

Creating Space for Reflection in Academically Demanding Schools

Early Outcomes of the **Winning in the Game of Life** Curriculum at *Oxbridge Academy*

A six-week implementation with 105 Year 5 & Year 6 students · Oxbridge Academy, Baku, Azerbaijan · September–February 2025



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Educator Preparation



Prior to implementing the curriculum, two teachers from Oxbridge Academy completed the Spirituality for Kids (SFK) Certification Program in August 2025. The training was conducted through a comprehensive, self-paced online platform over approximately 4–6 weeks.

The certification program prepares educators to facilitate the Winning in the Game of Life curriculum by introducing the core educational framework, classroom facilitation methods, and reflective learning practices used throughout the program.

Following completion of the certification program, the trained educators introduced the curriculum to students in September 2025, delivering the lessons through weekly classroom sessions.

Training components include:

- understanding the curriculum structure and lesson sequence
- learning discussion and questioning techniques
- practicing reflective facilitation methods
- applying journaling and dialogue-based learning tools
- developing classroom environments that support psychological safety and reflection

Executive Summary

In September 2025, Oxbridge Academy in Baku, Azerbaijan, introduced the Spirituality for Kids (SFK) curriculum, **Winning in the Game of Life**, to 105 students in Year 5 and Year 6 (ages 10–12). The program was delivered through weekly 45-minute classroom sessions integrated into the regular school day.

This report reflects observations from the **first six weeks of implementation** (Lessons 1–6 of the 12-lesson curriculum cycle). During this initial phase, educators reported noticeable early shifts in student engagement and classroom dynamics.



Students demonstrated a growing ability to:

- articulate personal qualities
- explain the causes of their emotions
- reflect on their choices during group discussions and journaling exercises



Teachers also described a calmer classroom atmosphere during the sessions and increased participation from students who were typically quieter.

The observations presented in this report are drawn from teacher reflections, facilitator notes, and student statements shared during classroom discussions. These early findings suggest that structured spiritual-social-emotional learning may support the development of self-awareness, reflective thinking, and emerging self-regulation when delivered consistently in academically rigorous school environments.

Key Findings

During the first six weeks of implementation, teachers reported several early indicators of change:

More Precise Emotional Language

Students increasingly explained **why** they felt a certain way rather than simply describing their mood.

Emerging Self-Regulation Behaviors

Teachers observed fewer interruptions, brief pauses before speaking, and quicker recovery after moments of frustration.

More Reflective & Inclusive Discussions

Classroom discussions became more reflective and inclusive. Students who were typically quieter began participating more openly.

Identity & Personal Value

Several students expressed insights about self-worth and personal qualities during reflection activities.



School Context

Oxbridge Academy

Location: Baku, Azerbaijan

Type: International School

Oxbridge Academy serves a culturally diverse student population, including children from internationally mobile families and regions affected by geopolitical instability.

Identified Developmental Needs

School leadership identified several developmental needs among upper-primary students:

- limited language for describing inner experience
- difficulty expressing emotions
- impulsive responses during peer interactions
- elevated academic stress
- few structured opportunities for reflective discussion

The school sought a program capable of supporting emotional and personal development while remaining appropriate for a **multicultural and non-religious educational environment**. The SFK curriculum was selected for its values-based framework and practical classroom tools for reflection and decision-making.

Program Overview

105

Students

Year 5 and Year 6, ages 10–12

40

Minutes per Session

Delivered during the school day

12

Lesson Cycle

Initial phase covered Lessons 1–
6

6

Weeks Observed

September–February 2025

Curriculum

Winning in the Game of Life

Organization: Spirituality for Kids (SFK)

Implementation Period: September–February 2025 (initial phase)

Structure

- Weekly classroom sessions
- Approximately 40 minutes per session
- Delivered during the school day
- Uninterrupted weekly schedule

📄 By Lesson 6 of the curriculum sequence, teachers reported that students were increasingly **anticipating the sessions**.

Instructional Approach

The curriculum uses interactive and reflective learning methods to help students explore **identity, emotions, and personal responsibility.**

Core Practices

- Guided Discussion
- Journaling
- Reflection Prompts
- Breathing Exercises
- Creative Expression
- Metaphor-Based Learning

Students Practice

1

Recognizing emotions



2

Understanding how choices affect themselves and others



3

Identifying personal strengths



4

Reflecting on challenges and responses

Data Sources

Evidence included in this early-phase field case was drawn from:



Teacher Voice Notes & Written Reflections

Educators documented observations and reflections throughout the implementation period.



Facilitator Session Notes

Detailed notes captured during each weekly classroom session.



Student Statements

Statements shared by students during classroom discussions throughout the six-week period.



Informal Teacher Feedback

Informal teacher feedback gathered during implementation.

- Quotes included in the report represent **representative examples of themes observed across multiple sessions.**



Observed Outcomes

1 Development of Self-Awareness Language

Students increasingly articulated ideas related to identity, personal qualities, and intrinsic value. During a reflection activity exploring personal qualities, one student wrote: *"I know that I'm enough."*

Teachers reported that students became more comfortable discussing ideas related to self-worth and personal strengths. One teacher observed: *"Over the weeks I noticed that students began using more precise language when talking about themselves and their feelings. Instead of saying simply 'good' or 'bad,' they started explaining why they felt a certain way."*

2 Emotional Vocabulary and Cause-and-Effect Thinking

Teachers reported that students increasingly connected emotions to identifiable situations. When asked how they were feeling, students explained their mood in relation to: weather conditions, upcoming events, classroom experiences, and personal expectations.

One teacher explained: *"Students started connecting their emotions to specific situations. When we asked how they were feeling, they were able to explain what had influenced their mood."* This reflects the development of early emotional reasoning.

3 Emerging Self-Regulation Behaviors

Teachers observed several behavioral changes during classroom discussions. Examples included: students pausing briefly before speaking, fewer interruptions during discussions, students verbalizing intentions to adjust their behavior, and quicker recovery after moments of frustration.

One teacher noted: *"Some students who tended to interrupt or react quickly started pausing before speaking. It wasn't perfect, but I could see them making an effort to regulate their behavior."* In one case, a student known for frequent interruptions independently told his teacher he would try to listen more attentively during lessons. The teacher later observed noticeable improvement.

4 Classroom Climate and Psychological Safety

Teachers consistently described the sessions as creating a distinct classroom atmosphere characterized by openness and attentive listening. Students reported feeling comfortable sharing personal ideas. One student comment reported by a teacher: *"This is the only lesson where we can be ourselves."*

Teachers also observed increased participation among quieter students. *"Students who were usually quieter began participating more openly during the discussions."* Educators noted that discussions during SFK sessions were often calmer than typical classroom conversations.

5 Changes in Teacher Practice

Teachers reported that the program influenced their own teaching practices. Several educators began incorporating short reflective pauses into other lessons and allowing more time for student discussion. One teacher reflected: *"The journaling exercises helped students slow down and reflect. I noticed that several students took the writing seriously and used it to think about their reactions and choices."* Another teacher noted: *"Sometimes I feel that the students are teaching me as well."*

6 Trauma-Sensitive Expression

In one classroom discussion, a student referenced experiences related to war during a lesson using light as a metaphor for human qualities. The student shared: *"During the war... they didn't show their Light to people."* The teacher facilitated a brief flashlight exercise demonstrating shared light among classmates. When asked what the light represented, the student responded: *"It means that we love each other."*

The teacher later observed a spontaneous gesture of trust from the student toward classmates, suggesting that the classroom had become a psychologically safe space for expression. *(Student identity intentionally withheld.)*



Teacher Perspectives

Teachers reported that students began **anticipating the weekly sessions**.

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"Students started asking when the next SFK lesson would be. They seemed to look forward to the time when we could talk about these topics."

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"What surprised me most was the depth of some of the conversations. Students were able to discuss ideas about identity, fulfillment, and relationships in thoughtful ways."

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Replication Considerations for Schools

Schools seeking similar outcomes may consider the following implementation structure.

Recommended Structure

- Weekly sessions
- 40 minutes
- Multi-month implementation

Key Supports

- Trained facilitators
- Administrative alignment
- Protected instructional time
- Classroom norms supporting reflection

Simple Monthly Tracking Indicators

Schools may also track two simple indicators monthly:

- 1 Teacher Reflections
Documenting observable behavior changes
- 2 Student Reflection Prompts
Related to emotional awareness and decision-making

Study Scope and Limitations

Nature of This Report

This report represents an **early-phase field observation** based on teacher reports, facilitator notes, and student statements during the first six weeks of implementation.

Not a Controlled Research Study

It is not a controlled research study, and the findings reflect **observed and reported changes** rather than measured long-term outcomes.

Further Observation Recommended

Further longitudinal observation may provide additional insights into **sustained outcomes**.

Closing Observation

The early implementation at Oxbridge Academy indicates that **students are capable of engaging meaningfully in structured reflection and self-development** when provided with appropriate language, tools, and supportive classroom environments.

Within six weeks, teachers observed early signs of:

Increased Emotional Awareness

Reflective Dialogue

Emerging Self-Regulation

These findings suggest that **structured spiritual-social-emotional learning can complement academic instruction** by helping students develop skills related to self-awareness, thoughtful decision-making, and positive classroom relationships.