

*Democratic school leadership - Topic 2: Competences for democratic culture*

**Key questions:** *What competences does a democratic society rely on? How can they be acquired and practised in school?*

*Preparation handout 2.1:*

### **Support for students in acquiring competences for democratic culture (CDC)**

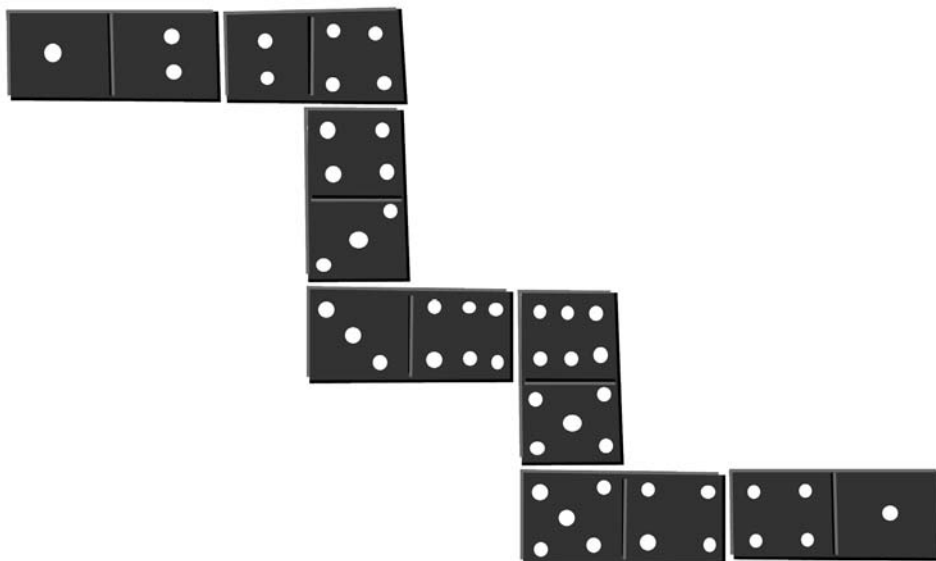
Students learn competences for democratic culture in clusters, or holistically, by linking values, skills, attitudes, and knowledge and understanding. They acquire the competences by deploying them in action and mainly by interacting and co-operating with each other. This raises the question what teachers and the school principal can do to meet their students' learning needs. This handout focuses on the decisive impact of a supportive methodology and learning environment for CDC. For a fuller account and the quotations, see *Reference Framework of [Competences for Democratic Culture, Vol. 3, Guidance for Implementation](#)*, p. 92 f.

#### **At the class level**

- Teachers can create an “open, participative and respectful classroom environment” that offers students a safe learning space. Here, they may feel free to express their views and emotions.
- Teachers can create opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and to participate in lesson planning.

#### **At the school level**

- Teachers can co-operate across the curriculum to facilitate forms of co-operative learning.
- Teachers can co-operate to include CDC in the curriculum and to ensure equity for all learners.
- Teachers can “create opportunities for students to acquire positive high-quality participation experiences through projects in which the experiences are focused on issues that are of importance for the students themselves” (see the case history in [Awareness handout 3.1](#)). Teachers can encourage students to participate in decision-making processes, both in school (see Topic 3) and the local community.
- Teachers can arrange extracurricular activities on aspects of EDC/HRE.
- Teachers can arrange EDC/HRE projects, e.g. debating societies (see <https://www.living-democracy.com/textbooks/volume-4/part-3/unit-8/>)



At the school level, the principal plays a key role in creating supportive learning environments and opportunities for students in CDC learning, through encouragement, support, and co-ordination. For example, CDC learning could be regularly included in the agenda of staff meetings.

A free exchange of opinions on controversial issues in a safe atmosphere of mutual respect may support the development of a cluster of competences for democratic culture including

- Linguistic skills, such as the ability to express oneself clearly and briefly;
- Self-efficacy and empathy;
- Tolerance of ambiguity;
- Valuing of democracy and fairness;
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the topic under discussion.