

4. About the 10-step training program in Part II

In the foundations volume of this series (Handbook and workbook: Foundations and backgrounds) the following passage relates to the challenges and tasks of HLT instructors (chapter 2.3):

“Particularly important is the mediation and thematization of all the prevailing unwritten norms and expectations in the host country, which are often totally unknown, especially to emigrated parents from underprivileged educational backgrounds. This includes, for instance, unwritten rules that are taken for granted, concerning the “right” time when smaller and older children should go to bed, what they should eat for breakfast or eat in general, how to deal with homework and the learning environment at home, etc. To be informed about such issues and to be able to pass on the information is an important task for HLT instructors.”

The problem with all these unwritten rules and norms is the fact that for the “locals” (at least those from educated, successful families), these expectations are so clear and internalized that they are hardly ever communicated explicitly. When even HLT instructors require some time to grasp the most important rules and expectations, this is much more difficult for parents or children who are distanced from education or more disadvantaged. The innovative 10-step program in Part II of this volume intends to address this by providing help in very specific and practical ways. It introduces the readers to the fundamental prerequisites for working effectively and for success in school. This includes, for instance, setting up quiet a work place, regular study hours, working with a plan, etc. For every step there are explanations, tips, and concrete implementation exercises. Working through the entire program (in a manageable 10–14 days) promotes practicing and rehearsing of the most important unwritten “rules of the game”, which would otherwise be unknown to many children and adolescents of socially and educationally less privileged families.

For using the 10-step training program, a number of different scenarios are possible:

- The program is being discussed and worked through in its entirety by the whole class, e. g. as a common project “we optimize our learning”. For younger children, the steps 5–10 must be age-appropriately simplified and adjusted.
- The program is administered with a smaller group of motivated students who would, naturally, also communicate their experiences to the others.
- The program is being worked through in conjunction with individual students or a few students who are educationally weak and receive little parental support. The parents and, if possible, the classroom teachers, should absolutely be included. In this case, the program has the function of an emergency measure, as an effort to save the students’ jeopardized school career.

Working through this program without any parental support can be an overload for many students. It is therefore all the more important to inspire the parents’ support and enthusiasm for this project within the context of HLT, particularly since the instructor generally only sees the students once per week. What the HLT instructors can accomplish in terms of a successful project with the 10-step program can be summarized as follows:

1. Inform the parents about the project “Working through a training program for successful learning” and about the unwritten, but essential school-related rules and norms. This works best in conjunction with a parents’ event or a discussion with parents, supplemented with an information sheet (see below). In lieu of a meeting with a parent, at least the information sheet should be provided. Optimally, this program should be coordinated with the teachers of mainstream education classes. It is highly likely that they would be interested in the 10-step initiative.
2. In copying the program from Part II of this volume, collect and staple the pages together into a booklet and distribute them to the students.
3. In the two weeks where the students work through the program, discuss their experiences, problems and successes in class. Make time for discussions, suggestions and exchanging tips. Similarly, conclude with a follow-up discussion with the students after the end of the program.

Sample of an information sheet for the parents

(template intended for adaptation as needed)

Dear parents,

As part of the native language education program, we would like to assume a training program, designed to ensure acquiring the prerequisites for successful learning. These prerequisites are of vital importance for your child's success in school. As parents, you should endeavor to help your child fulfill these requirements, if at all possible. The program is comprised of ten steps. Your child will receive the program outline in form of a copied booklet. The steps outline, among other things, the importance of setting up a work space, the importance of maintaining fixed work hours and prior planning of one's work. There is a short exercise at the conclusion of each day. This program should be concluded in about 10-14 days of work. Your supporting your child and taking an interest in his/her work with this program will help a great deal to ensure his/her persevering and really working through the program. Your support does not demand much time. It simply consists of making sure every day during that 10-day period....

..... that your child continues to work through the program and has completed and understood the corresponding step and its related exercises.

.... following the conclusion of the work on a particular step, engage your child in a short conversation about the following points: How did it go? Is everything clear? Show me the completed exercise or the assignments related to this step! (Maybe your child may still need a little help from you in this regard).

It goes without saying that the program will also be discussed in our lessons, but this does in no way replace your vital support.

I thank you in advance for your interest and your help in carefully working through this program. I can assure you that your assistance will make a valuable contribution to your child's approach to learning and student success.

With kind regards,

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