

Focus Group Analysis

Project title: LEAD: Specific LEarning Disorders no more!

Erasmus+ 2019-1-IT02-KA201-063254

Place: Online with ZOOM.

<https://zoom.us/j/92523901284?pwd=eWhWNVRnZ3ZLbXNYUIhUSU5YMzRPUT09>

date 26/11/2020

Moderator:

1st Moderator: Gabriela Conea

2nd Moderator: Alina Bendescu

Start time: 13:00

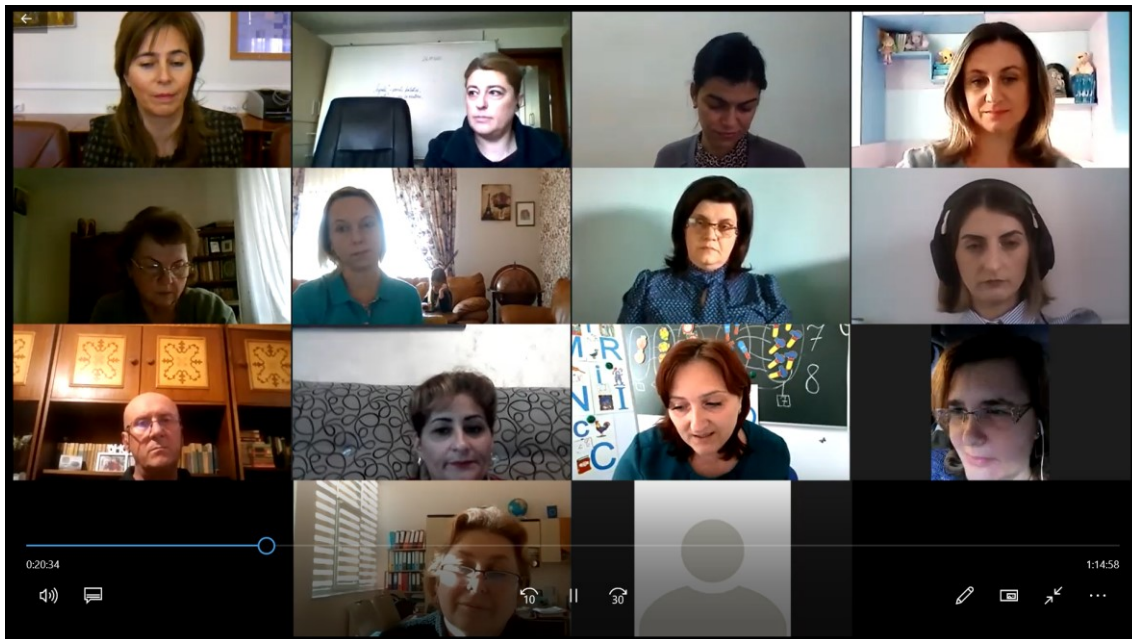
End time: 15:00

Is the Focus Group registered? **Yes**

Participated:

	Name and Surname	Profession, Position or Role	Association / Company / School / University / Public Service	online
1	Genoveva Aurelia Farcaș	General School Inspector	Iași County School Inspectorate	X
2	Alina Bendescu	School inspector for primary education	Iași County School Inspectorate	X
3	Corneliu Constantin Ilie	School inspector for primary education	Iași County School Inspectorate	X
4	Alina Mendelovici	Speech therapist	Iași County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance	X
5	Mioara Pește	Headteacher	"Nicolae Iorga" Secondary School, Iași	X
6	Laura Chirilă	Primary school teacher	"Carol I" Primary School, Iași	X
7	Monalisa Văduvă	Primary school teacher	"Mihai Eminescu" National College, Iași	X
8	Carmen Buburuzanu	Primary school teacher	"Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu" Secondary School, Iași	X

9	Ana Rotaru	Primary teacher	school	"Alexandru cel Bun" Secondary School, Iași	X
10	Irina Belei	Primary teacher, headteacher	school	"Garabet Ibrăileanu" Secondary School, Târgu Frumos Costești Secondary School (rural area)	X
11	Iuliana Penu	Primary teacher	school	"Junior" Primary School, Iași	X
12	Carmen Rusu	Primary teacher	school	"Gheorghe I. Brătianu" Secondary School, Iași	X
13	Gabriela Oana Agherghiese	Speech therapist		Iași County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance	X
14	Laura Tudorache	Primary teacher	school	"Ion Ghica" Secondary School, Iași	X
15	Alexandra Simona Pană	Primary teacher	school	"Ion Ghica" Secondary School, Iași	X
16	Florentina Dumitrache	Primary teacher	school	"Ion Ghica" Secondary School, Iași	X



Introduction

Gabriela Conea presents the objectives of the LEAD! project, as well as the way the focus group is structured. She also presents the rules by which the focus group will be conducted (duration, recording, interventions).

The purpose of the meeting is to analyze the situation of the students who experience specific learning disorders (dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyslexia) and to identify appropriate solutions that can be applied in the context of the schools in Iași.

The participants introduce themselves, the institutions they represent and the expectations they have regarding the outcomes of the project.

Genoveva Aurelia Farcaș, the project coordinator for the ISJIS team, explains that approaching specific learning disorders from an early age is essential for children's academic and professional evolution, which is the reason why the focus group attendants are mostly professionals working in primary education.

Gabriela Conea delivers a presentation of the project, stating its objectives, target group and expected outcomes.

Analysis of focus group

The focus group has three elements of discussion as its objective:

1. How do School – Healthcare System – Family relate in the process of identifying students with SLD in our country? What are the strengths and weakness of the System?
2. How are compensatory tools used in school? Are teachers and parents adequately and instructed to support the pupil in using these tools?
3. The LEAD project is working on the creation of a training course consisting of specific modules. According to the participants, what could be improved in the working draft?

How do School – Healthcare System – Family relate in the process of identifying students with SLD in our country? What are the strengths and weakness of the System?

Alina Mendelovici

The symptoms specific to various learning disorders become evident prior to children's reaching school age, but a formal diagnosis can only be established after the child finishes the second grade and is observed by a specialist for six months. Up to this point, children may experience

difficulty in pronunciation and speech fluency, which might not necessarily be labeled as SLD symptoms, whereas dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia do.

Doctors are usually among the last to recommend parents to consult a speech therapist, being more prone to guiding parents towards conventional, medication-based therapies.

The speech therapists' activity starts with observing children for a span of six months, while collaborating with their parents, at the same time. The children's teachers are advised to observe additional behaviors, besides their reading / writing skills development.

Mioara Pește

There are two sides of the school – healthcare system – family triangle that work well: the school and the family. Most cases of SLD are identified by speech therapists working in schools. While collaborating with the class teachers and parents, they will initiate the first steps towards ensuring appropriate medical support for these children. It is the reason why speech therapists are essential to schools and should be employed by one school only, without having to serve several schools at once, especially since more SDL cases seem to emerge every year.

Ana Rotaru

As a primary school teacher, she has come across several SLD cases and believes that it is essential for teachers to acquire information in this field in order to identify such cases by means of educational projects, teacher meetings, collaboration with specialist.

Oana Agheorghiesei

Speech therapists mostly identify children with pronunciation disorders rather than the specified learning disorders.

Carmen Buburuzanu

She speaks of two SDL cases she identified while working in a kindergarten, of two children who tended to hold their pens with a closed fist and also had difficulty in drawing / writing letters properly. These two children were identified as suffering from dysgraphia. As parents were open to collaborating with specialists, the two situations have greatly improved.

Irina Belei

There is a certain discrepancy between children living in urban areas and those who attend schools in rural areas. The parents in urban areas are usually more educated and informed, and

find it easier to identify their children's problems and refer them to specialized support. The parents in rural areas tend to neglect the symptoms, dismissing and labelling them as laziness or stupidity. Poverty is also the reason why some parents cannot afford specialized medical treatment for their children. Ultimately, these children are at risk of becoming dropouts.

In conclusion, parents in rural areas should be educated to recognize SDL symptoms, to understand that this is a medical condition that can be alleviated with appropriate support.

Monalisa Văduvă

SDL is a reality and parents fear that acknowledging such problems might stigmatize their children.

Alina Bendescu

Expresses trust in the outcomes that the collaboration between schools and speech therapists can produce in terms of allowing children to pursue a successful academic life.

How are compensatory tools used in school? Are teachers and parents adequately trained and instructed to support the pupil in using these tools?

Gabriela Conea points towards the tools mentioned by the project partners as being used in their countries. The tools are related to several submodules – orthography, typing, phonology, semantics, reading fluency, vocabulary, algebra, arithmetic, geometry, functions and graphics.

Monalisa Văduvă

She that she uses Scrabble as a tool to train the children's vocabulary and pronunciation.

Iuliana Penu

Uses the various letters that Wordwall provides in order to teach children to recognize various letters and words.

Live worksheet – transforms pdf files into interactive tools that allow children to practice their pronunciation.

She illustrates her examples with several exercises she has developed in order to teach syllables and word graphic representation.

Ana Rotaru

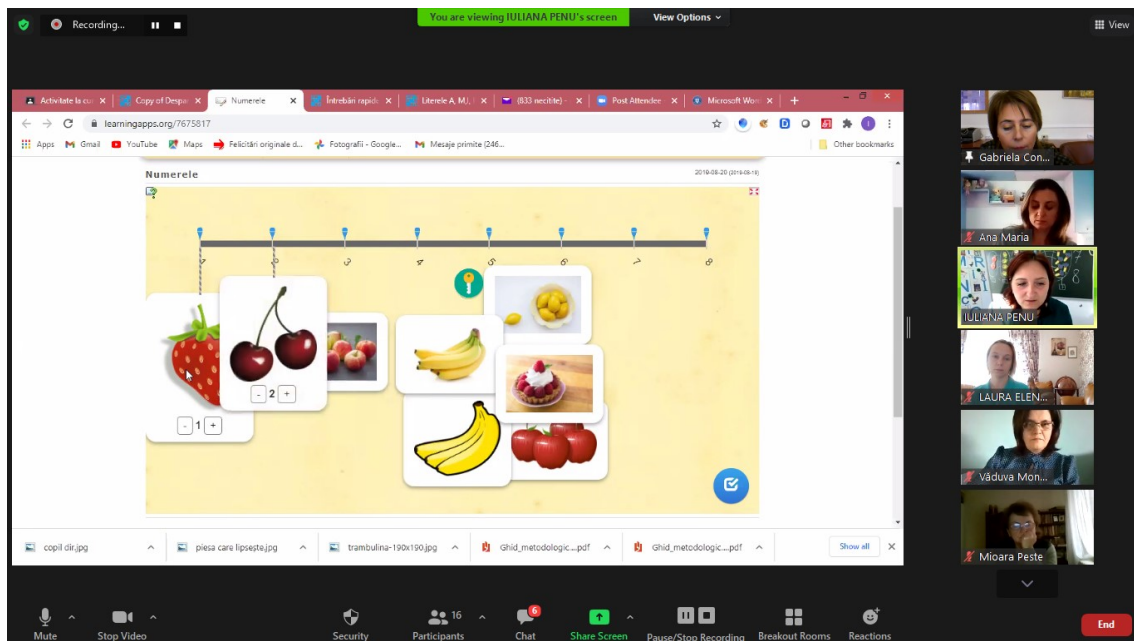
She also uses interactive apps to facilitate learning. She also mentions that using various stimuli in reading is also essential.

Alina Mendelovici

Several other techniques can be used, involving the children's kinesthetic abilities (shaping letters from clay, in sand / water / oil). Dyslexic children can learn easily, but learn differently.

Another participant mentions that it is important to teach children how to recognize their learning resources, capitalizing on every opportunity they have (reading signs and announcements on the street, reading labels etc.).

The participants showed each other a lot of applications (net and apps) and in few moments the focus group become a workshop where the teachers present the applications that they use.



The LEAD project! is working on the creation of a training course consisting of specific modules. According to the participants, what could be improved in the working draft?

Gabriela Conea mentions that the project platform is integrated within its webpage and is currently under construction. It is structured in three sections – learning, community and support, it will be available to access with a guest account. She also introduces the modules and training plan, providing details on the contents.

All the participants were happy to participate in focus group and LEAD project, and most of them hope to receive news about project results.

They were very kind to offer feedback on the meeting using the Jamboard platform, thanking them for attending the meeting.

