Child-Friendly Schools - Safe Schools

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I. Introduction

Distinguished Participants and honored symposium organizers from the Grand Assembly of Parliament, the Security General Directorate, the Ministry of National Education, and UNICEF.

It is a delight to be with you for this national celebration of Children's Day and for this Second International Symposium on Children at Risk and in Need of Protection with the theme, "Safe Environment - Safe School". I am honored to have this opportunity to advocate for children in partnership with all of you.

Last month I asked this question to the students I was interviewing in Ankara as part of the work I have been doing for UNICEF in this region: "What is your school's goal for you?" One Grade 8 student stated forthrightly and without hesitation: the aims of the school are "to raise exemplary students and citizens who would learn Ataturk's principles to support the republic, the people, and the nation." That student understands his school's and his nation's goals for his civic participation. His words – and this symposium – are a fitting celebration of Children's Day, the day that Ataturk established many years ago. (Wouldn't Ataturk have been proud of that student?) Clearly children were a high priority for Ataturk. This day and this symposium clearly are a priority for you and for all of Turkey's children. You are gathered here as citizens to discuss your support for children, especially for the most vulnerable and at-risk children of the republic. This is noble and necessary; it is also our duty, so that all children can claim and live out their human rights.

You have designed this symposium to be a platform for cooperation and information sharing. Over the next three days you will discuss and take action on six goals. These goals range from the nature of safety in the educational environment to best practices for making schools safe. My task is to provide a framework for this discussion. The Child-Friendly Schools framework fits seamlessly with your goals. This is a framework that everyone at all levels can use as you work proactively to ensure that all children, especially the most vulnerable children in Turkey, can attend school in a safe environment.

For more than a decade I have been working with UNICEF and with ministries of education around the globe to improve equity and improve quality in education systems. This year my associates and I are working with the UNICEF regional office to explore the development of Child-Friendly School standards in seven countries across this region, from Istanbul to Tashkent. After spending a week talking to students, parents, teachers, administrators, education officials and civil society organizations, it became clear that there are some great things going on in the process of developing quality education standards in Turkey! You also acknowledge that there is work to be done and so you have convened this symposium. The solutions are not always simple, but the Child-Friendly School approach can help you do the work – systematically and system-wide, one school at a time.

II. Child-Friendly Schools are Grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child

What is so important about the Child-Friendly Schools framework?

First, the foundation of this framework is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Turkey signed in 1989. According to this human rights instrument, all girls and boys in the country are entitled to these rights:

1. **The right to survival,** which includes necessities for life: food, clothing, housing and medicine;
2. **The right to development,** meaning that a child is entitled to develop his/her potential to the fullest, **which includes the <u>right to be educated</u>,** to play, to rest, to engage in cultural activities, to have access to news and information;
3. **The right to protection** from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The CRC explicitly states that children should be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence. Children should not suffer inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and school discipline should be consistent with the child's human dignity; and
4. **The right to participation,** with freedom for expression in the community, in matters affecting the child's life, and in ways that prepare children to take on increasing roles and levels of responsibility as grow up.

To make it possible for children to claim these rights, CRC Part 2 Article 42 says:

 "***The State agrees to make the principles and provisions in this convention widely acknowledged among adults and children in an appropriate and practical way.***"

In other words, it is the obligation of "duty-bearers", which is us, the adults, to ensure that all children are cared for, protected and supported to be able to develop to the fullest. To the fullest means physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually with equality and integrity.

The Child-Friendly schools Framework brings together these fundamental rights that are listed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in these ways: (1) Child-Friendly Schools are child-centered. (2) They are inclusive. (3) They are gender-equitable and celebrate all cultural backgrounds and languages. (4) They are effective – that is, in Child-Friendly Schools children are learning and being educated. (5) Child-Friendly Schools are protective, safe, healthy environments; and (6) they are characterized by democratic participation. It is obvious that the vision of Child-Friendly Schools for educating children goes far beyond who gets the best score on the final examination. Their mission insists that each and every girl and boy has the right to participate in her or his own learning in a safe, protective learning community.

Since we first began to discuss Child-Friendly Schools in the early 1990s, over 100 countries in all regions of the world have included the principles of Child-Friendly schools in their laws, their education systems, and their schools.

The framework is used for planning the transformation of an entire education system, one school at a time, with everyone's participation, for the benefit of each and every child. It is a framework that will enable each and every girl, boy, young child and adolescent to claim her or his right to education in a learning community that is child-centered, inclusive, and based on democratic participation.

III. Using a Zoom Lens to Understand the Child-Friendly Schools Approach

Various groups are represented here today – parliamentarians, police, educators, and researchers. Many of you are also parents. Each group's point of view is different and each is necessary, but to work together as partners, some common ways of looking at things are needed.

As policymakers, you are required to think about the big picture – the entire country, or regions of the country in combination, or a province. As police, you consider the issues from the perspective of law enforcement. That is your role and your obligation. You are here to explore your partnership with education. As educators responsible for the learning outcomes of children, we often see that policies work when they take the classroom and the school into account. Policies and programs can go wrong if they are designed for the whole country but do not support building capacity at the local level – that is, the level of the community, the school, and especially the classroom. The Child-Friendly School approach can establish that common framework, especially when we examine it through a zoom lens.

The zoom lens approach will help you to understand what it means to take a "child-centered approach" in a Child-Friendly school – to keep your policies and your programs focused where they need to be focused. That's right, a zoom lens – like the lens on a camera that moves from close range to wide angle.

At close range, we begin by focusing on the <u>girl</u> and on the <u>boy </u>so that every child is included. For the Child-Friendly School, being child-centered and focusing on the <u>child</u> is critical.   It is also important, however, that we talk about Child-Friendly *Schools,* since children learn about their rights in particular places, in the classroom and school.

So we need to zoom wider and focus on the <u>classroom</u>.

This is where one child interacts with many other children. It is also where the teacher has to plan for, manage, and assess the learning needs of 12 or 20 or 52 or more children all at once, on a daily basis, for nine or 10 months of the year.

Then we need to zoom out and focus on the entire school, where we see children of all ages, all the teachers, the principal and other school personnel, including the guidance and counseling teachers and the security guards working together. They are working together so that *all* children in every classroom can learn to read and write, do mathematics, develop critical thinking and life skills, and become good citizens of the republic and of the world community.

Then we zoom out farther to see the school positioned in the community. This is where children live with their families. It is where their parents work and vote. This is where the police have a central role in law enforcement and a desire to support the school community in its actions to be a *safe* Child-Friendly School within a *safe* community .

We then zoom out even farther to see the community in the context of the wider society and the nation. At this level, the national government provides the legal structures and finances for Child-Friendly Schools to develop through legislation that parliament enacts for the 35,000 schools across the country. It is here that the Ministry of National Education designs programs and policies to support the development of s in communities and the development of a Child-Friendly School system. At this level, the national police coordinate the work of law enforcement across the country.

Having arrived at this system level with the wide angle lens, we then zoom back in, slowly to the community, and then the school, observing that the school and what goes on inside the school is a microcosm of the larger society, that is, a small slice of the whole pie of society.

We then zoom back in to the classroom and note how each level of the system supports the learning of each child. This includes girls and boys who are disabled, disadvantaged, and who have learning disabilities. They too, have a right to claim the benefits of a quality education and Child-Friendly Schools are inclusive.

As we return to focus on the child in the Child-Friendly School approach, we consider not only the children in school, but also the girls and boys who are *not* in school – those who have been *excluded* from school, those who have dropped out or have been pushed out, those whom the CRC insists also have an equal right to a quality education.

The zoom lens approach reminds us that the work we do together to develop Child-Friendly Schools is a complex enterprise. I trust that no one at the symposium this week will try to make it sound simple, that no one will suggest *if only* the police or parliament or schools would do *one* thing differently, all our problems with violence would be solved. The work is complex and complicated, and we need to take each other's perspectives into account as we plan future action.

Now, zooming back out to Turkey...

IV. Data on Child-Friendly Schools in Turkey and Beyond

In 2002, UNICEF and Ministry of Education officials in Turkey, began to work together to design a CFS approach for Turkey. Twenty-five schools volunteered to participate in the Child-Friendly Schools project. The number of schools later expanded to 326, two of which I visited last month.

What did the children have to say about Child-Friendly Schools?

The students said, a Child-Friendly School "is where we are safe" and "where we get to vote for our class representatives."

Parents said, "it is where parents know children will be in a safe environment; where one can easily communicate with teachers, friends and others"; and "Where the child feels and the parents observe children getting a quality education, learning."

Teachers described a Child-Friendly School as "safe – and healthy". They added "it is where children know their rights and see their rights posted on the classroom walls". They also said it is where children know that they have the right to have access to a quality education. Teachers also described Child-Friendly schools as "teacher-friendly", a place where teachers too are respected.

Do we have any evidence that Child-Friendly Schools make a difference in countries outside of Turkey?

UNICEF Headquarters recently commissioned an evaluation of Child-Friendly Schools in six countries in four regions of the world (Osher, Kelly, Tolani-Brown, Shors, and Chen, 2009). Here are two of the findings.

First, students felt safe, respected, and were more involved in learning in schools where two things were going on in schools: (1) teachers used child-centered teaching methods; and (2) families and communities participated in the life of the school.

Second, while it is important to have schools that are well-built – especially to have buildings that children with disabilities can use easily – this was not enough to make a school child-friendly. However, if schools focused on children, if there was mutual respect among students and teachers, and if parents were involved, *there* you could expect to see a Child-Friendly School.

The research from Turkey and from the international study both underscore that participation and a safe, protective, and healthy learning environment go hand-in-hand to support children's learning.

V. Prediction, Prevention, and Preparation for a Safe, Child-Friendly School

There are three things a school must do to ensure that children are as safe as possible, that they are protected and healthy.

These three things are prediction, prevention, and preparation.

Prediction: We cannot predict the future, but as duty-bearing adults we must try to foresee possible risks or possible dangers that could affect children in the school or the school neighborhood (UNICEF, 2009).

Prevention: When we have predicted risks or dangers in the school or neighborhood, we must take precautions so that children's health and safety are not at risk.

Preparation: Schools need to have resources and security procedures in place to deal swiftly and decisively with specific dangers to children's health and safety (UNICEF, 2009).

In a Child-Friendly School, everyone participates in prediction, prevention, and preparation. The zoom lens approach can show us how. Two examples are preparing a school safety map and developing a risk index.

Girls, boys, teachers, parents, the community – *everyone* in the school community can participate in developing a map of the school and neighborhood that shows the safe and unsafe spaces. Creating this map can help to predict and prevent occurrences of violence.

Were you ever afraid in school? I was – and I remember exactly where I was when I was afraid. In fact, I could still today locate that place on a map of my school. If I were to do that, the school I attended could take measures to make sure that no other child would ever feel unsafe in that same space.

So starting with the children, each girl and boy can map out where they feel personally vulnerable. Girls and boys frequently map different spaces when they are showing where they feel unsafe in the school. Predicting where violence may occur is related to prevention. And prevention is important, especially for dealing with bullying and with sexual harassment. Girls and boys can show on a map where this is most likely to occur.

Adults – teachers, principals, parents, security guards, police from the community, everyone can participate in the mapping exercise. After the map has been completed, all members of the Child-Friendly School community make sure that they have a prevention plan in place. If they already a plan, they should review it every year to ensure that each person knows her or his role in preventing violence, unsafe or unhealthy conditions.

Another way to work on prediction, prevention, and preparation is to develop a risk index. Everyone at the school can also participate in this – and it is especially effective to take the zoom lens approach. Each group identifies the possible risks related to health or to

physical, emotional or psychological violence.   They establish the cost. And then they use the information to develop plans for prevention and preparation.

For example, consider a child's journey to and from school. In developing a risk index, where are the potential sources of danger on that journey and what can be done about it? The police are an important resource in working with the school community on this risk index. A Child-Friendly School community will identify safe ways for children to travel to school and back once they identify the dangers. Students can travel together since there is safety in numbers, which costs very little. The community working with the police can identify secure walking paths in remote rural areas or in protected streets in urban centers, which might be expensive and require the involvement of local businesses and others as well.

For the final phase of preparation, Child-Friendly Schools need to identify security procedures so that they can deal swiftly and decisively with specific dangers to children's health and safety (UNICEF, 2009). The procedures need to be clear and school personnel at all levels – the student, the classroom, the school, the community - need to know their roles. Warning systems from a simple school bell (e.g., rung intermittently) or buzzer (e.g., fire drill) can alert students, families, and school personnel to a danger or emergency (UNICEF, 2009, p. 3). Schools now also send out text messages in time of crisis. Principals of Child-Friendly Schools in Ankara told us they have "crisis teams" in place, which include parents, teachers, and school personnel. If an emergency arises, the crisis team is prepared to communicate immediately and appropriately with the rest of the school community.

Four years ago in 2006, the world was startled to receive the news of the extent of violence in schools around the world from the United Nations World Report on Violence against Children. At that same time, Turkey's Ministry of National Education also was conducting studies and gathering evidence on violence against children, after which they conducted a symposium. The report said, "Studies carried out in various provinces of Turkey show that the violence experienced in educational environments is too large in scale to ignore." Among other things, they noted that "Corporal punishment is illegal but studies show that it is still going on in classrooms." As a result, the Ministry of National Education developed the *Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Reducing Violence in Educational Environments (2006-2011)*. The Action Plan includes the three key concepts of prediction, prevention, and preparation or intervention. The national plan is in place; how are schools doing with prediction, prevention, and preparation? To what extent are the schools child-friendly? What resources and support are schools across the country receiving to implement this action plan at the local level?

VI. Everyone Participates Every Day to Make Child-Friendly Schools Safe

Everyone in a Child-Friendly School can participate in the prediction, prevention, preparation activities. Everyone in a Child-Friendly School community also participates on a daily basis in making the school a safe, protective, healthy environment.

Children participate. Girls and boys understand that along with their rights they have responsibilities. Students with whom we spoke confidently described the ways in which they participate in making the school child-friendly. They are elected as class or school representatives and take pride in representing their class and making the needs of their classmates known at school meetings. They use the wish boxes (also known as complaint boxes) – where they can write confidentially about concerns related to students, teachers, or their home environment. They also write about changes they would like to see. Schools see these wish boxes as a "safe" way for girls and boys to make their needs known, and the teachers and principals regularly look in the boxes. They take students' notes seriously. Students take great satisfaction when they see their suggestions have been implemented.

The school principal(s) and teachers participate. They are the duty-bearers in the school with primary responsibility for the well-being of girls and boys. Students, teachers, and parents, with whom I spoke last week all mentioned teachers as frontline monitors of safety. In addition to safety in the classroom, teachers are in the hallways, on the playground, taking turns watching over children. Children and parents also mentioned security guards, night watchmen, and police – even bus drivers are involved, noted one parent.

The school principal in particular is the key person who is responsible for internal and external matters. The principal is at the interface of the well-being of the children in classrooms and of the school in the community. In this role, the principal (or principals) work(s) with many individuals – with classroom teachers, guidance and counseling and special education teachers, and girls and boys of all ages on the inside. On the outside the principal works with parents, daytime or nighttime school security guards and other school personnel – to negotiate the roles and responsibilities of each.

The principal works with the Parent-Teachers Association and invites them to participate in first developing and then reviewing the school's safety action plan. The National Crime Prevention Council in the USA (2009) suggests that a PTA Action Committee should be established to take responsibility for this assessment and to participate in ongoing monitoring and evaluation at the school level.

The community participates. In the community, the police are partners working with the principal, the teachers, and parents to support the development of a Child-Friendly School. Since roles need to be clear, what is or are the roles for the police? A 2005 study funded by the US Department of Justice on "The Role of Law Enforcement in Public School

Safety" found that one of the most common ways in which law enforcement personnel were involved with schools was to help schools create written plans to deal with school safety and security. Police activities also included patrolling school grounds, school facilities, and student travel routes; they conducted traffic patrol on or around campus, and responded to calls for service. They were present at school functions such as athletic and social events and typically they were involved in safety plans and meetings with schools, especially working with schools to create written plans to deal with bomb scares or other school-wide threats. Some schools had Resource Officers who worked in schools and who worked to be positive role models for students.

According to this large scale study, what was the ideal role of law enforcement in school safety? The hundreds of people interviewed for this study – school staff, parents, and students – could not agree. Primary schools wanted less police presence; some high schools, depending on their location, their size, and level of crime in the surrounding community, appreciated a higher level of involvement. What they did agree on was that they wanted a balance of police presence that met the needs of the school and that contributed to but did not interrupt the quality of life of the school (2005, p. 196).

Schools are microcosms of society and school communities have different needs in different places. Child-Friendly School principals work with student representatives, teachers, parents and other community members, and police to decide on the best approach to security, safety, and protection for each Child-Friendly School.

VII. School Level Interventions to Deal with Violent Behaviors

When some of the children in the Child-Friendly School stop being friendly and cause trouble – what then? Students we interviewed talked about the important role of the teacher in settling their arguments. So did teachers: "A Child-Friendly School is where," said the teachers, "if children fight, we talk to them and in the end they apologize, because we want them to have empathy with one another at the end of the fight."

What about more serious issues? What prevention and intervention plans are there to enable a whole school to deal with children who exhibit violent behavior?

At the school level, two new, important interventions are being used increasingly: anti-bullying programs and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The anti-bullying movement looks at interactions between children. Much of its focus is not on violence, but on looking at what leads to violence. The general idea is that there are four stages of interactions between and among children: harmony, teasing, taunting, and targeted aggression. Harmony is most desirable– of course! – and teasing generally takes place among friends. Teachers and students learn to watch closely the line between teasing and taunting, however, because taunting can quickly lead to aggression.

A guidance and counseling teacher I met in one of the Ankara schools described an anti-bullying program already in place. She had been working with a class, teaching lessons on how to identify children who are being bullied or who are doing the bullying. When an incidence of bullying arose, the students then worked with her as a team to confront the children and to deal with the behaviors that had become too aggressive.

Also at the level of the school, another promising trend is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, which also comes out of Inclusive and Special education, is another model. [1] A PBIS functions like a pyramid. At the bottom of the pyramid are the expectations everyone in the whole school agrees on – students, teachers, parents, administrators, everyone. Everyone participates in developing these expectations, so they provide an opportunity for even the most marginalized and the most vulnerable to participate.   In the middle of the pyramid – for a smaller number of at-risk students – Guidance and Counseling teachers and administrators ensure that supports and interventions are in place for at-risk students. These include group social skills trainings courses, self-esteem groups, counseling. At the top of the pyramid are the most intensive interventions and supports for the very few children with the greatest behavioral challenges. Even the child with the most serious problems has a right to an education, and the PBIS model is one way the Child-Friendly school can function in order to support and educate all children.

VIII. The Way Forward: Child-Friendly School Standards

It is clear that Turkey already has established a foundation for developing safe schools – Child-Friendly Schools – and for dealing with violence in schools. The Ministry of National Education has established a five-year action plan. Specific laws are in place, and there have been and continue to be education projects, such as the parenting classes offered by UNICEF in partnership with the European Union and various non-governmental organizations.

The Special Representative on Violence Against Children (Human Rights Council, 2010) reminds us of the three overarching recommendations of the 2006 World Study on Violence against Children: (1) each state should develop a comprehensive strategy on violence against children; (2) each state should introduce a national, explicitly legal ban on all forms of violence; and (3) states should consolidate national data collection, analysis, and dissemination, and research in this field.

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[1] Dr. Christopher Johnstone, University of Minnesota, USA, provided the succinct descriptions of PBIS and anti-bullying for this speech.

This is both a call to action and an affirmation of what you are doing. One pioneering effort currently underway is to develop school standards that incorporate Child-Friendly School principles. The Ministry of National Education has plans for regular monitoring and evaluation of Child-Friendly school principles at the school level.

Countries around the world have begun to develop standards of what all children should know and be able to do at a particular age in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Similarly, countries are also developing and revising standards of Child-Friendly Schools (or quality basic education). Turkey's Ministry of National Education, with support from the UNICEF regional office and the Turkey country office, is working to develop Child-Friendly School standards and is contributing to the cross-national, global dialogue on standards of quality education.

In June 2010 or soon thereafter, the MoNE with support from UNICEF will pilot a set of Primary Education Institutional standards, which will enable schools to assess and to monitor over time how they are measuring up to standards of quality education – including safety and protection.

There are three Standard Areas for Primary Education Institutions: (1) Education Management; (2) Teaching and Learning Processes; and (3) **Support Services (Safety, Health, Nutrition and Hygiene).** The third area has 12 Standards to be monitored, one of which is **Standard 3.1 "School carries out activities to ensure a safe and appropriate physical environment at school".** Sub-standard 3.1.1 in this category is "Physical safety at school. School premises are safe." To monitor this Sub-standard, the school will input data into the e-school system on the following:

1. The school has a physical safety risk analysis.
2. There is a security wall encircling the school
3. There are student wardens at building entrance and exits
4. Three are security guards at school-garden entrance and exits.

– and 10 other items for the school administrator, teacher, and student to input data.

Another Sub-standard (3.2.2), is entitled, "Measures to prevent violence and abuse in and around the school are taken." To monitor this, the school will input data into the e-school system on such items as the following:

1. There is a risk analysis of violence and abuse in and around the school.
2. The school has a violence prevention action plan.
3. Children at risk of violence and abuse are identified.
5. A school violence prevention team has been established.
6. There is a school violence prevention action plan end-of-year report.

In addition to these six items, there are 14 other categories. These are comprehensive standards that specifically target violence prediction, prevention, and preparedness.

Entering this information into the national e-school information database and data management system at the school level will enable every school to develop its own action plan. It will also enable the Ministry of National Education to monitor where resources are needed in order to allocate funds equitably in order to develop safe, Child-Friendly Schools.

IX. Conclusion

What can you do to help make all schools safe, Child-Friendly Schools?

I commend you for the work that is already underway, the legislation that has already been passed, the Plan that was developed in 2008 and the plans that currently are in the making. You have already achieved much, but you have convened this symposium because you know there is more that you can do. Here are five recommendations to consider.

(1) Use the Child-Friendly School framework and the zoom lens approach to test out your ideas. New ideas may sound good for the whole country or from your perspective in law enforcement or research, but will they truly make a difference? Will they keep children safer in the school and in the classroom? The true test of new policies, programs, and ideas is this: What do they mean for the school, the classroom, and each individual child?

(2) Support the school as the center of decision-making and those within the school who are the front-line decision-makers. Support and professional development are needed for the principal who is responsible to work with the teachers, parents, students, security guards, police, Ministry of National Education officials, and others to ensure that children are safe.

(3) Ensure that schools have violence prevention plans in place. The police can partner with the school at the community level in the school's annual risk analysis of violence and abuse and the development of such a plan.

(4) The international Child-Friendly Schools research revealed that children feel safer when there is good, child-centered teaching and when parents and community members are involved. Provide professional development to teachers to improve on their child-centered teaching strategies and the development of Parent Teacher Associations within schools and nationally.

(5) Finally, generously support the development of the Primary Education Institutional Standards. In the weeks ahead, the process will be piloted that will eventually allow all schools to assess, monitor, and evaluate how they are doing in relation to these standards that are based on the principles of Child-Friendly Schools. This is pioneering work internationally and it will require resources. Ensure that laws are in place to support this major effort and allocate the resources. The Ministry of National Education can ensure that the standards are piloted, tested in the e-school, and honed so that it is user-friendly in every school across the country.

A former minister of education once said that ridding schools of violence and promoting a learning environment based on respect for the rights and dignity of all members of the school community will benefit not only the children of today, it is also a major step forward toward a non-violent society in the future for us all (MoNE, 2006).

These next three days will be an opportunity to listen to the evidence, plan future research, and frame your future plans – plans, I hope, that will lead all 35,000 schools in the nation to becoming ever more Child-Friendly.

Thank you.

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