

*Learning***School as a learning community**

Discussions and new developments are permanently taking place in education. While it is impossible for every principal to be aware of everything some teachers at your school may have relevant information to share. Are these issues in education important for our school? How can we find out? Could we make better use of the time before and after lessons?

**A sustainable system**

In every school community, teachers age more than other people. Students are always at the same age, and most parents also belong to the same age group, with minor exceptions. Thus, the ranks of teaching professionals at a school need replenishment and rejuvenation to counteract the trend, so as not to widen the age gap created by the years. School is a place of innovation, yet many teachers experience the disappointment of system changes that come and go. What is needed is a sustainable system that makes every day enjoyable besides getting the work done, that offers fulfilment and joy, and safeguards fun. Democracy is such a serious issue that it cannot survive without such a sustainable system.

Teachers must be able to understand school as a learning community, and a community where learning is practised. A learning community is aware that collaboration not only improves academic performance, but also helps the members of the community to develop self-knowledge and self-esteem. It is about creating a dynamic, competent participation through practice.

**Two basic elements**

As far as teaching is concerned, a learning community depends on two basic elements: Connecting teaching to learning and creating a culture of collaboration for that purpose.

**Connecting teaching to learning**

Let's take a common example: A teacher teaches a lesson to his/her best. Some of the students have mastered what was taught, some have questions, and others need more help and attention. Here two diverse needs arise: the teacher needs to follow the curriculum requirements and move to the next issue, while some of the students need more time to understand the subject lesson that has just been taught. There is not enough time for both of them. A learning community creates a wider range of possibilities to overcome such a dilemma in that all teachers care about every single learner's individual needs.

As there is a right to education, the school is obliged to offer equal learning opportunities, and teaching designed must to help all learners to achieve their learning goals. Therefore, is not enough for learners to be taught, but it must be ensured that they learn. No matter how simple it sounds, it is a difficult shift from traditional teaching habits. It means that there must be a research of practices that can ensure the equality of learning opportunities, no matter how different the teacher or the learner's characteristics may be. The outcomes of this research must be studied to deliver suitable indicators to describe the necessary steps and their evaluation.

### Creating a culture of collaboration

For teachers to act as a learning community, they must be bound together by a culture of collaboration. If every single learner's achievement is a common goal, then every teacher can contribute to it from a different perspective, offered either by the different subject that he/she teaches, or by the various teaching methods and strategies that teachers use. It follows that the teachers' collaboration cannot be limited by the traditional issues about school program, activities or discipline, but it has to focus on caring for every single learner's needs. This requires working together, discussing and analyzing teaching practices, and collaborative decisions to bring about improvements in professional, scientific, pedagogical or didactical issues. This kind of collaboration requires and encourages the development of co-operation skills that citizens also need in democratic participation, e.g. "identifying and setting group goals" and "sharing relevant and useful knowledge, experience or expertise with the group and persuading other group members to do so". See [Competences For Democratic Culture](#), p. 49.