numbers to call and ask them to bring it every day so things do not get lost.

1.2. REACTION MECHANISMS

After understanding the good and bad in the picture, the kids shall be taught how to react if they become witnesses of violence or victim of violence. Make sure that you dedicate enough time to both cases – being a victim and being a witnesser.

Task: Teach Reaction Strategies

Practical ideas:

The best way to do it is through simulating the experience. **We encourage you to use our book for kids** and to make discussions on the presented cases and answer the questions after that.



You can simulate cases and include some outdoor acting so it will be easier for them to remember. For the simulation try to avoid using names from our class for representing the violent child to avoid mocking after that.

There are also a lot of other practical tools and resources which can be used in this process and be placed on a visible place in the classroom. Check for practical tools in the respective organizations in your country. You can also consider using the “Circle of Choice” offering different strategies in case of conflict, developed by the [Centre for Inclusive Education, Bulgaria](#).

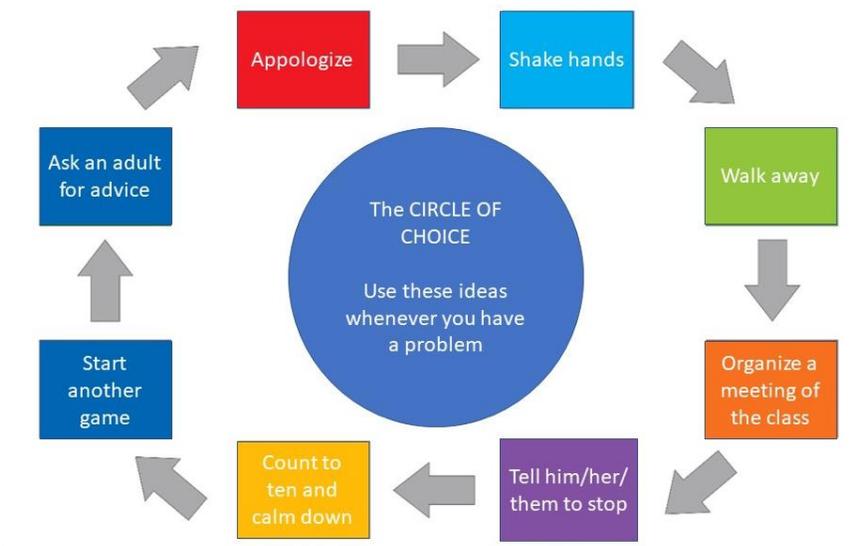


Figure 3 The Circle of Choice, Source: Center for Inclusive Education, Bulgaria

1.3. BUILD KEY SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

The task in this process is to foster education, training and build-up of key social and emotional skills. **Social and emotional skills refer to the abilities to regulate one’s thoughts, emotions and behaviour.** They are considered to differ from the cognitive abilities because **they are mainly about how people manage their emotions, perceive themselves and engage with others, rather than their raw ability to process information.** [OECD](#) outlined six broad domains of skills which they named – the “Big Five” dimensions and the compound skills. The development



of compound skills will manifest later in their age so for the first and second grade we encourage you to focus on the social skills.

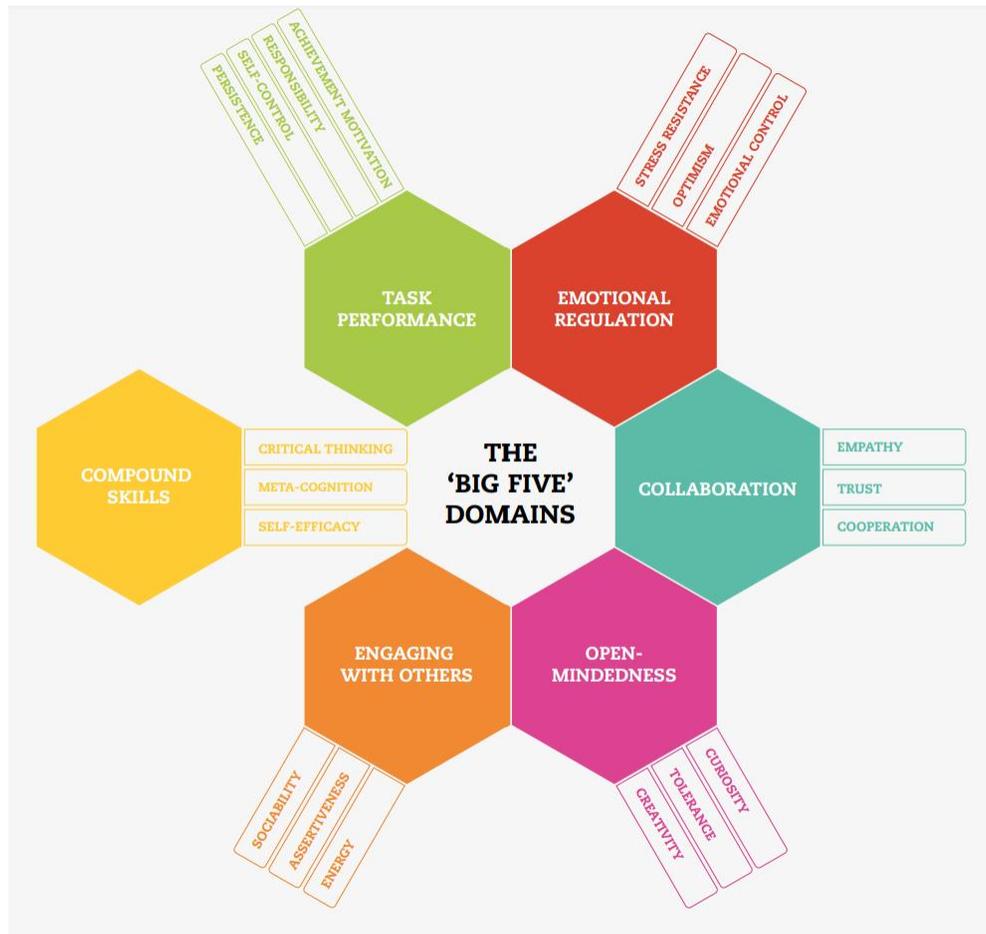


Figure 4 Social and Compound Skills, Source: OECD

According to the report mentioned above, **social skills are learnable** and our advice is to try as much as possible to include exercises which will foster the development of such skills in the children. Of course, you should always adapt the training to the age of the children in your class. The good thing about social skills is that teaching them can be integrated into the educational process of all other subjects in in your program. **The stable emotional condition, the positive psychological development and the good educational results are interconnected.** This is why the cooperation of the teacher; the pedagogical counsellor and the school psychologist shall be in close and active collaboration.



Task: Development of social skills

Practical ideas:

Team work

Too often we are concentrated in the individual knowledge and skills building of the children. Almost everywhere in formal education the ratio individual work/team work is 80/20 or even more in favour of individual work. We encourage you to create more opportunities for team work and team games. There is plenty of resources which can be used in different ways and class activities. Check the websites of local NGO's and Educational Directorate in your region/country.

Establish groups for social skills improvement

Create environment to include the pupils in groups for improving the social skills. Such groups should be normally small (2 to 8 pupils) and the participants should be from the same age. You can invite an external experienced specialist or by the school psychologist to lead the training in those groups and teach the kids how to effectively communicate with their peers. Such trainings can improve the communication skills of the kids, to help them shape negotiation skills, active listening and conflict resolution.

Encourage extracurricular activities

This option requires you to encourage the kids to start extracurricular activities aligned with their needs. It has been proven that arts and sports activities have extremely positive effect for coping with impulses of inappropriate behaviour. **Participation in arts help people better express their emotions, they are the perfect way to reach anger management and have a better understanding of the own emotions and the emotions of the others.** Sports are also amazing way to improve social skills and foster team spirit, develop sense of belonging and have a better physical and psychological wellbeing. They help shaping key competences.



Here we would like to refer the special KMS Heart program of Association “Krav Maga Survival Bulgaria”. The program is based on the Israeli self-defence system “Krav Maga” which has been adapted for kids of primary school age. **The philosophy** of the Krav Maga Survival education is based on **respect** and **esteem** above all. Every student is required to learn and practice the principles of mutual respect - respect for the others and self-respect as well, tolerance and patience- soft skills for strong results in conflict solving. Apart for developing physical skills and special awareness, Krav Maga teaches that **everyone should avoid the conflict with all possible tools**. It helps building mental skills for avoidance of conflicts, mastering skills for overcoming anger impulses, teaches in right behavioural patterns, **sense of belonging**, self- **responsibility**, **responsibility to the group and to the society** and other.

Use the advice of your colleagues who also work with your class in order to identify better the strong sides of the pupils, their interests and talents and help chose properly the right extracurricular activity. Sure, you need their parents to cooperate so do not miss to inform them about the need of this. **Arts and sports can help the kids canalize their energy in a creative way for developing the talents and the personal potential.**

Initiate and encourage volunteering

Volunteering helps building new friendships, establishing contact and increasing social interaction. They help building teamwork skills, problem solving skills, multitasking and develops creative thinking. It also promotes active citizenship and responsibility to the community. The children participating in volunteering programs have better self-confidence. They are happy doing something meaningful for the society. Several examples of volunteering activities: nursing home visits, supporting the work in animal rescue initiatives, participation in charity campaigns (donating toys, clothes, books), planting trees, etc. Such activities stimulate the good deeds and develop positive attitudes.



And some more golden tips

For convenient for the class time, we recommend to make together feeling&needs cards. **The game fosters empathy**. Such relationship games and exercises are designed to **help listen deeply to each other's values, needs, wishes, hopes and dreams; and to listen to oneself for clarity and self-connection**. These games are fun, engaging, and educational; with no ‘winners and losers’.

We encourage you to check also the powerful change that trainings in **Non-Violent Communication** (by Marshall Rosenberg) and consider practicing some of the tools in **Sociocracy** to encourage inclusion (*a lot of free trainings are available in Youtube*). Circles of decision can be developed or be applied the rule of decision consent. For effective results, it is important for the teacher to understand well these concepts, be curious, practice and participate so to increase his/her capacity to establish effectively this kind of preventive measures. Consider reviewing [the Sociocate platform](#) for international resource sharing.

1.4. ENFORCE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

This type of intervention measures aims to foster civic education, to build sense of belonging and personal contribution to the common goal of creating a safe and healthy studying environment. One of the biggest problems identified during our research is that in many cases the children do not report when they become victims of aggression or witness such.

Task: Encourage a common commitment to keeping the safe school environment

Practical ideas:

Conflicts inevitably occur. Even if they may not lead to violence, they are an event which should be well understood by the pupils. For this we recommend you to establish in your class a regular mediation session in which you can play as a mediator when conflict occurs and create a positive habit in your pupils that they will consider mediation whenever they face a conflict which they can not solve by themselves. As this is an existing widely practiced form of conflict resolution,



such mechanism will be also useful for their civic knowledge and competences. [Coursera](#) offers a free course for mediation which can be easily adapted for children.

You can even be more courageous and make a training of your older pupils (3rd-4th grade) on how to be mediators. You can explain them how important are the mediators, to explain them with examples the roles and the algorithm of mediation and to make practical exercises on it. In the end we recommend you to give them certificates that they are certified children mediators. In this way you will make them actively engaged in the peace keeping process and involved in it.

1.5. PARENTS INVOLVMENT

The parents and the family are one of the key successful factors in the prevention mechanism. You need to make sure that their parental education approaches do not ruin your efforts to establish the preventive measures.

Task: Get the parents as collaborators

Practical ideas:

Try to speak with the parents, not at them and to establish good trust connection so they will support your endeavours. Create a monthly newsletter or a common chat group dedicated to prevention of aggression at school. Set the rules of the group so only relevant content appears. There you can inform the parents on your recent activities with their kids in the field, you can ask for their support or ideas. Being part of a dedicated group supposes more focused attention on the issue and more active involvement.



INTERVENTION

One great problem identified in the international research is that because of different reasons most of the cases of violence and aggression are not reported and thus no work can be done on them. This is especially dangerous because victims of violence, bullying and mocking may develop severe mental health issues (like anxiety, inability to sleep, closing). On the other hand, with the assumption that the aggressor has been triggered in some way and the aggression is just his/her way to communicate his/her problem, these kids also need social and psychological assistance.

2.1. IDENTIFYING CASES OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

Task: Get informed about every act of violence and aggression happening amongst, around or to pupils from your class.

Practical ideas:

After you make sure that the pupils understand what is violence and aggression and how to recognize it, initiate building checklists for identification of violent behaviour based on what you have done in the awareness campaigns. You can divide the children in working groups to stimulate teamwork with each group with the task to develop a checklist for identifying the violence in its different forms: physical aggression, verbal aggression, cyber aggression, sexual harassment, etc. Then you can play a year-long game in which each of the pupils will be a “policeman” throughout the whole year and will report cases of aggression which s/he witnessed or if being bullied. You can build even a reward mechanism. Ex. Giving stars to the “officer” who identified more cases. In order for everyone to be a winner, at the end of the school year you can initiate other activities so everyone will get “promoted”. This type of game promotes also active citizenship as it builds positive traits and educates the responsibility of each society member to get involved in the solution of the social problems.



2.2. EVALUATE AND BUILD A STRATEGY

After understanding the essence of the problem, you should analyse well the roots and the depths of the problem and plan well the means to solve it. It is not necessary to act immediately.

In the evaluation phase you need to collect enough information about:

- **the case itself – what/when/where/how it happened;**
- **Is it a sole incident or reoccurring behaviour?**
- **What is the family environment and are there current changes which may caused distress in the children?;**
- **Differentiate between trigger and cause.**
- **What resources may be needed to make intervention on the case (time resources, human resources)?;**
- **What strategies should be applied and for how long? Development of which skills will help both sides overcome the problem and prevent its reoccurrence.**

NB! Keep positive attitude, do not blame and victimize, show empathy to both sides, build trust, keep the child's dignity!

2.3. INTERVENTIVE ACTIONS

There are existing numerous ways of solving issues of aggression. For each situation you may use a different tool depending on the situation. The most important thing is not to remain indifferent.

Task: Speak about the problem and understand it

It is important to understand that in the cases of child aggression both sides (the aggressor and the victim) are victims and should be treated with equal care.



Practical ideas:

Speak with both sides- this will help you to clarify the situation and to show support in solving the issue. Show your appreciation for their openness to speak about the problem, support them encouraging them that the issue will be solved; speak calmly, not only name the problem but try to explain why this is a problem and what may be the consequences of it. Do not blame the aggressor, establish trust and try to make him/her share about the problem. Encourage using the tools learned in the reaction mechanism strategies. If you identify serious roots of the problem, consult with specialist.

Another very successful educative strategy to be used as intervention is to apply the **principles of Non-violent communication in the class with all pupils**. Here are some practical examples of how it works in practice: The [YouTube channel of Kristen Kristensen](#) shows the effective interventive work step by step. For your convenience, her videos have subtitles in English, Italian, Bulgarian and Turkish.

Here are some possible tools you may consider.

Mediation

As described in the previous section, mediation is a powerful tool in conflict resolution. The pedagogical practice shows that using intermediate at school is a good way to tackle the inappropriate behaviour. The involvement of a third neutral party helps solving the problem in a way that both sides feel satisfied and no one is a loser.

Practical ideas: See the ideas in the previous section. You can practice as mediator, you can invite other colleague to do it or is the case is not so complicated, you can ask some of **your “certified” mediators** to take care of it under your supervision.

Consultation with the school/regional psychologist/pedagogical counsellor

If you do not feel confident to solve more complicated issues, do not hesitate to involve the school/regional psychologist/pedagogical counsellor or even the school principal. The mental and



physical health of the children is a priority of every school as well as the safe and secure educational environment.

Mentorship programs

The mentorship programs include people to whom the child has respect and trust. It is quite more effort-costly to organize such a program but the results are amazing.

Practical ideas:

You can build your own pool of mentors (parents, colleagues, older pupils) who have good social behaviour and are willing to participate in your initiatives. Then you can create a list with recommendations and to set your expectations from their participation in your program. It is also good to organize a meeting with them and provide some guidance. Whenever there is a case of aggression you can assign both the aggressor and the victim to a mentor for regular meetings. If the choice of mentors is good, the children will share more about their troubles while the experienced mentors will help them cope the issues as third parties. In order to gain their trust, the mentors should keep confidentiality and approach the issues with the respective understanding.

Depending on the case, you may consider transforming some of the preventive measures as interventive.

2.4. PARENTS INVOLVEMENT

It is always a very sensitive issue to approach the parents. Our research shows that in many cases the parents of the aggressor may deny existence of a problem or apply too severe home educational tools which can deepen the problem while the parents of the child suffering violence tend to react too emotional and advocate for severe measures. But the cooperation of both sides in some cases is crucial and the parents understanding and will to solve the problem is essential. For each case you should decide your strategy individually. What is important is:

- **To build good connection with the parents;**
- **To make sure they understand importance of the problems;**



- **To build trust;**
- **To give confidence that everything will be solved in a positive for them way.**

Effective involvement of parents in the prevention phase will ease your work in intervention.

COMMUNITY

School aggression may occur in every educational institution and it is important for you to know that the challenges for the teachers are not unique for you. There are thousands of teachers who are facing similar to yours issues and dilemmas. Each of your colleagues is struggling the same way and this helped him/her build own know-how which may be useful for you to solve aggression and violence issues in your class. We can not attend all possible trainings, try all possible tools and read all the literature on the topic. This is why it may be useful to join an existing community for sharing pedagogical problems, exchanging good practices and working tools with others.

Additionally, the pedagogical approaches and the techniques used are dynamically changing and joining such a community will help you stay updated.

If you do not find such community in your country, you may decide to be a change-maker and establish it by yourself. It will be useful for everyone.

Additionally, the community mechanism may be used for building a local community to involve all members of the society who may have direct impact on your work and call for action.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Phase 1: Envision well the mission of the community and its goals. It can be for exchange of information and resources for tackling violence and aggression at school; it may target only one type of aggression; it may target the problem only in your city/region.

Envision the means of interaction, and draw the limits within which you imagine that your community will operate. Keep everything clear and simple so it can be easy to be communicated.



Identify the profile of the people you would like to involve in your community and draft the rules in it (who has the right to participate, what kind of information should be shared and what will not be considered as relevant).

Phase 2: Build identity- Find potential members who fit the community identity you envision.

CMX identifies the process of joining a community as a circle in which the potential community members should be able to identify with the community, their trust in it and participate with the believe that the community will be helpful for them.

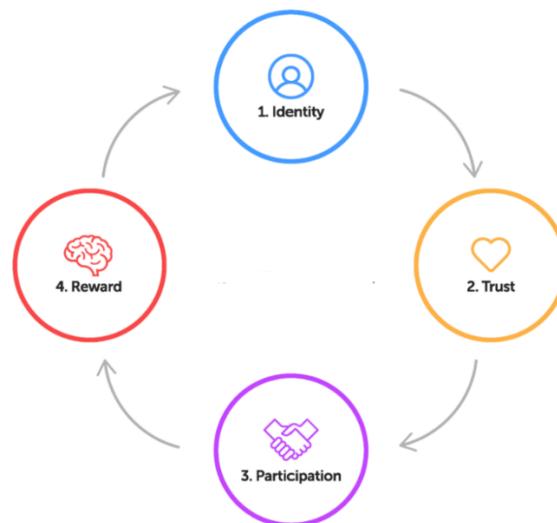


Figure 5 Community Building Process, Source: CMX

Speak about the idea with your closest colleagues and try to bring your first 10 members according to the profile you set (teachers, psychologists, pedagogical counsellors). It is preferable to chose some opinion leaders in your field so they will bring more popularity to your community. Encourage your first members to invite other people.

Phase 3: Move online- In order to be more fruitful, it will be good for the community to grow online so more people can participate the sharing process and more people will feel the benefit of being members.



Phase 4: Promote – make your community visible, promote it through all relevant channels so your message can reach and attract more of your target members

Phase 5: Manage – It is very rare for the community to self-operate, especially in the beginning. You need to manage it or to choose a community manager who will initiate discussions, comment, moderate and be active in sharing.

Phase 6: Be creative- you know better the problems and the topics which you want to discuss and are important in your field. Initiate and be creative. There is no formula for this, just your gut feeling.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

It is always exciting and encouraging to see your progress and impact. This is why we recommend you to measure your achievements and record measurable data so you can improve in the time.

Indicators for success (for absolute values):

- Number of reported cases of aggression in your class by type of aggression;
- Number of reported cases of aggression by your pupils by type of aggression;
- Number of children with improved social behaviour;
- Which channels were used for reporting;
- Other (depending on the applied approaches).

Measure the data every school term and analyse which strategies worked well and where need to put more efforts to improve the values.

In order to track the development of the process and its success applying the methodology we recommend you to use an evaluation table where the evaluated items are countable.

The first sub-column of each period indicates the counted number of cases (N) while the value in the second column is the counted number divided by the number of students. In this way, you will get in the second column a normalized value which will allow you to compare your results with the results from previous years, the results of your colleagues and community members.



Table 2 Sample table for process evaluation

Measurable		Start of the school year		Mid-Term		End of the school year		Previous year
		N	N/n	N	N/n	N	N/n	N/n
1	Number of pupils participated in the program							
2	Number of reported cases of school violence and aggression							
3	Number of parents actively involved in the prevention program.							
4	Number of cases sent to mediation							
5	Number of cases solved by the mediator							
6	Other...							