

**RespAct is a sports and democracy education project, which empowers children and young people to be agents of change in their neighborhood.**



## **Strong children. Strong democracy.**

**RespAct** supports the development of children and young people into strong, independent adults. Using low-barrier-to-entry sports exercises, video and project work focusing on concrete issues in the neighborhood, participants gain self-confidence, practice conflict solving strategies and engage in local political processes in their local environment. RespAct is suitable for children and young people aged between 8 and 18 in schools or youth centers. During the RespAct summit, our participants discuss their ideas for improvements to their local area with decision-makers from business, politics and the municipality. Participants experience their ability to shape their surroundings by engaging in the democratic process in a very tangible way, when they witness their ideas being implemented. Our project has been recognized and was awarded, among other prizes, the Capital City Prize for Integration and Tolerance (2012), the Mete-Eksi Prize (2012) as well as honored as one of 100 Landmarks in the Land of Ideas Competition (2016).

## **RespAct – Educational Concept**

As a sports and democracy project, **RespAct** helps develop competencies that young people need to fully participate in democratic processes as active citizens and to contribute to shaping their local communities. The following questions guide all our project activities:

How do we want to live together in our neighborhood?

What do we need to achieve this? How can we translate tolerance and respect into our daily lives?

How can we, as children and youth, become agents of change and participate in political processes?



## RespAct – Methods



### Simulation games for democratic competencies

The “mayor’s game” is used to sensitize young people to ways of thinking around decisions that affect their local area; topics frequently include violence, safety, cleanliness and pollution. Learning to formulate their own and facing opposing opinions and ideas, participants gain first-hand experience in **democratic processes**.

### Sports and movement for social skills

Sports and trust games help young participants to gain awareness of their own strengths and to overcome fears, to build confidence in their own body and interacting with others constructively. The exercises support **self-confidence**, focus and perseverance, in addition to training **empathy** in social situations. Additionally, our sports modules help young people to set and accept physical and emotional **boundaries**.



### Video work for media awareness

Media sensitivity and awareness is of increasing importance in the **personal development** of young people. Our participants learn the right usage of video cameras in front of and behind the lens, and learn to develop and deconstruct narratives around their local area. This module also enables the children to structure and **present their ideas in confident** and convincing ways.

Camera interview

Guess emotions

Mayor's game

Boxing

District maps

Our neighborhood



## RespAct – Thematic clusters

Our award-winning approach sets a focus on three areas: newly arrived migrants and local children, local participation & safe public spaces and environmental protection & sustainable neighborhood. We consistently develop our pedagogical methods further and add innovative elements to the approach. This ongoing development allows us to adapt the workshops in a flexible way, according to the interests and needs of different target groups. Regular evaluations prove the social impact of our projects.

Our exchange formats for **“Newly arrived migrants and local children”** are designed to facilitate social exchange amongst young people without a common language. Hands-on games designed to explore participants’ living environment create opportunities to engage with local children in a relaxed and stress-free environment. Planning and carrying out neighborhood improvement projects helps to **foster positive local identification for all participants.**

**Newly arrived migrants and local children**

In project weeks, action days and weekly clubs around **“Neighborhood improvement projects: safe and secure young people in public areas”** we engage with the topics of **violence prevention** and **taking responsibility for communities.** Using low-barrier-to-entry-sports exercises, video and project work, participants learn to stand up for their interests, work together and take personal responsibility for solving problems in their neighborhood. Children and young people experience a boost in their self-efficacy and understand their capabilities to become agents of change through participation in local democratic processes.

**Local participation & safe public spaces**

Our cluster **“Environmental protection & sustainable neighborhoods”** aims to make accessible the topics of **environmental justice** and **sustainability.** Sports and cooperation modules, scientific experiments and neighborhood improvement projects turns children and young people into competent experts on their neighborhoods.

**Environmental protection & sustainable neighborhood**



*‘The project improved the confidence of the students, because their voices were heard. They felt taken seriously.’*

Teacher, Grade 6

## RespAct – Evaluation

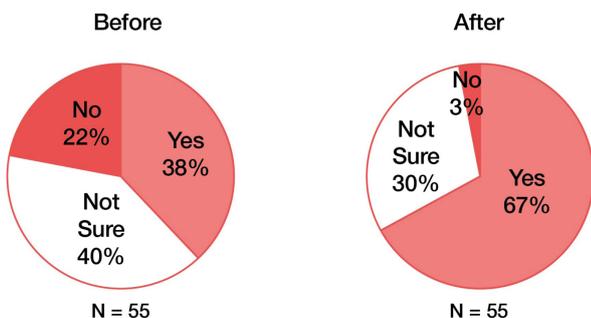
The **impact** and the **achievement** of the objectives of RespAct are regularly assessed, in order to adapt its educational methodologies to changing social conditions and constantly develop and improve the project. In the process, we work closely with other organizations, such as the **German Sports University in Cologne (DSK)** and **Oxford University** to guarantee the highest academic standards. For our latest evaluation in Summer 2015 we asked the DSK to give an expert opinion on our evaluation methods. Our sample included participating students, teachers as well as local stakeholders. The evaluation showed that participants show:

**A significant increase in self-efficacy in the context of social challenges.**

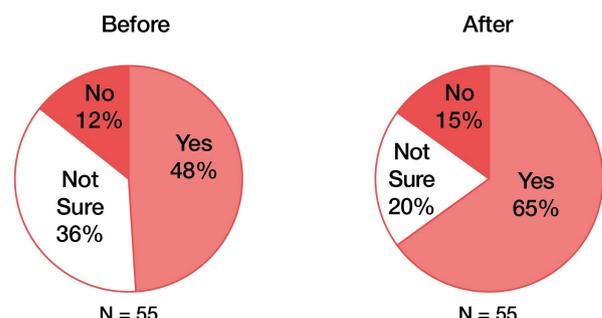
**An increase in gender-awareness, political awareness, self-confidence when working with presentations and intention to improve their neighborhood.**

**The evaluation substantiates several ways in which the project has a significant impact on participating schoolchildren, teachers and stakeholders. Participating children report the following differences pre- and post intervention:**

*„I am certain that I can deal with difficult situations in the future.“*



*„I am able to solve problems in school by myself.“*



**The qualitative interviews demonstrate participating teachers' satisfaction with the RespAct project and their reported intention of adapting the RespAct methodology for their work in the classroom.**

Stakeholders at the RespAct summit valued the understanding into the life-world of participating students that they were able to derive, as well as the increased networking between local actors during the RespAct summit.



*'We are participating in today's RespAct Summit, because we are interested in the children's ideas and propositions. And if there is something where we can support them, we are happy to be contacted. Very often we lend out cleaning supplies for neighborhood improvement projects. We also organize neighborhood walks with children to examine the cleanliness of the streets and to discuss what to do and if it is in our power to do so.'*

Local waste management officer

*'The results show an understandable positive impact from the project on its participants. The increased self-efficacy in concert with social challenges of the schoolchildren is particularly convincing. The satisfaction of participating teachers with the project, and the increased networking between local actors are further insights achieved, which confirm the successful implementation of the RespAct project.'*

Expert assessment of the RespAct evaluation, German Sports University Cologne, July 2015



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