

# Assessing the Cultural Relevance of *INSIGHTS* for Jamaica

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*This paper describes the process undertaken to assess the cultural resonance and dissonance of INSIGHTS into Children's Temperament in preparation for adapting the intervention for dissemination in Jamaica. INSIGHTS is an evidence-based intervention that enhances the social emotional development of young children and the behaviour management skills of their teachers and parents. To obtain stakeholders perspectives regarding an adaptation, 32 Jamaican educators attended a two-day INSIGHTS workshop conducted by the developer of the intervention. At the conclusion, the educators were asked to evaluate whether INSIGHTS resonated with Jamaican cultural values and beliefs. A thematic analysis of their verbal and written comments showed that the core components of the intervention resonate well with Jamaican culture. Additional comments provided suggestions on how to make the intervention more accessible and appealing for Jamaican audiences. Recommendations included re-filming the intervention's videos at local schools and capturing the specific challenges faced by Jamaican teachers and children. A nine-month follow-up survey indicated that educators reaffirmed their initial assessment of the intervention.*

Social and emotional skills include understanding and managing emotions, setting and achieving positive goals, having empathy for others, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible decisions (CASEL 2013). The role of social-emotional skills in influencing one's life is wide-ranging. Over the past decade in the USA and the UK, education leaders have acknowledged that social emotional skills are as important, or even more important, than cognitive gains in supporting children's academic

achievement and its lifelong repercussions (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger 2011; Feinstein 2015).

Children learn social-emotional skills from their parents and other caregivers such as their teachers. The acquisition of social and emotional skills can also be acquired and enhanced in structured school-based social emotional learning (SEL) programmes. While many SEL programmes focus directly on children, others also support parents and teachers in their caregiving roles. Children from low-income families particularly benefit from responsive teacher and parenting strategies that support their emotional development and positive engagement at school (Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, and Ponitz 2009).

A multitude of SEL programmes exist with varying levels of effectiveness. Increasingly, however, randomized clinical trials have been implemented to rigorously test the efficacy of SEL programmes (CASEL 2013). Although a number of SEL programmes have demonstrated efficacy, most have been developed and tested in the USA (Kaminski, Valle, Filene, and Boyle 2008; Oliver, Wehby, and Daniel 2011). Their applicability and efficacy in middle-income countries, such as Jamaica, are unknown.

SEL programmes are particularly needed in middle-income countries where high levels of poverty and other stressors adversely affect the developmental potential of children (Elias and Haynes 2008). To be effective, however, an SEL programme must be grounded in the target population's cultural norms, values, and attitudes (Holleran-Steiker et al. 2008). Although culturally adapting evidence-based interventions for international implementation has been recommended, few examples exist (Kumpfer, Magalhães, and Xie 2012). This paper describes the process undertaken to assess the cultural resonance and dissonance of INSIGHTS into Children's Temperament in preparation for culturally adapting the SEL programme for dissemination in Jamaica.

## **Literature Review**

Jamaican educators and community leaders assert that the developmental potential of the country's children is compromised by authoritarian and harsh disciplinary practices used in homes and at school (Evans and Davies 1997; Jones, Brown, and Brown 2011; King 2002; Leo-Rhynie 1993). Authoritarian child-rearing practices are derived from adult expectations that children should obey strict rules for behaviour without questioning or negotiating (Baumrind 1967). Failure to follow the rules results in punishment.

The historical roots of harsh disciplinary practices in Jamaica are attributed to slavery and other oppressive circumstances emanating from colonialism (Barrow 2002). A number of factors still contribute to the contemporary use of harsh punishment by Jamaican parents (Brown and Johnson 2008; Evans and Davies 1997). Although children are highly valued, the majority of infants are born to young, single mothers living in poverty. Overwhelmed by economic problems and lacking education on normative child development, these young mothers have unrealistic expectations about children's behaviour (Brown and Johnson 2008). Even minor infractions are met with punitive consequences, including corporal punishment, disproportionate to the child's misbehaviour.

Harsh punishment also occurs in Jamaican schools, adversely affecting children's social-emotional development and academic underachievement (Gentles 2006; Jennings 2009). Other factors also compromise children's development. As a middle-income country, Jamaican teachers encounter the universal challenges inherent in limited resources, including large class sizes and an inadequate amount of teaching materials. The teacher-centred pedagogy typically used by Jamaican educators provides little opportunity for students' critical thinking and reduces their academic engagement. In addition, young children in Jamaica undergo a dramatic change as they transition from the nurturing early childhood education environment to the much more formal and demanding primary school setting.

Change is occurring in Jamaica (Barrow 2002; Jennings 2009). National and international government and nongovernment agencies have converged on a commitment to improve the rights and treatment of Jamaican children. Many initiatives emanating from these agencies espouse a critical reorientation of childrearing practices and the role of the community in supporting children's development (McPherson-Kerr, Down, and Lambert 2006). Consensus is mounting that alternative effective disciplinary strategies are sorely needed (Evans and Davies 1997; Jones, Brown, and Brown 2011; King 2002; Leo-Rhynie 1993). The cultural adaptation of evidence-based SEL programmes is vital to the success of this movement.

## **Strategies for Culturally Adapting Evidence-Based Interventions**

When adapting evidence-based interventions for a specific cultural group, issues of cultural relevance must be balanced with fidelity of the core components of the original programme (Castro, Barrera, and Martinez 2004). At the same time, fidelity must take into consideration the community context and resources (Harn, Parisi, and Stoolmiller 2013). Without attention to these sometimes competing aims, the intervention's intended goals—and consequently, its efficacy—will be compromised.

One of the responsibilities of the developer is to make explicit the “deep structures” of the intervention. Deep structures reflect the roles, responsibilities, values, and beliefs of individuals and families within a culture as seen through the eyes of the developer. By listing the assumptions of the intervention in a logic model and explaining how they are reflected in the content, the developer can invite the new stakeholders to evaluate whether the deep structures are consistent with their own culture (Resnicow et al. 2000; Santisteban et al. 2002). Unless there is congruence, an adapted intervention will lack cultural relevance. As a result, participant recruitment and retention will suffer and the programme will be ineffective in promoting change (Kumpfer et al. 2012).

Not all parts of the intervention are deep structures. A number of components, such as the illustrative exemplars, are “surface” elements that can be modified to make the intervention more appealing to the new stakeholders (Kumpfer et al. 2002). Such revisions include modifying programme materials so that they include ethnically matched characters and feature local settings (Dumka, Lopez, and Jacobs Carter 2000; Kumpfer et al. 2002). In partnership with the stakeholders, the developer can modify the surface elements, making sure that the changes accurately reflect the social realities of the cultural group while still maintaining fidelity to the deep structures.

Another important consideration requires assessing whether the intervention needs to be adapted due to the specific needs of the local context (Spencer, Detrich, and Slocum 2012). For example, financial resources in the new community might be different, which in turn may affect how staff are trained and utilized. Social political structures might also differ and could require adjusting the setting in which the programme is delivered.

Rolling out the adapted SEL programme will involve a number of iterative steps. A pilot study should be conducted so that additional feedback from the targeted participants can be incorporated before the adapted programme is disseminated more broadly. Another critical step is testing the effectiveness of the adapted programme in its new context. Stakeholders should be involved in selecting the outcomes that are relevant to their community (Spencer et al., 2012). Measurement tools that demonstrated validity and reliability in other contexts must also be evaluated for their cultural sensitivity (Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2008).

*INSIGHTS into Children’s Temperament* is an evidence-based SEL intervention that was developed in New York City with extensive input from stakeholders in New York City (McClowry and Galehouse 2002). The stakeholders were predominantly African-American parents, teachers, community leaders, and school district administrators from an under-resourced public school in a low-income neighbourhood. *INSIGHTS* was developed iteratively, incorporating

the stakeholders' feedback into the programme content and related materials. Multiple pilot studies were conducted before the intervention was implemented in multiple schools.

## **An Overview of *INSIGHTS***

*INSIGHTS* is a comprehensive intervention with teacher, parent, and classroom programmes that integrates theory, research, and clinical strategies to enhance the development of low-income children who are at risk for academic and behavioural difficulties. With temperament/personality theory as its foundation, *INSIGHTS* explains how the consistent behavioural style that children demonstrate influences their behaviour, social interactions, and reactions to life. To demonstrate differences in the temperaments of school-age children, the intervention presents four empirically derived temperament typologies (McClowry 2002; McClowry et al. 2013): Coretta the Cautious—who is shy, Gregory the Grumpy—who is high maintenance, Fredrico the Friendly—who is social and eager to try, and Hilary the Hard Worker—who is industrious.

The teacher and parent programmes are delivered in separate 10-weekly two-hour facilitated sessions using a structured curriculum that includes professionally produced vignettes, didactic content, handouts, group activities, and individual assignments. Although only one of the sessions is held jointly with parents and teachers, many activities encourage parent/teacher communication and collaboration. The curriculum for the comprehensive intervention is briefly summarized in Appendix A.

In their respective sessions, parents and teachers learn how to recognize a child's temperament. Although temperament is not amendable to change, adult responses are and can greatly influence children's behaviour. One of the key assumptions of *INSIGHTS* is that every child desires to be cherished. *INSIGHTS* demonstrates ways that parents and teachers can relay warmth, such as verbalizing acceptance and appreciation of a child's unique qualities.

Parents and teachers are also encouraged to reframe their perceptions by understanding that every temperament has strengths

but also issues that concern parents and teachers. For example, children who are social are friendly but may be unconcerned about their safety. Children who are industrious may have trouble transitioning from one activity to another if they are not satisfied with the quality of their work.

Acceptance of a child's temperament, however, does not imply permissiveness. Parents and teachers also learn scaffolding and stretching strategies that support children when they encounter temperamentally challenging situations. For example, a child who is cautious is likely to find the first day of school stressful. Or a child who is low in task persistence might find conducting a multi-step project beyond his current capabilities. By understanding the child's temperament, the caregiver can assess the degree of distress or difficulty the child is likely to experience. If the situation is likely to be overwhelming, then the caregiver should remove the child from the situation. If, however, as in most situations, the child can manage with support, then a responsive parent or teacher applies strategies that gently stretch the child's relevant emotional, attentional, or behavioural repertoire to meet that challenge. For example, a responsive parent might prepare a shy child for the first day of school by introducing her to other children in the neighborhood who will be classmates. For a child who is low in task persistence, a responsive teacher can divide a multi-component project into segments, assign one at a time, monitor the child's progress, and provide recognition as each part is completed. With enough support, the social emotional development of the child can be expanded and, with time, the child's use of such stretching strategies will become more automatic and less dependent on adult support (Dennisen et al. 2013; Rothbart et al. 2011).

The *INSIGHTS* children's programme takes place in the classrooms of participating teachers during the same 10 weeks as the adult programmes. The facilitator and the classroom teacher work together using puppets, videos, and other programme materials with the children. The aim of the classroom programme is to improve the children's social emotional development by enhancing

their self-understanding, empathy, and problem solving skills. During the first four weeks, children are introduced to four puppets that represent each of the temperaments. The children explore how some situations are easy and others are more challenging based on a puppet's particular temperament. During the remaining six weeks, the children work with the puppets to apply problem solving strategies when confronted with daily dilemmas.

## **The Impact of INSIGHTS in the USA**

The efficacy of *INSIGHTS* has been tested in three randomized clinical trials funded by the USA's Institute of Education Sciences and National Institutes of Health. Twenty-two urban under-resourced elementary schools were randomly assigned to *INSIGHTS* or a supplemental reading programme that served as an attention-control condition. The participants included 435 students in 122 classrooms. Observational and other types of data were collected at five time points across kindergarten and grade 1. Intervention occurred in the second half of kindergarten and the first half of grade 1.

Hierarchical linear models were used to examine changes over time. The results demonstrated that *INSIGHTS*, compared to the reading programme, enhanced teachers' classroom management strategies and children's engagement (Cappella et al. in press). Children in *INSIGHTS* gained greater math and reading skills, increased sustained attention, and had fewer behaviour problems (O'Connor et al. 2014). Differential effectiveness was found for children with two types of temperaments. Shy children in *INSIGHTS* demonstrated more rapid growth in math and critical thinking skills than their peers who were not shy (O'Connor et al. 2014). Those magnified effects were partially mediated by increases in behavioural engagement — a behaviour that is particularly challenging for shy children.

Differential (greater) effectiveness was also found for children with high maintenance temperaments—children with low levels of task persistence and high levels of motor activity and negative reactivity (McCormick et al. 2015). This finding was of particular



importance because many teachers have difficulty relating to children with high maintenance temperaments (McClowry, 2014). After participating in *INSIGHTS*, however, children with high maintenance temperaments exhibited fewer disruptive behaviours and off-task behaviours and had higher levels of behavioural engagement. These intervention effects for children with high maintenance temperaments were partially mediated through improvements in their relationships with their teachers.

Previous randomized clinical trials showed that *INSIGHTS* reduces the behaviour problems of children with oppositional defiant disorder and attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder without the use of medications. In addition, teachers and parents demonstrated more effective, responsive discipline strategies, and gained confidence in handling challenging child behaviour (McClowry, Snow, and Tamis-LeMonda 2005; McClowry et al. 2010; O'Connor et al. 2012). More information about *INSIGHTS* and the publications that explain its outcomes are available at <http://insightsintervention.com/> and <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/insights/>

## **Strategies Used to Culturally Assess and Adapt *INSIGHTS* for Jamaica**

Although *INSIGHTS* demonstrated efficacy in multiple domains with participants in under-resourced schools in the USA, its cultural relevance and transportability for Jamaica were unknown. At the invitation of Jamaican education leaders, an exploration began to evaluate the cultural relevance of *INSIGHTS* for the country. Should the SEL programme resonate with the cultural norms of Jamaica, steps could be taken to culturally adapt the programme for implementation in the country.

One of the most central activities used to assess the cultural resonance of *INSIGHTS* occurred in April 2012. The participants included 32 educators with a broad range of professional experiences, who attended a two-day *INSIGHTS* workshop at the School of Education at the University of the West Indies, Mona. All of the

attendees had a background in early childhood education. Approximately half of the educators were from the Jamaican Ministry of Education's Early Childhood Commission. Other participants included faculty from other Jamaican universities and professional staff from community organizations. The educators were told they would learn strategies from *INSIGHTS* and would be asked to assess its cultural resonance and dissonance for Jamaica at the conclusion of the workshop.

Dr. Sandee McClowry, the developer of *INSIGHTS*, conducted the workshop by discussing the intervention's core content and applied strategies. She also provided the educators with multiple opportunities to review the taped vignettes and handouts and to engage with the puppets in activities. Dr. McClowry concluded the workshop by presenting the core assumptions of *INSIGHTS* that are listed on its logic model (*see Appendix B*)

- Every child desires to be understood and cherished.
- Temperament influences child behaviour, social interactions, and reactions to life situations.
- Social/emotional adjustment is enhanced when there is a goodness of fit — a match between the child's temperament and the environment.
- Responsive parents and teachers match their management strategies to a child's temperament.
- Children can be taught strategies that assist them in regulating their emotional, attentional, and behavioral tendencies in temperamentally challenging situations.

Dr. Mark Spellmann, a clinical psychologist, then led the educators in exploring the cultural resonance and dissonance of *INSIGHTS* for Jamaica based on what they had experienced and reviewed in the workshops. The educators were first asked to write their responses to three structured questions: (1) Is there a cultural fit between *INSIGHTS* and the Jamaican culture; (2) Would *INSIGHTS* be of value to Jamaican educators and parents; and (3) Should *INSIGHTS* be modified to increase its acceptance and acces-

sibility for Jamaican educators and parents? The educators discussed the same questions within a focus group format.

Following the workshop, Dr. Spellmann subjected the educators' written and transcribed verbal comments to a thematic analysis which is a commonly used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within a data set (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006). First, an inductive process was used to label key words or phrases in the data. Then themes were identified among the codes. In the following section, the themes derived from the educators' responses to the questions are reported along with representative quotes.

**Question 1:** *Is there a cultural fit between INSIGHTS and the Jamaican culture?*

In their written comments and in their focus groups, the educators reported a strong congruence between Jamaican culture and the deep structures of *INSIGHTS*. Educators' verbatim comments included

- It values and respects children and teachers.
- With this programme, both teachers and parents can learn how to accept and deal with children for who they are.
- With *INSIGHTS* training, teachers will be able to better plan... and work with parents...to ensure goodness of fit and learn about how special their children are.
- All parents, like Jamaican parents, need to know how to help their children control/manage their temperaments so they can live a well-adjusted life.
- Some Jamaican parents may interpret the programme as one that spoils children. However, parents want to raise children who are able to regulate and recognize their own temperament. They want children to maximize their full potential and consequently this programme will help them.
- Children love puppets and *INSIGHTS* puppets reflect temperaments that are universal.

**Question 2:** *Would INSIGHTS be of value to Jamaican educators and parents?*

Several themes were extracted from the data in response to this question. In brief, the educators reported that *INSIGHTS* provides alternative perspectives and choices, and practical strategies for parenting and classroom management. Educators' verbatim contributions within these themes included

- *INSIGHTS* gives Jamaican educators and parents alternative options for discipline.
- Many of our parents and teachers are throwing up their arms in despair as they have run out of options to control their children. Teachers have given up on some students as they are unable to pay attention to lessons. *INSIGHTS* provides options that are likely to work in Jamaican homes and schools.
- *INSIGHTS* will help teachers work with children instead of being aggressive (beating).
- It gives alternatives and options.
- Quite a number of teachers, parents, and caregivers do not know how to deal with our children...we do place great emphasis on beating and hitting to discipline...it would be most relevant to try something new that has been proving [sic] to work.
- *INSIGHTS* gives teachers and parents new perspectives, providing more developmentally appropriate and sophisticated ways of seeing things.
- It would help us distinguish temperament versus rude behaviour.
- In Jamaica, children suffer because teachers do not understand them and apply the wrong method of punishment to them.
- We often mistake the child's temperament to be "rudeness."
- The ability to distinguish between children's temperament and behaviour problems is a struggle.

- INSIGHTS provides practical strategies and solutions.
- Strategies presented are practical and promote empathy.
- It provides practical strategies...it gives alternatives and options.
- Provides teachers with options for solving problems.
- INSIGHTS can help parents learn strategies that will help them cope with their child's temperament.

**Question 3:** *Should INSIGHTS be modified to increase its acceptance and accessibility by Jamaican educators and parents?*

According to the educators, a number of surface-level modifications would enhance accessibility and appeal for Jamaican audiences

- The programme could be more culturally relevant if scenes were shot in local schools and captured specific challenges faced by Jamaican teachers/children.
- Use Jamaican classroom teachers.
- INSIGHTS could be more relevant if some of the videos/vignettes were done with the Jamaican children so they can relate to the experiences.
- INSIGHTS could be more relevant if we use more Jamaican-style characters.
- Make a set of puppets that look more like our typical children.
- More Jamaican music, more Jamaican puppets.

The responses of the educators to *INSIGHTS* immediately after the workshop were positive. Their assessment after they had time to implement what they learned at the workshop was also sought. In January 2013, a follow-up survey was conducted. Fifty per cent of the original workshop attendees completed the survey. Most of the respondents were from the Early Childhood Commission. Although nine months had passed since the workshop, the educators generally had very positive reactions to what they learned. Findings included that

- Over 90 per cent found the workshop **very useful**.
- Over 90 per cent reported they gained **very much deeper understanding** of children's personality and temperament and of children's behaviour.
- Two-thirds of participants reported they **very much gained** new ideas about improving children's behavior.
- Over 90 per cent shared what they learned with other professionals.

Their comments supported that they maintained a deeper understanding of children's personalities as these two representative quotes demonstrate

- I, for one, was linking the students' temperament (Gregory the Grumpy) with being rude or disrespectful. But, I was enlightened to know that it's not being rude or out of order but it's just their personality and we have to help them to self-monitor until they can manage themselves. The situation is two-way, the students need to understand their temperament and as educators, we need to understand how children think and behave so as not to abuse or mislabel them as misfits.
- I have developed tolerance for the pouting, sulky child and practised ways to help him/her to share the way they feel. Previously, my comments were to jolt the child out of his/her sullenness assuming that his actions or inactions mocked my authority, now I embrace and acknowledge his/her expressions as both good and bad signs of how he/she feels and as such can now conduct my actions/reaction accordingly and favourably.

The educators' suggestions for adapting the surface elements of the intervention echoed their original comments

- Please have puppets and or activities that are relevant to the mixed culture, lifestyle, or upbringing of the children and or parents/teachers; particularly the inner-city culture: that culture is a complex mix of aggression, 'hustling', teenaged parents, mixed literate levels among others.

- You may want to include some of our songs and rhythms.
- Redesign the puppets and characters to suit our Jamaican culture.

## Implications

In addition to the feedback from the workshop attendees, other valuable input came from education and community leaders who functioned as an *INSIGHTS* in Jamaica advisory board. They, too, endorsed the deep structures of the intervention but were concerned about the cost and feasibility of remaking the surface elements to be more culturally specific. Such practical issues are paramount in middle-developing countries. Although a revision of all of the surface elements in an adapted intervention would be the ideal, the cost must be weighed against the benefits.

Developing efficacious SEL programmes that support the development of young children takes a number of years. Middle-developing countries, such as Jamaica, can reduce their time and cost commitment by culturally adapting existing evidence-based interventions, like *INSIGHTS*.

Based on a variety of stakeholders' assessments, the deep structures of *INSIGHTS* appear to resonate with Jamaica. Culturally adapting the surface elements is likely to increase its appeal. Stakeholders are providing recommendations for the next steps that include remaking the children's videos in Jamaica, conducting a pilot study, and considering the pragmatics of rolling out the intervention in multiple Jamaican educational settings.

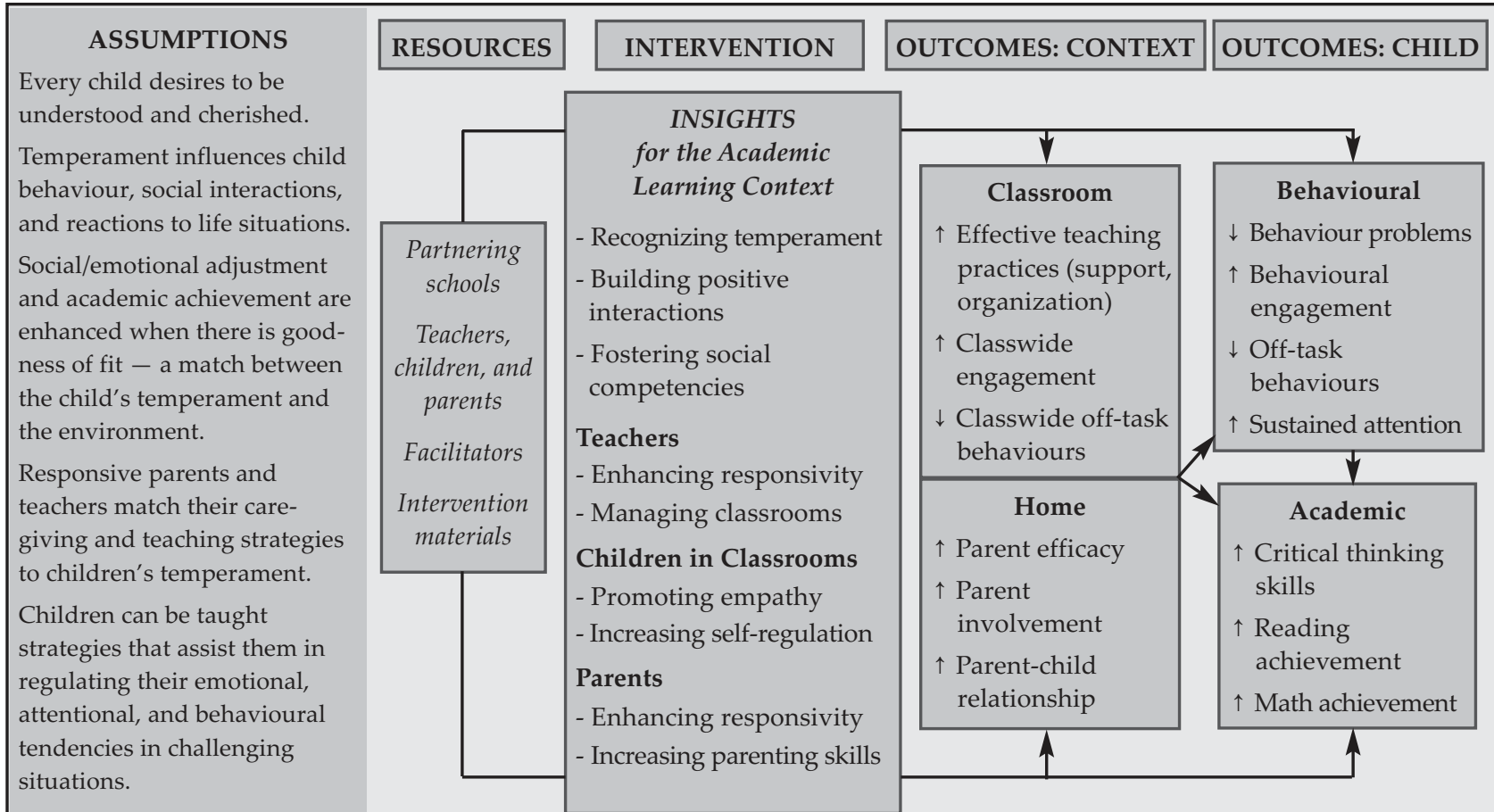
**APPENDIX A**  
**Curriculum of *INSIGHTS***

Teacher & Parent Programmes	Children's Programme
<p><b>The 3Rs: Recognize, Reframe, &amp; Respond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize differences in children's temperaments.</li> <li>• Reframe perspectives understanding that each temperament has strengths and areas of concerns.</li> <li>• Differentiate caregiver responses that are optimal, adequate, and counter-productive.</li> </ul> <p><b>The 2Ss: Scaffold and Stretch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffold children when they encounter temperamentally challenging situations.</li> <li>• If manageable with support, gently stretch so that they can better regulate emotional, attentional, and behavioral repertoire.</li> </ul> <p><b>The 2Cs: Enhance Compliance and Competence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply discipline strategies for non-compliant behaviour.</li> <li>• Contract with individual children who have repetitive behaviour problems.</li> <li>• Foster social competencies.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Enhance Empathy Skills</b></p> <p>With the help of puppets, understand that people have different reaction styles that make some situations easy to handle while others are challenging.</p> <p><b>Learn How to Resolve Dilemmas</b> Work with puppets, facilitator, and teacher to learn self-regulation strategies by resolving hypothetical dilemmas using a stoplight (red: recognize dilemma; yellow: think and plan; green: try it out).</p> <p><b>Resolve Real Dilemmas</b> Practice the same problem-solving process and self-regulation strategies to the dilemmas that the children experience in their daily lives.</p>



APPENDIX B

Logic Model for *INSIGHTS* into Children’s Temperament



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