

*Nutrition*
**Whole school approach versus classroom practice**

When we ask: "What is a school", the answer depends on the point of view. While some might talk about the teacher and what happens in the classroom, others refer to the school community, the school as an important element of society, or simply what occurs during recess. A whole-school approach recognizes that all aspects of the school community have an impact. This applies especially to nutrition which affects the health and wellbeing of all. Wellness as an overall approach and healthy nutrition as one of its elements must be a whole school concern since it is well known how closely linked learning and wellbeing are. Given that young people spend much of their first 15 to 20 years in a school environment, and teachers and school staff perhaps many decades, school is not only the focal point of academic learning, but also the locus of social, emotional and physical development, indeed a place where a lot of food and beverages are consumed. School is the place, where all members of this model society make friends, develop healthy relationships, learn to deal with difficulties and eat together. Democratic leadership does not only reflect the chosen political system of a state, but also represents the culturally diverse communities. Where else are there such varieties of traditions and habits, but in food? Is it possible that these traditional or different regional or national eating habits are not the difficulty today, but rather the globalized, mass production of ready-made food products, which are easy and cheap to buy and consume? Together with the school community, it should be possible to develop a school environment and food culture, that promotes health and good nutritional habits.

Knowing the facts of unhealthy nutrition, it should be easy: a school leader just does not allow certain foods brought from home, or in the school canteen, or the little kiosks and shops on the school campus. However, experience shows that prohibition produces concepts to undermine it. A democratically oriented leader knows that participation is the basis for sustainable solutions: The professional justifications for democratic leadership in schools are grounded in the nature of democracy itself and the social contexts of our communities. Reaching a democratic consensus on issues among educational stakeholders is often difficult in today's diverse communities. Therefore, the school leaders must strive to foster an atmosphere of sensitivity to the values of others. They must give meaning to the actions of the students, teachers, parents and community members with whom they interact. The pay-off to this authentic form of leadership occurs when understanding the value orientations of others provides leaders with information on how they might best influence the practices of others towards the achievement of broadly justifiable objectives like healthy food and healthy eating habits. To bring everyone on board, a school leader needs to know, who knows what, who has which experience in the field of a specific topic. As school leader, I am aware of the competences of the others and I make clear to them: please support our school community with your knowledge and experience (skills)! In terms of a democratic understanding, this also means that you share power with others. But, for this you need to be ready.

