

Assessment Tool and Individualisation Guidelines: WellbeingInSchools

PROJECT NAME: Enhancing Resilience and Well-being of All Students in Primary Schools

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This document serves solely as supporting material for teachers implementing the Erasmus+ Wellbeing in School program. It may only be used by teachers who have successfully completed the relevant training for this program.

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1. Introduction

These guidelines are designed to help teachers implement the WellbeingInSchools curriculum and learning materials. They are designed to facilitate a classroom implementation that is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their specific needs or abilities. The foundation of these guidelines is the STEP adaptation methodology, a well-established framework that has been successfully implemented across many different countries and types of activities.

The STEP methodology provides a simple yet effective framework for making changes to activities so that everyone can be included and participate together. Using this tool, teachers can ensure that all students experience the benefits of mindfulness practices.

2. Understanding the STEP Methodology

What is STEP?

STEP is an acronym that stands for:

- Space
- Task
- Equipment
- People

These are the four key areas where activities can be adapted to encourage participation.

Origins and Application

The STEP adaptation tool was originally developed as part of the wider “[Inclusion Spectrum](#)” - an approach to promote inclusion of students with disabilities and diverse abilities in physical education and sport settings. Its principles are universally applicable and have been successfully transferred to various educational contexts.

The STEP methodology provides different approaches to running inclusive activities:

1. **Open activities** - Simple activities that can be done with a large group requiring little to no modification
2. **Modified activities** - Everyone does the same activity, with modifications made to support different needs and abilities
3. **Parallel activities** - Students are organised into groups where they can do the activity at their own pace and level
4. **Separate activities** - A particular group or individual does a purposefully planned, different activity tailored to their specific needs

3. Applying The STEP Methodology

Space

Step 1: Consider the Environment

Ask yourself:

- Where would this activity typically take place?
- Would a different type of environment work better to encourage participation?

For example, a body scan meditation might typically take place in a quiet classroom with students sitting comfortably on chairs or on the floor. However, this activity could also be done outside, or in a quieter part of the school where students can more easily relax.

Step 2: Assess Your Available Spaces

Think about all possible locations where you could run the activity:

- Your classroom
- Gymnasium or large hall
- Outdoor areas (playground, field, garden)
- Quiet room or library
- Other specially equipped rooms

For each space, consider:

- Is the size and capacity of the space suitable for everyone to participate?
- What kind of sensory characteristics are there (light, sounds, temperature) and can they be changed to make a more comfortable environment?
- Is the space sufficiently private for students to be able to relax?
- Are there potential distractions that might prevent students in engaging with the mindfulness activity?
- Is the space physically accessible or can be made accessible to all students who will be participating?
- Do any students have specific needs that need to be addressed in the space in order for them to be able to participate effectively?

Step 3: Prepare the Space and Determine Modifications

Choose the most appropriate space(s) to run the activity based on what you identified in step 2. Think about what you can do to prepare the space and what kind of modifications would make it more suitable for the activity. Typical modifications might include:

- Using soft furnishings (cushions, rugs) to make the space more comfortable
- Clearing away clutter or unnecessary visual stimuli
- Dimming lights or closing blinds

- Adjusting temperature and ventilation
- Marking out personal spaces or boundaries for students
- Creating a "calm down" area or separate room for students who need a break
- Adding ramps or barriers if necessary to access the space

Example: Preparing a Space for a Body Scan Activity

The following example demonstrates how a teacher could select and modify a space to run an inclusive body scan activity. Note that in most cases the classroom provides an adequate and barrier-free environment for carrying out mindfulness activities - the following examples demonstrate adaptations to make the classroom more suitable, or how to choose an alternative space when the classroom is not suitable.

The teacher considers the spaces available to them: their regular classroom, a smaller room and the outdoor playground. They decide that the smaller room is not big enough for everyone to fit in comfortably. The outdoor playground provides a lot of distractions and might prevent some students from being able to focus on the activity. The teacher also has two students who are sensitive to bright lights and loud noises.

The teacher comes up with two options.

Option 1

The teacher thinks that the activity can be run together as a whole class in the classroom, as an **open activity**. They clear out a large space in the middle of the room, free of clutter, where everyone can sit, stand or lie down. They place soft furnishings like cushions and bean bags for students to sit in. They close the windows and blinds, lower the lighting level, and close the door to create a more relaxed environment, as well as to address the needs of the students with sensory sensitivities. They decide to reserve the smaller room and explain to students that it is available if they need a break from the activity.

Option 2

The teacher thinks that their classroom is not ideal for running the activity, because there is too much noise from the hallway and other classrooms. They want to run the activity in the outdoor playground, but are worried that this might be a barrier for the students with sensory sensitivities. The teacher decides that the best way for everyone to participate is to carry out two **modified activities**, by running two activities in different spaces.

One activity is run in the playground, while another activity is run in the smaller room, which is much quieter and free from distractions. The teacher selects a group of students for the activity in the smaller room, including the students with sensory sensitivities. This ensures that the two students do not feel singled out and separated from the rest of the group.

Task

Step 1: Understand the Task

Look through the mindfulness activity that you want to run and understand what the students will be doing. Consider the exact steps involved and what challenges they might involve. Prepare a clear and well-structured explanation of the activity for the students.

For example, a mindful breathing exercise might involve the following steps:

- Find a comfortable position
- Close or relax eyes
- Notice your breathing
- Learn to count your breaths
- Practice prolonging your breathing
- Continue for a set duration (e.g. 2 to 5 minutes)

Step 2: Identify Potential Barriers

For each component, ask yourself, could any students have difficulty or challenges with this? Considering the needs of each student in the class, which steps might need adapting so that everyone can participate?

In the mindful breathing example, some students might struggle with the task of counting their breaths on their own without someone to help them. Others might find it difficult to continue the task for the set duration without continuous guidance or encouragement.

Step 3: Determine Modifications

Tasks can be modified in many different ways.

You can modify the **complexity** of the task:

- How can you make the task easier and less demanding?
- Are there ways you make the task more challenging for more capable students?
- Can you break the task down into smaller steps that can be taught one at a time?
- Can you teach it progressively over multiple sessions, instead of all at once?

You can modify the **duration**:

- Would some students prefer to do the activity for a shorter or longer duration?
- What kind of options do you want to offer?
- The mobile app contains audio recordings of 2 minutes, 4 minutes and 7 minutes. You could consider starting with the short, 2 minute version, and then building up to the longer versions in future lessons.

You can modify your **instructions**:

- Are the instructions clear and easily understandable for all students?

- Do you need to provide instructions in different formats, e.g. spoken and written?
- Can you demonstrate the steps physically before students attempt them?
- Can you create visual supports (diagrams, posters) that are more easily understandable than written text?

You can modify the **flexibility** of the task:

- Are there parts of the activity that can be made optional, or are there parts that you definitely want all students to participate in? Students can participate in activities with their eyes open or closed, sitting, lying down, standing or walking.
- Where can you give students choices about how they do the activity? All parts of the activity should be optional, and students should be given the freedom to opt out of any part of the activity.

Example: Task Modifications for a Mindful Breathing Activity

The following example demonstrates how a teacher could modify the task to make a mindful breathing activity more inclusive.

Option 1

The teacher identifies the individual tasks involved in a mindful breathing activity. They consider the particular needs of their students, and decide that the overall activity is relatively straightforward and does not need modification, so they run an **open activity**. The teacher makes sure to clearly explain the activity beforehand and give everyone written instructions in case they need them, but the activity is run without any other modifications to the task.

Option 2

The teacher decides that the activity is too complex for all students to participate together without modification. They decide to run a **modified activity** to include everyone at once. They decide to use a 2-minute audio recording for the first session, and instead of counting ten breaths, students count up to three breaths each time. In subsequent sessions, the teacher slowly builds up to using the longer audio recordings, as well as the number of breaths.

Option 3

The teacher decides that some students might find this task challenging, while others might find it too simple. Therefore, they decide the best approach is to run **parallel activities**. They divide the room into three separate zones, with the task in each zone increasing in complexity. In the first zone, students simply focus on breath awareness and practice inhaling and exhaling deeply. In the second zone, students practice lengthening the outbreath. In the third zone, students actively count their breaths, following a pattern, such as 3 seconds to breathe in, and 6 seconds to breathe out. All students are encouraged to find which zone they feel most comfortable in. The teacher can always change the activities in each zone if students are finding them too easy or too challenging.

Equipment

Step 1: Consider Possible Equipment

Think about what kinds of equipment you have available that might improve both the accessibility, as well as enjoyment of the activity. Students can practice many of the mindfulness activities independently using the Mindzy mobile app within the WellbeingInSchools programme on their phones. Headphones may be required in order to do this in the classroom. Pens and paper may be required for journaling activities, but these can also be done in the app.

Most mindfulness activities will not have any particular equipment requirements, but you might find that some benefit greatly from having certain items available. Make sure there is sufficient equipment for all students.

For example, for a mindful eating activity you might want to consider:

- The kinds of food that will be available
- Napkins
- Hand wipes
- Cleaning items
- Seating options (chairs, cushions, beanbags, yoga mats)

Step 2: Assess Student Needs

Do any students have particular needs that can be met by providing specific equipment? These might include things like:

- Having seating alternatives, or the option to sit, stand or lie down
- Using noise-reducing equipment like headphones or ear defenders
- Allowing typical support items like weighted blankets, stress toys, textured objects, fidget spinners, etc.
- Using visual tools such as diagrams to explain instructions
- Having a visible clock or timer in the room

Example: Equipment Modifications for a Mindful Eating Activity

The teacher decides that in order to run a mindful eating activity, they should make a few modifications to the items available. They decide to prepare different foods that have different textures, tastes and smells so that students can experience different sensations during the activity. They make sure to identify any students' allergies or dietary requirements beforehand and avoid those kinds of foods. They make sure to explain that students are welcome to sit or stand for the activity, and prepare different seating areas and options, including chairs, bean bags, or cushions on the floor. They make sure there is a clock in the room, and clearly explain how long the activity will last.

People

Step 1: Determine Who Will Be Involved

Start by going through everyone who will be involved in the activity. This includes you, the students, and any teachers, support staff or other individuals who will be helping you to facilitate the activity. Think about the needs and capabilities of all those who are involved. This part of the STEP methodology typically involves thinking about how to best use the skills and abilities of those involved.

Step 2: Consider Grouping Options

Think about how students can best be grouped together and what kind of support they might need from others. Will you run the activity as a whole class, or in small groups? Would some students benefit from one-to-one support from support staff or peers?

In most cases it will make sense to run activities as a **whole class**. This is best when:

- Most students are at a similar ability level
- The activity is naturally accessible to all, or can be made accessible with a few modifications
- You feel students would benefit from all experiencing the activity together

You might want to separate into **small groups** or **pairs** when:

- There are students with different levels of ability in the class (e.g. shorter attention span, visual/hearing impairment) who would benefit from separate activities run in parallel
- Students might be overwhelmed or lack focus in a large group
- Students might need to build confidence before joining the larger group
- Some students might need individual support or attention

Step 3: Determine Modifications

Determine what kind of modifications you can use based on the people involved in the activity.

Start by thinking about how you will act as a facilitator. Think about what kind of language you can use to encourage students to engage with the activity, such as:

- A calm, gentle tone of voice
- Clear, simple, positive and encouraging language
- Be non-judgmental in your approach
- Give students time to process instructions without talking too fast
- Encourage students to participate in all activities, but make sure they understand that participation is voluntary and that they can take a break or drop out at any time

Consider where you will be when the activity is taking place. Will you stand at the front of the class giving instructions, or walk between groups to see who needs your support?

How much instruction and advice should you give? Do you need to give highly structured instructions and frequent prompting, or can you give minimal guidance and let students take a more active role in carrying out the activity? Can students support each other? If you split the activity into smaller groups, you might be able to assign capable students who can lead each group in their task.

Decide whether students should be allowed to talk quietly amongst themselves, or if you want them to be silent once the activity has started. If some students are paired together with peers or support staff, and others are doing the activity in a large group with minimal support, consider how you will divide your attention between each group.

Example: People Modifications for a Mindful Breathing Activity

The following example demonstrates how a teacher could make modifications to the people involved in a mindful breathing activity.

Option 1

The teacher decides that the class is capable of all participating in the activity together with little instruction and guidance required. They decide to run an **open activity**. The teacher makes sure to explain everything clearly and in an easily understandable way beforehand, and stands centrally in front of the class during the activity so that they can easily help anyone that needs it.

Option 2

The teacher decides that some students need regular support and encouragement with the activity in order to maintain attention and focus. The teacher decides to run two **parallel activities**. They explain to the class that in one activity, the teacher will give the instructions and allow the students to do the activity at their own pace. In the other activity, a support worker will work with students step by step through the activity, and students are more easily able to ask questions and ask for help, (perhaps with counting the breaths, for example).

Assessment Tool Survey: WellbeingInSchools

Integrated within the Mobile App Mindzy

Lesson 2: Focus on the Important

I find it hard to concentrate on one thing at a time

→ *For example: Trying to study while also checking group chats, getting up to do other activities or tasks you think of like organising your clothes.*

Lesson 3: Taste the Moment

I rush through meals without really experiencing them

→ *For example: Finishing lunch in five minutes because you're eager to get back to class or your phone.*

Lesson 4: When it Gets Uncomfortable

I notice when I'm feeling uncomfortable

→ *For example: Recognising that you feel tense before giving a presentation or meeting new people. This might mean you recognise that you are sweating more, or have shaking hands, or are feeling hotter than usual.*

Lesson 5: Stress Less, Chill More

I often feel stressed

→ *For example: Feeling nervous about tasks you have to complete or about talking to other people.*

Lesson 6: Be Your Own Bestie

I criticise myself harshly when things go wrong

→ For example: Thinking, "I'm terrible at this," after getting a maths problem wrong or not catching the ball in PE.

Lesson 7: Declutter Your Mind

I often overthink things

→ For example: Replaying a conversation in your head over and over, wondering if you said something wrong.

Lesson 8: Real Connection, Not Just Reactions

I often react quickly without thinking when I'm upset

→ For example: Snapping at a friend in a group chat because you misread their tone.

Lesson 9: Little Things, Big Mood Boost

I tend to focus more on what's wrong than what's good

→ For example: Focusing on a bad grade even if you did well in all your other classes.

Lesson 10: You and the Algorithm

I can easily put my phone away when I want to focus on something else

→ For example: Turning your phone on "Do Not Disturb" while studying or hanging out with friends.