

## FRANCE [2] - 2012

### TOWARDS SOCIALIZATION IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

#### A. BASIC INFORMATION

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| <b>Country:</b>   | France  |
| <b>Title of initiative:</b>   | [FR] <i>Vers un college socialisant</i><br>[EN] Towards socialization in lower secondary schools  |
| <b>Coordinator/<br/>Organization:</b>   | Headmaster of <i>Collège Paul-Émile Victor Branne</i><br>(lower-secondary school)   |
| <b>Key competences<br/>addressed:</b>   | The key competences addressed are those of the <i>socle commun des connaissances et des compétences</i> (core curriculum of knowledge and competences):<br>[FR] <i>maîtrise de la langue française</i> [EN] command of the French language;<br>[FR] <i>pratique d'une langue vivante étrangère</i> [EN] use of a foreign language;<br>[FR] <i>compétence de base en mathématiques et culture scientifique et technique</i> [EN] basic competence in mathematics, science and technology;<br>[FR] <i>maîtrise des techniques usuelles des TIC</i> [EN] command of common techniques in ICT;<br>[FR] <i>culture humaniste</i> [EN] humanistic culture;<br>[FR] <i>compétences sociales et civiques</i> [EN] social and civic competence;<br>[FR] <i>autonomie et initiative</i> [EN] autonomy and initiative; |
| <b>Type of initiative and channels used for implementation</b> (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.) | Curricular reform<br>Local decision to organize groups according to their competences rather than in traditional class groups   |
| <b>Partners:</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bodies of the Académie (local education authority) and pedagogical inspectors</li> <li>• Elementary inspector for the link between elementary and lower-secondary school</li> <li>• Non-educational participants</li> <li>• Participants from the educational sector for some training sessions</li> </ul>   |

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| <b>Scope:</b><br>(student/teacher/school level;<br>local/regional/national)        | Students and teachers<br>Regional level  |
| <b>Learning context:</b><br>(formal or non-formal)                                 | Formal framework of acquisition of lower secondary school competences  |
| <b>School education level/s:</b><br>(primary, lower secondary,<br>upper secondary) | Lower secondary  |
| <b>Target groups:</b>  | All students of the school   |
| <b>Time frame:</b><br>(start and end date)   | September 2008—on-going<br>First evaluation set for September 2015   |
| <b>Relevant links:</b>   | School website:<br><a href="http://webetab.ac-bordeaux.fr/Etablissement/CPEVictorBranne/">http://webetab.ac-bordeaux.fr/Etablissement/CPEVictorBranne/</a> |

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## B. SUMMARY

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The project in *Collège Paul-Émile Victor Branne* is a global strategy developed by the school within the framework of the implementation of the *Socle commun des connaissances et des compétences* (core curriculum of knowledge and competences), which aims to develop competence-based learning and differentiated pedagogical approaches. The initiative, which started in 2009, changed the way teachers work and stimulated reflection on other points relating to pedagogy and communication to parents and other actors from the world of education.

The project focuses on developing the key competences of communication in the mother tongue and in foreign languages and mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology. Competence rubrics by subject as well as cross-curricular rubrics have been prepared, with the aim of enabling all teachers to adopt a differentiated pedagogy. The overall aim is to tackle the issue of low achievement and high dropout rates and to enable every student to acquire the skills required for social integration by the end of his/her *Collège* education.

## C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

### Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

#### **Rationale based on school indicators:**

- Rate of certification of the core curriculum of knowledge and competences
- Pass rate for end of lower-secondary mock exam
- Rate of acquisition of competence n° 1 (Command of the French language) of the core curriculum of knowledge and competences

#### **Observations regarding teachers:**

- 2008: teachers are very set in their routines and convictions, there is a low turnover of teachers thus teams are rather stable
- The good atmosphere at school explains why teachers do not wish to change schools, but at the same time this good atmosphere allows the school management and inspectors to promote change towards the competence approach
- All teachers of the school need to be encouraged to implement differentiated pedagogy

#### **Observations regarding students**

- Rural lower-secondary school that caters to an above average number of students from deprived families (families with financial and social difficulties) compared to families in the local area
- Lack of cultural opportunities, students are isolated in their villages
- Classes are highly heterogeneous
- Need to bridge the gap between family contexts and school requirements, as is common in rural schools

#### **Low achievement and dropout rate**

- A high proportion (20%) of students finish school without having mastered the codes of written and oral social language
- Lack of confidence among students who leave mainstream education early
- Very few problems with student behaviour but a clear reluctance to do any individual work
- A lot of families have no ambition for their children
- Conversely, for some families, living in a rural area corresponds to a lifestyle choice and their children's academic achievement is important to them whatever school they attend.

### Objectives:

This project aims for all teachers of the school to adopt a differentiated pedagogy in order to:

- fight low achievement and a high dropout rate
- enable each student to acquire the skills required for social integration by the final year of that school level

**Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform** (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

The targeted project dimensions, as stated in the official school project, are to help each student to reach his/her highest level of competence, to master ICT and to be able to acquire new knowledge which will help his/her integration into society

**Overall approach** (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

In the long run, this is a global strategy of the school within the framework of the implementation of the core curriculum of knowledge and competences. The approach was formed through participation in “Experimenting with projects” (groups and competence based evaluations), *Académie* level, since June 2009.

**Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:**

The project focuses on the following key competences:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

A common rubric for the evaluation of key competences in French, English and Maths has been created, as has a rubric that can be used for all disciplines.

**Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:**

The subject focuses initially on French and Maths, then takes a cross-curricular approach.

**How the initiative/reform is being implemented** (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

The operational process relies on splitting two same level/same schedule classes into three groups of students in order to reduce the students/teacher ratio and to enable competence-related work and evaluation.

In Maths, English and PE (2 groups per 2 classes for PE) the competence group structure enables students to change from one competence group to another. Competence groups in French for final year students are planned for September 2012.

Competence rubrics were drawn up, firstly for all disciplines (2009-2010: 1st and final year of lower secondary level, 2010-2012: 2nd and 3rd year), followed by cross-curricular rubrics in 2011-2012.

### Present stage/phase of implementation:

All teachers of all disciplines and at all levels have been involved in drawing up and revising the competence rubrics.

Thanks to these rubrics and the SACoche application developed by M. Crespin (<https://sacoches.sesamath.net/>) all the elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage (end of *Collège*) of the core curriculum are evaluated all year round and for some elements evaluation starts earlier, in *Quatrième* [3<sup>rd</sup> and penultimate year of *Collège*, age 13-14].

Subject rubrics enable students and teachers to determine which elements have not been acquired and have to be studied again, as early as in the *Sixième* [1<sup>st</sup> year of *Collège*, age 11-12].

The evaluations are also explained to parents on the *Collège* website (<http://webetab.ac-bordeaux.fr/Etablissement/CPEVictorBranne/>)

Since 2011 the national assessment of the acquisition of competences by students of this *Collège* has been based on a continuous evaluation in all disciplines instead of being based on an end of year certification.

**Pedagogical issues** (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

- Identifying the competences that can be evaluated in different disciplines
- Identifying the competences that be evaluated in a cross curricular way
- Developing evaluation rubrics

## What works well (to identify enablers):

### Concerning students:

- Reduced number of students dropping out at the end of Quatrième
- Higher academic success of students previously labelled as low achievers in traditional classes
- Better definition of teachers' expectations
- Evaluation criteria are determined in advance

### Concerning parents

- Identification of the difficulties and achievements of their child
- Pedagogical continuity of an approach to evaluation already implemented in elementary school
- A tool to support communication during PTA meetings

### Concerning teachers

- Need for efficient disciplinary and cross-disciplinary work in order to develop rubrics by grade level of elements common to several disciplines and of cross-disciplinary elements that apply to shared activities (internships, art history oral test, etc.)
- Re-examination of pedagogical practises: What is evaluation? What do I want to evaluate? How am I going to evaluate? What do I teach?
- Change in the cohesion, atmosphere, identity and culture of the school

## Challenges and how these are being addressed (to identify obstacles and solutions):

The project began slowly because :

- It was difficult for teachers to integrate the concept of competence: need for disciplinary work and for support from disciplinary inspectors
- The first rubrics were difficult to use and as the concept of competence was progressively integrated so was the definition of different components that could be evaluated
- Extra work was necessary to maintain traditional marks: issue of the two systems of evaluation and institutional requirements
- Establishing rubrics was a more or less lengthy process depending on subject area (finding items to evaluate is easier in French and Math for instance)

The project then gained momentum, despite the discouragement of some teachers, thanks to the help of the groups of pedagogical inspectors who supported the project on issues such as differentiated pedagogy, complex tasks and mastering a language.

**Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used** (e.g. internal/external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

- Evaluation regarding the evolution of indicators of student achievement, specifically the assessment of acquisition of competences in the core curriculum at the end of compulsory education.
- Evaluation by inspectors and within the national assessments of pedagogical projects.

**Impact** (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

- Self-assessment of the impact of the project is carried out in the school as the project evolves and a final assessment is compulsory for all new projects
- Involvement of all the pedagogical team in the school project
- Solidarity between team members, will assist new teachers and help to further the reflection
- Impact on the school atmosphere
- Impact on the school image: parents are pleased with the information provided, the school is highly rated locally

**Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:**

- Information provided to the *Académie* authorities (follow up of projects)
- Presentation to parents of the project and its results (as part of another school project to support parenting)

**Next steps/follow-up:**

- Replacing class structures in the *Cinquième* and *Quatrième* [2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of *Collège*] with competence groups of students from the two years in the middle cycle of lower-secondary education; a team of teachers remains with the students for two years to help them attain the competence-based end of cycle objectives.
- Extension of the no mark system to *Sixième*, *Cinquième* and *Quatrième* [1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of *Collège*]
- Meetings by levels and by subject
- Progressive introduction of a differentiated pedagogy
- Extension of the use of complex task didactic material
- Evolution of communication tools such as end of term reports, class councils and PTA meetings

*The KEYCONET project has been funded with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Responsibility for this publication lies solely with the author, and the Commission is not responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*