



# Social and Cultural Learning Environments

**Educational Spaces 21.  
Open up!**

**Vol. 3.**



**EDUSPACES21**

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## **CONCLUSIONS**

# INTRODUCTION

In almost every country in the world the concept of school is tainted by an anachronistic model of education. According to this model, school is a place where “students” (individuals) are educated and brought up by “teachers” (individuals). It is the role of a teacher to educate students, and students are expected to learn. Schools should provide students with knowledge and character traits that will prepare them for their adult lives. Not only is this model false, but it is also harmful; it describes tasks and powers of teachers in a distorted manner. It makes it more difficult to notice actual social processes that occur at schools. Additionally, this model prevents us from using schools for positive educational purposes; if our thinking focuses on the future, we fail to perceive schools as places where young people, together with a group of adults, spend a long and important part of their lives. The traditional model is excessively authoritarian and individual-oriented. It puts limitations on both teachers and students; it also fails to properly recognise the parents, the local community and the rest of the world. Today, in times of advanced communication technologies and easily accessible information, this model proves to be too ‘narrow’ and it fails to address the challenges of the 21st century.

In this part of the manual we present examples of alternative thinking about education. In these examples education is perceived as a dynamic and social activity, where relationships between students and teachers co-create and fit into a large network of interpersonal bonds and are a part of life experience. In this way schools become places open to the local communities, to actual challenges present in their neighbourhood, country and the globalised world. The learning process does not come at a cost of everyday life, it is not disconnected from students' lives, but it becomes the very core of the students' and teachers' activities. We present schools that have understood it and do not wait for a reform of the national educational system, but have decided to reform themselves instead. Teachers and students in such schools decided to face difficult challenges, thus that their ambitions are greater than a mere desire to advertise the school or to complete another project. The examples listed below show various - often quite different from one another - attempts to change not only the educational space inside schools, but also lives of children and teachers, of the local community, and even of the entire world.

### **We learn together, not separately**

Is it only about a change for its own sake? Is it only about making school a less boring place and breathing some life into it? This is one of the motivations of headteachers, teachers, children and their parents in schools that have made an attempt at 'getting the students out from behind their desks'. However, there is also a more important thing at stake – creating good conditions for young people to study ef-

fectively and to build a constructive communal life at school. Are these two things interrelated? It turns out that yes, they are.

Scholars researching education have demonstrated that learning is not merely a cognitive act occurring in an individual, but a complex socio-psychological process. First of all – how and how much we learn in our lifetime depends to a large extent on our social and cultural background; it depends on the family in which we grew up, on the number of books that were kept at home, on the level of education of our parents and on their ability to motivate us to study. Also the social environment in which we are brought up plays an important role – the school we attend, whether the students in our course are motivated to study and whether we encounter teachers who are able to instil into us passion for knowledge and firmness of purpose.

Secondly – the ability to absorb information depends to a large extent on life goals that students set for themselves, their beliefs about schools, how self-confident they are and what learning strategies they apply (quite often unknowingly). Creating a body of knowledge involves making use of already existing cognitive structures, so if they are poor or weak, taking in new information and transforming it into meaningful, interconnected and mutually supportive systems will be more difficult. Persons who already have some points of reference learn much faster.

Thirdly – the learning environment itself has a visible social dimension. Classrooms and schools

constitute communities with a defined structure, hierarchy, micro-culture and climate. They are by no means neutral from the educational perspective – to a large extent they may hamper or foster the learning process. Research results indicate that young people learn most quickly and efficiently when they can work in a group of peers with higher, equal or lower skills and talents, when they casually interact with teachers every day, when various ways of studying and seeking solutions are allowed and when the students can participate in deciding on what goals they want to achieve and how. Classrooms and schools should not be treated as random communities, where children and teenagers have to spend several years, but, at least potentially, as learning communities.

### **If you want to have influence on your students, stay tuned to their educational needs**

Teachers and their relations with individual students and the entire group, as well as their strategies and methods of work have great influence on how and what the children learn. John Hattie, the author of the book 'Visible Learning for Teachers', encourages teachers to 'understand the power of their influence'. On the basis of 900 meta-analyses of educational studies (they covered a total of 240 million students!) the author created a so-called influence barometer, which indicates the strength of individual factors, including methods of working with students and other 'forms of intervention'. It turns out that the students' achievements most strongly depend on teachers (on their expectations and faith in students, on the atmosphere they create in the classroom and their openness to new situations), school (its atmosphere and peers), curricula, and teaching methods. Naturally, students' performance is also affected by internal factors (learners' innate attributes, their approach to learning, and their previous experience) and their background (socio-economical status and their parents' aspirations).

Below you will find a handful of guidelines for schools and teachers who want to improve their teaching:

- focus on the progress that students make, and not on the grades; perform regular checks of how your pupils are studying and what they are studying; find out what they struggle to understand and what they need in order to better comprehend given material;
- describe and clearly communicate criteria of measuring progress; tell your students what information and skills they are expected to take out from a given class, task or project; do not teach them everything at once – set clear priorities;
- remember that students get most out of feedback when it is given regularly and based on clear assessment criteria; also instruct the students on how to perform self-assessment and peer assessment; use feedback from students to find out what is missing in your classes and what could be improved upon;
- show them – also by your own example – that learning also means making mistakes and constantly searching for new solutions, and that the role of the teacher is to set the bar adequately high, but also to secure a potential fall with a soft mattress right behind it...

It turns out that one of the key attributes of a good teacher and fine teaching is openness to feedback from students: learning from them about what they already know and what they are able to do, about what they do not understand, what they are yet unable to do and what should be taught in a different manner. It also means embracing risks that individual and team work involve, mistakes students make, various shortcomings and ways of seeking solutions, unpredictable situations and original ideas – for instance ideas for non-standard projects.

Enthusiasm for learning is one of the most desired products of school education. It may be contagious, one can acquire it and pass it on; every one of us has for sure met in our lives at least one teacher who was enthusiastic about their work and remembers how

their classes stood out compared with other courses. Een schools may be full of enthusiasm or devoid of it. Examples that we present below demonstrate how this enthusiasm may bring about visible and meaningful change.

### **Motivation and emotions – fear is a poor teacher**

It is not only about turning a school into a nice and pleasant space (although it is valuable in itself). More serious issues are at stake. It turns out that emotions and motivation constitute key elements of the learning process and it is virtually impossible to achieve anything without them. Research indicates that students are more motivated to study if they feel they are able to meet their teacher's expectations; when they see a clear connection between their work and their achievements; when they perceive what they learn as important and meaningful and when they believe that classes, teachers, their peers and school support their learning process. There is also a lot of solid evidence that when students experience negative emotions – fear, shame, the sense of not being treated fairly, sadness, anger, helplessness – they fail to focus on learning and become unable to work efficiently. Teachers should avoid making comparisons and personal criticism; they should also constantly encourage students to celebrate their achievements, even if they are not spectacular. When students fail, instead of making a negative statement such as: “Why am I not surprised?”, it is better to say: “I appreciate your attempt, but your answer was wrong. Do you have an idea why it is not correct? How could you solve this problem differently?”

We know both from research and from our own experience that students are susceptible to criticism, failures, and that it is easy to hurt or discourage them. It is believed that a part of educational failures result from fear that one's efforts will not yield results and one prefers not to take action instead of doing something wrong and being judged or getting a low mark. Teachers also have their sensitivities. Even though they are not always willing to admit it, they care about their work and about how they are treated by students, parents and colleagues. An

open school is a place where one can admit one's weakness, sadness, and where one may expect understanding and support. It includes both one-off initiatives to help ill colleagues or charitable activities to help those in need, but first and foremost, it is about noticing the needs of other people in their everyday school life. The best situation is the one in which everyone has a chance to experience both roles - helping others and asking for help. It is also beneficial when there are a lot of such situations and they start to affect the general atmosphere in classrooms and in the entire school.

An open school encourages students to cooperate. The spirit of team work should be present in all groups - among students, teachers, parents and in the entire local community. Such school rejects competition, which implies that children are expected to show their superiority over their peers and thus infuse their parents with pride. Also teachers in such school do not work in the void, but talk to each other about how teaching could be improved; they try to resolve problems together, implement joint projects and learn from one another. The rule of ‘we share what we have and what we know’ applies both in classrooms and in the teachers' room. A school does not resemble a closed, guarded fortress – parents are welcome and they are invited to participate in joint projects for the benefit of the students; they are asked to voice their opinions and they are asked for help.

The schools we present here are very open to the local community. They organise sessions of reading aloud for toddlers, sports events for parents and all interested persons and evening activities for the elderly. They open their doors and make their football pitches and baseball courts available for the local inhabitants. Such schools become centres of community life, and they are far from being lone islands.

### **Meaningful and joyful school – is it possible at all?**

Social, civic and cultural dimensions of a school are important not only because they may foster or impede learning. They are important for their own sake, because children and adults live parts of their

lives at school. Those lives may be meaningful and joyful, or the opposite – meaningless and miserable. According to the PISA study, Polish students are not happy at school and they identify with their school only to a limited extent. Even if we assume that Poles are generally reluctant to admit that they feel happy, this state of affairs is worrisome. It also means that one should appreciate and set as examples such schools and situations at school that make one feel happy, or which at least bring some joy. A good case in point are the “Workshops of pretty things,” organised by a school in Czeszochowa.

Members of the same grade are potentially a learning community but, first of all, they are a living and interlinked group of children or teenagers who spend thousands of hours with each other and who go through hundreds of difficult situations and important moments. It matters how they feel with one another at that time, how they treat one another, whether they help each other out or if they remain indifferent, if they do something together and for one another or against one another. One may have an impression that schools all around the world are discovering this aspect of their activity anew. Those schools start to realise that they are not ‘waiting rooms’, nor even places where one ‘prepares’ for life, but life in itself. It has been understood by the headmaster and teachers from the school in Radowo Małe which was described in the introductory volume. Teachers and headteachers in schools described in this volume perceive their institutions in a similar manner.

### **How to transform an asocial school into a civic space?**

Polish schools, just like schools in many other European countries, are not focused enough on developing social and civic competence. They devote too little time and space to real teamwork, helping each other out and openly discussing difficult issues or working together for the benefit of the school and local communities. They do not give enough support to students’ initiatives and students’ autonomy. According to the ICSS study that has been carried out for many years in over 20

countries all over the world, in Poland there is a visible discrepancy between how students and teachers perceive their school. The latter are convinced that they give their students a lot of autonomy and that they listen to their voice, while the younger respondents believe that they have very little actual influence on the school life or the teaching/learning process. According to reports based on an external evaluation of schools’ performance, only 6% of students feel that they can suggest how a classroom or school should be decorated, while 4% feel that they may influence the rules of school life and the grading system. There is also a fundamental divergence between the headteachers’ and teachers’ opinions on students’ participation and the students’ everyday experience.

Schools do not teach students how to be involved or how to take joint decisions. They recreate low level of social capital and fail to improve confidence in others. They do not give the students a sense of community nor an impression that they can have an actual impact on reality. Children and teenagers unwittingly reproduce the model of low social engagement, they are reluctant to get involved in self-help or voluntary activities or to work for local associations and other organisations. This state of affairs is a by-product of the excessive focus on ‘following the curriculum’, mechanical tests and using summative (instead of formative) assessment, which entails competition and fear of failure. External tests and exams strongly affect teachers’ work, students’ behaviour and parents’ expectations; such tests trivialise education by turning an exam score into the only criterion for measuring success.

### **Involvement and activity matter**

Polish schools are learning how to become facilities that educate students to become active citizens. An open school is an institution where children are regularly asked to express their opinions, ideas are consulted with them, where decisions on important matters are taken jointly – for example, how physical education classes should be organised (see: round table on sport at school) or how a common room should be arranged.



There are various working methods and strategies, but they have one thing in common – they get children and young persons involved in real, tangible activities that are socially and civically meaningful. These may be short, one-day-long initiatives, educational projects spanning several weeks, students' self-government yearly activity or the entire school community getting involved for the benefit of the local community (Seniors' Club at school in Podmokle Małe).

Such initiatives are supported by numerous non-governmental organisations, public media and public institutions that give students the opportunity to get involved in public affairs – from local 'green' initiatives to projects advocating diversity and equality; from projects similar to 'young people go to polls' to charitable fundraising for victims of the earthquake in Nepal and inviting students to Letter Writing Marathons in defence of prisoners of conscience, held by Amnesty International. This volume includes numerous good examples that can be emulated!

The goal is to do something real, to make students feel that they are a creative force, even at a small-scale. It gives them a sense of civic empowerment. The purpose is to get involved with other persons, find solutions or even have arguments, but most importantly – to give each other support. This gives them a sense of community and teaches team work. It is doing something for oneself and for the others. It gives satisfaction, joy and a sense of pride. If young people feel that they have a say, they are more willing to get involved and they treat developments at school and its neighbourhood as their responsibility, not someone else's. This is how young citizens come to life. Children who did not experience cooperation and joint responsibility become adults who are reluctant to participate in public life, who become mistrustful or cynical with regard to their fellow citizens and authorities.

### **Social capital - wanted!**

A good school should be a place which develops not only human capital in individuals, but also so-

cial capital – i.e. capital built through mutual trust, cooperation and self-organisation. Social capital deficit is one of the main obstacles to development in Poland. Schools that operate in this way (and they are quite often located in small towns and score less in external test) do not receive enough support from institutions or educational authorities. They should be appreciated, showcased and put in touch with one another, so as to build a network of schools with 'good practices' and to encourage others to learn from their experience. It was exactly what happened with the primary school in Podmokle Małe village (Lubuskie region) or in Radowo Małe (Zachodniopomorskie region), where the most active schools participating in programs "Szkoła z Klasą" or "Szkoła Ucząca się" organised by Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej (Foundation Center for Citizenship Education), or institutions that belong to the nascent movement of "awakening schools" set up networks of schools seeking new models of work.

For several decades sociologists have been pointing out that the Polish society is characterised by strong excluding ties that strengthen the status quo; in particular family and national bonds. At the same time the opening, bridging, and emotionally weaker ties are less pronounced. However, this kind of bonds allows one to change their life situation, to develop, as well as to overcome rigid socio-cultural divisions.

In Polish schools both types of bonds are rather weak. The excluding ties are more pronounced however; they close groups and prevent children and teenagers from various social groups and subcultures from cooperating with each other. On the one hand, such excluding ties naturally reproduce cultural models present in the society at large, and, on the other hand, they are additionally strengthened by the rules of communication and social distance that are present in Polish schools – for instance, competition among students and members of a grade, exclusion of 'others' and finding scapegoats.

Most schools operate according to the same model; they focus on human capital, i.e. they develop particular skills in individual students, and fail to focus

on the social capital, i.e. on increasing mutual trust, team work, giving support to weaker students who come from families and communities with lower socio-economic indices (lower level of education and income), as well as to children with special educational needs.

### **Why building social capital at school is so difficult?**

At first sight schools seem to be a perfect place for building social capital. They provide a safe space for children's and young people's activities. At school students can learn how to trust others, how to organise themselves, how to work in mixed teams and how to benefit from the support of adults, if such a need arises. Secondly, declared goals and norms of the Polish education are perfectly in line with the idea of building social capital (c.f. content of core curriculum for general education). Thirdly – the shared fate and challenges that students and teachers face together could stimulate development of various types of bonds, both emotional and 'civic'. The joint effort could encourage creation of smaller and larger 'teams', task teams and communities, and finally – taking school activity outside classrooms and the school building.

Regrettably, in many schools it is not the case. Why? Because what is valued is individual achievements, and competition is often preferred to cooperation, whereas social and civic competence are of secondary importance. Children and teenagers study 'alone', instead of studying 'together'; instead of sharing knowledge, they pursue it on their own. Teachers lack incentives to cooperate and support one another; moreover, they lack good cooperation models. Interactive and team-based methods are not compatible with a majority of Polish and European schools, because they require flexible hours and small groups. In addition, they do not result in the highest scores at tests. It would be unfair to blame headteachers and teachers; schools have limited room for manoeuvring, because very often tests results decide about how school, teachers and students are perceived.

Meanwhile what we need is 'making schools more social'; we need to strengthen the sense of belonging and co-dependence in everyone – both children and adults. Teachers must be better prepared to facilitate team work, to identify and resolve problems and conflicts in classrooms and at school, and to discuss controversial and ambivalent issues.

### **Joint decisions, joint responsibility and work**

Interpersonal relations at school should be built on the foundations of the sense of security, trust and treating children and young people as subjects. Hierarchies and divisions should definitely be avoided. The communication model should support dialogue and cooperation, also among teachers. The leadership style must be changed from a 'forcing' one to a more dispersed model, engaging teachers and the entire school staff, students, and - when possible - also parents. It should rely to a larger extent on consultation, listening and finding solutions together. Polish schools need round tables more than podia or rostra. Young people can make great use of such opportunity, provided that they see that their voice matters. It is the case at schools where students are consulted about the rules of using new technologies or about the rules that apply during PE classes. How to turn students' self-government into an actual institution? You must genuinely share power and responsibility with the students; it can be observed in our open and opening schools.

New IT and communication technologies may help to open a social and civic space at school. If one is able to make good use of them, they facilitate making contact as well as sending and receiving feedback; they encourage exchanging ideas and making teachers', students' and school's work more transparent and visible for all.

### **Praised be diversity**

A closed school tends to stifle diversity instead of supporting it. Every child is at the same time similar to other children and – in some respects - unique and 'different'. One of the most important educational tasks that a school needs to fulfil is to create an

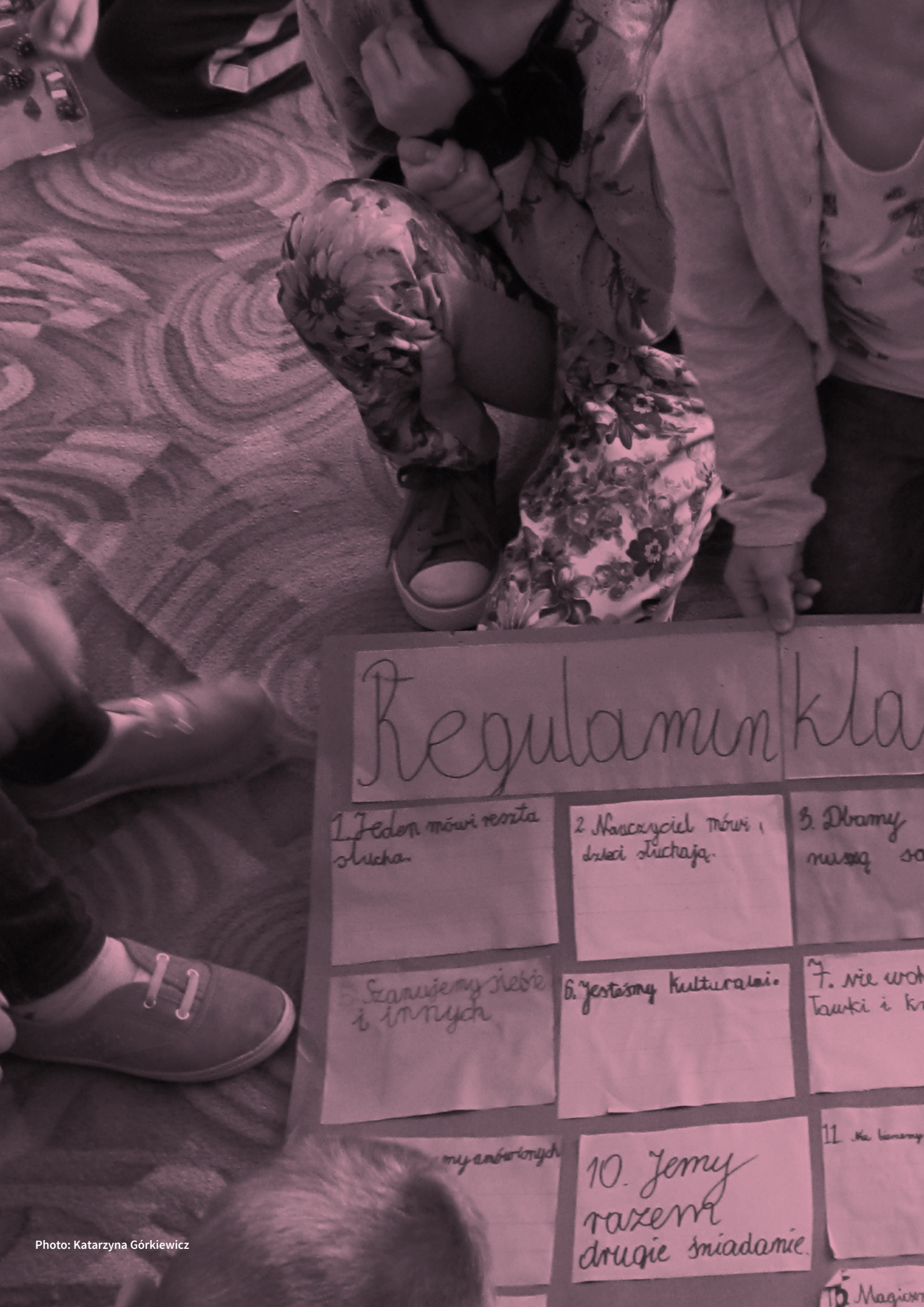
atmosphere in which not only is diversity accepted, but which is full of respect and curiosity. It is especially important now, when in Europe, and in particular in Poland, xenophobia,` fear that leads to a sense of superiority, contempt and aggression are gaining momentum. Our schools try to go against narrow and limiting models of ethnic-national identity, they search for traces of multi-national traditions in their towns and familiarise students with German or Jewish history of their region and Poland. They fight against prejudice, they hold social campaigns against hate speech – not only online, but also in the streets of their towns. They discuss the issue of refugees, they think about why this topic triggers so much fear and aggression and plan what they can do together with regard to that matter.

All those school projects, regardless of their topics, have an additional dimension of ‘opening up a school’; students assume new roles and shed stereotypes of a ‘polite girl’, ‘too-cool-for-school boy’ or a ‘shy student’. They expand their body of experience and discover new talents and passions. They learn how to build relations with one another, teachers, inhabitants of their town and... the rest of the world.



**ALICJA PACEWICZ**  
**Center for Citizenship Education,**  
**Poland**





# Regulamin kła

1. Jeden mówi reszta  
słucha.

2. Nauczyciel mówi,  
dzieci słuchają.

3. Dbamy  
miejscu so

5. Szanujemy siebie  
i innych

6. Jesteśmy kulturalni.

7. nie wot  
taurki i kn

my anforonych

10. Jemy  
razem  
drugie śniadanie.

11. Nie kłaniamy

15. Magician





# SPACE FOR CO-DECISION AND JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

my 2 C

4. Pracujemy w zespole,  
kiedy jest taka  
potrzeba.

podziwiamy na  
przestrzeń.

8. Nie robimy niczego co  
takie nie ma.

codziennie

12. Nie wiadomo na  
podpisanie nie otrzymamy  
otwier.

e słowa

16. Uwaga! Pracujcie z

## THE VILLAGE OF YOUR DREAMS: CHILDREN CHANGE THEIR COMMUNE

**We are experiencing a difficulty with lack of civic action among children in our area. We would like pupils to be informed and active participants in the social life.**

**ELŻBIETA RYCZEK**

**Educational Complex in Podmokle Małe, Poland**

“We aim to cultivate civic attitude among pupils.” This statement is probably present in the statutes of most schools, if not in all of them. But have you ever asked yourselves, what it really means?

At first glance it seems obvious. We can organise a project that involves taking pupils for a trip to local authorities or give a performance about historical figures. These activities are definitely important; however, they fail to get to the heart of the problem. We quickly realised that we would not succeed in stimulating social activity among pupils if we based the concept on adults giving orders to children. For our actions to be successful, we should empower pupils and give them the possibility of making decisions concerning themselves and the environment they live in.

It is easy to say: “let pupils make decisions.” Perhaps this works in middle schools or secondary schools. But surely we cannot let pupils from primary schools decide! On the other hand... why not? When children attend a middle school, it is already too late to cultivate civic attitudes. Raising informed and active participants in social life should begin as early as possible.

The idea of civic actions was conceived during art classes when pupils were working on projects entitled “the village of my dreams.” We asked ourselves a question why not put it into practice and let the children influence the place they live in? Yes, we also thought: it is impossible! But we will give you some good advice: believe us, everything is possible. The

first step is to strike off the word “impossible” from your vocabulary.

We started from surveys. Children talked to people from their commune and asked them about its strengths and weaknesses. They learnt what was good about their area and what the residents were dissatisfied with and what they wanted to change. By way of example, one of the problems included too intense heavy goods traffic through one of the villages. Children investigated the matter by counting the lorries passing by. Other issues concerned illegal rubbish dumps and lack of modern playgrounds.

The results of the surveys were presented in the form of a multimedia presentation. Pupils wrote a letter on their own to the chairperson of the Town Council in which they asked for the opportunity to speak during the next sitting of the Council. The chairperson agreed and the children presented their report reviewing the situation in our commune in the eyes of its residents. Due to huge commitment of pupils, the visit was a success and everybody was very pleased. The presentation was received with applause. At the end a group picture was taken. In the course of the project, we met the mayor twice. We met with a warm reception and the mayor, seeing the results of our work, encouraged us to further investigate the existing problems.

Our actions resulted in new playgrounds, some of the roads have been improved and plans to build a bypass around the village have been initiated. We



also learnt about the structure of local authorities and the principles of democracy. Pupils saw that residents have the right to be informed about and to control the activities of their local government. That they can take part in the Town Council's works, ask questions, put forward motions and petitions, organise demonstrations, etc. This way school teaches children to be proactive and raises young citizens in the spirit of shared responsibility for the area they live in.



### Good advice

It is good if children learn how their local government works and what its rights and duties are beforehand. It is also important that children get to know how residents of a commune may influence decisions taken by the authorities. Sound planning must not be forgotten. The implementation of the change does not require a lot of time. It is the preparations that are much more time-consuming.



#### TIME:

the project lasted 16 hours and was implemented by pupils from the 4th-6th grade (10-13 year-olds)



#### FUNDS:

no costs at all



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

teacher (in our case this was a history teacher) and pupils

City Council Meeting in Babimost. Pupils present recommendations concerning municipality development following public consultations. Photo: School Complex in Podmokle Małe.



## EMPOWER PUPILS TO CHANGE THE SCHOOL

**A school is not merely a building where classes are taught. A school is above all the people who spend their time together working or learning. A school is also a place of encounters which should give the opportunity to talk about matters important to us, to solve everyday problems and put the ideas of change into practice. A truly open school is only the one where the teachers, the headteacher, parents, and, above all, pupils build a community together. How do they do this? By sharing power with the student self-government.**

PIOTR KOZAK

Middle School No. 7 in Kalisz, Poland

In this middle school in Kalisz, the process of giving students power began from the simplest matter which was, coincidentally, very dear to the entire school community – from their canteen. The project of the school canteen renovation and the change of its menu was subject to a co-decision procedure. It was a grassroots initiative that came straight from students and was recognised by the whole school community.

What did the co-decision procedure look like? First and foremost, the idea was discussed during weekly class meetings and, later, at gatherings of class representatives with the student self-government council. The parents and the students also had the chance to speak out their opinions in questionnaires, where (thanks to open-end and close-end questions) they expressed their views on the design of the canteen and the quality of food served there. Both the student and parent communities agreed with the project team members that the canteen needed changes.

The room was renovated in line with students' suggestions. The headteacher's headteacher provided the financial means for that purpose. After the renovation, the canteen was supposed to be a place of gatherings and presentations of students' achieve-

ments, too. The youth also had the opportunity to share their ideas with the student self-government council through a box of suggestions.

After the renovation, the project group set to work on the menu. They set up a forum where they collected ideas for dishes the students liked eating. Right after the opening of the renovated room, the company renting the canteen conducted tasting of new dishes among approximately six hundred students and teachers, which provided the basis for the final selection of the new canteen menu. At the end, a suggestion box was set up where guests of the canteen can still put their proposals as to further innovations that could be introduced to the canteen.



### Good advice

**Paweł Sobczak, the project manager, states that all activities aimed to find out about the students' opinions and the results show that the students' ideas can actually be put into practice. Getting involved in the project made the students feel more closely related to their school and, consequently, now they can take responsibility for the decisions they make. Let's not fear giving students power. Let's risk it. The results can indeed exceed our expectations.**





**TIME:**  
3-6 months



**FUNDS:**  
the project is an investment



**RESPONSIBILITY:**  
headteacher'sthe headteacher's office,  
teachers and students.



Pupils conduct a debate on physical education and decide what changes can be introduced and how. Photo: Primary School no. 5 in Czerwionka-Leszczyny

## SCHOOL PEER COURT

**We would like to teach our students to take responsibility for themselves and for others, and to show them how conflicts may be resolved inside school.**

**JANUSZ ŻMIJSKI**

**Secondary School No. 44 in Łódź, Poland**

Ever since our school was founded, we have wanted it to have strong democratic structures as one of its pillars. We have wanted the students to learn how to be responsible for themselves and for the school community; we have wanted them to be able to resolve conflicts and renounce violent behaviour at school. It was the reason why we set up a special judicial institution: a school peer court. It was created because we had an idea to create a space inside the school where students could experience in practice the principle of being equal before the law – both in creating and enforcing the law. For most students it was the only experience of this kind before entering the adult life and facing the mechanisms of contemporary democratic state.

On a personal note, I can say that ten years of performing duties of a ‘teacher-judge’ was one of the most memorable and inspiring professional experiences. As a ‘teacher-judge’ I was involved in examination of several dozens of cases and problems, from trivial to very serious ones. The extent of the court’s activity was truly impressive; it examined nearly one hundred cases of conflicts and breaching school norms every year. It was a very popular institution at school and left only a few students indifferent. The court evoked strong emotions; some students felt perturbed, others were fascinated. There were also students who had unrealistic hopes and expectations with regard to this institution, which often resulted in disappointment.

The peer court was composed of ten ‘student-judges’ and ten ‘teacher-judges’. Initially the judges were elected for one year term of office in universal, fair

and secret ballot. It was not possible to remove a judge during his or her term of office. All students and teachers had active voting rights. The court was entrusted with the following tasks: examining submitted cases filed, i.e. collecting information and clarifications regarding examined cases, hearing out persons who had a case brought against them, carrying out court sittings during which the parties concerned should have a full possibility to present their case. The court was publishing its decisions in the form of notifications on court information board and it was imposing sanctions. After ten years an additional institution was created – a witness incognito. One had the possibility to appeal from the court’s decision to the gathering of the Secondary School Community. The community would then appoint at random seven of its members to sit in the jury. The jury examined the appeal and its grounds, and announced its verdict. The jury’s verdict was final, without a possibility to appeal.

We are all equal before the law. It means that charges could be pressed both against students and teachers. During over ten years of my work in this school, there were a total of twelve cases in which charges were pressed by the students against the teachers. All teachers who appeared before court complied with its decision. The fact that students decided to bring a case against some of their teachers shows that they had a lot of trust in them – apparently they did not fear unpleasant consequences.





The concept behind our school peer court was a general reference to the experience of Janusz Korczak, a great reformer of pedagogics, who filed in complaints against himself to the peer court: “I have brought myself before the court five times over the last six months. Once for slapping one boy in the ear, once for throwing a boy out from the bedroom, once for putting a boy in the corner and once for offending the judge [...] these several cases constituted a cornerstone of my upbringing as a just, constitutional educator, who does not hurt children not because he likes or loves them, but because there is an institution that protects them against anarchy, lawlessness and despotism of the teacher”.



### Good advice

What kind of punishment is administered by the school peer court? Punishments vary – from a warning issued by the xxxheadteacher up to (in extreme cases) striking off from the list of studentsexpelling from school. Usually more ‘fun’ punishments are applied, for instance: preparing and putting up posters with apologies, official apology, preparing and carrying out a lesson (or a part of a lesson) on a given topic, removal from a position held in a community or an obligation to wear a comic book character costume or funny headgear for a specific period of time. Also community work sentences are in use, for instance an obligation to carry out work on a smaller or larger scale and to remedy the damage.



**TIME:**  
no limitations



**FUNDS:**  
there are no costs



**RESPONSIBILITY:** the  
entire school community

Let's provide children with an opportunity to take responsibility for themselves and for others. In this way, we can start building a real community. Photo: Middle School in Dębno.



## FROM TRUST TO RESPONSIBILITY

**Our school has a computer laboratory. Students would love to use it when they do not have classes; however, there are too few teachers-guardians who would ensure safety of the youth sitting in the laboratory. How could this challenge be tackled?**

**PIOTR KOZAK, ANNA SOBALA-ZBROSZCZYK**

**Paweł Jasienica Social Secondary School No. 2 in Warsaw**

"Why aren't you in your classrooms?" – you certainly heard this reprimand in your school times while wandering along the corridor during classes. It is easier to give a reprimand than to provide a solution. The problem is not that students are outside the classroom but that they have no place where they could spend their free time.

For our school the challenge was quite demanding as, due to specific work organisation, students have relatively many free periods between their lessons. The easiest solution would be to open the computer laboratory for them. Between their classes, students would be able to browse the Internet for some valuable information or do their homework on a school computer. It would be a perfect solution if it were not for one challenge. Safety. We cannot ensure them full day custody in the school laboratory. The computer hardware is also expensive. "Are we really supposed to allow unattended students use the computers?", the teachers asked and their doubts were partially right. We could not leave the students without supervision. But who said that they cannot keep an eye on themselves?

In case of our school, the basic challenge was to develop a system where, on the one hand, students would be vested with responsibility for the school computer lab and, on the other hand, they would not be left alone. That required teachers to learn to trust students, and students to learn to take responsibility.

We set a rule that a student may be granted the right to take the key to the computer lab and to use the room independently on the condition that they earn trust of the IT teacher, who is responsible for the lab. The teacher interviews a given student and evaluates if they are capable of assuming responsibility for themselves, other students and the computer hardware in the lab. A student who is granted the right to take the key to the laboratory may admit other students to it, provided that they consider them trustworthy and able to share the responsibility. While such a student has the key in their custody, they are entitled to manage the laboratory and other students should obey them. All other students must leave the laboratory when the student having the key in their custody leaves. Students are required to report any difficulties or non-compliance with the rules to the person responsible for the laboratory.

The system of shared responsibility has been in place at our school for several years now and it has proven to be particularly successful. We have never experienced any difficulties such as damage to computer hardware. Students feel responsible for the school, which strengthens their feeling of identification with the institution even more and teaches them independence.



## 💡 Good advice

Disciplinary challenges are rare at our school. However, it is important to react immediately and adequately strictly if need be. In our case, a student who violated the rules, e.g. did not

behave themselves, failed to react to the orders of the student in charge, etc. is banned from the laboratory as a punishment.

 <b>TIME:</b> 1-12 months	 <b>FUNDS:</b> no costs at all	 <b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b> a teacher, students and student government
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Computer lab was left at pupils' disposal. They can use it whenever they want to, and they are aware of the amount of trust that was put in them. The pupils also decided how to decorate the walls of the lab. Photo: Piotr Kozak.









A photograph of a classroom scene with children sitting on a patterned rug in a circle. In the background, a whiteboard displays handwritten text: 'tarea > halogran > delogran > gran' and 't by day y'. To the left, a shelf holds various supplies. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent pink filter.

# SPACE FOR COLLABORATION

# PEER EVALUATION

**Our students find it difficult to evaluate their own progress. How could we help them learn to assess their own work and the work of others?**

**PIOTR KOZAK**

**Middle School No. 2 in Brodnica, Poland**

You have certainly heard a child or a student saying: “Johnny got an F, too.” This is because students constantly compare themselves to each other. Perhaps peer evaluation is even more important to them than a grade received from a teacher. It is worth learning how to come up with reasoned evaluation and not to compare oneself exclusively based on abstract grades and marks. The latter may be useful to create a mere Excel table.

This should be our Mantra to repeat: giving students feedback is one of the most important tools affecting the educational process. It was proven by Professor John Hattie in his book *Visible Learning for Teachers*. However, we are not always aware of the fact that the art of giving feedback should be mastered not only by teachers but, more importantly, by students themselves. The purpose is not limited to providing the information about the educational progress or the lack of it, but to develop in students the ability of self-assessment and critical approach to their own work and the work of their classmates.

We noticed the advantages of educational evaluation at our school a long time ago. But at some

point we saw that it would be worth involving students in the process. This brings a double benefit. On the one hand, we wanted to teach our students the ability to indicate what is good and what needs improving in other people’s work. On the other hand, our intention was to develop in them the difficult art of self-assessment, the ability to identify strengths and weaknesses of their own work. Those two issues are strictly interrelated. While evaluating others, we can look critically at our own doings.

We experimented with feedback in the second grade of the secondary education school. During a class, selected students prepared speeches on a given topic. The remaining students were to assess their classmates’ presentations. It is important to remember to discuss with the students the criteria of the assessment beforehand, both with regard to speech preparation and peer evaluation. In our case, the teacher first discussed the rules for preparing speeches and giving feedback. He also devised a table in which students put their marks for particular criteria while a speech was presented.

CRITERION	MARKS		
	2	1	0
Was the purpose of the speech achieved?			
Did the speaker use various linguistic means to interest the audience?			
Was the speech to the point?			

Sample table for assessment





**“A class incorporating peer evaluation shows students how much effort you need to receive a good mark. It teaches them to be cultural, tactful and to contain negative emotions towards the less gifted or shy students.**

Anna Jurczak, biology teacher,  
5th Upper-Secondary School Complex  
in Krosno

On the basis of the criteria given, students evaluated the speeches. They also had the opportunity to express both their positive and negative opinions on the presentations. Then, the teacher collected the evaluation sheets and, based on them, prepared a summary feedback that was subsequently present-

ed to the speakers. The summary feedback contained such information as, e.g. what criteria were met and what should be improved or made up for. Students were excited about the opportunity to assess others and to be assessed by classmates. What is more, students who were subject to peer evaluation were keener on improving their performance.



### **Good advice**

**Let's always remember to be objective in our evaluation. We never criticise our classmates personally but only the performed tasks. We should primarily focus on the positive aspects of work. Let's not allow the critical remarks evolve into nit-picking. We must stick to the rules of the assessment set and provide assessment in line with the scheme. It is important that we give some tips as to what could be changed or improved.**



Pupils learn how to cooperate by giving feedback to one another. Photo: Primary School in Strzelęcin

# BUILDING LIFE SKILLS – SELF ASSESSMENT

## How can self-assessment be taught as an integral part of the curriculum?

JUSTIN SISMEY (HIE-RO)

The Freie Schule Rügen, Germany

Werkstatt Schule, Rostock, Germany

The Ecolea International School, Rostock, Germany

One statement often made in many pedagogical discussions always surprises me, that is that students lack the capability, and indeed the willingness, to undertake self-assessment. My experience with children is a different one. They organise a race to figure out how fast they run, plays to test and demonstrate their skills, and, if they are asked to select the best players for their football team, they undoubtedly are capable to assess their own and others' performance and skills. So, why is there such a strong feeling that students have to learn self-assessment? Or take it differently. When students, in principal, are capable to self-assess their performance, what is different in a school context, that we have to reflect on self-assessment?

There are a couple of issues that have to be taken into consideration. Firstly, it is an issue of power. Assessment is in the traditional approach, principally, the monopoly of teacher. Thus, self-assessment is about changing teacher roles and control. Secondly, assessment, in general, is closely related to motivation. Any assessment, positive or negative, by externals or by oneself, will have an influence on learning esteems. Education is a continuous effort. There will be lows, much frustration but also other stimuli that attract student attention. Self-assessment is closely related to ideas of self-determined learning. Thus, external control and extrinsic motivation provided by teachers is constrained. A major aspect of self-assessment is increasing frustration tolerance, avoidance of frustration by setting realistic goals, staying focussed and being determined and persevering. Lastly, it is about the nature of the learning processes it-

self - its transparency and its causalities. Any assessment is based on a comparison – a state is compared to a reference value. A self-assessment becomes difficult, if I do not have a clear idea of the reference value. It is comparatively easy to measure my running speed, but if I do not know the correct solution of the mathematical calculation, how should I know, how far am I away from it? And even if I understand my performance, I do not necessarily know ways to improve it.

Self-assessment is about communication. Indeed, group learning plays an important part in this. The benefits of students working in a cooperative way in groups include enhanced learning through collaborative learning and assisting teachers to effectively utilise their own time. Self-assessment requires to identify, to describe and to understand moments of failure, mistakes, and difficulties and learning barriers. Self assessment tools are effective, if they are unfolded in communication in the group and/or in bilateral student-teacher conversations. To express and analyse own emotions and thoughts students require a group atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

The Freie Schule in Rügen and Werkstatt Schule in Rostock respectively have group meetings during class time and thus the focus in these situations is less on the teacher but much more so on the groups themselves. Through these group sessions students are much more able to learn from each other and also provide an opportunity for students to clarify and refine their understanding of concepts through discussion and rehearsal with their peers. More im-



portantly, the individual learning styles are different. Moreover, working within groups helps to motivate students to work for the benefit of the group rather than themselves as individuals – there is sometimes the potential for students to feel more responsible for their contribution to the group compared to how they would feel when working alone; they do not want to be seen as “letting down” their team/group members.

The Ecolea International School in Warnemünde encourages, in some classes, the feedback by students of other student presentation work. Although this is not strictly individual self-assessment and leans more towards group assessment, it is nevertheless seen as a useful group tool for developing self-assessment skills. In this situation student groups provide feedback and suggested scoring for other student work, though this is closely overseen and monitored by class teachers to ensure parity and consistency as well as adherence to prescribed criteria. Moreover, students are encouraged to think carefully about the effects of their feedback and use a “sandwich” method that is framed as positive/negative/positive when actually giving feedback. The Ecolea International School also requires students to complete beginning and end of year self-assessment feedback forms. This is undertaken on the basis of expectations and stated aims in the autumn term and followed up with what has actually been achieved in the reflecting back part.

Educational standards are usually given. It is important to make curricula accessible in ways that students at any level are able to understand learning objectives. The Werkstattschule in Rostock uses competence grids to summarize and define and communicate standards with students and parents. Basic standards are set in a way that they can be passed by everyone, to avoid discouraging students with learning difficulties. The perception that efforts result in learning progress – even if it is small – is a motivating experience and releases energy to tackle the next challenge, while experiencing failure is frustrating. However, regular

and higher standards can be more selective. The Freie Schule created a kind of a traffic light system for the self-assessment. Content-related and social learning competences, forms of learning and work related behaviour as well as the self-satisfaction are described in a comprehensive, yet accessible way, and allow students to assess their current stage. Teachers do the same, and different assessments are jointly discussed and compared.



### Good advice

**Student self-assessment is clearly an important part of student development in a range of skills that can later pay dividends well beyond school life. Self-assessment strategies should not necessarily be one dimensional, that is, relying on only one method. Students are more likely to react positively to different ways of reflecting on their learning experiences and thus any strategies for developing student self-assessment should include several strands that integrate both written pro-formae (thus keeping a record) as well as oral methods. However, it is important that self-assessment becomes an integrated and normal part of school life and throughout the whole school rather than seen as something that is simply an add-on.**

### Further Reading:

Enhancing Student Learning Through Assessment

[http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-development/assets/pdf/250309\\_assessment\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-development/assets/pdf/250309_assessment_toolkit.pdf)

Peer and Self-Assessment of Student Work

<http://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/lt/resources/handouts/StudentPeerAssessment.pdf>

# PRETTY THINGS WORKSHOP

**Our students do not identify with the school and they have difficulties with finding a reason to study. We have been trying to remedy the situation with traditional methods, but we failed. What else can we do?**

**ANNA SOSNA**

**Marshall J. Piłsudski Middle Schools Complex in Częstochowa, Poland**

Who needs a school? It is a tricky question, especially when asked by our students. After all, students are experts in asking tough questions. Do you have a ready answer?

Please, do not tell them that 'a school is a place where you learn things'. We have already tested it in our school. It is a wrong answer, especially for students who are not particularly keen on studying. There is only one possible worse answer: "to pass an exam". When you think back about your school years, do you remember tests and exams? From the time perspective they seem even less important than they actually were.

Is school a good place to learn? Of course it is! However, one should not forget that learning should, first of all, expand students' horizons. So, what do we need schools for? Schools are there to educate students. Do not associate it, however, with military-style discipline! A good school helps students to discover themselves, to grow and develop. Do you remember your time at school? The most fascinating thing about this period was discovering who we were.

But how does one get to know oneself? In our opinion the best way leads through art. Would you like to develop imagination, passions and interests of your students? Give them space to express their personalities. Let them be creative.

We are not an artistic school. We have no expertise in supporting artistic talents. We do not have a formula on how students should be taught (besides, who can say that he/she has one?). The only thing that we could give them was space for self-expression.

Organising a workshop of pretty things was the first step in that direction. Teachers and invited guests were instructing students how to make jewellery or how to paint on glass. The chemistry teacher taught the participants how to prepare simple, home-made cosmetics. We were designing clothes and sewing them together with our students. It was also important that our students' works were put on display during a festival. We have set up a temporary exhibition of their works. It was very important for the participants of the workshops that the public appreciated their works. Does it sound simple? Simple ideas often work best.

Our great success was that artistic work made the students believe in themselves. We never would have achieved it with any talk, reprimand or an exam. "During these workshops I learned how to make unique items that cannot be bought in ordinary stores. I am very glad that no one will possess a thing of such beauty and that I have made it myself," said one of the participants of the workshops.

The students also developed a creative approach to problem solving, which could later be observed during lessons. They were more eager to cooperate and did not withdraw when faced with difficult tasks in maths or physics class. "Participation in the workshops gives me a lot of satisfaction. Making jewellery was initially a challenge, and it taught me to be very patient", said one of the students.

Additionally, a special bond developed among the workshop participants and teachers. The time spent together allowed them to get to know each other.



It has positively affected the atmosphere at school and relations between students and teachers. “Ever since I started to attend these workshops I enjoy going to school much better.” These workshops were attended mostly by girls. Unexpectedly it turned out to be important and added a meaningful dimension. Workshop participants continued old traditions of the times when women were learning one from another and when they were giving emotional support to one another. This aspect of workshops was not intended and turned out to be very precious – especially due to difficult family situation of many of our students.



### Good advice

**It is a good idea to start with describing resources that you have at your disposal and talking with parents, students and teachers. Guests invited to conduct workshops bring in diversity, a fresh perspective and they help to create a good atmosphere. You should make sure that participants can enjoy the workshop on their terms – in a space that they created and without time pressure.**



#### TIME:

one year for planning, organising, implementing change and evaluating results.



#### FUNDS:

it is a low-cost project



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

this project should involve as many participants as possible. The more participants there are, the greater the diversity.



The fact that pupils started to believe in their own abilities thanks to artistic work was the biggest success for us. Photo: Anna Sosna.

## STUDENTS READ TO YOUNG CHILDREN

**Can we promote reading while engaging young people in doing something for others? All you need to do is set up a school reading club and invite young children, e.g. from a local nursery, for joint reading sessions.**

**ALICJA GROBELSKA**

**Middle School No. 9 in Pakość, Poland**

Not only does a school reading club groom the reading habit among students but also, thanks to appropriate selection of books, it enables its members to learn more about the place they live in and strengthens the feeling of local identity. Group reading is not all there is. A given story may provide the ground for games, workshops, art classes or theatre performances.

Students from the school of secondary education in Pakość visited the nursery three times, each time combining reading with music. At the beginning of the first session, they read a famous Polish rhyme *The Needle Danced with the Thread* (*Tańczyła igła z nitką*) by Jan Brzechwa. After reading, it was time to design carnival costumes and a dancing lesson. During the second gathering, students read a story entitled *In the Land of Music* (*W krainie muzyki*), talked about their musical passions and the construction of some musical instruments. The last meeting was devoted to Easter traditions (*Easter Tale* [*Bajeczka wielkanocna*], a story by Agnieszka Galica), decorating Easter eggs and music games.

While listening to stories read to them by older fellows, the young develop their imagination, broaden their vocabulary and practice memory and noticing cause and effect relationships. Including musical or artistic elements additionally affects their spatial imagination, manual skills and motoric coordination. On the other hand, teenage students learn responsibility, perseverance and

patience, the features indispensable when working with young children. They also develop the skills of public speaking, planning their actions, time management and working with a diversified group. School coordinators of the programme often point out that teaching classes to the young boosts the teenagers' self-confidence and motivation for reading. The form of the classes during which teenage students become guides for young children opens the social space of the school, closing the distance between age groups arbitrarily created by dividing students into grades and classes. The reading club project integrates the school environment. It builds emotional relationships between the listeners and the readers, the young children and the teenagers.



### **Good advice**

**One of the main challenges of the volunteering programme is keeping the volunteers motivated throughout the project. The initial enthusiasm may sometimes fade away, especially when students encounter the first obstacles and the reality differs from the expectations. It is the teacher's task to discuss the scope of responsibilities with the students, to talk to them about possible difficulties and how to manage them before the teenagers set to work. It is worth encouraging students from the very beginning to plan their engagement in the volunteering programme and particular classes with the children. If the teacher receives the plan of a reading club**





session two weeks in advance, the odds that students will talk themselves out of it at the last moment with too much work are low. Thanks to that, we also ensure that the class-

es are of appropriate quality – the scenario of the meeting can be discussed and improved together in advance.

**TIME:**

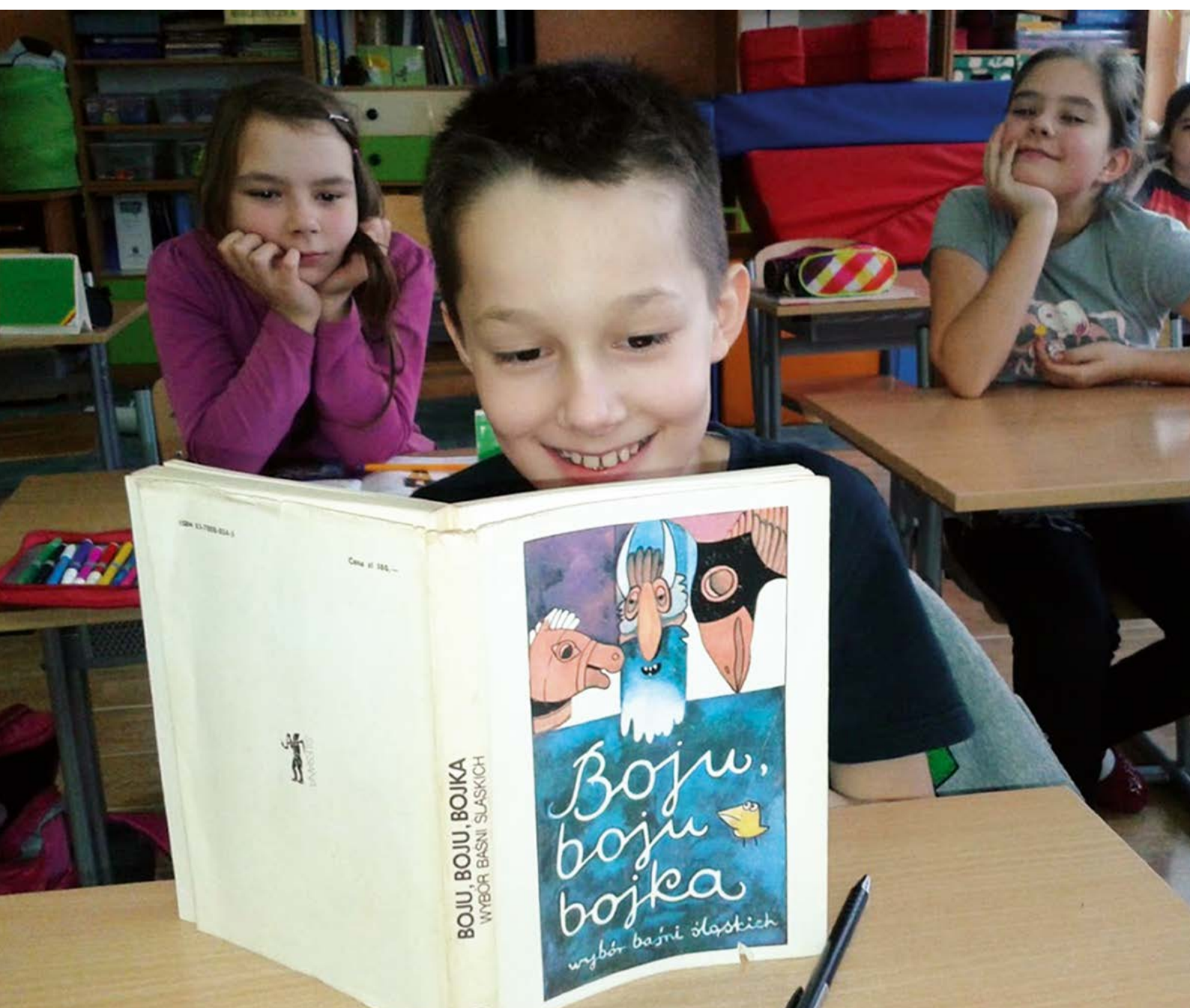
depends on the number of meetings planned; however, it is good to stretch the plan of the project throughout the whole school year

**FUNDS:**

no costs at all

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

a teacher, students and local community





## IT ALL BEGINS WITH A SKILLED SCHEDULER

**We would like to teach our pupils how to organise their work and how to take responsibility for one another. How do we go about encouraging them to do so?**

**FRIDA MONSÉN**

**Vittra School Teflonplan in Stockholm, Sweden**

A school's task is multifaceted. We are not merely here to teach our students but also to raise them into independent, responsible and socialised individuals. Another task facing schools is to prepare students for a future career. In the midst of a daily routine marked by the pressure to achieve targets and where course topics must be processed in a short space of time, it is easier to choose the well-trodden path down which tried and trusted methods are the obvious first choice. The classic format of lessons, individual study questions and final exams, is rife throughout our school system all the way up the academic ladder. This is an educational model that may be effective for absorbing large amounts of course material in a short period of time but it offers little or no opportunity to use knowledge in a relevant context. Digitalised teaching that merely repeats the same method, but using digital aids, will generally give the same results. So, how should we think if we want schools to offer the complete package, both knowledge of individual subjects and an ability to collaborate with others using methods and working practices that reflect a likely future career?

Project-based working methods are a way to provide students with the opportunity to work in teams with a variety of roles. During my time working at Vittra Telefonplan just outside Stockholm we arranged an annual film festival, giving the pupils three weeks to work on all aspects of producing a film. During one year, documentary films on environmental issues were the theme of the festival. These films formed part of a wider working area, so

the pupils already had relatively good grasp of the basic subject matter. One purpose of the documentaries was to delve deeper into certain aspects of the subject but they were also intended to actively train those non-cognitive skills and competencies important to obtaining a good result. From the beginning they were permitted to divide the responsibility for the various areas of production between them. A group leader was appointed, another person might be responsible for props and locations and a third for collating previous research and choosing the relevant parts for inclusion. Graphics were also required and suitable subjects needed to be selected for interviews. A scenario familiar in any real workplace. And much like any workplace this process was far from conflict-free. It did however provide us with the opportunity to work on socio-emotional skills in a real-life context rather than as part of a distinct core values project. This connection to real situations was also important in engaging the students in the final outcome, making it easier for the teaching staff to convince them of the importance of being able to collaborate and listen to one another throughout the process.

Another important component is the physical conditions the students are provided with in order to carry out their work. Do they have access to digital tools in order to communicate and express themselves? What do the spaces in which they are asked to work look like? Do they have the opportunity to leave the school premises? And not least; what form does the organisation take?



### Good advice

Few workplaces could maintain momentum with the fragmented schedule, diffuse subjects and allotted minutes that characterise the working day in most schools. If I were to give a

solitary piece of advice along the way, it would be to look closely at the conditions the organisation provides for teachers and students to work on more coherent and overarching projects. It all begins with a skilled scheduler.



#### TIME:

from one to several months.



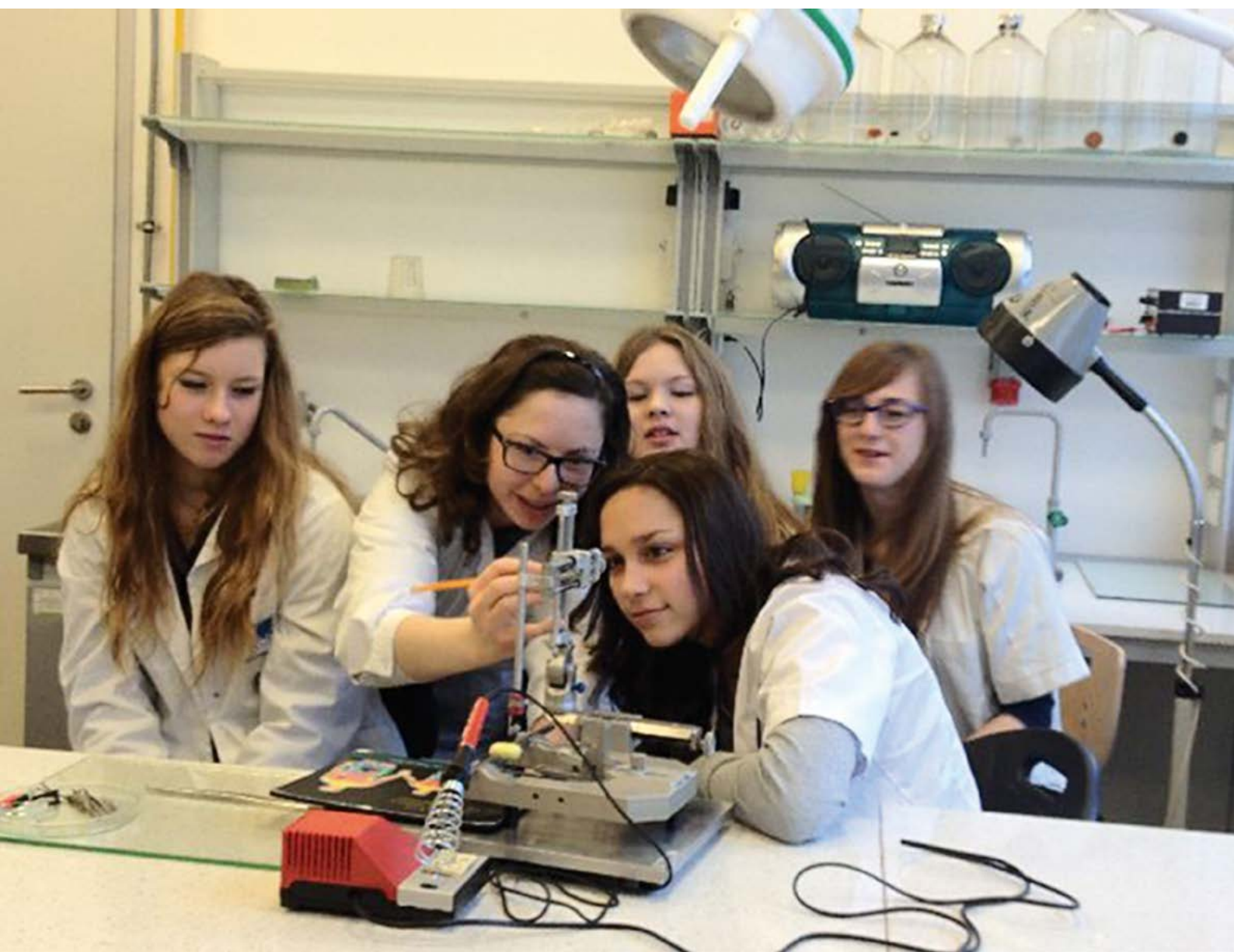
#### FUNDS:

low cost project.



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

teacher and students.



Project-based work can prepare children for coping in their future jobs. It is worth providing pupils with authentic working conditions that resemble professional environment. Photo: [blogiceo.nq.pl/clikeyculture/](http://blogiceo.nq.pl/clikeyculture/)

## A SOCIALLY ENGAGED MOVIE

**Think globally, act locally. This well known slogan was formulated a long time ago during one of the UN conferences and poses quite a challenge to schools, which should promote such an attitude among the young. How can we help students better understand the network of global interdependencies and the impact each of us has on the surrounding reality?**

**ELŻBIETA SATOWSKA**

**Middle School No. 9 in Lublin, Poland**

Students from our school made a film entitled “Are Anita and Weronika Responsible Buyers?” talking about responsible consumption. The film was a project closing the school’s participation in the programme “How to Organise the World?” carried out by Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej in co-operation with Gazeta Wyborcza.

In our activities, we used the guidelines of the project handbook prepared for the purposes of the programme mentioned above. We chose a topic that interested us most and agreed on what we would like to change in our surrounding. We decided to make a film. We were able to do this thanks to film workshops with Osiem Życzeń (Eight Wishes) Foundation. We wanted our work to be authentic, to show real experience in the field of overconsumption. We showed how we can contribute to solving this global challenge locally, taking daily decisions.

Making a film about a global challenge opens the school in two ways. On the one hand, it is a demonstration of its active participation in solving problems of the world today. On the other hand, this commitment goes beyond the school building. Owing to the fact that the film has been published on the Internet, the message has reached a large number of people.

It is important for the school to be open to students’ point of view – they are the authors of the scenario, they choose the topic and how they want to talk about it. Making students the authors of the message that is supported by the school strengthens children’s feeling that they have impact and can change the world. The use of multimedia technol-

**By embracing global education, we teach responsibility. It is worth employing unconventional methods for this purpose. Photo: Flickr glob\_BYwoodleywonderworksCC BY 2.0**







ogies is a sign of courtesy to the young, who prefer this channel of communication, and of the school's being open to new technologies.

Scenarios prepared by non-professionals and amateur acting may exaggerate the features of the social groups presented. Let's not allow the students to resort to stereotypes in creating and presenting film characters. Although it is easy to simplify the story by e.g. using the character of a homeless person to present the problem of poverty, we encourage the youth to tell the story of their characters rather than focus on the external (visual) attributes of their current situation. While discussing challenges faced by the South, let's avoid exoticism and unjust simplifications (see how to talk about Africa).

Global challenges are usually overwhelming due to their scale and range. We should be careful not to allow them to make the students feel helpless and hopeless. It is good when a film has a positive message: a proposal of a solution to the problem or its reduction. We should make the students feel that they have the power to change the world.

The more people watch our film, the better! Let's publish it online and then use different channels of communication to tell people about it (social media, e-mails or local media). It is a good idea to present the film during a school event. You could ask a local community centre to screen it during an event concerning global education. Let's encourage teachers to use the footage in their classes.



### Good advice

**Making a film requires equipment, software and preparation. If you do not have a video camera, you can use your mobile phones. The software necessary for film editing and graphical design can be easily found on the Internet – open-source substitutes of professional tools and trial versions with limited licences. Before you start recording, it is worth getting familiar with tips concerning film making for educational purposes.**



#### TIME:

1-5 months



#### FUNDS:

low costs



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

students and a teacher. It is worth involving local community, authorities and NGOs.



Project-based work enriched in new technology allows for developing several different competencies at the same time. Photo: Primary School no. 2 in Bochnia

# THERE'S NO "I" IN TEAM

## In what ways can team work be included as an integral part of the curriculum?

JUSTIN SISMEY (HIE-RO)

### Context/Situation

Ecolea International School has recognised that, in order for students to achieve a comprehensive and well-rounded education, integrated teamwork, which is framed by the school in several areas, is imperative. They have seen that the more teamwork principles are displayed, the more opportunities students have to learn and hone the essential skills of compromising, negotiating and collaborating.

Teamwork is an essential part of private and public life, both in the Ecolea and outside it. Thus teamwork is less of an option and more of a necessity for equipping students for life. But the school had to ask and review, how could such an important life skill be properly and fully embedded within the school itself and across all disciplines and subject areas? The answer that the Ecolea has to this question is to ensure that teamwork is seen as a norm at all levels and at all times irrespective of both the tasks in hand or who is involved.

Within the Ecolea, teamwork has had to become an integrated way of school life. Thus to have become embedded the school encourages teamwork across all disciplines, formal and informal. This has also meant there are both rewards and consequences when team members don't pull their weight. As an example, every class student has an individual task to fulfil for the group, e.g. cleaning the blackboard, watering the plants, collecting the mobile phones at the beginning of school, etc. Where a student does not undertake their task to the required standard they are penalised with a "yellow card", which is then recorded on a list that is pinned to the classroom door for all and everyone to see! The "yellow

card" signifies that the student has to do a "social service" for the class, e.g. cleaning the class room, dining room etc. Should a student "collect" five yellow cards, his or her parents are informed about it by the teacher. This might seem harsh but this is in line with the principle within the school that teamwork works both ways and failing to be a good team member brings consequences and is not simply just about letting the team down. But for the Ecolea, teamwork is not only about how pupils and teams function together, they see that teams need also to have conditions and environments that support teamwork. A key area here is the design of classrooms which needs to support teamwork and thus the Ecolea has "Scandinavian-style" furniture that includes triangular shaped desks and moveable blackboards that can easily be rearranged for group-work activities.

Teamwork is also encouraged through something that the Ecolea describes as a "Fun" project. This project is where responsibility for teamwork is placed with students whereby tutoring and additional learning support is offered by pupils for other pupils. Through this pupil-led initiative, students learn to lead teams and to work together while being focused on the overall aim of improving pupil school achievements in various subject areas.

But teamwork in the Ecolea goes wider than just being a school focused on the simple betterment of pupil achievement. Teamwork is seen as being absolutely essential for the benefit of third parties and the other communities. An example of this is where students participate and organise activities



together, not only in the form of project work but also in the form of activities for and which benefit communities – a charity run is regularly organised in which the students also take part and they decide together which good cause or organisation to whom the money collected should be donated.

A last key area that it is also important for the Ecolea school to use teamwork is in pupil presentation and project work while actual analysis is done of teamwork in the Skills subject. Here the teaching focus includes looking at team roles and how teams should function and analysing and talking through any issues that might have arisen previously in teamwork - what went well and what didn't function as it should have etc.



### **Good advice**

**Making students aware of what teamwork is and what it means is an important part of creating the conditions for teamwork to succeed and thus teacher intervention during teamwork is an important part of the teaching process. Likewise, embedding teamwork as a norm (and as an integrated part of the curriculum), where**

**sharing ideas and working collaboratively needs sometimes to be a guided process, especially if students do not have sufficient experience of activities that encourage such behaviours. Sometimes, particularly with younger learners, these skills need to be developed over time and consequently some learners need lots of practice and in different ways. But what is most important about teamwork that pupils need to learn is simply but importantly that there is no "I" in teamwork!**

### **Further Reading:**

The Importance of Teaching Your Children Teamwork

<http://www.theschoolrun.com/importance-teaching-your-child-teamwork>

Promoting Student Self-Assessment

<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/promoting-student-self-assessment-30102.html>





A high-angle, monochromatic photograph with a pinkish-red tint. It shows a woman and a young child sitting on a paved surface, looking down at a map spread out on the ground. The woman is on the left, and the child is in the center. A smartphone lies on the map near the child's hand. The text 'SPACE OF COMMUNITY BUILDING' is overlaid in a white-bordered box in the center.

# **SPACE OF COMMUNITY BUILDING**

# PARENTS AS SCHOOL PARTNERS

**Our school used to struggle with lack of engagement in the educational process on the part of parents. We wanted to change it and to involve them in school life.**

**ELŻBIETA SATOWSKA**

**Primary School No. 30 in Lublin, Poland**

It is easy to complain that a parent at school is a nightmare! On the one hand, parents do not engage in school life but, on the other hand, they are constantly unhappy with something and feel that the teacher is an enemy who acts to children's detriment. We know it from our school reality, where contacts with parents (if any!) used to be limited to parents' evenings.

But it does not have to be that way. A parent at school has great potential. Above all, parents' presence gives us a chance to join the powers in the teaching and educational process. At our school, we noticed that it is crucial for the children to know that the parents and the teachers act together for the sake of their education. On the one hand, the parents who are involved are more aware of their offspring's educational progress and react faster to possible challenges, on the other hand getting involved in school life gives the parents the chance to feel important and needed.

How can a school open itself to parents? The change begins with the school headteacher. The headteacher needs to win parents as his/her allies, he/she needs to get off their high horse and stop being an omniscient person who knows best what is good for the school and start discussing problems and asking for opinions and advice instead. We wanted the parents to believe that they can have real influence on our school.

There is no simple recipe for involving parents in school life. We, for instance, took several actions at

once. First of all, we intensified the parent council meetings. In those meetings, parents receive full information about the school and decisions made by class councils. We plan all actions together.

Additionally, we included parents in educational activities. By way of example, a grandfather pays a visit to the school during classes, talks about the time of war and shows his extensive military collection. We invite a grandmother who teaches the children how to make Christmas decorations or cross stitches. A dad who is a policeman or computer programmer, or an aunt who is a nurse come and give their lectures. A mom gives Zumba classes and a brother who is a member of a knighthood group together with his fellowship add splendour to school celebration of its patron's day.

It is vital that parents are part of everyday school life. If we organise a bike trip, parents come too and prepare a barbecue together with the headteacher. We invite parents to basketball or rugby matches. For years we have collected waste paper in the neighbourhood and we have spent the funds earned to buy books to our library or invite writers to meetings that are also attended by parents and grandparents.

We also respond to parents' needs. A lot of them are willing to take part in programming lessons, workshops on filling in electronic tax returns or the use of Internet. We appreciate parents' work. They always receive our thanks, certificates, small gifts and congratulation letters.





The results of the actions we have taken have been surprising even to us. On the one hand, we have enriched our educational offer and made the classes more interesting; on the other, we have made the children more proud of their parents. Also, among the parents, the number of allies has increased and there are fewer of those “constantly unhappy.” Parents have become aware that they have impact on the school and they can participate in decision making to a great extent. They are no longer the petitioners but they have become the co-hosts.

A healthy relationship between the parent and the school is definitely the ‘Holy Grail’ of Polish education. We do not claim that we have found one. However, it is absolutely worth reaching for.



### Good advice

**Involving parents in school life is a long process as it requires building mutual trust. Do not get discouraged in the case of failures but devise a good action plan. Changes that appear to be insignificant often bring surprisingly positive effects in a long-term perspective.**



#### TIME:

depends on individual conditions at a given school. It is certainly a process that has to be continued until mutual trust has been built. Obviously, not everyone will be always happy to co-operate, but that must not discourage you.



#### FUNDS:

no costs at all



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

headteacher's office and teachers.



Games and parties for all are a great occasion for parents to engage in school life. Photo: family sports activities in Józef Tischner Primary School no. 2 in Żory

## LOCAL SPORTING EVENT

**We can see quite often that the youth are unwilling to take any physical activity. This attitude most usually stems from the passive approach of the parents. How could we change it and spread the passion for sport not only among students but also in the entire local community?**

**BEATA BABIK, MAGDALENA ŻACZEK**

**Public Middle School No. 3 in Leopoldów, Poland**

We decided to organise a sporting event for the families of all our students. The Active Family Day was attended by our students' parents, brothers and sisters as well as grandparents and other relatives. While preparing that event, we asked the parents council and the headteacher's office for financial support of the event to cover the costs of symbolic prizes for the winners of particular competitions. Parents learnt about the Active Family Day during a parents' evening; we also put invitations on notice boards and the school website. All equipment necessary for different sports competitions was obtained thanks to the courtesy of the school staff and local sponsors.

We spent the whole day actively, in line with the slogan "Fun, Health and Sport." After the official part, all the guests were invited to take part in sports competitions, which were held in the gym due to bad weather conditions. The Active Family Day was full of unusual and fun disciplines. The purpose of the event was not limited to mere competition. What was even more important, was the participants' integration and spending the time in a way that would result in positive associations with sport. The competitions included a parent-child race (in a set of trousers where the parent and the child each wore one trouser leg), a race with hula hoop rolled in front of the runner (for children) and a tyre (for adults), blind race, throwing a beret at a target and races in



**Local sports events  
in Józef Tischner  
Primary School no.  
2 in Żory and in the  
Koziegłowy Middle  
School**





too big wellingtons. We also took care of the artistic part of the event. The competitions were accompanied by shows of our school talents. The girls sang songs dedicated to parents and presented a gymnastics routine they prepared by themselves. At the same time, outside the gym, an art contest was held under the slogan “How to live a healthy life?”, during which many interesting works were produced.

Joined efforts of the teachers, parents and students resulted in a successful sporting event and promoted healthy attitudes among the children and their parents.



### Good advice

It is worth beginning your preparations for such an event from starting an initiative group composed of teachers, involved parents, representatives of local authorities and people responsible for promoting physical activity in the commune. Next, a student project team should be formed, which would consult the initiative group and devise an action plan and schedule. One of the purposes of local sporting events is overcoming the generation and economic gaps; hence, it is worth including mostly competitions focusing on integration.



#### TIME:

preparations took several months, the event was held on one day



#### FUNDS:

low-cost project



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

entire local community



# SENIOR CITIZENS! COME BACK TO SCHOOL!

**Our locality is home to many senior citizens. How could we involve them in school activities and use their educational potential?**

**ELŻBIETA RYCZEK**

**School Complex in Podmokle Małe, Poland**

We are a small village school, which is the centre of events for our neighbourhood. This is where cultural life thrives and integrates the people of local villages. We live far away from major cultural centres like Poznań or Zielona Góra, so we have to organize everything ourselves.

The world is changing so rapidly that the knowledge we acquire during a lifetime quickly becomes obsolete. Seniors are no longer perceived as “fount of knowledge and wisdom.” Today, seniors rather learn from children (e.g. how to use new technologies and keep up with changes). However, as there are no natural spaces for intergenerational contacts, the young and the elderly know very little about each other and rarely work together. Stereotypes arise on both sides.

What is more, the senior circles, particularly in the countryside, have immense needs. First and foremost, there are no places where seniors could gather and feel needed. We decided to change it.

We decided to check in practice how much the young can learn from the elderly and so we engaged seniors in the educational process. At our school, we organised events called Edukationy during which elderly people had the opportunity to work with school children. Those were three educational events on different topics; each time they lasted 3 to 5 hours.

One of them was titled “The old and the new playground games.” Senior volunteers showed the children what games they had played in their youth

and the children were excited to learn those. The purpose of the meetings was for the children to learn some traditional playground games and for the seniors to recall the times of their childhood. The ladies also conducted handicraft workshops: sewing, crochet, knitting, sewing buttons, embroidery, and making Christmas decorations.

Still, it is crucial not to focus exclusively on acquiring knowledge from the seniors but also to offer them something in exchange. Children from our school showed the guests how to use new technologies, e.g. how to do basic things on a computer and how to write text messages. The ladies also took part in gymnastics and Nordic walking classes. The sports classes were conducted with the use of the school sports facilities. Another activity included going to the swimming pool and water aerobics. This was a particularly remarkable experience since most of the participants went to the swimming pool for the first time in their lives. One of the events integrating the local environment included Christmas dinner for all the participants, which concluded the project.

At first, activating seniors at our school brought humble results, but with time our guests took more initiative. We hope that making new friends and deepening the existing relationships with one another will result in strengthening mutual respect and recognition. In the years to come, we are planning to include senior citizens in the school structures and to create permanent volunteering programme engaging the elderly.



### Good advice

Introducing an educational volunteering programme for seniors at schools requires thorough preparations as the elderly and the young are not used to working together. The seniors who have not worked with young people for a long time

may feel uncomfortable. Therefore, the head-teacher and the teachers should offer them support and give them the feeling that they are really important to a given school. During the first classes, guests should be assisted by teachers.



**TIME:**  
approx. 6 months



**FUNDS:**  
low-cost project: PLN 5,000 or less



**RESPONSIBILITY:**  
teachers, pupils, the principal's office,  
parents and local authorities



When a school becomes a local activity centre, all generations have a chance to meet. The photo presents pupils showing senior citizens how to use new technologies. Photo: [blogiceo.nq.pl/sp5klasa5a](https://blogiceo.nq.pl/sp5klasa5a)

## A BLOGGING SCHOOL

**Although blogs are easy to use and do not require specialist IT knowledge, they are still underrated as a teaching tool. They can improve communication with students and encourage them to engage in dialogue. It is worth using their social potential and including them in the teaching process.**

**MAGDALENA JANISZEWSKA, PIOTR KOZAK**  
**Primary School No. 12 in Białystok, Poland**  
**Primary School in Damice, Poland**  
**Middle School No. 6 in Bielsko-Biała, Poland**

Are you familiar with Maffashion or Littlemoonster96? If not, then you were probably born before 1990. Those are pseudonyms of the most popular bloggers in Poland followed by several thousand readers. In the younger generation, blogs have replaced the traditional media and children are in their element when browsing blogs. You know nothing about that world? It is definitely worth learning about. From the teacher's perspective, blog popularity constitutes a great opportunity to use them as a communication tool.

A teacher's blog is, above all, another way to contact students. Both sides acquire an additional channel of communication, which can also prove helpful with homework. How? By giving homework through the blog, appreciating students' progress there, commenting on interesting posts, giving suggestions and tips for further work. Many teachers stress that thanks to blogging they also build an exceptional relationship with students, as blogs are "a shared activity and shared discovery." Anna Jędryczko, a teacher from the Primary School in Damice, repeatedly praised her students for commitment and ideas presented by the girls on the blog, as well as for the creativity demonstrated during seemingly usual classes at school. Katarzyna Zawajska-Dominiak, a teacher from Białystok, supported her students by promoting the radio drama they worked on for almost the whole semester.

Anna Wójcik-Jachowicz, a Polish teacher from a school of secondary education in Bielsko-Biała also used a blog as an additional channel of communication and inspiration for her students. There, she published links to different materials which could be useful while preparing for a class, project or test in Polish. Anna's students were surely happy that they can also be an inspiration and source of knowledge for their Polish teacher. Danuta Chwastek, a Polish teacher from Inowrocław was active on her blog, too. She used it to publish links to websites related to the subject of the last lesson or encouraged students to use audio grammar review materials.

Teacher bloggers are also willing to discuss topics they find interesting or school dilemmas they face. Sometimes it is good to go beyond the school walls and confront a problem in a broader circle. Working methods, lesson scenarios, examples of experiments and exercises may prove helpful for educators from other places. The network of mutual inspiration is unlimited – throughout the year in the comments section, people exchange their ideas about lessons and how to change them, creative work after classes, projects and inspirational activities for the whole school.

Teachers' blogs are usually open to the public, including parents. A lot of teachers use their blogs to show how active the school works, how interesting





everyday classes are and what projects are carried out at school. Today, everybody is online – everybody reads, watches, comments and publishes

various things on the Internet. A teacher's blog may become an additional place where willing parents could engage in matters important to their children.



### Good advice

In need for an inspiration? Here is a handful of useful links:

<http://edublogawards.com/2015/12/18/and-the-2015-winners-are/>

<http://blogiceo.nq.pl/szkola2zero/blogi-nauczycieli/>

<http://blogiceo.nq.pl/kobietazklasa/2013/01/27/koniecznie-tam-zajrzyjcie/>

<http://blogiceo.nq.pl/kobietazklasa/2012/11/21/galczynski-i-madre-owce-czyli-dzien-pelen-atrakcji/>

<http://blogiceo.nq.pl/mamtikam/2013/02/19/sluchowisko-1/>

<http://blogiceo.nq.pl/6wsieci/2012/12/30/tez-sie-od-was-ucze/>

<http://blogiceo.nq.pl/tiknapolskim/2013/04/24/audiopowtorka/>



#### TIME:

indefinite



#### FUNDS:

no costs at all



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

a teacher and students



Blogs are a great tool that combines virtual and pedagogical learning methods. Photo: Primary School in Karniewo

## LEVEL UP THE LEARNING PROCESS!

**Pupils are not sufficiently active when we test new, project-based working forms. How can we make them more motivated to drive their own learning process.**

**FRIDA MONSÉN**

**Fjällenskolan, Stockholm, Sweden**

I'm sure that the majority of teachers will recognize the situation. Project-based work, a looser framework and groups that don't work well together. We try to break down the traditional teaching structures and give our students the opportunity to pursue a project in a more informal manner, but the result is not what we intended. I particularly recall an assignment in which the pupils were given the task of producing their own TV channel on YouTube, to include films on the theme of history and the development of people and societies. Recurring conflicts and an all too loose framework brought about results that I could barely bring myself to watch! These projects are often driven by one or a handful of pupils among the group. In the best case scenario, they divide the work among themselves and present the results as if they were a product of a collaborative effort. Other groups are masters of giving the impression that work is progressing, before revealing two days before the due completion date that they have barely formulated a point of departure.

Why then do we insist on persevering with these type of methods in school when we find it so desperately difficult to make them work in a satisfactory manner? One reason is of course that our policy documents demand it, but another reason that weighs heavily on us is that the abilities that are trained in project-based tasks are the very ones that are in demand in working life. If our students are never given the opportunity to train these abilities in school, they will find it harder to adapt to a future workplace that places high demands on tak-

ing responsibility and showing initiative. The thing is that even the YouTube TV project contained a variety of learning situations and both I as a teacher and the students developed during the course of it. We merely lacked the metacognitive tools to recognize it. The project Spelifiera lärandet - Kan man levla Lgr 11? (The gamification of learning - can you level-up in LGR11?) was created to change this. Would it be possible to use the mechanisms of gaming to make visible the abstract abilities that form the basis of the learning process?

To a large degree gaming is made up of those things that school so often lacks; a clear mission, frequent feedback and a visual method of measuring skills. By creating a gamified framework in which projects became quests, with well-adapted challenges making it clear to students which abilities they need to level-up in order to succeed with the project, the focus shifted to the learning process rather than the content. The project was a success. When a couple of years later we launched a larger film project, we identified bravery, collaboration and responsibility as examples of the abilities that the pupils would be required to level-up. In the event of conflicts we were then able to challenge different individuals by pointing out that it takes courage to say sorry, or to ask them for concrete suggestions as to how they might develop their collaborative abilities. If, after a period of joint reflection with the teacher, they felt that they had succeeded in this, then the group was able to see an immediate result as their skill bar was charged and in the end they were able to level-up.



### Good advice

The experience gained in this project shows that it is important for those who wish to employ gamification in the context of project-based work to understand that it is not a matter of creating a competitive mentality in which the students challenge one another. Rather it was

the work on a group level, where as part of the process we jointly engaged in a high level of self-evaluation, which provided successful results. Our aim is to clarify the learning process, not to discover who can reach the highest level.



**TIME:**  
3–6 months



**FOUND:**  
no cost



**RESPONSIBILITY:**  
teachers, principal



Gamification is a great learning tool fostering cooperation and engagement among pupils.  
Photo: Piotr Kozak



# HOW TO LEARN SELF-LEARNING

**Students are not active enough in a self-learning situation e.g. project work. How can this be changed?**

**LUTZ LASCHEWSKI (HIE-RO)**

**The Freie Schule Rügen, Germany**

The Free School on the Island of Rügen is nicely located in a rural village. The school is proud that its school grounds are very extensive and its appearance is more like an adventure site rather than an ordinary school yard. There is much to investigate and see for children outside the classrooms, particularly, on sunny days. Despite all these possible distractions inspired by Montessori pedagogy the headmaster and the teachers are determined to encourage self-determined learning as much as possible. They believe that self-activity will lead to self-reliance. In fact, it is practised everyday – with great success as they emphasize. How does it come?

First, it is about motivation. We all know it. There are these things we must do, and the others we like to do. The former we try to avoid, while the latter we seek. There is a basic assumption in the traditional school-model that children do not want to learn, but they definitely do. They love to know more and be capable of something new. Children learn self-determinedly, if it makes sense to them – if something is interesting or simply to please or being together with others. However, they seek self-determination in the way they want to do it.

The learning environment places an important role in this process. The classrooms in the Free School Rügen offer different spaces. Children may opt to solve tasks together, to do research online or read a book. This requires space to sit together, access to PCs, and learning materials. Therefore, in every classroom PCs are available. Students can comfortably sprawl in a couch and sit upright drawing or solve tasks at a table.



## Good advice

Here, it is important to safeguard work progress and results. Therefore, students have “their” personal spaces. But also teachers may have secured spaces on bookshelves, so that that students easily find their course material.

Easy going you may think? Hanging around – playing PC – pretending to learn. Of course, there is regular feedback and control of learning success. Students must have a feeling of competences. They want to know, what they know. The Freie Schule created a kind of traffic light system for the self-assessment. Content-related and social learning competences, forms of learning and work related behaviour as well as the self-satisfaction are described in a comprehensive, yet accessible way, and allow students to assess their current stage. Teachers do the same, and different assessments are jointly discussed and compared.

Self-determination does not necessarily mean learning alone. Asking for help and getting help is as well an objective as encouraging students to help each other. In the Freie Schule Rügen classes are organised in mixed-age groups. Younger students find established work routines, rituals and a conversation culture, while the older students learn to take responsibility for others. This strengthens their self-confidence, but also “learning by teaching” helps to deepen their knowledge.



Are teachers redundant then? Almost – just kidding. Teacher’s roles are just different. They become “content resource, resource locator, interest stimulator, positive attitude generator, creativity and critical thinking stimulator, and evaluation stimulator.” Here the teacher’s role is to help in developing an environment that is favourable to self-directed learning, as well as providing assistance for both individuals and groups of learners. Thus the teacher directed learning experience makes way for more of a guider who does not do things for the learner, rather, they provide guidance and supervision as the learner undertakes them. The main emphasis is upon being a guide to students as they are cultivated in the ability for self-directed learning.

### Further Reading:

Hiemstra, R (2011) “Self-Directed Learning: Individualizing Instruction – most still do it wrong!” International Journal of Self-Directed Learning, 8(1), 46-59

Helping Students Become More Regulated Self-Learners

<http://www.slideshare.net/vadenbd/helping-students-become-more-selfregulated-learners>

Grudnia ubiegłego „Jedynki” powstała w Różaniec. Składowo nazwa: „Jedynki” – oznaczała jednolitość światłości. Później w Włocławku, w Zakładzie Politechniki, w warsztatach specjalnie dla niej dołączono światła kolorystyczne tak, że powstała „Jedynka” – „Jedynka”. Później już nawiązywała do siebie w jej własnym.

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Gillespie, Nathaniel A., "Jazzville" reprinted from *Trumpets*, Modern Poems by Pauline A. Giles, 1920 coll. Price for single 22 others 2.00; 40 W. Jackson, Philadelphia; 40 W. Philadelphia; 100 W. 10th St. N. W. D. C. 1000. Modern Poems by Pauline A. Giles, 1920 coll. Price for single 22 others 2.00; 40 W. Jackson, Philadelphia; 40 W. Philadelphia; 100 W. 10th St. N. W. D. C. 1000.



Frédéric Lemaire, *etc.* in his studio? (p. 180)

[illegible][illegible]

## A black and white photograph of a large group of people, likely a school or community group, posing in front of a building. The group is arranged in several rows, with some individuals standing and others possibly kneeling or sitting in the front. The building in the background has a flat roof and several windows. The overall tone is formal and organized.



WILLIAM  
BENTLEY  
J  
POLYMER



ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY 7



CFT

SCH

**RAMA DREWNIANA**  
Ciepłota i miłość w każdym domu

SITO





## WE ARE EUROPEANS

**We are Europeans living in difficult times. How can we learn from each other to cooperate and to be open? How can we appreciate diversity? What can we do to build understanding that will create the conditions for peaceful coexistence of the next generations in multi-cultural Europe?**

**KATARZYNA GÓRKIEWICZ**

**Ignacy Łukasiewicz School Complex in Police, Poland**

**Polish-German Middle School – the European School in Löcknitz, Germany**

Police joined Europe much earlier than the remaining part of Poland. Polish-German local collaboration began over twenty years ago. The fact that the two towns are located so close to each other provided an excellent ground for taking joint actions. But above all, it has been a result of a vision and courage of two school headteachers who acted ahead of their time and took a step no one had expected yet. Only years later did history catch up with them.

For twenty years now, Polish students from Police go to the school in Löcknitz by a special bus on a daily basis. They attend classes in German there together with their peers from Germany in international groups. Formally, they are students of the school in Police delegated to Löcknitz. Additionally, they must do three subjects as a Polish group. They learn history, social studies and Polish in the Polish language. At the end of each school year they receive two certificates – a Polish and a German one. The final stage consists in a double baccalaureate exam – graduates receive a Polish and a German baccalaureate certificate. This opens them the doors to universities in both countries as well as in entire Europe.

In order to attend the school in Löcknitz, students are required to pass an exam in German. That is not that difficult, though. The real challenge is to

do well in the German school. The first year is a test. Of course, teachers are lenient toward them for the first few months, during which they have the time to make up for some linguistic deficiencies. But later, they acquire knowledge and get their marks according to the same rules as their German peers.

This form of education is chosen mostly by those students who are willing to work harder and aim higher. Those who are thinking about studying abroad and want to master the German language perfectly.

Teachers on both sides of the border learn to collaborate, too. They meet up on the occasion of different holidays and build understanding while sitting at one table. The teachers go on trips together during which they get to know Poland and Germany. They engage in educational projects and recently an idea has come up to organise regular joint international teachers' meetings.

The schools in Löcknitz and Police are raising new generations of Europeans. As a result of this work, students learn the language of their neighbours, and also open themselves to a different culture than their own, learn mutual tolerance, acceptance and respect for national identity – those are the values that Europe needs most now.





### Good advice

We cannot learn to be open-minded and to respect diversity if we do not meet people who are different than ourselves. Let's find them and think together what we can learn from each other.



#### TIME:

depending on the scale of activities, from a few months to a few years



#### FUNDS:

such activities require financial outlays



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

headteacher's office, teachers, students, parents and local community.



As a part of the European Flying University, pupils from the District School Complex in Łyse are debating the future of Europe. Photo: School Complex in Łyse



## WHAT HAPPENED TO EMPATHY?

**It seems impossible to create anything more atrocious than a concentration camp. And yet it is possible. In 1941-1945 there was a concentration camp for children in Łódź. Our school commemorates its prisoners by taking the name *The School of the Child Heroes of Łódź*. How to talk about our patrons? How to talk about the darkest moments of our history?**

**BOŻENA BĘDZIŃSKA-WOSIK, KATARZYNA GÓRKIEWICZ**

**Primary School No. 81 in Łódź, Poland**

The school building is bordering the concentration camp wall, near the Broken Heart monument, in the Szarych Szeregów Park. It is an outstanding monument. The big skinny posture of Chudy, one of the children imprisoned in the camp, is wrapped in a huge concrete heart. Our schoolchildren used to be afraid of this monument. They preferred to take a different route to school because the huge concrete construction was too frightening for them. They were not aware of what happened here during the war. How to face a difficult truth? How to talk about these issues with six-year-olds? How to explain that people did this to those children?

We pondered this for a long time. After a series of discussions on the subject, we knew one thing for sure: emotions should accompany any history lesson. We wanted to tell the children about the camp, to raise some sense of responsibility in them. We knew that the only way this could happen was via an unconventional educational action. And this is how we launched the project entitled “Let’s free Chudy – beyond memory”.

At first, children were to conduct a street survey among the local inhabitants to get information on how many people were aware of what was going on in their part of the city during the Second World War. The results were depressing. Not many adults knew the history of their neighbourhood. They often confused the children’s camp with the ghetto, and

many people knew nothing at all about the issue. Only a few participants had heard about the camp. Students then decided to take matters in their own hands. They decided that it was necessary to start an educational action among the adults. With the support of their teachers, they planned actions that went beyond the typical school activities.

First, they made some research into the history of the camp: they went to the school memory room run by older schoolchildren. They participated in meetings with former prisoners, drew portraits of those who lived in those difficult times. When they digested all that information, they were finally able to look Chudy (the child from the monument) in the eye. And they found loads of empathy deep inside. After that, they decided to show the world that they do not accept cruelty toward children. Together with their peers from neighbouring schools, they knitted an over 10-metre scarf to put on Chudy’s neck. Then, with the wool taken from the scarf, they made a pathway around the former camp borders. In this way, they could educate local inhabitants about the issue. The children also put heart-shaped stickers all around the monument to express their compassion toward those who had suffered in the camp. Later on, they organised a meeting between former prisoners and local inhabitants. They decided to take responsibility for commemorating the suffering of young prisoners.

In the second part of the initiative, “Let’s free Chudy — continuation”, students invited their older peers from middle schools and secondary schools located in Łódź. The latter group of children learned about the history of the camp and then conducted a survey among the inhabitants of various Łódź districts. The results (similar to the results of the first, local survey) were then presented to City Council representatives in order to draw their attention to the issue. The children also invited people to respond to prisoners’ letters to family and friends which had been left unanswered. In this way, adults could take some part of the responsibility for commemorating the suffering of the children – cruelty which should never have taken place. Finally, the children organised a series of happenings in various parts of the city, thanks to which the inhabitants were able to learn about some part of their history. And not only that. They were also made aware of the fact that responsibility must be taken for the memory of such places as the Łódź camp and for making sure that no such thing will ever happen again.

As a result of the actions undertaken by children and teenagers, local media revived the forgotten topic. For the first time in history, a whole series of articles published in Gazeta Wyborcza was devoted

to the Hitler’s camp for children in Łódź. Thus, our children taught us responsibility for commemorating the victims of atrocities of the past. Thanks to their proactive attitudes, engagement, and empathy, the reality of their surroundings was changed. The children established interactions with the adults, boosted their own self-esteem, managed to foster cooperation and responsibility for both the past and the future. As teachers, we were able to see the potential of our students. We believed in their strength, engagement and passion. We learned that it is worth letting children be in charge of social undertakings, trusting in their curiosity and natural motivation, as well as in their creativity and the feeling of responsibility for themselves and for others.



### Good advice

**Each place has its own context, its own history: people and events that contributed to its current state. Opening up to history has to be both wise and brave. It is worth looking for historical trails and analyse them in depth together with the students. In this way, we can get to know ourselves and take responsibility for the future.**



### TIME:

depending on the project, from a few months up to a few years. Discovering history is a long undertaking.



### FUNDS:

low-cost activities.



### RESPONSIBILITY:

headmaster, teachers, students, parents, local community.



Pupils made a long warm scarf for Chudy in order to express their empathy. Photo: Primary School no. 81 in Łódź

## VILLAGE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE

**How to strengthen in students their sense of belonging to the local community? How to open their eyes to its problems and make them care about the fate of its members? What should one do to expand their horizons and interests related to, for instance, historiography, journalism or photography? Where can one find ideas on interdisciplinary projects that support skills related to searching and selecting data, using multimedia and in-group communication?**

KATARZYNA GRUBEK

Middle school in Mucharz, Poland

Students prepared a photo report on a depopulating town, whose fate was sealed by a plan to make an artificial lake on the river.

The title "Village at the bottom of the lake" was taken from a collection of short stories by Janina Barbara Górkiewiczowa, who writes about the passing of time and about the history of villages in Mucharz municipality. We wanted to save from oblivion the place that would soon be engulfed by the waters of an artificial lake on the Skawa river. The protagonists of our photo report were people who were forced to leave their houses before their dismantlement. 'Do you miss...?' - was the question that we addressed at the villagers who had to leave their homes and the land that they had inherited from their fathers. Interviews became as important as taking photographs, or maybe even more important, because they turned out to be much more difficult. It is not easy to win a person's trust or encourage him/her to confide. Our photographers succeeded at it. They also managed to obtain from them old family photographs; in the abandoned houses they found remnants of the past, such as sieves, rakes, butter churns and flails. Thanks to the support from Mikołaj Grynberg, a photographer who held two workshops with us, we made a photo report illustrating the gradual abandonment of a then lively village full of people, supplemented with interviews with their previous inhabitants. An exhibition of photographs from this project was or-

ganised during the celebration of Mucharz Municipality Days.

The students who worked on the photo report became for a short while witnesses of an important story - they documented a breakthrough event in the lives of their interlocutors. The young people stressed that they had been very impressed with interviews they conducted with displaced villagers. Every story carried a different emotional load and presented a different perspective on the same occurrence. This made the students reflect on the meaning of one's roots, on the local identity, the spirit of a place and evanescence. Through this initiative the school reached out to the local population. It assumed a role of an institution that documents the local history, talks to the local community about their problems and gives them a voice on issues that matter to them.



### Good advice

**Before the students begin to interview protagonists of the photo report, you should talk with them about the role of journalists and their professional ethics. An interview that touches upon personal and painful issues, that deals with the past and difficult choices, leaves its trace on the interviewee. You need to make sure that the young people understand this responsibility.**



Reading texts of classic journalists or watching the movie “The Passenger” by Michelangelo Antonioni may be a good introduction to this talk. A good reportage is a text that moves its readers. It tells a story which does not leave one indifferent. Herein lies the major challenge of this project. You need to suggest to the students that if they want to achieve this effect, they should not try to simplify their story. Instead, they should strive to tell it as faithfully as possible and to divide the content into important and less important information at the very end of the process.

After listening to the villagers’ narrative, the students may absolutely identify with their point of view. They may even feel outraged with the plan of flooding a village in order to build a dam. We should also try and show them the perspective of those stakeholders to whom they

did not talk, namely explain to them why a decision on building a reservoir was taken and what the threats and opportunities of this project are.

This project also requires some good photographic equipment. If you intend to hold an exhibition, you will need a printing shop that offers large-scale printing. You may also want to organise a short workshop on photography composition and framing for the students.

Moreover, the students are documenting history, so it would be a shame if the photo report disappeared among other papers in the depths of the teacher’s files. You may start cooperation with a local library or, as it was the case here, Municipal Centre of Culture and Books. Who knows – maybe you will manage to obtain funds to publish the photo report in print?



**TIME:**  
1-5 months



**FUNDS:**  
a low-cost project



**RESPONSIBILITY:**  
teacher, students, the local community

During their photography lessons, pupils could discover the history of the places they come from. Such educational projects help pupils understand themselves and the surrounding world better. Photo: Digital resources of the Janina Barbara Górkiewiczowa Middle School in Mucharz



## AN ETHNOGRAPHICAL PROJECT

**Each region has its own legends and people with incredible past. Let's play detectives, use those interesting facts and thus encourage the young to learn about local history and tradition.**

**MARTA ŁABĘCKA**

**Henryk Sienkiewicz General Secondary School in Szydłowiec, Poland**

Even today, people know stories about the life and actions of Ludwik Aleksander Młokosiewicz, the famous botanist from Omięcin. However, we were not that sure if that extravagant person actually lived in our area and whether the effects of his mad experiments were really as spectacular as it is said. We decided to check it and visited Omięcin, situated 11 kilometres away from our place, where he was supposed to have his palace, to interview village residents and gather information about the life of the eccentric nobleman. We wanted to tell the story of the unusual botanist as truly as we could, filling in the missing information with our guesses. This way, an animated film was produced titled Omięcin – a Journey to the Ends of the Earth. Pleased with the results of our work, we submitted the animation in the competition organised by the publishing house Nowa Era called “A Classy Project” (Projekt z klasą).

This gave the secondary school students from Szydłowiec an opportunity to do ethnographic field studies and make their own stop motion production. Students designed and conducted the studies by themselves, which gave them insight in social research methodology. The interviews with residents of the local village developed their skills of listening and verification of the information they received; and the participation in the workshops on animation gave them an idea about the work of a computer graphic designer and an illustrator. Students declared that their participation in the project inspired them to record local stories with multimedia technologies.

By supporting detective's enthusiasm among the youth in solving historic mysteries, the school goes beyond its traditional roles. For a moment, it becomes a research institute investigating local culture and, at the same time, a cultural centre, taking active part in recording and promoting cultural heritage in the region, its legends and traditions. Such activities send a message to the local community that the school, as an institution, participates in culture of the area it is located in and helps shape it.



### **Good advice**

**It is worth preparing students for interviews by giving them some basic information about social research methodology. We should take care about the correct construction of questions asked in questionnaires and tell the students what the principles of in-depth interviews are. If we do not feel competent in this area, we can ask employees of the social studies faculty at the nearest university for help.**

**It is important to ensure that the youth are safe while carrying out the field study. The classes should take place under the supervision of a guardian and students should receive detailed instructions about how and to whom to talk. If you want to conduct long, in-depth interviews, an alternative solution is to organise a focused group interview at school.**



The animation requires a bit more financial outlays and preparation than other filming techniques. You can use our advice regarding film making which was prepared on orders of the School Film Library programme (Filмотeka Szkolna): [www.ceo.org.pl/pl/filмотekaszkolna/news/jak-zrobic-film-0](http://www.ceo.org.pl/pl/filмотekaszkolna/news/jak-zrobic-film-0).



**TIME:**  
3-6 months



**FUNDS:**  
medium costs



**RESPONSIBILITY:**  
a teacher, students and local community

Photo: Krzysztof Pacholak.





## FOLK VIDEO

**How to familiarise students with folk art and strengthen regional identity? Multimedia solutions can help combine tradition with modernity in an unconventional way.**

**MAŁGORZATA GRACZAK**

**Primary School in Dębska Wola, Poland**

Our students created a video to accompany a folk song entitled “Śpiwom jo se śpiwom” [And I sing to myself]. They were inspired by the music composed by a local folk band, Wolaniecki, and their school followers: “The young Wolaniecki”. Apart from getting to know local folk tradition, we wanted to get information concerning young people’s tastes, so we launched cooperation with professional artists and new media specialists.

We have a lot of folk artists in our municipality. For this reason, we decided to create an educational project centered around those artists. We wanted to take a piece of local tradition (a traditional song performed by the school band) and make it more attractive in visual terms, but without tapping into the pop-Slavic aesthetics. Our schoolchildren helped us with the script as well as recordings, and they played their roles with great enthusiasm. The Kielce Land Museum in Tokarnia helped us with the costumes and the scenery, and one of the solo artists from the Wolaniecki band assisted with the musical elements.

By participating in the project, students had a chance to get to know their own community. Thanks to direct cooperation with artists, an intergenerational dialogue was established. At the same time, students learned about multimedia techniques: the process of making and editing music videos.

This was also a great opportunity for the school: it could open its doors to the local community. In

this case, the school has become a local culture animator: it revives and gives new interpretations to folk traditions (songs, handicraft, etc.), and at the same time a patron of folk culture: it makes sure that the traditions get passed on to the youngest generation.



### **Good advice**

**New folk art interpretations require aesthetic sensitivity and artistic maturity. Teachers should make sure that the means used to present a given piece of art be far from kitsch – distortions and caricatures should be avoided.**

**If you can think of no local artist to work with, go to the regional museum or a folk culture centre. If they are not able to contact you with any local artist, their collections may give you inspiration instead. If you live in a city, it is worth looking at local folklore from a particular district.**

**If you don’t have a video camera, you can use a mobile phone. A short music video can be recorded in this way and later uploaded to an internet page. Trial versions of popular film editing software are usually available for free.**

**And don’t forget about promoting your film! Share it on the internet, use it in class and show it at the local cultural centre.**



We combine tradition with modernity.  
And technology with folklore! Photo:  
Krzysztof Pacholak



**TIME:**  
2-5 months



**FUNDS:**  
low-cost undertaking



**RESPONSIBILITY:**  
teacher, students, local community,  
local cultural centre or museum

## ORDINARY-EXTRAORDINARY

**How to encourage students to learn about their local community and history? In our town, there are many people who seem ordinary, but are not: they have some very extraordinary, fascinating stories to tell. They have become the main characters of our school project.**

**AGNIESZKA GRZEGÓRZEK-ZAJĄC, MARIUSZ WIDAWSKI**

**Middle School in Wola Rzędzińska, Poland**

Second year students were to identify people who deserve an honourable mention. The individuals they chose were later interviewed in order to gather information for the “Ordinary-Extraordinary” project. Students prepared presentation concerning the lives, jobs and merits of the selected persons. These portraits were then presented at the end of the school year, during our project festival. Most of the children opted for multimedia presentations, although some decided to prepare something special: a short film, a souvenir collection, or a feature story. The “Ordinary-Extraordinary” included: local culture representatives (choir conductors), social activists (“Pomocna Dłoń” [Helpful Hand] association), political activists (head of the Tarnów municipal council), organisations focused on helping others (Voluntary Firefighters, Catholic Sisters’ Congregation), and local tradition keepers (Village Housewives Association).

Thanks to the undertaking, the students got to know the local community better, and had a chance to talk to the extraordinary people that form part of it. This made them identify more closely with their place of birth. At the same time, the project enhanced students’ competence in searching for data and selecting relevant information concerning cultural heritage. It was also a good opportunity to acquire presentation skills. Journalism and reporting were the key competences during interviews. Students could learn how to ask questions, and how to write compelling stories. Prosocial attitudes were another area of develop-

ment for the teenagers. The “Ordinary-Extraordinary” are good role models to follow.

The school, on the other hand, had a chance to open up to the local community, not only by initiating talks with the most important representatives of that community, but also by emphasizing their special status at the official gala. Thus, the school supported grassroots initiatives by promoting them in public.



### **Good advice**

**A discussion on the selection criteria should take place before choosing the “Ordinary-Extraordinary”. It is important to find those people that present talents, wisdom and integrity we want our children to follow. If the selected pool includes persons whose extraordinariness is a result of pure luck (lottery win) or features that cannot be changed or developed by a given person (e.g. beauty), it is worth asking the students whether and/or why these people are so extraordinary to them. Also, let’s make sure that both women and men are included in the extraordinary people pool. The choices should not follow the usual pattern. It is good to have a woman traveller or entrepreneur, and a male educator or social worker/activist.**

**Such a project can become an interesting introduction to a debate on good journalism standards or conversation/rhetoric skills (Ry-**



szard Kapuściński's, Wojciech Jagielski's or Mariusz Szczygieł's works can be used as support material).

The official gala during which the selected persons are invited to the stage and/or awarded is a good occasion to engage local media.

Let's use this opportunity both for the students' sake, and to honour the efforts of the invited "Ordinary-Extraordinary" figures. It is worth contacting the local paper or information channel to prepare a feature story on the event. In this way, the student can gain first-hand experience in journalism.

 <b>TIME:</b> 2 months	 <b>FUNDS:</b> no cost	 <b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b> teacher, students, local community, parents, headmaster; also, possibly local authorities, NGOs, media
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Musicians visit the school in Podmokle Małe. Photo: School Complex in Podmokle Małe

## THE CENTRE OF COMMUNITY OR A FRINGE PLAYER?

**How can a school attract and sustain community inhabitant involvement within the school in terms of, for example, using the school for other community purposes?**

**JUSTIN SISMEY (HIE-RO)**

**Binz Secondary School, Germany**

**Werkstattsschule, Rostock, Germany**

Every school is closely linked to the local community as it plays an integral part in the lives of many local children that attend the school, and the families that partake in their children's school lives. Schools enrich their pupils' knowledge as well as social skills and provide them with a room to develop their identities in an extensive learning environment. Similarly, the children and their families also contribute their share, for example by planning school activities together with the staff, which sometimes include the local community (e.g. visits to local facilities like theatres, museums, etc.). Many schools feel that the pupils are their only ties to the local community and that hence, a relationship between the schools and the local communities needs to be strengthened for the mutual benefit of both.

The issue here is on how schools can contribute to the local communities and, through this, foster learning and the building and developing of community links. The flip side is that where schools don't engage with their local communities they will be perceived suspiciously, as being somewhat irrelevant, detached from the locality and even sometimes elitist. So how can it be achieved that a school comprising its staff and students can really engage with communities at a local level?

There are different ways in which schools can address this challenge. On the one hand, there is Binz secondary school, which is located in a popular tourist region of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on the island of Rügen. Due to its location within

a more rural region, the school is attended by a variety of students from Binz and the surrounding villages and is thus linked to several communities, most of which are profiting from the tourism of the region. Therefore, the Binz school not only hosts public events and activities on its own premises, such as community meetings in the school's main hall, but it also caters for tourists outside the school premises. During the high season, which starts in early summer (May/June), the school furthermore organises sporting events on the beach areas for adults and children alike, bringing together the students and their families with local inhabitants and tourists from abroad. The Binz secondary school's engagement is thus not only about hosting community events within the school but is also about taking the school resource (its staff and teachers) out into the locality for community events.

On the other hand, there are schools like the Werkstattsschule in Rostock. In contrast to the secondary school in Binz, the Werkstattsschule is located in an urban region and was created out of an initiative of teachers and parents in 1998. Rostock, as the largest city in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, offers a variety of opportunities to engage with local facilities and clubs. The Werkstattsschule has taken advantage of their location within such a large community and struck up partnerships with local sports associations and clubs. Not only do they allow these associations and clubs to use the school sports facilities but they also hold joint activities which includes club/association members as well as students of the school.

The school also allows its other facilities to be used, such as the rooms which are used by a locally established music school whereby both the school students and local people have a variety of music lessons run by the music school on the Werkstattsschule's premises.

The Werkstattsschule's guiding concept envisages that the children learn about the balance between individual needs, shared values and social conditions. Some of the school's projects thus knowingly put emphasis on helping people from the local community in a variety of ways. For example, the school has linked up with a local refugee centre in Rostock which houses several thousand asylum seekers and together with them holds different kinds of events including, for example a "history workshop" that helps those who attend to improve their German but also informs on a cultural and historical level. Such events and workshops of the Werkstattsschule can thus encourage it's students to learn about social responsibility and to not only think about their own future but also on future social developments and challenges. Moreover, the Werkstattsschule also provides in-school counselling and advice sessions to young people through an external provider, who are not necessarily students of the school, but who are out of work and are looking for jobs and live locally. Thereby, the school could take on an important role in helping these young people to get a job in the near future based on the knowledge that they gained at the counselling and advice sessions.



### Good advice

**The holding of such events both in-and-out-school has been positively received by both the Binz secondary school and the Werkstattsschule as well as by local stakeholders and community members as this has met their respective needs; that of the school wanting to strengthen links and community involvement and those of the community who are having their needs met. The successful relationships of both schools with their respective communities underline that such links can always be encouraged in multiple ways in order to benefit from each other's resources.**

### Further Reading

The Journey to Excellence

<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/partnership/improvementguides/theschoolinitcommunity.asp>

Building Mutually Beneficial Relationships Between Schools and Communities

<http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/Building%20Mutually%20Beneficial%20School-Community%20Relationships.pdf>



# HOW WELL CONNECTED ARE YOU?

**In what ways can the school become better connected to educational, recreational and social community youth work activities?**

**JUSTIN SISMEY (HIE-RO)**

**The Ecolea International School, Rostock, Germany**

## **Context/Situation:**

We all know that it might sometimes be an uncomfortable feeling to look beyond the confines of the school and the school teaching staff to other, external sources for input into the curriculum. You might think that teachers are the most suited to give children the best learning experience as they are trained for this task and are paid to do it – at least, some teachers, governing boards and even parents feel that way. It is always easy to say that a school should have enough qualified staff to deliver whatever is required of the curriculum. What many people forget, however, is that children are interested in a variety of things and might be looking towards the school to offer them a similar diversity of experiences and learning possibilities that they experience in their free time outside of school. It is often simply the fact that even the most qualified and experienced teachers can never be sufficient enough to deliver fully enriching learning experiences for the students. The school environment itself as well cannot offer everything that might be available to the children outside the school. So what could the schools do? After all, such a situation might tempt them to simply “make do” with what is available internally and more often than not the result can be unsatisfactory attempts to replicate what could be easily found externally. How can such a situation then be avoided?

## **Possible Solutions**

The answer to this question is easier than one might have initially thought. Who says that learning environments need to be restricted purely to

the school premises or have to solely rest on the teaching staff? There are so many possibilities that can open up when one looks beyond the limits of the school. Schools and their teachers can tap into external resources in the form of external partners, professional organisations and individuals who are involved in a range of disciplines.

Take for example the Free School on the island of Ruegen, which is beautifully located in a rural village that is set in a region rich in forests and national parks. The surrounding offers so much possibilities for the children to experience nature and learn about environmental issues outside of their classrooms. The school takes advantage of this setting by entering into regional projects with local partners, such as the Rügen National Park where they organise environmental excursions for the students. And which child would not want to directly experience and learn about nature and environmental protection issues rather than simply reading about these matters in books?

But what about those schools that cannot draw on a beautiful, rural surrounding, one may ask. Of course, there are still many other opportunities open for such schools. The Werkstatt secondary school, for instance, is located in Rostock, which is the biggest city in the region. Within the city, there are a variety of external organisations and specialists who can offer new learning experiences to the students. The school, for example, initiated a partnership with local historians who visit the school and run history workshops for the students. These

include a variety of themes which focus on local history that is relevant to Rostock and which the students can more easily relate to due to it being focused on their own area and surroundings. This means, even a subject like history that is often perceived by students as “boring”, can become interesting and fun for them. It is easy – the subject becomes more alive for the students through the focus on local history due to the involvement of the partners.

That such connections with external organisations are valued and sought after by many schools is evident. For instance, the Universitas School in Rostock is also engaged with a variety of external organisations, professional communities and consultants who come onto the school premises and interact with and help the students. Such professionals have included the disciplines of logopaedics, ergotherapy and psychology. You may think now that these are not the most traditional subject areas to learn about in schools. Nonetheless, they enrich the school curriculum and facilitate the school-day for students and teachers alike. The children and their parents can thus always feel assured that they will receive the best of attention at school regarding their individual needs and that they can benefit from the experiences of professionals from a variety of fields during their school day.

So all in all, what does this mean for schools in the future? Of course it needs to be stressed that the school is still a very important and enriching pillar in the lives of its students. However, with the involvement of external organisations, consultants and specialists within the school learning environment, the experiences of students can be broadened in a way that cannot be achieved merely through internal resources. Children love to learn with a “hands-on” approach instead of being fed information that is purely theoretical. They can see how the things they learn at school relate to the world outside and that they are not just facts that they have to know for a test. Furthermore, the “unfamiliar” experts and consultants can stimulate their learning experience in new ways other than the already familiar teaching methods. And even more, not only students can benefit from this, but also the teaching staff as they can also be enthused in their particular field.

### Further Reading

The Involvement of External Experts in School Education

[http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/re-sources/t/genericresource\\_tcm4735780.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/re-sources/t/genericresource_tcm4735780.asp)

Pisa 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful?

<http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-volume-IV.pdf>







**RESPECT  
AND OPENNESS  
TO DIVERSITY**

# MULTICULTURALISM HERE AND NOW

**Multiculturalism has become reality in today's Europe. How should schools prepare for it? How to introduce children from different parts of the world that speak different languages and have different cultural backgrounds? How to foster understanding, openness and dialogue among students, parents and the local community?**

KATARZYNA GÓRKIEWICZ

„Bednarska” High School Complex in Warsaw

For many years multiculturalism meant travelling, exoticism and the unknown. In Poland, it was mostly about organising multicultural events, such as ethnic festivals. Today, multiculturalism has ceased to be something distant, although it's still unknown to us. Europe has a challenge to face in the form of multiethnic, multicultural communities. Such environments typically cause fear and uncertainty. Wise solutions and openness are therefore needed to counteract this. Schools are the best place to start.

“Bednarska” Community High School Complex has chosen its patron for a reason. Jam Saheb Sri Digvijaysinhji was an Indian Maharaja who provided

shelter and education to a thousand Polish orphans in the 1940s. The creators of our schools wanted to base the institution on three principal values: equality, respect and tolerance.

There are a few dozen refugees and immigrants of 16 different nationalities in the school. The first immigrants were admitted to the school in 1995 during the First Chechen War. Krystyna Starczewska, the founder of the school, saw that there was a need to support refugee families. She did not question it, so she started to think of how to provide some support. Her project included places for foreigners in each class without the need to take entrance exams. Financing was difficult to find, however. At first, the idea of paying for refugees and immigrants attending the school from the fees paid by the Polish children's families was difficult to accept. What convinced the parents was the way in which the presence of refugees in the school might serve educational purposes, support moral development, raise awareness, foster acceptance and openness among the Polish students.

With time, the school was able to learn from its own experience and improve methods of working in multicultural environments. Subsequent solutions were being introduced, educational methods were modified and adjusted to the students' needs.

**Joint actions are the best ways of fostering equality, respect and tolerance.**  
Photo: Flickr, Jiheffe\_CC BY-NC-ND 2.0







There is a one-year multicultural class for immigrants only in which Polish is taught to those who don't speak it. Then the foreigners join the rest of the students. This system has been very successful. For example, a student from Uganda passed the international graduation exam and then went to the university to study cinematography.

Each school year starts with a meeting between the students, their parents and the teachers. In this way, all the participants can get to know each other and see how multicultural classrooms work.

Whenever a school opens to admitting refugees, it must be ready to face some unexpected challenges. There may be children who were subject to human trafficking, war refugees or orphans. Some of them may have found new families in the homes of their classmates.

Today, state and EU funds cover the cost of school excursions, meals and textbooks, but this required a lot of work and cooperation on the part of the school community.

Children may also find it difficult to adjust to the new reality, and their efforts do not always bring the desired results. In our experience, joint undertakings are always the best way of fostering integration. We have also created a Multinational Club at our school, which organises thematic meetings devoted to foreign cultures, e.g. Tibetan, Vietnamese or Chinese. They are open for everyone to attend, including local inhabitants. The initiatives of the Club demonstrate that a well-organised school can influence the local community, just as the local community can influence the way schools are functioning.



### Good advice

**It is not easy to face the challenges related to multiculturalism in Poland. Students and teachers alike are usually not ready for meeting and working with people from a different cultural background. Such undertakings must be implemented with caution, based on thorough knowledge concerning a given child, culture and the world he or she came from. And remember – don't judge. Regardless of our experience, there are many surprises on the way.**



#### TIME:

depending on the scale, from several months to several years, integration takes a long time



#### FUNDS:

financial means will be needed



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

headteacher, teachers, students, parents, local community



## LEARNING THE LINGUA FRANCA

**Our school is located in a social environment that is characterised by huge cultural diversity. For a large share of students the official language at school is not the native language spoken in their families. In which ways can the performance of all students in that school be improved?**

JUSTIN SISMEY (HIE-RO)

The Ecolea International School, Rostock, Germany

“Excuse me, but do you speak English?” is often a phrase asked by tourists during the summer months during the summer season across the Baltic county of Mecklenburg Vorpommern (MVP). But Rostock and the wider county of Mecklenburg Vorpommern (MVP) itself is not exactly well known for being a multi-cultural area where a multitude of languages are spoken and where young and old can speak more than one language. In fact, less than 4% of residents are migrants and thus German is spoken as a first language by about 96% of the population. But what are the implications for the children of those families who first language is not German? International data indicates that 15-year-old immigrant students who do not speak the language of instruction at home are, on average, one year behind non-immigrant students. This is worse in MVP where the education system is simply not geared up for migrant children and the resulting gap in student outcomes affects not only student educational attainment, but also makes it difficult for them to succeed in the labour market.

So a problem for migrant families that has been experienced in MVP is that when children (of migrant families) first go to school the cooperation with the parents can be a challenge because of language problems and the ingrained prejudices that exist. The parents see cooperation with the school as quite complicated because of their inability to speak the (local) language and a lack of information. In many cases, mothers, who stay at

home, but are not integrated in the labour market, have a significant impact on the children’s language skills. Thus, schools have needed to develop a proactive approach that addresses parents, and mothers in particular. Schools have also to address children’s reading and writing skills of their native languages. The challenge here is, how is this actually achieved, especially when schools have little experience of dealing with migrant issues?

The “Rucksack” project was an innovative idea from the Netherlands but was first adapted and used in North Rhine Westphalia for language support and parental education to address the circumstances detailed above. It has been extremely effective in large Germany cities where there are migrant groups and whose only language is non-German. The “Rucksack” model cleverly uses mothers who speak the “foreign” language and German who are essentially trained up as “district mothers” or act as companions to parents of students. Their role is key because it involves them visiting groups of mothers and giving them guidance about language and development activities. The project itself is focused on furthering the development of bi-/pluri-lingualism amongst the migrant children as well as to strengthen parenting skills. But not only this, the project builds self-confidence of both the mothers and their children and to promote intercultural education and the concept itself of multilingualism.

An excellent example of dealing with children from migrant families is The Ecolea International School, Warnemünde which has a diverse student body, where, aside from the majority of German students, has students from 13 different countries therefore, having 13 different mother tongues. In Rostock, to have such diversity in a school is unprecedented! The additional support that is provided to these students is simply in the form of recognising the need to provide additional language support. Simple maybe, but very effective! This is because the teaching staff understand, mainly from evolving experience, that it is their responsibility to recognise and anticipate the language demands of the curriculum and how this can affect students. So, to help students additional German lessons are provided where necessary while some classes, notably, Geography and History from year 5, are taught in both German and English. Although simple solutions might sometimes be the best, this is not all that is done; intercultural training provided to staff also plays a key part. Typically, this training includes awareness raising (of the need to pay extra attention to the needs of bi/tri-lingual children) and to concept check that students have understood instructions. Further, they encourage a climate for those students to ask for directions/instructions to be repeated without students worrying that the teacher's assumption is that the student has simply not been listening.



### Good advice

**What is important is that the ability of some students to naturally speak more than 1 language should be treated by schools as something to be celebrated rather than a disadvantage. And it doesn't matter whether this concerns majority languages such as, for example, French, Spanish or English or even a minority language. The teaching staff role should also include valuing and encouraging the maintenance of the home language. Of course, though being bi-lingual (or tri- or multilingual) can in fact have a "negative" (short term) impacts on student educational attainment this does not always need to be the case if schools have good support in place that actively helps bi-lingual students.**

### Further Reading

Excellence in Bi-lingual Education

[http://education.cambridge.org/media/576417/excellence\\_in\\_bilingual\\_education\\_\\_a\\_guide\\_for\\_school\\_principals\\_\\_cambridge\\_education\\_\\_cambridge\\_u\\_samples.pdf](http://education.cambridge.org/media/576417/excellence_in_bilingual_education__a_guide_for_school_principals__cambridge_education__cambridge_u_samples.pdf)

Enhancing Learning of Children from Diverse Language Backgrounds

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/imag-es/0021/002122/212270e.pdf>

## STUDENTS SPEAK FOR THE EXCLUDED

**I believe that the school is not just about studying. It is also a space in which we accompany young people on their journey towards adulthood, to the place they want to have in this world, and to responsible living. How to make students care about others? How to talk to them about discriminated groups and the socially excluded? How to teach them empathy and responsibility?**

**KATARZYNA GÓRKIEWICZ**

**General Secondary School No. 11 in Cracow, Poland**

Every day, our students have to face the world they live in. They learn about the principles that govern it. It is not true that today's youth are insufficiently engaged and irresponsible. Young people need us, adults, to support them and show them where to go. Thanks to our support, they will be able to take responsibility. Some female students involved in a school project wanted to do something that would have a real impact. They decided to learn how to prepare a social campaign, and wanted to decide on the topic by looking at various socially excluded groups: sick people, addicts, families with numerous children, the disabled. After debating the issue, they decided to organise a social campaign for the disabled. The topic seemed very important to them as they personally experienced ignorance and arrogance on the part of youngsters and older people in this respect. This included pretending that the disabled person was not there.

The girls started by gathering information on how to plan and implement a good social campaign. They browsed through articles on marketing strategies. Then, with theoretical knowledge in place, they elaborated a professional plan with an estimated budget. This was not an easy task for students who had never had any course or lesson in economics. Despite this fact, they did very well, which shows the enormous potential that usually lies dormant

in young people. The number of ideas they had for helping the disabled with such a small budget was impressive.

Another important part of their planning process was the choice of the advertising means and media, as well as the need to find and convince potential sponsors. Because the girls wanted to reach the largest number of people possible, they decided to ask the scouts for assistance as they have substantial experience in similar undertakings.

At the next stage, campaign materials had to be prepared: a poster and leaflets. What the girls found most exciting was the experience of working in Corel Draw, which is much more advanced than Paint. The knowledge of this piece of software will certainly help them in college.

The second implementation phase consisted in preparing an advertising spot that would raise awareness of the presence of disabled people in the society and of their needs. This time, the girls invited their classmates to join them. The joint undertaking gave fruit in the form of a professional video uploaded on YouTube and shared via social media.

At the end of the project, the girls presented the results of their work in the form of an official public speech. First, the girls rehearsed their speech in front





of their peers, and then presented in public at the 3rd Małopolska (Lesser Poland) Entrepreneurship Competition.



### Good advice

By launching such campaigns, students can believe and demonstrate that small initiatives can change reality. Those young people will be adults soon, and they will take responsibility for the world we live in. It is important to make

sure that students can count on the help of an adult in terms of organisation or methodology. Given the amount of school duties, children can lose their motivation and energy. This is where the teacher should step in to boost enthusiasm.

### Useful links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN4svSDlaH0s>



#### TIME:

depending on the project, from a few months up to a few years.



#### FUNDS:

low-cost activities.



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

headteacher, teachers, students, parents, local community



By learning how to organise a social campaign, pupils could see how filmmakers work. Photo: Flickr, studio Tempura\_CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

## DO NOT DISCRIMINATE

**How can we develop social attitudes and civic competencies in students? How can we encourage them to take responsibility for their surrounding and to see the needs of excluded groups and to show solidarity to them? It is good to support students in independent identification of a given social problem and allow them to take the initiative.**

Zofia Cofałka

John Paul II Middle School No. 2 in Chorzów, Poland

Students carrying out the project in co-operation with Amnesty International Polska focusing on discrimination and human rights identified a significant social challenge in their surroundings. Some of the underpasses in strategic places in the city are not adapted to be used by people with physical disability and other groups with limited mobility. Students decided to organise an educational campaign, a happening, to ap-

peal to city authorities to remove architectural barriers from those places. During the happening, one of the students sat on a wheelchair and together with an assisting colleague who pushed the wheelchair asked pedestrians to help them cross the street. Depending on the behavior of a given pedestrian, the rest of the participants lifted a banner up saying “Bravo!” or “Don’t discriminate, don’t be indifferent!” During the



Let's give pupils the initiative. They will surprise us with their openness and active engagement. Photo: Flickr, padawan xava du\_CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



campaign we gave away leaflets and collected signatures under the petition to the President of the City. We also filmed the whole happening and published the footage on the Internet. Thanks to that event, the school showed initiative in solving challenges faced by the local community and the students took responsibility for vital social matters and learnt that as citizens they have the right (or even the obligation) to appeal to the local authorities on behalf of excluded groups.



### Good advice

**LANGUAGE.** When you and your students undertake a project regarding excluded groups, pay attention not only to your and your students' intentions but also to the language you are using when speaking of it. Do not let the vocabulary strengthen stereotypes concerning those groups.

**SENSIBLE ASSISTANCE.** The first step should consist in a thorough diagnosis of a problem

you want to address. Before you decide to help a given social group, gather as much information as you can on the subject, talk to a representative of such a group and contact a non-governmental organisation dealing with those matters.

**POLITICS AT SCHOOL.** A lot of social challenges that students will try to tackle are topics of current political debate. The teacher should play his or her role in ensuring adequate level and culture of school debate, respect to different opinions and reasoned argumentation.

**ACTIVITIES IN A PUBLIC SPACE.** If you plan to act in a public space, it is crucial to plan the time of the event: the weather and e.g. lack of pedestrians may ruin your work. It is advisable to prepare the students for possible negative reactions of the pedestrians. It is also necessary to inform local authorities (the Police, Municipal Guards and City Hall) beforehand about the planned happening.



#### TIME:

1-5 months



#### FUNDS:

low-cost project



#### RESPONSIBILITY:

a teacher, students, principal's office, parents, local community, local authorities, NGOs



# HATE? I OBJECT

**How can we develop tolerance among the youth and readiness to act against discrimination and violence? How can our students gain knowledge about groups struggling with prejudice in their local communities?**

**EWA JASKUŁA , LILIANA SOBIESKA-JĘDRUSZCZAK**  
Middle School No. 3 in Zgierz, Poland

“Tolerate. Not Hate.” is a slogan that reflects the purposes of our campaign: we wanted to draw students’ attention to acts of discrimination we commit through our recklessness or for which we do not take responsibility (e.g. because we feel anonymous). Our campaign had several elements: we started from ourselves, at our school. As part of Open Days, we organised an Anti-Discrimination Path, which included 6 stands where participants had to carry out tasks checking their knowledge of discrimination in their neighbourhood. We also took part in meetings with Live Library organised by Open Zgierz. We had the opportunity to talk to people experiencing discrimination in our city due to their religion, nationality or lifestyle. The campaign closed with a flash mob about tolerance – a street spectacle in front of the City Hall of Zgierz, prepared by students from our school. The “Tolerance. Not Hate.” campaign had a huge impact – local press printed articles about it; we were also invited to the radio and television.

By supporting the “Tolerance. Not Hate.” campaign, the school took its stance in the debate on tolerance and (national and religious) minorities in Zgierz. It pointed out a problem that affects some of the city dwellers and took the role of the mediator in the intercultural dialogue. At the same time, the school sent a clear message to its students and their parents that on its grounds there is no place for discrimination or hate speech. Both the experience of organising a

social campaign (planning and implementation of the project, media education) on their own and direct contact with people suffering from discrimination were for students highly valuable. During a conversation with the representatives of groups discriminated against students learnt about their stories. That made them more empathetic towards the minorities and the problems they are experiencing and strengthened their motivation to continue the activities against hate speech and acts of intolerance.



## Good advice

**When fighting stereotypes, an opportunity to meet a representative of a group discriminated against or suffering from prejudice is highly effective. If we have no contact with a given group at all, we tend to perceive it through the prism of the opinions and stereotypes popular in our circle. A handshake and a short conversation give us our own experience based on which we shape our own opinions.**

**In our neighbourhood there are non-governmental organisations dealing with intolerance, prejudice, refugees or national minorities. Let’s contact them. Probably, they will be interested in the opportunity to give a lecture at school, and we may benefit from their experience, knowledge and ideas of actions.**



It would be valuable if you talked to students about the source of prejudice and intolerant behaviour before taking action. If students learn about the psychological mechanisms driving prejudice, they will find it easier to plan effective ways to convince the audience they choose as target groups for the educational project.

If we plan to use public space for flash mob, it is vital to ensure all necessary permissions – from the headteacher’s office, parents and authorities (the Municipal Guards, City Hall and Police)




 <b>TIME:</b> 1-5 months	 <b>FUNDS:</b> low-cost project	 <b>RESPONSIBILITY:</b> a teacher, students, headteacher’s office, local community, NGOs
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Photo: Flickr, graphia\_CC BY 2.0

# TURN OFF THE HATE

**According to researchers, up to 20% of teenagers have fallen victim to cyber-violence, public mocking and hateful comments. How to make students aware of the consequences their virtual activity carries? How to help them cope with hate speech?**

**BEATA WYSOCKA-TUREK**

**Salesian Schools in Rumia, Poland**

The “Turn off the hate” campaign was initiated at our School Media Club as a response to the growing problem of cyber-violence, public mocking, insulting and degrading others over the internet. Young people who took part in the project were able to counteract such practices, and at the same time learn about the way in which social campaigns can be organised with the use of local media.

The idea came to us pretty easily: hate speech has been subject to much public debate recently. We decided that primary school students should be our target. We therefore prepared an advertising spot that shows inconsiderate, harmful comments distributed via the internet. Apart from that, we decided to organise several dozen workshops at schools to talk to children and teachers about internet threats. The promotional strategy also included regular posts on the project’s blog, and leaflet distribution around the town. Our action was very successful and received coverage by the local press, radio station, and even television!

The teenagers involved in the process acquired knowledge on the safe use of the internet, and skills related to organising social campaigns and managing the media. Students also learned how to plan their activities, manage time, work in teams, communicate with others and speak in public. The target group, on the other hand, learned about the ways of avoiding such threats as hate speech on the Web.

Making students learn from one another was a fruitful idea and a great educational tool. Young people usually have much in common and can share their own experiences. For this reason, it is easier for them to reach their younger peers than for adults. Besides, schools that actively respond to acts of cyber-violence and persecution provide a more friendly atmosphere for their students. By letting students speak for themselves, we create a feeling of unity and safety. At the same time, the social campaign promotes the school and fosters positive attitudes and reactions on the part of the local community.



## **Good advice**

**Make sure that you get the local media interested in your campaign. This is not necessarily made by distributing leaflets. Tell your students how to prepare press releases. Identify the media you want to get to and send them a short briefing of your initiative. Attach a photo and contact details. It is worth getting press support before starting the undertaking. Also, ask a local paper or portal for media patronage.**

**The teacher assigned as the project coordinator should also help choose the target group. Sometimes students’ goals may be too ambitious. Let’s encourage them to choose those groups they have direct contact with (e.g. their peers, parents) as addressees.**





Making a spot requires video recording skills and expertise in editing, as well as appropriate equipment. Of course if we want a short spot to put on the internet, a mobile phone should suffice to record it. We can also try to prepare a radio spot if we get the support of the local radio station.

If the students decide to organise a workshop, we may help with the preparations. It is also worth sharing good advice with the students

and helping them analyse the material they prepared for the workshop, e.g. discuss the difficulties that may arise in class.

Leaflets and posters are both costly and harmful for the environment. Think whether they are needed to reach your particular target group. Maybe social media or an animated banner on the school webpage should be used instead?



**TIME:**  
at least one semester



**FUNDS:**  
from low-cost actions to larger investments. It depends on the scale of the project.



**RESPONSIBILITY:** teacher, students, local community, local media



Photo: Flickr, graphia-CC BY 2.0

# SCHOOL OF TOLERANCE

**Fear, ignorance and stereotypes are the most common roots of hate. How one should talk to students and what measures one should take to create schools free from prejudice?**

**MIROSŁAW SKRZYPCZYK**

**School Complex in Szczekociny, Poland**

Young people encounter examples of Anti-Semitism almost every day – in the form of graffiti, offensive slogans chanted by hooligans during football games, comments referring to stereotypes in the social media, and even in the language in which the word ‘Jew’ has negative connotations. I decided to deal with this problem during a workshop that was a part of ‘School of Tolerance’. I used ‘Cud purymowy’ (‘Purim miracle’), a movie by Izabella Cywińska, as a teaching aid. The movie tells a story of a diehard anti-Semite, who discovered one day that he was a Jew. Before the screening, the students were asked to discuss in groups the following concepts: anti-Semitism, identity, stereotypes and Purim miracle. After watching the movie we had an exchange about its content and the meaning of the final scene. The students were later given a press article describing a court sentence that hooligans received for chanting anti-Semitic slogans during a football game. The article was a starting point for a discussion on the consequences of anti-Semitism. Students’ homework was to come up with ideas for initiatives (based on observed cases of anti-Semitism in their vicinity) that would go against xenophobic slogans and behaviour.

This project sensitised the students to the problem of stereotypes constructed against ethnic and national groups that lead to xenophobic attitudes, discrimination and even acts of violence. The young people noticed cases of anti-Semitism in their environment and declared that they were willing to take action against them.

By supporting similar initiatives schools stand up against instances of xenophobia, hate and discrimination in their neighbourhood and they become ambassadors of culture of kindness and tolerance. By the same token they have become active participants of the community life and promote attitudes that are in line with the values that they profess in classrooms.



## **Good advice**

**Discrimination is based on stereotypes, and these often result from a sense of being endangered and from beliefs taught at home. For this reason a discussion on anti-Semitism may be full of emotions and irrational arguments may appear. The teacher’s role is to keep high standards of discussion - he or she should remind the students about the rules of cultural debate, prepare statistical data and historical sources that will denounce populist slogans.**

**The teacher should also notice the language that his/her students use – not only during the class on tolerance, but also during other lessons. He or she should not accept jokes that make fun of other nationalities and strengthen stereotypes. The teacher should also respond to nationalist statements.**

**This class should not be only about confronting the young people with the existing problem. It should have a follow-up activity, an initiative**



through which the students can change their environment. Participation in an anti-discriminatory initiative can yield better results and may be more effective at convincing even the students with hardened beliefs than hours of lecturing in the classroom.

Our message of tolerance may fall on deaf ears - current world events (for instance the

problem of Syrian refugees) inspire open manifestations of xenophobic attitudes, while the global solidarity and rhetoric of common sense are not expressive enough to be visible among radical positions. For this reason it may be a good idea to precede the class on anti-Semitism with a talk on populism and the difference between nationalism and patriotism.

**TIME:**

three hours of classes and about one week for preparation and implementation of the initiative



no costs

**FUNDS:**

**RESPONSIBILITY:** teacher, students, the local community



We start from the youngest children in teaching tolerance.  
Photo: blogiceo.  
[nq.pl/angielka/](http://nq.pl/angielka/)



# CONCLUSIONS

How is it possible that the good practices collected and described in this book were actually implemented? At each of the described schools, in each of the contexts and communities, there were people who were open and brave enough to take the challenge. It was not about systemic solutions, programs or directives. It was about people. Engaged and attentive people.

If we want 21st century schools to be open and friendly, we need this kind of headteachers, teachers, parents and students.

Of course, in order to create good social and cultural educational spaces, we need time and patience, awareness and diligence. It is a process that dislikes haste and cannot satisfy the need for quick and spectacular effects. It is a process that requires the ability to listen carefully to what the school com-

munity has to say. It also needs acceptance of errors and perseverance. These are not catchy words today. Both teachers and headteachers engaged in the activities described in this book know this from personal experience. But still, against the current trends, they have been able to create truly modern learning environments.

The time the school community invests in their initiatives brings the right results: mutual trust and close relations. With this outcome, students are ready to take on their journey into adulthood. Into a future based on cooperation, engagement, openness and respect.

**Katarzyna Górkiewicz**  
**Center for Citizenship Education, Poland**

Art installation  
in Radowe Małe  
school. Photo:  
Piotr Kozak







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