

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF LEARNING (SEAL)

Potential Links with 'Rights-Respecting Schools' and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

SEAL provides a supportive programme for children to develop positive attributes of emotional health and well being which helps them to understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities in a mature and respectful manner.

Key features of SEAL which support the RRS process are:-

- clearly identifying the five social and emotional aspects of learning
- clearly valuing pupils' uniqueness and well being
- promoting teaching and learning styles which include purposeful, co-operative group work and group enquiry using the same Philosophy for Children (P4C) techniques which RRS advocates
- the emphasis on the importance of adult behaviour and language in promoting SEAL
- the emphasis on pupil participation
- building resilience in pupils
- the inclusive ethos
- the incorporation (but limited) of understanding of Rights and Responsibilities.

SEAL proposes five social and emotional aspects of learning. These are:

- *Self-awareness*
- *Managing feelings*
- *Motivation*
- *Empathy*
- *Social skills*

There are clear links between these aspects of learning and a Rights-based school ethos and culture. In a 'rights-respecting school':

- *Self-awareness involves knowledge and understanding of one's own rights as well as an understanding of the universality of these rights;*
- *Rights-respectful behaviour is more likely to happen when an individual is able to empathise with someone else's feelings and circumstances;*
- *Basic social skills such as listening and co-operation are enhanced by a rights-respecting school ethos and culture*
- *SEAL addresses examples of rights-abuse such as bullying*

While both SEAL and RRS operate across the whole school and can be cross-curricular in approach, it is useful to bear in mind that the SEAL programme places more emphasis on Personal, Health and Social Education while a rights-based school ethos and culture emphasises Global Citizenship.

In parallel with the process of becoming and sustaining a 'rights-respecting school', SEAL involves a whole school approach, building on existing good practice, and involves all staff in demonstrating key skills and attitudes through the way they relate to and communicate with children.

Like RRS, SEAL also advocates the active involvement of parents and carers.

There are clear links in SEAL with other school initiatives and practices that are also linked to RRS e.g.:

- *Peer mediation*
- *Playground buddies*
- *The active participation and involvement of children in their learning and in making decisions that effect the daily life and organisation of the school*
- *Children making choices in their learning and about how they learn*
- *Both RRS and SEAL promote strong respect for cultural differences*

The SEAL materials include much stimulus material in the form of photographs and posters designed for reflection on and discussion of feelings which can also incorporate rights issues.

N.B. there is no specific reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the SEAL materials.

Right, Responsibilities and Class Charters

SEAL offers a very limited understanding of these aspects of RRS. The *New Beginnings overview* and the Year 3-4 materials include rights and responsibilities. The understanding of the term 'right' is limited and is often the equivalent of 'wants', as it is not related to the UN Convention. It is very individualised with the focus of the Charters on the child's responsibilities and the keeping of rules. It appears that the child is responsible for everything. This has to be balanced by the understanding that others, such as parents, and schools and government share a responsibility for securing rights, but this is not a feature of the materials.

Specific links between RRS and the seven SEAL whole school themes.

1. New beginnings

- Includes Class Charters (see above) based on rights and responsibilities from Y1/2 to Y5/6; it is suggested that the terms Rights and Responsibilities are introduced in Y3 (NB Unicef advocates an earlier introduction in Foundation Key Stage 1)

2. Getting on and falling out

- Includes work on prejudice and exclusion and bad treatment due to difference, both of which can be explored as rights issues
- Includes work on listening to others' views and respecting differences of opinion (links with UNCRC articles 12 and 28)

3. Say no to bullying

- Includes consideration of how best to respond to instances of bullying, which can include reference to children's rights
- Includes potential case studies of rights denial when one person holds power over others in a group

4. Going for goals

- Includes opportunities for emphasising the importance of making the most of your right to education
- Includes consideration of the impact of one's own action on others (and their enjoyment of their rights)

5. Good to be me

- Includes discussion of standing up for what you believe to be right even when this is a minority view (e.g. when those views are based on a rights framework)

6. Relationships

- Includes work on knowing when something is your fault and taking responsibility for your own behaviour, when a human rights framework can be used to make moral judgements
- Includes work on stereotypes, which can be linked to rights entitlement and denial

7. Changes

- Includes opportunities for empathy with others who might be being denied their rights
- Opportunities to highlight how a framework of human rights contributes to community bonds, a sense of security and solidarity

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This paper also draws on the work of Ian Massey, Inspector for Intercultural Education for Hampshire, on the Hants website for its 'Rights, Respect and Responsibility' initiative (www.hants.gov.uk/childrensrights)