



**MANAHEL**

**SYRIA  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAMME**

**JULY/  
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**LEARNING  
BULLETIN**

**In this issue,** we share successes from the recent Learning Lab event, the launch of a Arabic Language teaching guide, updates from this year's Summer School - covering inclusive learning and a reading challenge - as well as learning from recent training for teachers and Safeguarding Officers (SGOs).

During the Lab, Manahel shared insights from the completion of two rounds of learning assessments and showed how that information is being analysed and applied to school planning. In sharing our experiences of using data to drive decision-making, and of using standardised tools, we showed effective, proven practices for enhancing learning outcomes, safeguarding, and well-being. The aim was to encourage others to replicate this approach beyond Manahel-supported schools and to build local and international confidence in supporting formal education in the region.

**LEARNING POINT:** Implementing a single, standardised assessment tool across all NGOs in the education sector can ensure data consistency, promote efficient resource allocation and foster collaborative efforts. This enhances system-level planning, elevates accountability and allows for targeted interventions to address educational gaps.



## Learning Lab shares importance of data driven decision making

Following the success of the 2023 Manahel Learning Lab, we hosted a second Learning Lab in August to present the results of the Teacher-Led Early Grade Learning Assessment (TEGLA) and explore how its data can inform the school annual plan. The event brought together Manahel partners and education stakeholders across Northwest (NW) Syria. Together we discussed how to enhance the generation and use of data for school planning - so that we can identify and address key gaps in the education system - and we explored ways to align the use of data tools and practices across different schools.

## Second Grade Arabic Language Teacher Guide launched

Manahel hosted a 90-minute webinar with representatives from 30 organisations across the education sector to disseminate the Second Grade Arabic Language Teacher Guide. The session covered an overview of the guide, its development process, the significance of standardising educational materials and an interactive Q&A session.

As part of Manahel's system strengthening approach in NW Syria, we recognise the importance of ongoing engagement and feedback as we develop educational tools that standardise teaching practices, so we circulated a survey after the webinar to gain insight. The feedback revealed a strong interest in implementing the guide alongside the desire for additional training and useful technical feedback for future enhancements.

**LEARNING POINT:** Early stage discussions of the guide with education stakeholders and the Education Directorates (EDs) was important to ensure their buy-in and endorsement. The feedback provided by participants highlighted the need for continuous collaboration with education actors and the EDs to refine educational resources, ensuring they are effectively used to enhance pedagogies and students' performance.

**“By equipping school staff with a variety of instructional approaches, the training prepared them to effectively manage diverse student needs and larger class sizes.”**

## Differentiated Instruction supports diverse learners in Summer Schools

This year's Manahel Summer School focused on remediation for struggling students while also challenging those who are performing well. Students from different academic levels were together in one classroom, which created a challenge for teaching staff to keep all learners engaged, interested and developing – regardless of their background or abilities. To ensure success, Manahel implemented training on Differentiated Instruction. Key aspects of the training included an in-depth exploration of Differentiated Instruction strategies, emphasising the importance of recognising and accommodating different learning approaches (e.g. interests, intelligence types and readiness levels).

By equipping school staff with a variety of instructional approaches, the training prepared them to effectively manage diverse student needs and larger class sizes. Teachers were encouraged to take inclusive approaches that actively involve all students in lessons to promote active participation and interactions. The training structure and content were carefully developed and reviewed by technical teams from Manahel, partner organisations and the EDs. Manahel successfully trained 2,838 participants, including Education Instruction Department Heads, instructors, Deputy Head Teachers (DHTs), and classroom teachers.

**LEARNING POINT:** Introducing new techniques and approaches for specialised education requires targeted professional development to ensure effective implementation. By equipping school staff with a deep understanding of the practical application of Differentiated Instruction, the training demonstrated how tailored teaching strategies can significantly enhance student learning, particularly for those who are less engaged in traditional settings. Bringing Department Heads, instructors, DHTs and teachers into a common learning experience helped create consistent understanding and application of inclusive teaching across the whole school.

## Expansion of the biweekly card initiative

As part of Manahel's efforts to support continuous professional development for education staff, we have expanded our biweekly card initiative to a wider audience that now includes instructors, headteachers, DHTs and teachers beyond Manahel-supported schools. This initiative aims to keep education staff consistently equipped with best practices in education by providing them with resources, tools and materials to self-progress and self-reflect. A range of topics are included in the cards, such as classroom management strategies, reaching different learner types, strategic education planning, time and priority management and effective communication between teachers and students.

During Summer School, Manahel faced a challenge in implementing this initiative in newly supported schools as staff hadn't implemented remedial activities before. Manahel addressed the challenge through training and providing individual support. Around 1,000 staff were then able to make better use of the cards and felt more confident in utilising the shared resources.

To ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the biweekly cards, we will gather feedback from a representative sample of participants and use it to shape our plans for the next academic year, e.g. refining, adding or removing content to better meet staff needs.

**LEARNING POINT:** The challenges faced in the Summer School highlight the importance of providing tailored support and training to new participants who are less familiar with certain activities or concepts. In addition, collecting feedback from a sample of staff will help tailor future initiatives more closely to their needs, improving the effectiveness of the intervention.

**1,000**  school staff more confidently using teaching resources

## Million-page challenge boosts reading habits

The Reading Challenge ran during the Summer School from July to early September across Manahel-supported schools in Idleb and Aleppo, as a way to boost time students spend reading. Each student was asked to read at least one page each day from a story, scientific magazine, or report at their grade level. To keep them engaged through healthy competition, participating students and schools were challenged to collectively read one million pages.

A detailed guide for teachers and staff was produced, including strategies to motivate students and how to monitor daily progress. The goal was that students taking part in the challenge would develop a stronger reading habit from diverse resources, including school libraries and digital content, which in turn will contribute to improved reading levels that can enhance overall academic performance and comprehension.

**LEARNING POINT:** Increasing student participation required continuous encouragement, engagement and clear communication. When the challenge was launched, engagement was initially low, but by reinforcing the campaign's benefits and providing regular encouragement, schools saw a significant rise in both enthusiasm and the number of pages read.

## Social Emotional Learning training for Safeguarding Officers

Manahel has cascaded Social Emotional Learning (SEL) training to 267 Safeguarding Officers (SGOs), following its successful implementation with coaches, our technical team and protection instructors. The two-day training was delivered in collaboration with International Rescue Committee (IRC) in 15 locations across eight educational assemblies by protection instructors, who had previously been given the training themselves. The training included:

- Introduction to SEL as a curriculum
- Psychosocial Support (PSS) for children
- Logistical preparation for SEL sessions
- A practical day of hands-on training

The SEL curriculum originally consisted of 88 sessions, covering five core competencies (positive relationships, emotional regulation, cognitive development, problem-solving, and perseverance), but was condensed to 12 sessions for the SGO training. This adaptation was made through coordination with IRC and Manahel's partners to align the curriculum with emotional and peer challenges identified by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

The SGOs then implemented two SEL sessions as part of the Summer School and will deliver more in the new academic year.



## Safeguarding Officers now delivering Social Emotional sessions to learners

Manahel, which in Arabic means 'fountains' – of hope, of knowledge, and of life –, is the northwest component of the FCDO-funded Syria Education Programme (SEP). Delivered by Chemonics UK, Manahel provides education to primary school-aged children and, since 2018, has benefited over 600,000 children through school, home, and after-school education and by responding to children's psychosocial and protection needs.

**LEARNING POINT:** Collaboration and curriculum adaptation are key to successfully implementing SEL programmes in schools. By working closely with partners like IRC and tailoring the SEL sessions to align with current interventions and resources – as well as data from the SDQ results – the training became more relevant and manageable. Involving librarians as co-facilitators indicates that engaging multiple school staff members can enhance the quality and sustainability of SEL initiatives.

### Plans for next months

- Work planning and academic year preparations.
- Developing new technical activities for the academic year.
- Finalising the Manahel school list.
- Finalising the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on the school running cost.
- Distributing literacy and numeracy booklets for Grade One students.