



Implementation Protocol

Peer Integration and Enhancement Resource (PIER)



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Related resources and materials

Website: www.refugeeswellschool.eu

Peer Integration and Enhancement Resource (PIER) Manual: Watters, C., Soye, E., & Meier, I. (2021). Peer Integration and Enhancement Resource (PIER) Manual. UK: University of Sussex.

The Manual is available in [English](#).

PIER Student Materials. Available in [English](#).

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Introduction

This implementation protocol serves as a guidebook to complement the PIER Manual. The RWS project seeks to measure the impact of different interventions but also learn more about how to identify and deal with contextual variables. It should offer professionals the necessary tools to create the right context and find solution for potential challenges they might face. We look for predictable challenges when implementing the intervention and creative solutions the RWS partners have adopted.

The Peer Integration and Enhancement Resource (PIER) intervention aims to enhance peer interactions between 'host' society and migrant and refugee adolescents in schools. The direct target group for the intervention is adolescent students in mainstream classes from diverse backgrounds, including refugee and migrant students and students from the host society. This intervention specifically focuses on schools where the 'host' or native population is the majority and where refugees and migrants are smaller in number.

The PIER intervention aims to encourage understanding of the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. It also develops a participatory approach to supporting safe, positive peer interactions and social relationships in multi-ethnic schools. Through clustering pupils from diverse backgrounds in small collaborative groups working together on establishing social connection in the school context, the intervention aims at strengthening school belonging and promoting dialogue between minority and majority groups.

Preparation

Logistics

Environment. PIER should be implemented in a large classroom or learning space. Some sessions require the students to move about the room; if the classroom has desks, it should be possible to move the desks where necessary.

The room should have access to a PowerPoint. The PowerPoint presentations provided as part of the PIER pack are an effective way of presenting the students with important content in relation to each PIER session.

Materials. A 'Student Materials' pack is provided in addition to the PIER manual and accompanying PowerPoint documents, containing photocopiable pages which are required for some sessions. Some sessions also require scissors or sheets of A2 or A3 paper and felt tip pens.

Information about the intervention

Senior school staff. Meetings should be held between the in-country project team and senior school staff prior to the intervention. Senior school staff should firstly be briefed on the wider project and its objectives. The intervention's target demographic, content, format, and expected outcomes for student wellbeing should then be explained. Senior school staff should be made aware of the commitments required by the school in terms of the time required for each PIER session and the demands of the quantitative and qualitative assessment process.

Teaching and support staff. A consultation should be held with any teaching and support staff who will be involved in the intervention. These staff should be informed of the intervention objectives, the intervention content and format, and their anticipated role in the intervention. An outline of the 8-week programme should be provided. Teachers should be given the opportunity to ask questions or air concerns about the intervention.

Safeguarding lead. Information should be provided to the school's safeguarding lead regarding the intervention and its objectives. The safeguarding lead should also be provided with a copy of the intervention manual and additional materials.

Facilitator. Once a facilitator has been recruited, they should be provided with comprehensive information about the intervention, including the intervention manual and additional materials, and the PIER programme schedule as arranged with the school. The

facilitator should also be provided with other practical information such as the location of and access to the school.

Students. Prior to or at the start of the intervention, participating students should be carefully informed about the PIER intervention and its place within the wider project. The objectives of the intervention should be made clear to the students. Every effort should be taken to promote inclusivity, particularly by limiting the use of terms such as ‘migrants’ or ‘refugees’, which can have stigmatising effects. The relevance and benefits of the intervention for students from *a variety of migration backgrounds*, including those from ‘host’ backgrounds, should be emphasised.

Students should also be informed of where and how to access psychological support should they feel it necessary as a result of participating in the intervention – normally this would be their class teacher or the school safeguarding lead in the first instance. This information should be provided to students at the start of the intervention and throughout the sessions.

The sessions

The intervention is spread across one school term and consists of eight weekly sessions. The intervention should ideally take place during the school day. Consultation with appropriate staff therefore needs to take place prior to the intervention in relation to how PIER will be scheduled to fit into the school day. If the programme will disrupt regular lessons, relevant teaching staff should be made aware of these changes as early as possible so that they can plan accordingly. Facilitators should also be prepared to be flexible and ready to adapt to last-minute changes in the school timetable where necessary.

Recruitment

An experienced facilitator should be recruited to run the eight-week PIER programme. The facilitator can be someone from a range of disciplinary backgrounds but must be skilled and experienced in leading group work in schools with adolescents on sensitive topics. Ideally the facilitator should have some background knowledge or experience of working on issues of migration and displacement. The facilitator should have passed relevant safeguarding checks.

Advertisements for the facilitator role should include a description of the wider project and the PIER intervention (including content and format), and brief information about the school and

target demographic. Information about the facilitator role and required skills and experience should be provided, as well as details in relation to payment and travel costs.

Teachers can also facilitate the PIER programme where necessary and possible. Appropriate training and support should be provided to teachers prior to the intervention and throughout.

Facilitator profiles

Background. It is essential that the facilitator has some experience of working with students in a secondary school environment. As noted above, the facilitator can be someone from a range of disciplinary backgrounds who is skilled and experienced in group work with adolescents on sensitive topics. Ideally, the facilitator should have some experience of working on issues of migration and displacement. The facilitator should have passed relevant safeguarding checks e.g. a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in the UK. Teachers may also implement PIER.

Training. Prior to beginning PIER in the school, meetings should be held between in-country project team members and senior school staff, all teaching and support staff involved in the intervention, and the school's safeguarding lead. All professionals involved, including the facilitator, should be provided with key information about the project and the intervention, as detailed in section 'Information about the intervention'.

A one-day training event prior to the start of the intervention is advised in order to brief facilitators/teachers on PIER objectives, structure and methods according to the PIER handbook. Planning time should be allocated to the facilitator on a weekly basis so that they can familiarise themselves with the content of that week's session and prepare materials where necessary.

The intervention

Contextual factors

A broad range of contextual factors are likely to influence the PIER intervention. These may include: the demographic of the class and wider school; class size; facilitator background and experience; teaching staff involved; intervention space; time; student behaviour, attitudes, language skills and special needs; preparation and communication; and scheduling.

Class and wider school demographic. The overarching aim of the PIER intervention is to increase empathy and encourage understanding among young people from diverse migration backgrounds. The intervention should therefore focus on schools where the host population is the majority and where refugees and migrants are smaller in number.

Class size. A maximum of 20-30 students should participate in PIER sessions at any one time. Class size is likely to influence student behaviour and the subsequent effectiveness of the intervention: a large group may lead to negative and disruptive behaviour and prevent effective group working. Accordingly smaller groups are preferable.

Facilitator background and experience. As noted above, the facilitator should have experience of working directly with adolescents in a school. Experience of working in a school is necessary because it demonstrates that the facilitator has the specific skills required to work with large groups of adolescents in an educational setting. Where possible, the facilitator should spend time in the target school to familiarise themselves with the students and wider school context prior to beginning the intervention.

Teaching staff. A meeting with teaching staff should be arranged prior to the beginning of the intervention. It is important that, from the outset, teaching staff understand the content, format and objectives of PIER as well as the objectives of the wider project. It is particularly important that they are given the space to ask questions or air concerns about the intervention so that these can be addressed in a timely manner. Confusion or discomfort about the intervention on behalf of teaching staff is likely to negatively influence students' own attitudes towards the intervention.

The anticipated role of the teacher during the sessions should be made clear from the outset. Teachers should be encouraged to provide regular feedback to the in-country project team on the intervention through clear channels of communication. A formal feedback session with teachers should be held at the end of the intervention.

Safe space. Students should feel that the PIER intervention space is a safe space. Prior to beginning the intervention, the facilitator should ensure that a safe space is established (as explained in the PIER manual, p. 5). The guidelines for creating a safe space should be revisited throughout the programme as and when necessary. Students should also be regularly reminded of how and where to access psychological support from the school.

Student attitudes and needs. The behaviour of students is likely to significantly influence the effectiveness of the intervention. The facilitator should be made aware of any students with special behavioural or educational needs prior to the intervention, and a plan should be put in place for how to work with these specific students.

Some students are likely to be studying in their second or third language. These students should have access to an interpreter where necessary. The facilitator should also adapt their approach to the language needs of these students, for example by providing visual aids.

Students' attitudes towards the topics covered in the intervention, such as issues of migration and social cohesion, are likely to be influenced by broader societal and family attitudes. The facilitator should be aware of the diverse ways in which the local context may influence students' attitudes and be ready to respond accordingly.

Communication needs. Communication is an important influence on the effectiveness of the intervention. All professionals and students involved should be provided with relevant information in advance of the intervention. Potential issues during the sessions, such as challenging student behaviour or confusion around the supporting role of teaching staff, can be mitigated through careful preparation and clear communication prior to and throughout the programme.

Timing. Sessions are approximately 45 minutes, but session length can be adapted where necessary with participating schools. Factors such as class size, behavioural needs, and special educational needs mean that additional time may be needed for students to adjust to group working. Some students may complete activities more quickly than others and require additional activities, to be provided by the class teacher or developed by the facilitator as appropriate.

Introducing the sessions

A class register should be taken at the start of each session. The PIER intervention and wider project should be explained to students prior to the intervention. However, at the start of the first session, the facilitator may wish to briefly reintroduce the PIER intervention and its objectives and provide a short overview of the eight-week programme. The facilitator should introduce themselves at the start of the first session. Initial sessions should also begin by establishing a safe space, as described in the PIER manual.

Participation

A class register should be taken as normal so that any student absences are noted. It is expected that all members of the class will participate in the PIER sessions. However, if a student strongly indicates that they do not want to participate, for example because of previous upsetting experiences of migration or displacement, separate arrangements should be made for them in coordination with their class teacher.

Language

Language of delivery. The host language should be used to deliver the intervention.

Language needs. If language is an issue, additional language support should be provided by interpreters. Visual aids should be used where necessary. If language continues to cause a significant problem for students, the facilitator should speak to the school regarding additional supportive measures. Participants who cannot read or write should be provided with additional language support.

Supervision

Facilitators should be encouraged to keep a 'fidelity check', either through a written record of the PIER sessions, regular meetings with RWS team members, or a weekly checklist. Regular meetings should be held between the in-country project team, the facilitator, and key school staff to discuss the progression of the intervention and to address any issues as and when they arise.

The facilitator's own wellbeing may be impacted as a result of the intervention, e.g. through vicarious or secondary trauma. Facilitators should be made aware of how and where to access psychological support should it become necessary.

An evaluative meeting should be conducted with the facilitator following the intervention. The facilitator should provide feedback on the challenges and opportunities of the intervention process and suggest where adaptations to the intervention content or structure may be necessary. Feedback from supporting staff may also be useful.