

# Excellency is Only a Stone's Throw Away – From Good to Better

Supporting the 'average' student to master the first year of high school



By Ulli Horak

**W**hen I started my teaching career in the early 2000s in Austrian junior high school, programmes for children with special needs and for those who were less gifted had been around for quite a while. Special courses were also introduced to promote the talented ones, those who needed extra stimulus to stay happy and be the high achievers of tomorrow.

What I felt was lacking was special support for those kids who knew they were just okay or good enough but wanted to do better, and I introduced various programmes to focus on this target group.

Since then, I worked primarily with kids who are about to master the transition from primary to secondary school at ages 10 and 11.

The basics of NLP, mindset and tools alike, have always been very precious to me and I will share with you some of my insights, taking advantage of part of the structure set out in Dilts' pyramid of neurological levels. But let me start from the beginning.

## The importance of supporting everybody

For a long time, supporting in schools meant working with groups of pupils that shared a certain deficit. They received worksheets and specially designed programmes; however, time for the individual needs was lacking, and the importance of the commitment of the pupil was taken for granted, not to say overlooked.

The programmes for the gifted were introduced a little later, given the insight that underachievers became more difficult to handle at school, especially with an increase in education of focusing on the individuality of each child.

To do better, to move towards excellency and to feel more in charge of one's growth and learning career: these are experiences, nourished by inner states, that motivate all kids, and in particular the average student, who tends to be overlooked by the system as he or she does not cause a lot of trouble or work. And it is these children who need a good share of focus, so they can experience growth and start reflecting on how and why things work or do not work yet.

## Perspectives on various levels

External opportunities and spaces are powerful. We have introduced 'learning skills for high school students' as a programme in our school, making use of various settings, from individual time to workshops for between 1 and 70 people. Parents also play a part here but let me focus on the work with students for the time being.

## Behaviour

As a coach, having used NLP now for 20 years, I find myself focusing on a certain set of techniques, many of which I was introduced to in my Practitioner's Course. Here are some of the main ones, in alphabetical order, that I use on a regular basis with my students:

**Kids in this age group are natural visionaries and flexible in thought.**



- Anchoring
- Core transformation
- Diamond technique
- Limited beliefs
- Meta-models
- Metaphors
- Modelling
- Neurological levels
- Perceptual positions
- POACHER model
- Rapport, pacing and leading
- Reframing
- Sub-modalities
- Timeline work
- Up – and down – chunking
- Values

### Capabilities

The students naturally have all the resources they need. What has helped me is the combination of my NLP qualifications and further training, my experience as a teacher and teacher trainer and my inner voice, combining head, heart and gut, that wants me to contribute and to make a positive change in the lives of kids who will go on and make a change themselves in this world.

### Beliefs, values and identity

I seek the 'cracks' in systems, the sometimes not so obvious nooks and corners, the space we can fill with life, and I understand that there is always room to help people grow. As a coach, I will always rely on the commitment of the client, and this is quite a new perspective for an 11-year-old. Rather than being told what to do and then just doing it, their part in their story as a learner is emphasized. Likewise, they are also being made aware that they are responsible for their path towards success, and I am there to help them to actively see the single steps that they take.

My core belief is that if we help students to experience the positive feelings of self-esteem, competence, growth, self-efficacy and motivation, they are well prepared for the world in whatever shape it presents itself and they can handle fallbacks and face the challenges that are surely out there for them.

### NLP presuppositions as a gateway

Kids in this age group are natural visionaries and flexible in thought. Their view of the world, their map, is just developing by taking in their surroundings, the people they are influenced by and, more and more, their own inner voice.

One of the thoughts I always share with them is that in changing my role from teacher to coach when I am working with them, I am more like a private detective than an adult who knows better. As they most likely have already experienced the fact that good advice might come in handy, but not always in the correct shape and size that is most useful to them, I ask the question: "And who is it that knows you best in this world?" What a joy it is to hear them replying, after a good pause, "I guess it must be me!"

The map is not the territory and you, dear, have all the resources you need. And, as behind every behaviour there is a positive intention, let us find that. If what you are doing is not working, increase your options as: 'There is no failure, just feedback.'

If you want to exchange thoughts or learn more about how I put these methods or the mindset into practice, please do contact me via email: [ulli.horak@grow-coaching.at](mailto:ulli.horak@grow-coaching.at)

"The flowers you water become the garden you live in." ■



**To do better, to move towards excellency and to feel more in charge of one's growth and learning career: these are experiences that motivate all kids.**

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