

### NIS Oskemen

Research shows that additional incentive systems in the form of points for participation in academic activities significantly increase student motivation and engagement in the educational process (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Studies also indicate that using such methods as mini-projects, assignments, and rubrics for awarding extra points contributes not only to academic improvement but also to the development of independent learning skills (Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

In 2024, our school was selected to participate in the NIS/Sshare project. Within the framework of this initiative, the “A Chance to Succeed” project was implemented to improve the quality of education, boost student motivation, and encourage active participation in learning activities.

#### Aim

The aim of the “A Chance to Succeed” project is to create motivational conditions for students that will help them improve their academic performance through additional points earned for active engagement in project-based learning. Another key objective is to comprehensively assess the impact of this bonus system on students' academic performance and motivation, as well as on teaching organization in the school. The project also aims to identify effective teaching practices that can be shared and applied across other subjects and areas of learning.

An essential component of the project is not only to enhance student performance but also to provide teachers with the opportunity to showcase their best practices, thus promoting experience sharing and improving collective professional culture.

#### Objectives

1. Increase student motivation by introducing a system of bonus points to encourage active participation in academic projects.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of this system based on changes in student performance and engagement.
3. Analyze feedback from both teachers and students to identify strengths and weaknesses of the system.
4. Develop recommendations for improving teaching practices and identify pedagogical methods that most effectively enhance learning outcomes.
5. Assess the system's impact on teaching practices and explore ways to improve teacher effectiveness.
6. Enhance teachers' professional development through experience sharing and best practices realized during the project.

Regular assessment and monitoring of the educational process are carried out as part of the project, allowing for timely identification of issues and quick responses. Additionally, analyzing the effectiveness of this approach provides valuable insights for refining educational practices and understanding which teaching methods and formats are most effective. It is also essential to consider participant feedback—from both students and teachers—to adjust approaches and develop recommendations for improvement. Exploring the strengths and weaknesses of the implemented system, combined with a collective responsibility approach, will help create conditions for further growth and professional development among teachers.

#### Research Methods

1. **Quantitative analysis:** Evaluation of student performance before and after implementing the bonus point system to assess its impact on academic results.
2. **Qualitative analysis:** Use of surveys and interviews to collect feedback from teachers and students, analyzing perceptions of the system and its effect on motivation and academic outcomes.
3. **Comparative analysis:** Comparing various teaching methods and their impact on students, including how different subjects respond to the new system.

4. **Observation analysis:** Classroom and project observations to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching practice, enhancing the effectiveness of instruction.
5. **Statistical analysis:** Application of statistical tools to evaluate data on students whose academic performance improved, declined, or remained unchanged.
6. **Feedback analysis:** Systematic collection of participant opinions to highlight both successful aspects and areas needing refinement.

A total of 168 students and 16 teachers participated in the project. Students who participated showed academic improvement across seven subjects. The average increase in academic performance was 3.28%. The largest number of participants was recorded in Biology (35 students) and Chemistry (30 students); the lowest numbers were in Geography (2 students), Kazakh and Russian languages (6 students each). Improvement in knowledge was noted across six subjects, ranging from +1.82% to 11%, particularly in Geography, Russian, Kazakh, Biology, Chemistry, IT, and Physics. Overall, 63% of students showed improvement in academic performance, 26% showed a decline, and 11% had no changes. Of the participants, 132 students took part in only one subject, 27 in two subjects, 8 in three subjects, and one student participated in four.

By comparing responses from teachers and students, three key commonalities were identified:

1. **Understanding the system:** Students generally found the system understandable, while teachers rated its transparency slightly higher.
2. **Impact on motivation:** Most students reported increased motivation, and teachers also observed this, albeit to a lesser degree.
3. **Alignment with educational goals:** Students believed bonus points helped their learning, while teachers assessed their contribution to educational goals more conservatively.

The implementation of the project helped students develop essential skills for successful learning and future development. In particular, students improved in self-management, time management, critical thinking, creative problem-solving, as well as communication and research competencies. These changes were supported by positive trends in academic outcomes and increased engagement. Participants showed keen interest in the proposed tasks and a desire for self-realization. Successful collaboration was established not only between students and teachers but also among teachers through professional learning communities. This teamwork fostered a more productive educational environment.

As a result of this research, we deepened our understanding of how a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods can provide a holistic view of educational interventions. We learned that collecting diverse forms of data—such as academic performance metrics, surveys, interviews, and classroom observations—allows for more accurate identification of both strengths and areas for improvement. The integration of statistical analysis with personal feedback helped us validate trends and understand the underlying factors influencing student motivation and achievement. Moreover, the collaborative nature of the research process highlighted the importance of teacher involvement in data collection and interpretation, reinforcing that meaningful educational change is most effective when grounded in systematic, reflective inquiry.

## **Recommendations and Future Steps**

Given the achieved results, it is recommended to expand the project's reach, increase the number of participants, and continue improving its implementation. The following model is proposed:

- **For Grades 7–9:** Introduce the project as an opportunity to earn up to 2 bonus points for summative assessment tasks for the unit (SAU).
- **For Grades 10–11:** Integrate the project into SAU structure, allocating 20 points for the written component and 5 points for project-based work, totaling 30 points.

Project work should be structured and include clear, sequential stages with set deadlines. This will help students understand that high-quality projects require time and planning and cannot be completed the night before submission.

Teachers are encouraged to develop integrated interdisciplinary assignments for each grade level and store them in a shared folder. This will create a unified system and offer support, especially to students with multiple low grades. Additionally, introducing **Learning Support Teachers** is recommended to provide personalized help to students facing learning challenges. This support aids in overcoming barriers and promotes deeper understanding and development of metacognitive skills.

## Conclusion

The project proved effective as a tool for enhancing motivation, developing academic skills, and fostering a sustainable culture of research and project-based learning in the school.

Our teachers have been engaging in action research for several years. However, this project helped us rethink our research culture, perspectives, and approaches. As Kurt Lewin said, *“There is no action without research and no research without action.”* Therefore, it is crucial that every action taken by a member of the school community is based on data collected before and after the research.

In the initial stage, we collected comprehensive data: academic achievements, classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students. By triangulating this data, we identified strengths and areas for improvement in both teaching and learning, involving many educators in the process. This work was systematic and collaborative, becoming a foundation for our professional growth.

Initially, we faced some resistance from participants. To address this, we held discussions, learned to listen to each other, and—most importantly—teachers came to understand that every voice matters in decision-making. We, as a team, realized that resistance is a natural reaction to change. We concluded that success lies not in combating opposition, but in supporting those ready for transformation. As a result, every team member took a step forward in the school transformation process.

A successful school is one that evolves based on open research into its own challenges. To conduct such research and implement meaningful change, certain conditions must be ensured:

1. Ensure that every teacher's voice matters in collaborative problem analysis and decision-making.
2. Encourage public presentations of teachers' research findings.
3. Create opportunities to use platforms with modern international sources for high-quality research.

Final Insight from Our Team's Participation in NIS/Sshare:

- Every research project must lead to meaningful change — whether at the level of a class, a grade level, or the entire school.
- Conduct introductory seminars not only for teachers but also for students and parents, to reduce initial resistance by clarifying:
  - the purpose of the project,
  - how points are awarded,
  - what project-based learning entails and why it cannot be rushed.
- Consider introducing short learning modules for students on time management, research skills, and critical thinking.