Teachers' Guide

On Stakeholder Engagement
and
Activity Planning

Democrat
EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

Summary

Participation *and* Inclusion

Every child has the right to quality education and learning. This means that when you design your lessons or start thinking about settng up a new project you must consider how to provide the opportunity of participation for all your students, regardless of their various physical and mental abilities.

With careful planning it is indeed possible for everybody to participate. First and foremost, you need to learn about your own implicit biases and blind spots, to help you actively mitigate those in your teaching. A useful self-assessment tool that can be used for this is the Identity Wheel (see in Annex).

Being aware of these biases is a very important first step, and it may be enough to consciously act upon them, but as they may have an impact on your approach to and communication with students or other people, you need to actively do something about them. In most cases there is no need for too much effort but introducing safe (potentially anonymous) feedback opportunites or having a sidekick to counterbalance you are good measures.

When designing your lessons or planning a project, you must consider:

1 physical disabilities

e.g. can your wheelchair user student enter the premises where you will have the lesson/project?

2 mental disabilities

e.g. does your autistic student have a talent that could be useful during the lesson/in the project?

3 gender-related issues

e.g. does the school community accept if girls act as leaders?

4 age-related issues

e.g. do the older students accept the opinion of their younger students?

5 national minorities

e.g. does the lesson plan/project include any historical or cultural references that might be derogatory for your national minority student?

6 religious issues

e.g. does the project timetable take into consideration the religious holidays of all the students?

In each of these examples, if the answer is not a definitive "YES" you have to think about possible solutions. It is unacceptable to shrug one's shoulder and make compromises.

Naturally, if any of the above examples do not apply, e.g. because you do not have physically disabled students, you can skip considering those issues. However, you still have to be aware of these questions, because e.g. an under/overweight student or one wearing glasses might feel just as incapable of participation as a wheelchair user.

It might take more effort, time, and dedication to find the best way to partifor every single student, but eventually it will be much more useful for everybody. At the same time, do not force any student to participate, but make sure that those who are reluctant know that they have a wide range of possible roles from leaders and elected representatives to active bystanders.

Play cooperative games with them, note their strengths, and make suggestions regarding their possible tasks. If you feel that the student would be willing to participate in an extra-curricular project, but their family does not support it (e.g. they feel that it takes too much time and would hinder their academic progress), consider invi ng the family to take part in the planning.

When looking for a solution, it is best to involve the student(s) and their families and ask for their opinion and advice. By acknowledging awareness of the issue, you have taken the first important step towards inclusion and show that you and your school consider inclusion an essential starting point.

Tips

- ask your students and/or their parents about their needs
- encourage them to speak up if something does not feel good for them or if they are unable to fully participate
- try to find solutions together with the students concerned, their classmates and their parents
- go to your colleagues and school leader for advice
- utilise learning communities online and offline to learn from the successes and failures of others

An inclusive environment is safe in every sense of the word

When planning the venue of your school project (it can be inside the school building or outside of it) it is necessary to be informed about the various needs of the participants. Beside the more obvious issues like basic safety (e.g. no loose floorboards or free-range wires) or wheelchair access, you must consider if the venue is always easily accessible for everybody (e.g. commuters might find it difficult to go home if rehearsals last till late afternoon or are organised at weekends).

The best way to make sure that the venue is acceptable for every participant is to include them in the planning from the very beginning.

A safe space needs certain boundaries. If you expect your students to express themselves honestly you need to make sure that they feel safe when doing so, especially when they are still developing their skills (e.g. debating). This means that you need a venue that is secure from the prying eyes of outsiders. Do not use a venue that can be accessed by anybody, and if it is not possible in the school, find an outside venue.

You should also create a space that is not only physically safe, but where all learners can express their opinion, concerns, fears, but also happiness and content. For this, it is of utmost importance to build trust within the group of learners and set rules together to make proper feedback possible, but only in a constructive, non-obtrusive way.

Creating a mentally and spiritually safe environment for everybody is difficult but maintaining it throughout the school year is almost impossible. If your students feel passionate about their opinions, it is very likely that they will have some clashes from time to time. You need to make sure that they learn to communicate their frustration in a respectful way.

Students who are very talented and/or highly intelligent may be especially difficult to handle in this regard and may require a gentle but firm hand in curbing their attitudes. Sometimes teachers admire their talented students so much that they allow them more leeway than is good for them. Your job is to support a learning process in which the development of all students is the most important goal.

Tips

- introduce methods for students to indicate if they don't feel safe
- don't force anybody to raise their concerns in front of everybody, provide a physically and mentally safe space for this
- offer an anonymous way to flag problems
- engage a colleague or parents if necessary

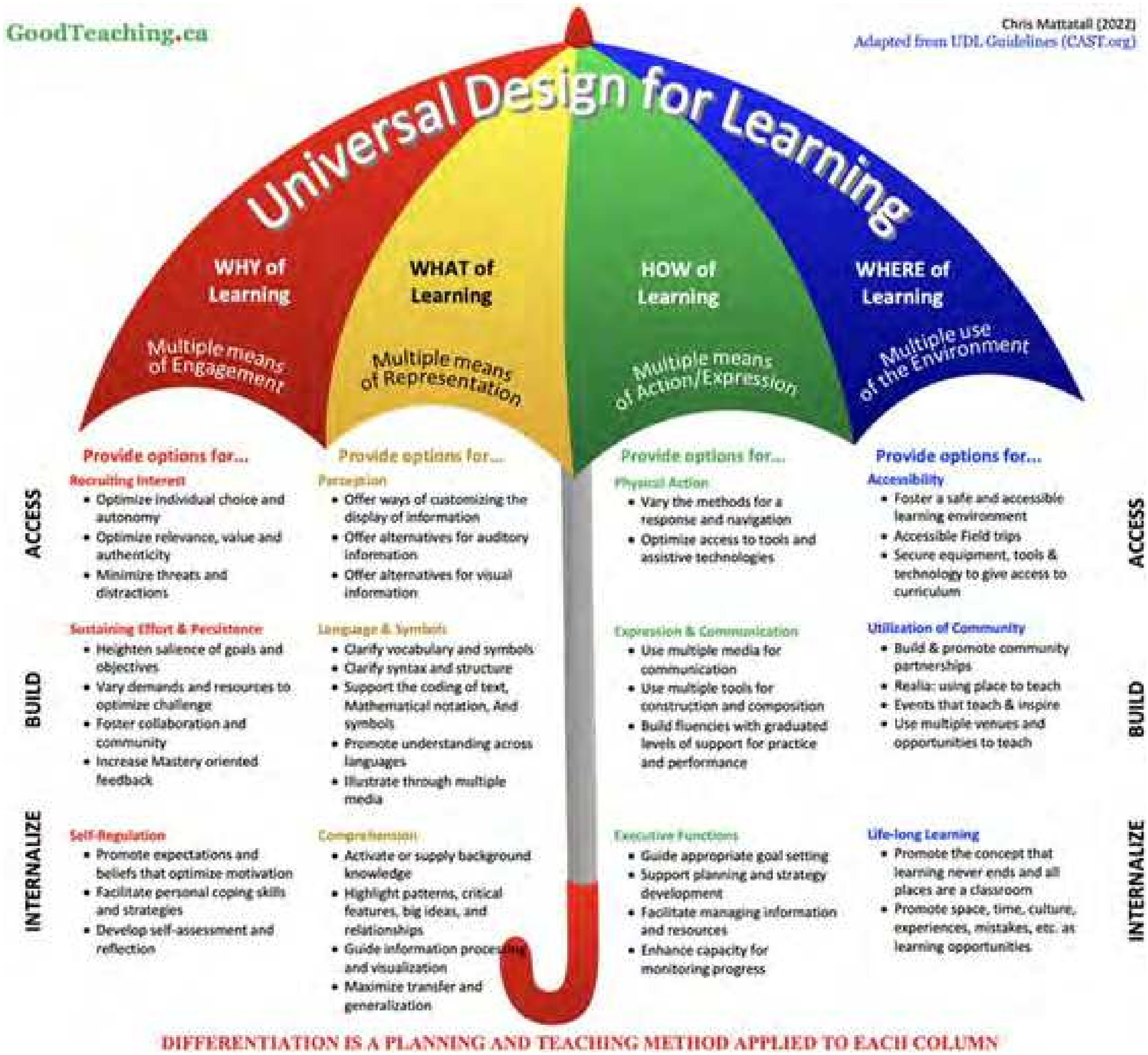
U

Universal Design

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that provides all students with an equal opportunity to succeed. The goal of UDL is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning. It acknowledges that every one of us has special needs and aims to build in flexibility that can be adjusted to every student's strength and need.

This approach to teaching doesn't specifically target children with learning and attention issues, but it can be very helpful for them, especially for those who have not been formally diagnosed.

By applying UDL principles, teachers can effectively instruct a diverse group of learners. It does not require you to redesign the project you are working on, but rather provides a way of inclusive thinking ensuring that all involved parties are offered learning support in a way that best helps them to thrive.


GoodTeaching.ca
Chris Mattatall (2022)
Adapted from UDL Guidelines (CAST.org)
Universal Design for Learning
WHY of Learning
Multiple means of Engagement
WHAT of Learning
Multiple means of Representation
HOW of Learning
Multiple means of Action/Expression
WHERE of Learning
Multiple use of the Environment
ACCESS
BUILD
INTERNALIZE
Provide options for...
Recruiting Interest
• Optimize individual choice and autonomy
• Optimize relevance, value and authenticity
• Minimize threats and distractions
Sustaining Effort & Persistence
• Heighten salience of goals and objectives
• Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
• Foster collaboration and community
• Increase Mastery oriented feedback
Self-Regulation
• Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation
• Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
• Develop self-assessment and reflection
Provide options for...
Perception
• Offer ways of customizing the display of information
• Offer alternatives for auditory information
• Offer alternatives for visual information
Language & Symbols
• Clarify vocabulary and symbols
• Clarify syntax and structure
• Support the coding of text, Mathematical notation, And symbols
• Promote understanding across languages
• Illustrate through multiple media
Comprehension
• Activate or supply background knowledge
• Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
• Guide information processing and visualization
• Maximize transfer and generalization
Provide options for...
Physical Action
• Vary the methods for a response and navigation
• Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
Expression & Communication
• Use multiple media for communication
• Use multiple tools for construction and composition
• Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance
Executive Functions
• Guide appropriate goal setting
• Support planning and strategy development
• Facilitate managing information and resources
• Enhance capacity for monitoring progress
Provide options for...
Accessibility
• Foster a safe and accessible learning environment
• Accessible Field trips
• Secure equipment, tools & technology to give access to curriculum
Utilization of Community
• Build & promote community partnerships
• Realia: using place to teach
• Events that teach & inspire
• Use multiple venues and opportunities to teach
Life-long Learning
• Promote the concept that learning never ends and all places are a classroom
• Promote space, time, culture, experiences, mistakes, etc. as learning opportunities
ACCESS
BUILD
INTERNALIZE
DIFFERENTIATION IS A PLANNING AND TEACHING METHOD APPLIED TO EACH COLUMN

Try to take the three main principles of UDL into consideration when planning your lesson/ project:

Representation

UDL recommends offering information in more than one format. For example, schoolbooks are primarily visual. But providing not only text, but also audio, video and hands-on learning you give students a chance to access the material in whichever way is best suited to their learning strengths. You can then further strengthen these recognized skills by giving them specific tasks, thus building their confidence.

Action and expression

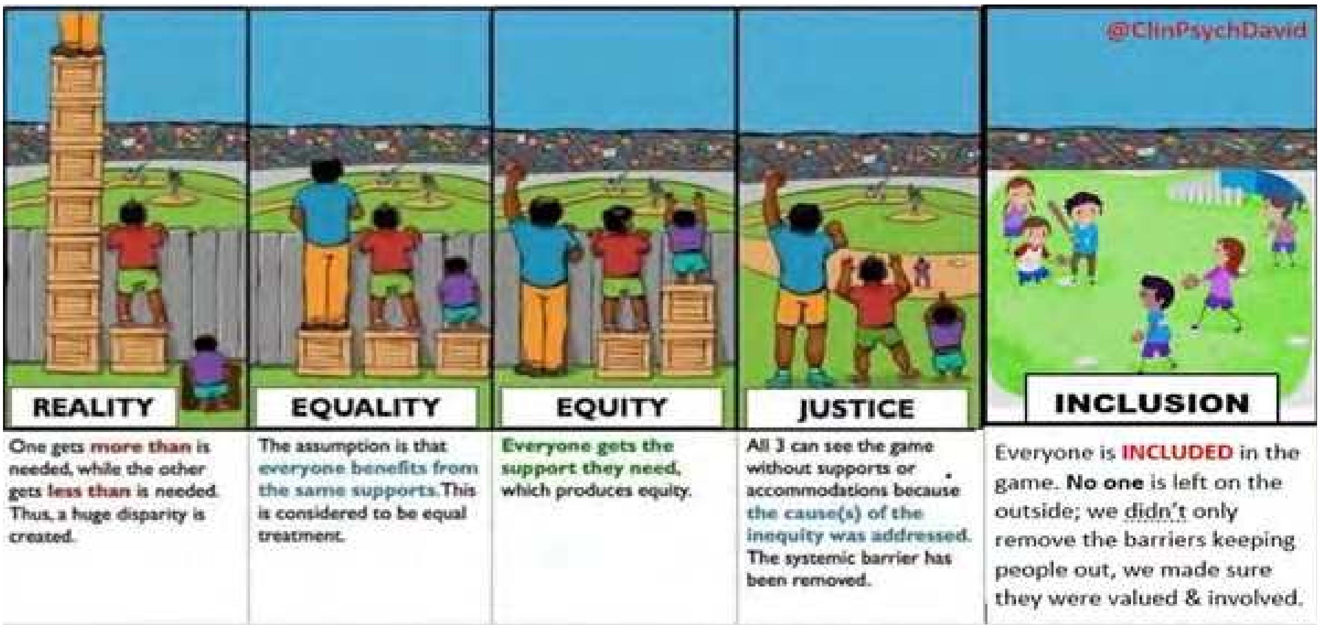
UDL suggests giving students more than one way to interact with the material and to show what they have learned. For example, students might get to choose between taking a pencil-and-paper test, giving an oral presentation, or doing a group project. This will, once again, provide you with information regarding their strengths.

Engagement

UDL encourages teachers to look for multiple ways to motivate students, e.g. by letting them make choices and giving them assignments that feel relevant to their lives. Other common strategies include gamification and creating opportunities for students to get up and move around the classroom.

When choosing the topic for your project, this principle is especially relevant. It will be much harder to motivate your students to participate meaningfully if you are the only one who really cares about the subject matter.

Most readers are probably very familiar with the first three slots in the picture below. The additional two are bringing us closer to a truly democratic school. You can even go beyond the last picture: we don’t only allow any student who want to become players, but we also offer possibilities for those who want to be the referee or play a different game.



C

Child Agency

Child agency means that children are capable of doing a wide range of things, usually much more than adults assume they can. It means that they are able to and thus may choose their way of acting, thus contributing to the construction of their social and cultural context.

As per the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 and 13, children have the right to express their opinion, and they also have the right to be heard. They have the right to freedom of expression, and it also includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

Article 14 protects the freedom of conscience, thought and religion that must be considered when deciding on topics you are working with. Children can and are allowed to express if they feel uncomfortable about a topic or how it is treated, and this must be acknowledged and acted upon.

Article 16 protects the child's honour and reputation, obliging others, including adults to behave respectfully.

Article 17 ensures the right of children to gather information from a variety of sources.

Article 19 protects children from abuse, be it mental or physical. In the context of child agency most of these regulations impose an obligation on responsible adults not only to ensure these freedoms, but also to guide children about the boundaries of these rights, namely that they cannot be exercised in a way that violates the rights of others.

The role of school in children’s life is much more than just providing academic knowledge. School is a place where children can develop and practise social skills, where they can explore their interests, learn about the ways society works and how to learn with the guidance of professional educators. Skills and concepts like critical thinking, decision making, the consequences of a decision, democracy, cannot be taught in theory, they need to be learnt through practice and error.

If children are allowed and supported to exercise these rights from an early age, they will be much more confident in them as they grow older. If children are included in the decision making for their own environment, they will feel ownership and will adhere to the rules much more. This is a skill even 2-year-olds are able to display.

If you let your students assume their agency when designing your school project, you provide them a safe space where they can develop the above-mentioned skills. It is difficult to let go of the illusion of complete control.

Professional educators and parents often make decisions for children with the intention of keeping them safe, protecting them from harm and the negative consequences of bad decisions. While these intentions are noble, they don’t allow children to learn and to make their own mistakes when the stakes are low and thus leave young people unprepared when they turn adults and there isn’t anyone making decisions for them anymore.

The role of adults is to involve and facilitate, to give them tools, help them consider options or point of views they have not thought about, make sure that everyone is heard. Children are one of the many stakeholders in school, and their input should be considered equally important as the other stakeholders’ opinions.

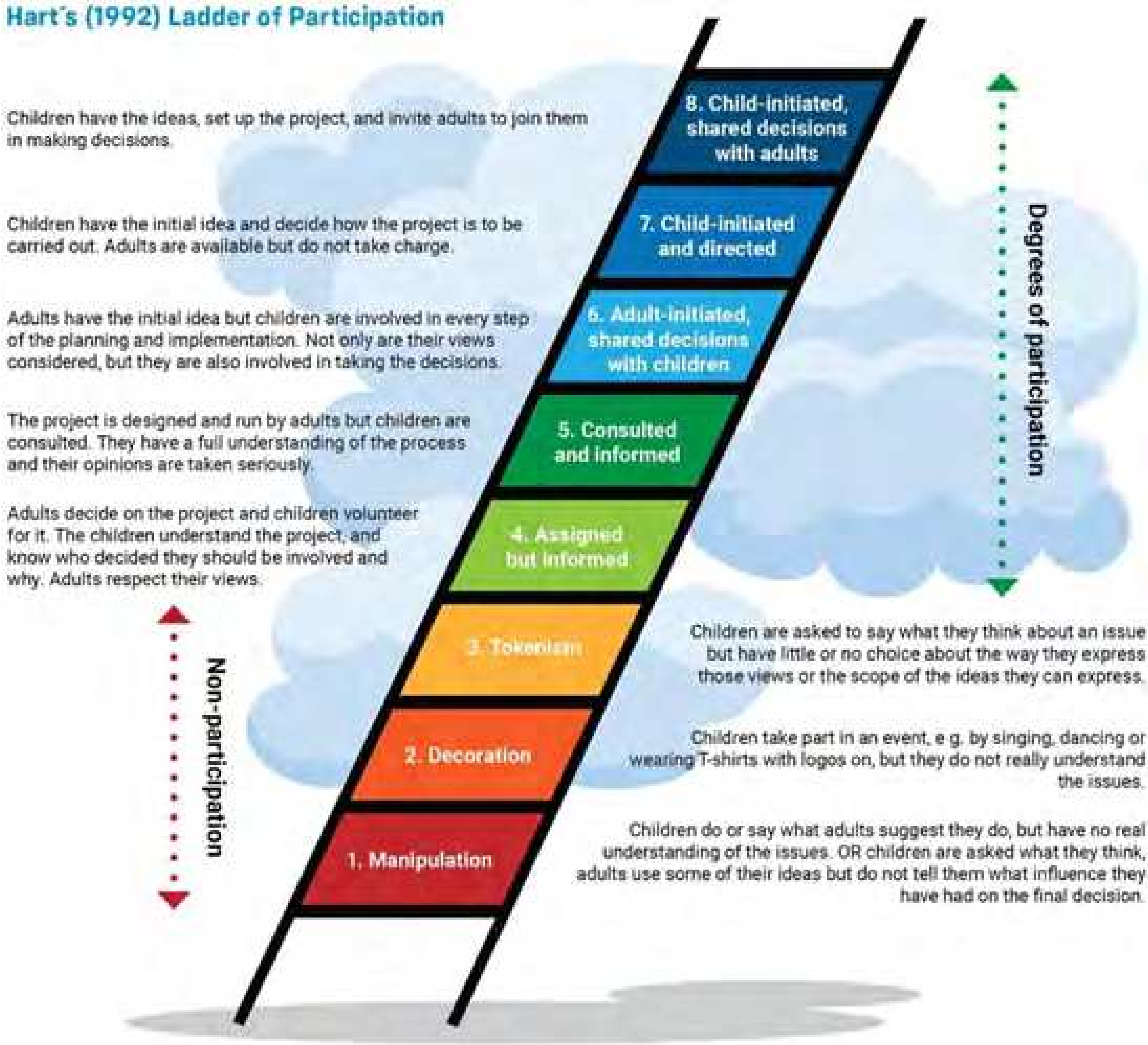
In practice, you first need to acknowledge the benefits of collaborative decision making. Collaborative decision making can help the group focus their intent, so it is not so much about winning the argument, but about finding the best solution. When this happens it builds trust and buy-in, which is a crucial element of strong and healthy group dynamics.

As the responsible adult, you need to make sure the regulations in place allow this to happen, and everyone is aware of their rights and duties. You need to identify age-appropriate processes for students to express their opinions and practice their decision-making rights. Hart´s Ladder of Participation (see below) is a great tool to monitor decision making practices, and to check if they are truly participatory.

It is important to know the background of the students in your school. Their family, their social status and their heritage have a lot of impact on how they view hierarchy, what values they respect, and how comfortable they are with making decisions and facing the consequences.

To make sure that every child is equally able to express their opinion and to participate, you need to be aware of these differences, and adjust the tools to accommodate them. It is essential to have a respectful and trustful relationship with parents too, so that children are not trapped between clashing values and practices.

Hart´s (1992) Ladder of Participation



P

Parent / Grandparent Participation

Research shows that family factors have the biggest impact on students' academic achievement. Parental engagement in their children's learning is far more predictive of students' academic success than the family's socioeconomic status. The quality of teachers is the second or third most crucial factor depending on the age of the child (over the age of 11 the other is the peer group). If parents (in this manual we use the term to refer to all family members who function as caretakers of a child) and teachers collaborate, they can make a huge difference in students' learning.

There are several factors that make parents/grandparents essential when creating a successful art project.

Parents as a resource

You will find that very often parents will be able to provide the necessary skills that are missing to make the project successful. It might be a very specific skill (e.g. the use of a special computer programme) or local knowledge (e.g. about local history). You can build on parents' cultural diversity and related specific knowledge they can bring into your project.

Parents in fundraising

Your project might need additional funds. Fundraising should not be your sole role and it might also be more effective if organised by parents. However, you can still arrange fundraisers, coffee and cake events, especially if these are initiated by the parents.

Parents as educators

You might want to ask for help from parents who can act as educators in your project – be that the necessary research (e.g. engaging a historian, sociologist, or librarian parent), art education (e.g. teaching dance moves), teaching the use of some equipment (e.g. video camera) or in other ways of supporting the students (e.g. by organising team building exercises). For this, it is important to be aware of relevant parent knowledge or skills.

Grandparents have time

Managing a more complex project can take up a lot of time, so it is good to know that grandparents often have a lot of free time on their hands and might be willing to help with smaller or bigger tasks. In some schools, it is compulsory to always have an adult present, and grandparents are a good choice for that. They can also accompany children on a necessary outing e.g. during research. This has the additional value of building a stronger relationship between the generations.

Grandparents have life experience to build on

As learning usually happens in a non-formal way during projects, this is an excellent opportunity for children to learn from their grandparents (or from the grandparents of their peers). Grandparents often have a lot of knowledge or first-hand experience about myths and local stories that can be utilised as one source of information during research. It can also be a life-changing experience for grandparents to have their experience acknowledged and this eventually leads to a stronger school community.

Below you will find an image that helps you understand how to engage parents/grandparents to participate in the life of the school and common practices that we suggest you avoid.

L

Local Community Participation

Engaging (or not) with the local community is an important decision to be made by the project team. Early outreach can lead to an early buy-in meaning that there is an interest about what you are doing among local community actors. If managed well, it can support your project from the research phase to the final outcome.

Local community can be a resource in itself with its venues and relevant practices, but they can also provide the skills that become necessary during the project but are absent from the school. Local communities can also help you out with material resources if there is interest and motivation.

Local youth organisations, animal shelters, cultural institutions, religious groups, media outlets or similar organisations can also be a great resource for truly localising your project, moving from a general interest to one that is more closely linked to local traditions.

Local community actors can also help you by providing safe and separable space if the school is not available or suitable for some reason. It can be the cinema, the back room of the local pub or the training venue of a local NGO.

Groups of parents who belong to local minorities or local community organisations representing them can also be a great asset for your project. In the overwhelming majority of European schools these groups are underrepresented or missing from the school staff and getting them on board may help with creating something truly multicultural and culturally sensitive. This kind of support can be actively sought by the project team even if these minorities are missing from the group working on the project but are known to them.

The most relevant community actors that you can collaborate with are local non-formal education providers. They can provide just space as mentioned before, but they may also become active members of the creative team. In this case, you need to make sure that they become real team members, accepting rules and common working methods.

Of course, your students may decide to invite representatives of such organisations on an *ad hoc* basis, e.g. inviting them to give a presentation during the research phase or offering a speech improvement class. If you want to invite external participants, especially ones with no experience with children or teaching, you may want to offer them a basic training. You can find guidance on this in the resources of the CoMap project.

Inclusive Assessment and Evaluation

Projects may be extra-curricular. If this is the case, you are free to develop an assessment system that supports learning most. If you manage to include a project as a curricular activity, its uniqueness provides an opportunity to build an assessment system that suits your students best and the practices you develop during the project can later be used in your everyday teaching.

Below you will find definitions, explanations, and examples for various types of assessment.

An **assessment** is a systematic process for measuring an individual's abilities based on various data. When you assess your students, you match their skills, behaviours against certain (usually centrally set) parameters, to provide a measure of their strengths and weaknesses.

Depending on the context, assessments can be standardised or fluid. A **diagnostic** assessment is a form of pre-assessment or a pre-test where teachers can evaluate students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills.

These assessments are typically low-stakes and are intended to help teachers identify what students know and can do in different domains to support their students' learning.

When planning your lesson/project, it is essential to conduct such assessments so that you are aware of your students' present skillset. Since you will also have a timeline to work with, make sure that you have realistic expectations regarding the development of students' skills. Underestimating their capabilities is just as harmful as overestimating it, and it might be necessary to be flexible and change some parts of the lesson/project on the way to make it more or less challenging for them.

Formative assessments take place throughout the learning process and provide real-time feedback. These assessments measure the efforts and dedication of your students. Even if they are not very skilful (yet), their enthusiasm or diligence might deserve praise. By acknowledging their commitment, you encourage them to develop further.

When applying **summative** assessments, you compare what your students know to the expected level of knowledge required for a specific context. As projects can be very complex, this might be difficult to measure, so it is a good idea to apply summative assessments to various aspects of the project, e.g. assessing the background research and the quality of the outcome separately.

An **evaluation** is the systematic assessment of design, implementation, or results of an initiative. For example, when having finished your project you evaluate it, you critically analyse the various outcomes and data to help you measure its success. You aim to make an objective judgement on the value, quality, or significance of your project using a set of well-defined criteria. It helps students to see clearly how they performed, but this practice can also support the implementation of another similar project in the future.

It's important to assess how students' skills have developed during the project, and to do so in ways that don't inadvertently disadvantage some children compared to others.

Inclusive assessment is based on continuous activities that allow both students and teachers to understand how the students' progress meets the learning objectives. It should include:

- early, low-stakes, frequent assessment, and feedback for learning,
- multiple and varied methods of student performance,

the use of exercises or assignments that promote self-assessment and self-awareness

- assessments before, during, and after learning,
- transparent assessments that clearly articulate step-by-step instructions as well as the criteria for success.

There has been increased attention over grading practices and equity because research evidence shows that grading negatively impacts learning. Prominent grading approaches often privilege individuals with the greatest resources, preparation, and desired behaviours. While you might feel that working on a school project does not necessitate giving grades at all (or you only give high marks as a reward for participating students), you might want to consider the practice of ungrading. It is not as simple as just removing grades.

This practice suggests that we need to do intentional, critical work to dismantle traditional and standardized approaches to assessment. In **ungrading**, feedback is subjective and individualized and invites the student to use these to continue learning.

For example, you might feel that the research a student has done is not comprehensive enough, because they used just one book. Instead of rebuking the student, you should encourage them to find other resources, e.g. the local newspaper and see if that data confirms or contradicts the earlier research. This way the student's critical thinking also develops.

Dealing with culturally sensitive topics

When choosing the topic of your project, you should consider the background of your students. For example, a student with minority/migrant background might have a very different viewpoint regarding Western European democracy. Teaching children critical thinking is very important, so you can solve the possible problems that arise from this in two ways:

- Research the chosen topic with the children and discuss the differences between legends, opinions, and facts. Researching these differences could be a major outcome of your project.
- Choose a topic with less controversies.

Where to start a teaching *and* learning project

Creating a project, regardless of its topic, is a lengthy and messy process, and might even lead to failure. However, good planning, preparation and guidance can help you to ensure that there will be results. The role of a Leader of learning – this is the role teachers should play – in such projects is mainly scaffolding the creative process avoiding interference as much as possible but ensuring that there is progress.

First, you have to make sure you are the right person to be the Leader of learning and assess what you will need support with. The first question to ask yourself is the following: Can I resist the urge to interfere, to influence the creative process? If the answer is no, you need to find another Leader of learning and find your role as a participant in the project.

Saying yes is relatively easy, but sometimes it is difficult to really act accordingly. It might be a good idea to draw up a list of things you promise not to do as a Leader of learning and ask somebody (a colleague, one of the students or the whole group of students) to remind you if you drop out of your role. Being a teacher, it is sometimes difficult to let go of control and to accept that in such cases you are not the "knowledgeable" one.

Thus, you may need a reminder if you:

- make decisions instead of facilitating group decision making,
- start instructing the students instead of letting the designated person to do their job, or
- start doing things instead of the participants because it is faster that way.

H

How to Choose the Topic and the Form of Your Project

When choosing the topic, you can be reactive or proactive. If there is an ongoing debate or conflict within the school or a topic your students are especially interested in, you can choose such topics. You can also choose a topic that serves curricular aims and offers a more participatory way of reaching certain learning outcomes. What is crucial is that you identify the desired learning outcomes of all activities planned.

The best is to engage students in choosing the topic as openly as possible. You can call students interested in participating to make a kind of bid.

This helps them to become fully engaged with the process, but also to start the research necessary. You can make a call that is totally open or that is somewhat restricted. If the activity is designed to be extracurricular, a totally open call is a good idea, but if you want to link it to curriculum, it is better to offer a more closed set of possible choices.

If you choose this method, you need to pose some simple questions for the students to make their bid. One way of doing it is offering a questionnaire. The questions might be relevant if you choose the topic in another way as it helps the group to focus. See questionnaire sample in Annex.

Participatory design *and* delivery

In an ideal case, the role of the Leader of learning is a background role leaving most of the activities to the participating students. It is a difficult position, quite unusual for most teachers. You have to be present, monitor the process, enable progress, but interfere as little as possible.

Remember that every moment of the project is a learning opportunity for the students, but it is learning by doing, so your role is that of the facilitator. You should also remember that students are capable of doing far more than most adults think if they are given the opportunity and feel they are trusted. Don't shy away from openly expressing or highlighting your own education for democracy in this process – for yourself and for your students.

In the previous section you have already read about the ways children can make decisions on the topic. A nearly fully student-led project will offer the widest possibilities for learning. However, your presence as the Leader of learning is essential in avoiding total failure. (Trial and error, however, is very beneficial for learning.)

After choosing the topic, students should be guided in the various phases of the project. They have to do the necessary research, decide on the various roles in the development of the project. It can also be students who organise the showing of the project outcome to an audience.

R

Research

It is important for both you (and other participating teachers) and for the students to understand that while the project outcome is the visible part, research is the most important element of the process. Research can be done parallel with some other preparations, but its outcomes have a major impact on other details. You will have students who are interested in this part of the project only. It is important to make them visible for everybody and to make everybody understand how essential the work done by them is.

Your students may not be familiar with social sciences research methods, so as Leader of learning you have to make sure they are equipped with basic research skills. However, the research itself should be done by the students.

Research, if done properly will provide a solid basis to ensure that

- historical facts and myths are separated
- there is a clear link to your locality

- controversies are highlighted so that they can be properly handled in the creation process
- participants have a clear understanding of the big picture their chosen figure/event/movement/theory is part of.

Creating the project

Your students will not feel comfortable in jobs assigned to them without being consulted. Some roles also require a wide consensus. Keep reminding yourself that this is a school project, so the learning and happiness of students is much more important than the final outcome's market value.

You must also be prepared for some students who wish to have roles that might not suit them. If you know the participating students well, you might be prepared for it, already having some alternatives in mind. If you do not know them well enough, you can trust other students' opinions if expressed in an agreeable way. It may also happen that you choose someone for a certain job, and they turn out to be not suitable. Have some alternatives up your sleeve for such cases.

However, you must be careful to differentiate between personal disagreements and being unsuitable for the job. Working closely on a project is a process that inevitably leads to conflicts of varying seriousness. As a Leader of learning, conflict management will be one of your main tasks to ensure the smooth creative process of your students. If you do not feel well equipped in this field, you can find training opportunities online (e.g. in the ParENTrepreneurs online training). It is of utmost importance to introduce mutually agreed rules for constructive feedback, too.

To ensure a smooth production process, you need to support students in several areas, facilitating their work, for example:

- having an agreed version of materials used shared with all participants (and any changes clearly communicated to everybody during the process),
- having clearly assigned and agreed roles,
- planning and developing details of the project together,
- planning the timing and place of working on the project together,
- planning and developing details of the project outcome together.

Engaging Your Colleagues - Pros and Cons

It is important to consider which of your colleagues are to be engaged in your project.

First and foremost, you need to have school leadership on board. This is necessary for several reasons: school leadership should understand the pedagogical value of your project, students or you may need to skip classes, you will probably use school premises and equipment, you may need support from other teachers or non-teaching staff, but they may even get involved in case of a complaint.

At the same time, your colleagues need to be informed and have ownership of your project as much as possible. Especially when you need a substitute or take students out of class, a positive mindset about the project is important. It is crucial to make the pedagogical value of your project clear to colleagues.

P

Project Based Learning and Its Management

Project-based learning (PBL) is probably the most widely known and used, complex student- centred methodology. Students work on a project over an extended period – from a week up to a semester – that engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question. They demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a public product or presentation for a real audience.

As a result, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. If managed well, PBL has the potential to boost creative energy among students and teachers.

In PBL, students work in groups to solve challenging problems that are authentic, curriculum- based, and often interdisciplinary. Learners decide how to approach a problem and what activities to pursue. They gather information from a variety of sources and synthesise, analyse, and derive knowledge from it. Their learning is inherently valuable because it's connected to something real and involves adult skills such as collaboration and reflection.

At the end, students demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge and are judged by how much they've learned and how well they communicate it.

Throughout this process, the teacher's role is to guide and advise, rather than to direct and manage, student work.

PBL is becoming widely used in schools and other educational settings, with different varieties being practised. However, there are key characteristics that differentiate "doing a project" from engaging in rigorous PBL.

Doing a project is often a short, intellectually light activity "served up" after the teacher covers the content of a unit in the usual way. In the case of PBL the project is the unit itself, the vehicle for teaching the important knowledge and skills students need to learn. The project contains and frames curriculum and instruction.

In contrast to "doing a project" to verify learning, PBL requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. To answer a driving question and create high-quality work, students need to do much more than remember information. They need to use high order thinking skills and learn to work as a team.

The role of teachers in PBL is the following

- build a culture of PBL
- manage activities
- scaffold student learning
- assess learning
- engage in activities and coach students
- support design and planning
- align products with curricula

Other student-centred methods

It is not only important to engage children in the planning and evaluation of innovative new programmes at school, but it is necessary if we want to have children as active participants in the classroom. There are various student-centred methods that can be suitable.

P

Problem Based Learning

This method flips the traditional approach to school learning by making the students identify what needs to be known rather than pre-defining it. In problem-based learning, students use “triggers” from the problem case or scenario to define their own learning objectives. Subsequently, they do independent, self-directed study before returning to the group to discuss and refine their acquired knowledge.

The most common approach to it is the Maastricht seven-jump process that clearly defines it as a combination of individual and group learning and is usually used in groups of 10 to 15 students.

The seven steps are:

1. discuss the case and make sure everyone understands the problem

2. identify the questions that need to be answered to shed light on the case

3. brainstorm what the group already knows and identify potential solutions

4. analyse and structure the results of the brainstorming session

5. formulate learning objectives for the knowledge that is still lacking

6. do independent study, individually or in smaller groups: read articles or books, follow tutorials, watch videos, or use other, trusted sources to gain the required knowledge

7. discuss the findings

Inquiry-Based Learning

This method takes a further step in student independence by offering students the possibility to identify the problem themselves and design an exploratory route of inquiry to refine their problem and find solutions for that themselves. This methodology is especially suitable for digitally supported activities that allow the inquiry process to be supported by digital learning environments. While the method is often used in science subjects due to its roots in scientific research, it is also suitable for humanities or arts discovery. It is often organised into inquiry phases that together form an inquiry cycle.

In inquiry-based approaches implemented in the classroom, students generally follow methods and practices similar to those of professional scientists in order to construct knowledge. It can be defined as a process of discovering new causal relations, with the learner formulating hypotheses and testing them by conducting experiments and/or making observations. Often it is viewed as an approach to solving problems and involves the application of several problem-solving skills.

Inquiry-based learning emphasizes active participation and the learner’s responsibility for discovering knowledge that is new to the learner.

In this process, students often carry out a self-directed, partly inductive, and partly deductive learning process by doing experiments to investigate the relations for at least one set of dependent and independent variables.

There are several definitions and frameworks for playful learning, the one used here is the one established by scholars at the LEGO Foundation and is defined as serious play.

While most scholars have done research on the benefits of serious play in early childhood, recent studies have also emphasised its benefits for older children and adults, thus making it an approach to consider in all stages of lifelong learning. This is partially rooted in the concept of Csíkszentmihályi’s flow and positive psychology. This concept establishes the ideal state for learning as a situation that is challenging, but not overchallenging for the individual, and offering meaningful learning moments.

The theoretically interesting element of it is that it highlights the importance of iteration, thus celebrating trial and error, a feature often missing from the school context. It does not only emphasise the importance of the feelings of learners during the learning process, but explicitly requires the experience to be joyful.

This joy, as Csíkszentmihályi establishes, comes from the satisfaction of achievement, so it is not necessarily “fun” or “humour”, but joy in a broad sense: as pleasure, enjoyment, motivation, thrill, and a positive emotion – whether over a short period of time or over the entire play session. In other words, joy is seen as both enjoying a task for its own sake and the momentary thrill of surprise, insight, or success after overcoming challenges.

The concept is built on the fact that children naturally learn through play and offers a framework to keep this in later stages and more formal environments of education. It offers a broad framework that can be implemented in any subject-context and puts an emphasis on developing life skills as a first step and as a basis for curricular learning.

G

Gamification

Gamification is not game-based learning, although gamified solutions often use games as a vehicle of learning. It builds on successful principles of (primarily computer) games to make learning more interesting, but not necessarily involves an actual game or digital technology. It is aiming at students being more motivated, having a deeper engagement with curricular learning, being genuinely interested, and applying learning in real life environments.

The approach is based on the gratification players feel in computer games. What is important for this pedagogical approach is the so-called epic win (perhaps it could be translated as cathartic success): difficult problems during games the gamer has to solve, they need to think hard, dedicate all available resources to it – and if they do, in the end success crowns their efforts.

Cathartic success is something that really took a lot of effort to reach in the game, at first it seemed even impossible to achieve, but still succeeded. As a teacher this is exactly what you want to achieve.

This is the feeling that you can take it forward, and it also encourages the student to make an extra effort.

Gamified assessment methods, based on awards and no punishments are an especially useful method for motivation, helping students to focus on their weaker points, and achieving learning goals. This is an element – offline or online – that can be introduced easily and independently from introducing other elements of gamification.

G

Game-Based Learning

In contrast to gamification, it involves designing learning activities so that game characteristics and game principles inhere within the learning activities themselves.

Educational games are games explicitly designed with educational purposes, but game- based learning can also mean the use of games that have incidental or secondary educational value. All types of games may be used in an educational environment, however educational games are games that are designed to help people learn about certain subjects, expand concepts, reinforce development, understand a historical event or culture, or assist them in learning a skill as they play.

Game types include board, card, and video games. For example, in an Economics course, students might compete in a virtual stock-trading competition; in a Political Science course, students might role-play as they engage in mock negotiations involving a labour dispute.

Team Building and Team Leading

Depending on the composition of the student or student-adult team you are working with, as a Leader of learning you may need to spend time and energy on building the group of people into a team as it is crucial for the success of your efforts.

Team building activities create a climate of cooperation and contribute to collaborative problem-solving, develop empathy and trust in the group and in yourself, enhance creativity, and boost self-esteem. This means that you may need to include specific team building activities in case of a conflict or challenge during the creative process, too.

Team building helps everyone get to know and trust their fellow team members, but you do not build trust overnight. Your team goes through gradual stages as they grow from a collection of strangers to efficient collaborators.

Psychologist Bruce Tuckman's team building model describes five stages – forming, norming, performing, storming, and adjourning – to show how teams can become more united over time.

During the performing stage – that is desirable to reach with your team –, everyone is working together at their highest potential, they have built the highest level of commitment, trust, and support for one another. It means that they are at their most productive and are highly motivated to achieve team goals.

Forming happens when your team first comes together. Team members learn about each other, the project requirements, and the leadership structure. This is also the information gathering stage. They are beginning to form impressions of how well they are going to work together. You may want to organise a picnic for all team members and include some activities that help them learn (more) about each other.

In the norming phase, teams become more cooperative. Team members start to understand and appreciate each other's working style, ethics, and roles. This helps them respect the Leader of learning as well as each other. They acknowledge the talents, skills, and experience that each team member brings to the table. They are more willing to trust and depend on one other to get work done. You may want to organise a problem-solving event to support them at this stage, such as a scavenger hunt or escape room event.

In the performing stage, your team really starts shining and working together harmoniously. They are motivated to work towards the team's goals with efficiency and enthusiasm. You as a Leader of learning can be sure that the work is being properly done and focus on boosting team morale rather than supervising your team. But even once you have achieved this goal of performing as a team, you want to keep the momentum going and keep an eye on them to notice any sign of the fourth stage of a team, storming.

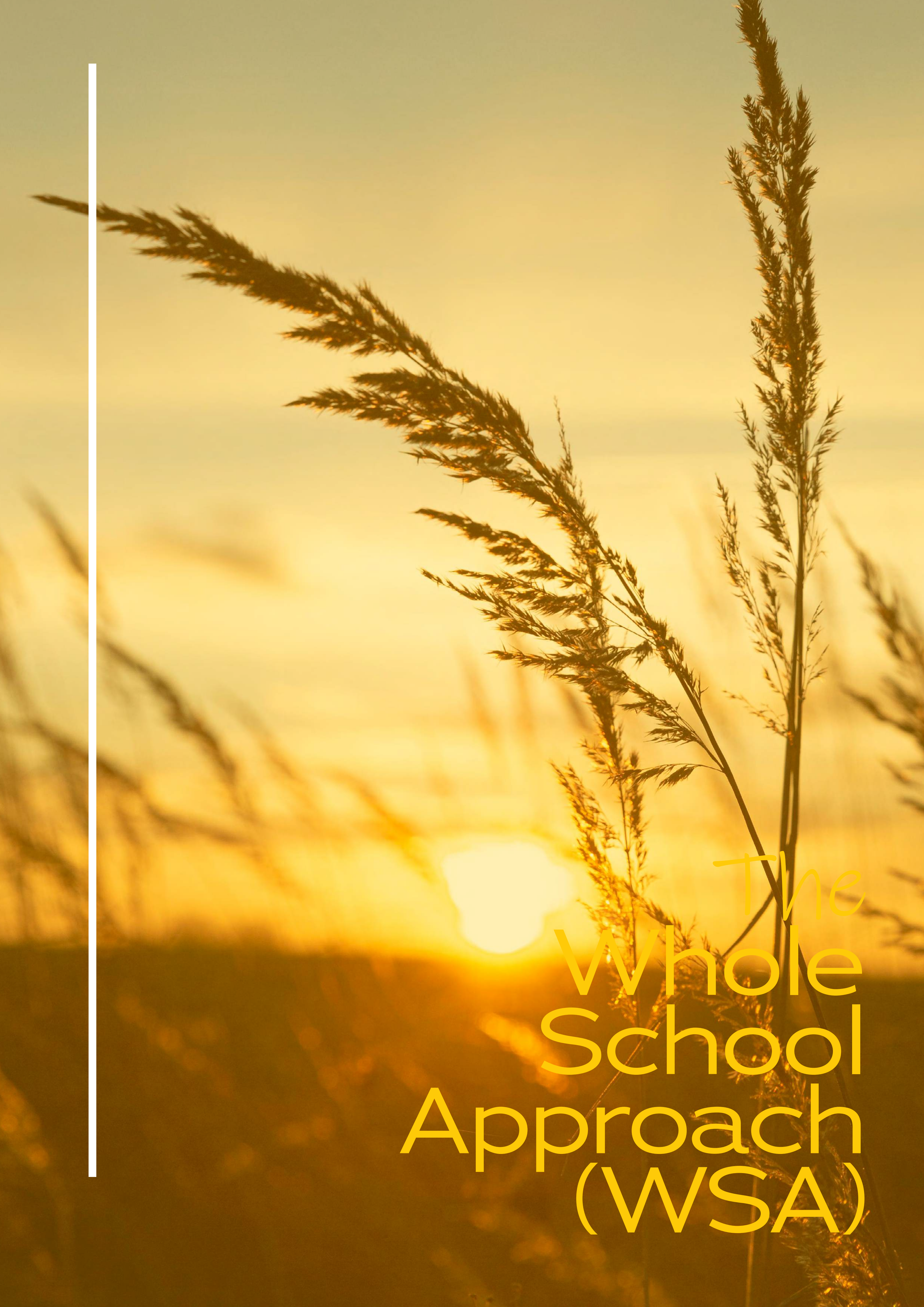
There are various methods to keep up the team spirit in the performing stage. Most of them require being together outside of the project. You can take your team out to have ice cream together or have a friendly match in the sports court.

Storming is also a natural part of team building. In the storming stage, people start to push against the established boundaries. Conflict or friction can also arise between team members as their true characters – and their preferred ways of working – surface and clash with other people's. At this stage team members may challenge your authority or management style, or even the team's agreed goals. Left unchecked, this can lead to face-to-face confrontations or simmering online tensions.

At this stage you may want to organise activities that are aiming at building trust, resolving conflict, or clarifying personal and team goals. Town Hall meetings are also beneficial at this stage.

Your team may also reach an adjourning (or mourning) stage when the team gets disbanded. It happens even if the students will continue to meet in the same school or classroom as the team itself is dissolved. Take the time to celebrate the team's achievements – having positive shared experiences will make it easier for them to engage in other activities or future projects with some of the team members.

There might be team members who are uncertain about their future social position (it is typically those who are not the centre of attention or liked by teachers but were brilliant in the project). Boost their confidence and future position by praising them in front of students or teachers. Small tokens of praise such as certificates are also often well received.



The Whole School Approach (WSA)

A whole school approach (WSA from now on) belongs to a learner-centred vision of education, within the frame of a communitarian sense of learning and development. International bodies and their declarations introduce WSA as a key factor for quality education as well as for building up an inclusive system which provides education for all. The UNESCO defines WSA as the educational process that "involves addressing the needs of learners, staff, and the wider community, not only within the curriculum, but across the whole-school and learning environment.

It implies collective and collaborative action in and by a school community to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these". The focus of this international organisation on WSA goes back to the UNESCO Guidelines on intercultural education in 2006 which recommended the use of approaches that connect the school to the community and identified the importance of parental involvement in whole school approaches and community schooling to foster tolerance in children.

The most up to date UNESCO's reference to WSA can be found within the statements on SDG4 and the policy recommendations on how to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

The WSA, as a perspective for inclusive and sustainable schools, cannot be implemented without considering some key preconditions. Without these preconditions, it is unlikely that a WSA might take place. The most remarkable precondition is to have a sense of community. Sometimes the sense of community is previous to a WSA implementation. On other occasions, the community is the outcome of a WSA process. Nevertheless, WSA and community sense go together to achieve inclusion and sustainability.

The generation of a sense of community can be achieved through WSA that is developed simultaneously from different dimensions. Without a doubt, formal education appears as one of the most important, the school becomes an ideal framework for that. However, we must also be aware of the rigid structure of the school (timetable, curriculum, architecture) as a strong limitation.

The Whole School Approach Principles

A WSA shares the same basic principles as community education. These principles guide the essential dynamics of the school, trying to take advantage of the potential, and limiting the effects of the aforementioned rigidness. These principles are:

Community

Education goes beyond the school; therefore, the community becomes an essential part of what happens inside and outside the school. A WSA is somehow a "whole community approach".

Horizontality

The participation and decision-making processes, as well as the participatory dynamics run by the several stakeholders (educators, educational professionals, families, participants, and administrations) must be transformed from pyramidal to horizontal relationships framework. In a WSA your role in the community plays a secondary position.

Osmosis

The WSA participatory processes integrate both internal school processes (formal and non-formal) and external dynamics rooted within the community.

Belonging

A WSA requires that schools become the meeting point of the different stakeholders engaged and it must give a sense of belonging to all of them.

System of relationships.

A WSA should promote both a quantitative increase of stakeholders and bonds and a qualitative improvement of their relationships.

So Challenges of The Whole School Approach

A WSA in action regarding these principles is affected by gaps and contradictions that must be considered since they might become negative barriers for a successful implementation of WSA. The more these challenges are achieved, the better a WSA will be implemented:

The “community outsiders” challenge

Urban dynamics and territorial mobility often mean that professionals do not belong to the community where they are working, they just stay in the community during their working hours. For sure, they play an essential role for achieving successful school activities: they are competent for leading them, and they also bring fresh knowledge from other contexts, since the community itself may not have it.

However, there’s a risk they act as “community outsiders”: they “stay” sometimes, but they are not “there”, and this fact might create constraints for a WSA. To avoid that, they should learn and make a cultural effort to understand each other to prevent this risk. An accommodation process is necessary by both sides for mutual benefit.

The "social class" challenge

A WSA seeks equity and wishes to improve the lives of those community groups that are at social risk. But this does not exactly mean that this approach is only implemented with these social risk groups.

A WSA needs to start from a pre- condition: social melting regardless of the participants' standard of living, the knitting of bonds among all the community members as a guarantee that school processes can help structure social life in terms of social cohesion. This challenge is rather focused on the differences among schools than on those gaps inside the schools.

The "digital" challenge

The use of ICT to establish the communication and socialisation channels of a group may significantly transform dynamics and interpersonal relationship formats, but is it always in favour of a WSA? What is sure is that we must question whether a community can be virtual, and consequently can be an active subject of a community education process.

A hypothetical virtual community breaks the barriers of time and space. It allows the relocation of relationships and the de-synchronization of exchanges. It facilitates interconnections to infinite levels. We cannot dodge the question of how and when to use social networks to promote a WSA.

The "sustainability" challenge

A WSA process may begin; resources are activated; the first results are obtained; but a minor event may block the development of the process itself and all its benefits. The social systems generated by WSA processes are hypersensitive to changes in starting conditions. Long-term WSA processes are extremely complex.

The worst consequence is not so much in the process itself, which gets interrupted, but in future ones that can be given.

A community that has failed in the development of a WSA only realises short term negative effects, and a lack of trust in future similar processes remains with community members.

A Whole School Approach is a Participatory Approach

One final dimension to be pointed out regarding a WSA is participation. Participation is the essential component to make it happen. Participation promotes a democratic citizenship for all, and the school is a privileged space where these participatory dynamics may take place, but as we have already said, this participation can only be effective if it goes beyond the school structure.

A WSA requires the assumption of a more holistic approach, and implies at least the implementation of three strategies:

1. To reformulate the sense of participation by all school stakeholders – The need to reformulate the sense of participation should lead stakeholders to understand participation as a personal value, a significant social behaviour and valued by all citizens irrespective of their personal background. Understanding participation as a personal value allows us to move away from the dependency-autonomy tension, in favour of a principle of positive interdependence among others. This interdependence should be seen as the basics for living together.

2. To reconstruct the already existing participation spaces to accommodate stakeholders' participation – The need to rebuild the spaces to participate let us understand participation as a remarkable political principle. This is revealed as a basic condition of a model which aims for "intercultural citizenship".

3. To rethink participatory dynamization strategies that facilitate the involvement of all the stakeholders – The need to rethink the strategies to promote the participation of stakeholders pushes us to understand such participation as a social strategy of action, a method of facing common projects beyond education. The purpose of this social strategy is to develop a network of partners and actions that allows us to deepen the fight against exclusion and build "social cohesion".

This three-dimensional perspective can become the ground for an innovative understanding concerning participation, a new perspective that should lead to strengthening WSA at schools:

Funds of knowledge: It refers to the historical accumulation of abilities, bodies of knowledge, assets, and cultural ways of interacting from migrant families' households, and how educators use them as a resource to enhance their students' academic progress.

Learning communities: It refers to the cultural and social transformation of a school, aimed at achieving maximum instrumental learning for all students, with respectful social interaction regarding diversity among everyone and the maximum participation of the community stakeholders (parents, organisations).

This description of WSA contains excerpts from research done in the European Education Policy Network on Teachers and School Leaders in 2022 by Miquel Angel Essomba Gelabert and his team https://educationpolicynetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Deliverable- 2_2_Whole-school-support-and-networking-for-school-success-for-all.pdf

If you want to learn more about the whole school approach, you can do an online course also providing the possibility of receiving a certificate that could be acknowledged as part of the continuous professional development obligations of teachers here: https://microvet- vle.eu/course/view.php?id=33

Students, parents, external partners

Implementing the whole school approach in developing projects means that the project might probably be best led by students, parents, researchers, etc., but not teachers.

However, school professionals are still responsible for the educational process, and thus it is important to consider how best to support a project that is not led by teachers. Teachers need to become facilitators of learning and assume a leadership role: enabling, supporting, and constantly monitoring project implementation and the learning process. This might be strange at first as it is very different from the traditional teacher role. Teachers traditionally create and implement learning materials, while facilitators support learners through the process and help maximise their education.

A good facilitator will mostly:

- Act as a mediator: Facilitators often work in group settings. By acting as mediators and encouraging a healthy discussion, they're able to increase participation, fostering new ideas or solutions.
- Engage in active listening and problem-solving: Understanding how to best help someone requires reliance on strong active listening skills. By narrowing down the specific challenges an individual is facing, facilitators can help find a solution.

- Use preparation or engagement techniques: Even though facilitators aren’t required to have background knowledge in a subject, proper preparation is crucial for facilitation. Arriving prepared with activities and strategies to keep students and other participants engaged can streamline learning, encouraging individuals to invest in the process.

When a project is led by students, it means that it is built on acknowledging child agency. Child agency means that children are capable of doing a wide range of things, usually much more than adults assume they can. It means that they are able to and thus may choose their way of acting, thus contributing to the construction of their social and cultural context.

Skills and concepts like critical thinking, decision making, the consequences of a decision, democracy, cannot be taught in theory, they need to be learnt through practice and error. If children are allowed and supported to exercise their agency from an early age, they will be much more confident in them as they grow older. If children are included in the decision making for their own environment, they will feel ownership and will adhere to the rules much more.

If you let your students assume their agency when designing your school project, you provide them with a safe space where they can develop the above-mentioned skills. It is difficult to let go of the illusion of complete control. Professional educators and parents often make decisions for children with the intention of keeping them safe, protecting them from harm and the negative consequences of bad decisions.

While these intentions are noble, they don't allow children to learn and to make their own mistakes when the stakes are low and thus leave young people unprepared when they turn adults and there isn't anyone making decisions for them anymore. The role of adults is to involve and facilitate, to give them tools, to help them consider options or point of views they have not thought about, to make sure that everyone is heard.

It is important to know the background of the students in your school. Their family, their social status and their heritage have a lot of impact on how they view hierarchy, what values they respect, and how comfortable they are with making decisions and facing the consequences. To make sure that every child is equally able to express their opinion and to participate, you need to be aware of these differences, and adjust the tools to accommodate them. It is essential to have a respectful and trustful relationship with parents too, so that children are not trapped between clashing values and practices.

Educating *active* digital citizens

In the past decade or so citizenship education started to focus on citizenship in the digital age or active digital citizenship. The Council of Europe has done substantial work in the field with recommendation for promoting the development of digital citizenship education and the role of collaboration among various stakeholders, including the for-profit sector. It tackles the need for education in 10 digital citizenship domains.

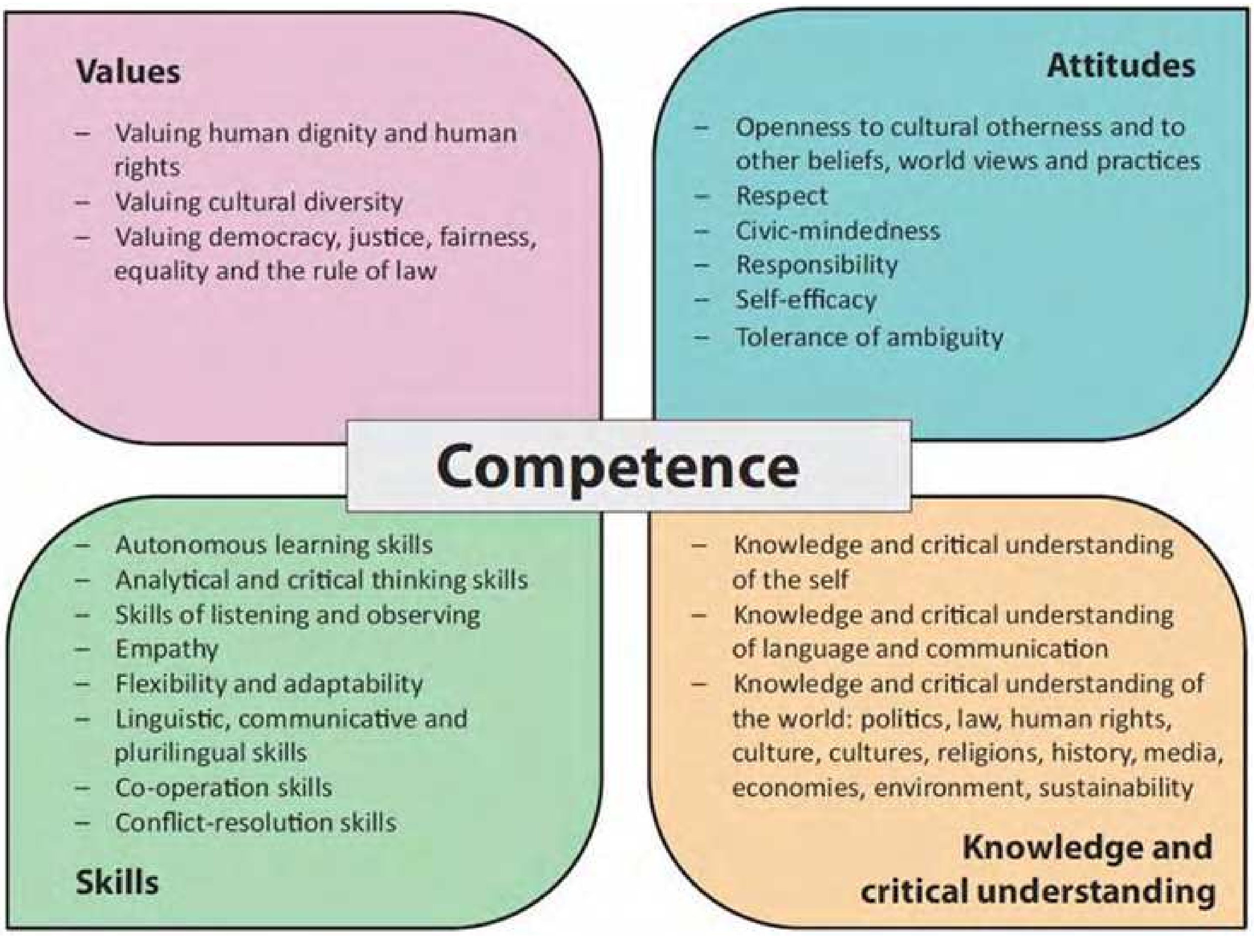
The 10 domains are grouped into 3 areas:

Being online
(related domains: access and inclusion, learning and creativity, and media and information literacy),

Well-being online
(related domains: ethics and empathy, health and well-being, and e-presence and communication)

Rights online
(related domains: active participation, rights and responsibilities, privacy and security, and consumer awareness). The necessary competences for democratic culture that are needed to safely navigate the 10 domains have also been listed. This is represented in the butterfly below.

These competences need to be developed in and outside of school, but most parents and teachers need competence development for becoming active digital citizens of the 21st century.



Annexes

Annex 1

ACTIVITY PLANNING CHECKLIST AND TEMPLATE

Make sure that you can mentally check off all the items on these lists

Before starting your lesson

I know the learning goal of this lesson.	
The methods I have chosen are appropriate to reach this goal and take time limitation into consideration.	
All the students will be able to participate actively.	
I have prepared alternate pathways for students who need them.	
I have prepared all the materials and equipment I intend to use and made sure that all the students have access to them.	
I have designed inclusive methods to assess whether the students have reached the intended learning goal.	
I have designed inclusive methods to evaluate the students and myself.	
I have considered engaging the parents, the local community and NGOs with reference to the topic and can think of ways to approach them.	
I have considered engaging my colleagues or experts in the field with reference to the topic and can think of ways to approach them.	

During the lesson

All the students are participating in ways that are most appropriate for them.	
All the students have the opportunity to express themselves in ways that are most appropriate for them.	
If students feel that they could participate more actively in some other way they have the opportunity to suggest it and will be heard.	

After the lesson

All the students have reached the learning goal.	
All the students expressed satisfaction and enjoyed the lesson.	
We have celebrated our success together.	

Annex 2

The Successful Educational Plan (SEP)[1]: how we do it

Key 1 / Think

1. Define what goals we want to achieve.

Consider what we need to do to improve educational success in our educational community and what objectives must be defined to meet these needs.

2. Remember that we have experience and competencies.

We know what to do and who could work with us and help us.

3. Consider what we need.

Resources, people, skills, time, etc. What else? Should we learn something before starting? How do we do?

Key 2 / Organise

1. How will we disseminate outputs to reach all families?

Let them know what we want to build. What do we tell the families? What do we want to ask of them?

2. How do we distribute the work?

Do we form a commission? What time availability do we have? And skills? Do we have allies within the community?

1 R. FLECHA (ed.)(2015). Successful educational actions for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe. Berlin: Springer

3. What timetable do we propose?

Both for meetings and for the activities we do. How often should we meet: weekly, monthly? When do we start?

Key 3 / Act

1. Communicate. Maintaining communication and coordination with the rest of the educational community always helps us, though the beginnings can be difficult.

2. Share the experience. It will be very useful for communicating the results to the rest of the family, strengthening links with the educational community, inviting people not yet involved, etc.

3. Learning. We learn doing and sharing all that we discover! If something does not go right the first time, we must remember that we are learning by doing! Do not be afraid to change or make a mistake.

Key 4 / Evaluate

1. Results. What have we achieved and what have we not? Why? How do we feel?

2. "Lessons learned." What have we learned from this whole experience? What has it brought us individually and collectively, as parents' organisation?

3. The future. Now what do we do? Do we continue our successful educational actions? Do we want to add more fields, modify some aspects, and continue this first experience of educational success?

1. Title of the activity	
2. Aim of the activity (intended competence development)	
3. Learning outcomes	
4. Age group	
5. Resources needed	
6. Step-by-step description of the activity	
7. Engaged stakeholders (other teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, community actors)	
8. Timeline	
9. Assessment and evaluation	
10. Follow-up activities and further reading	

Annex 3

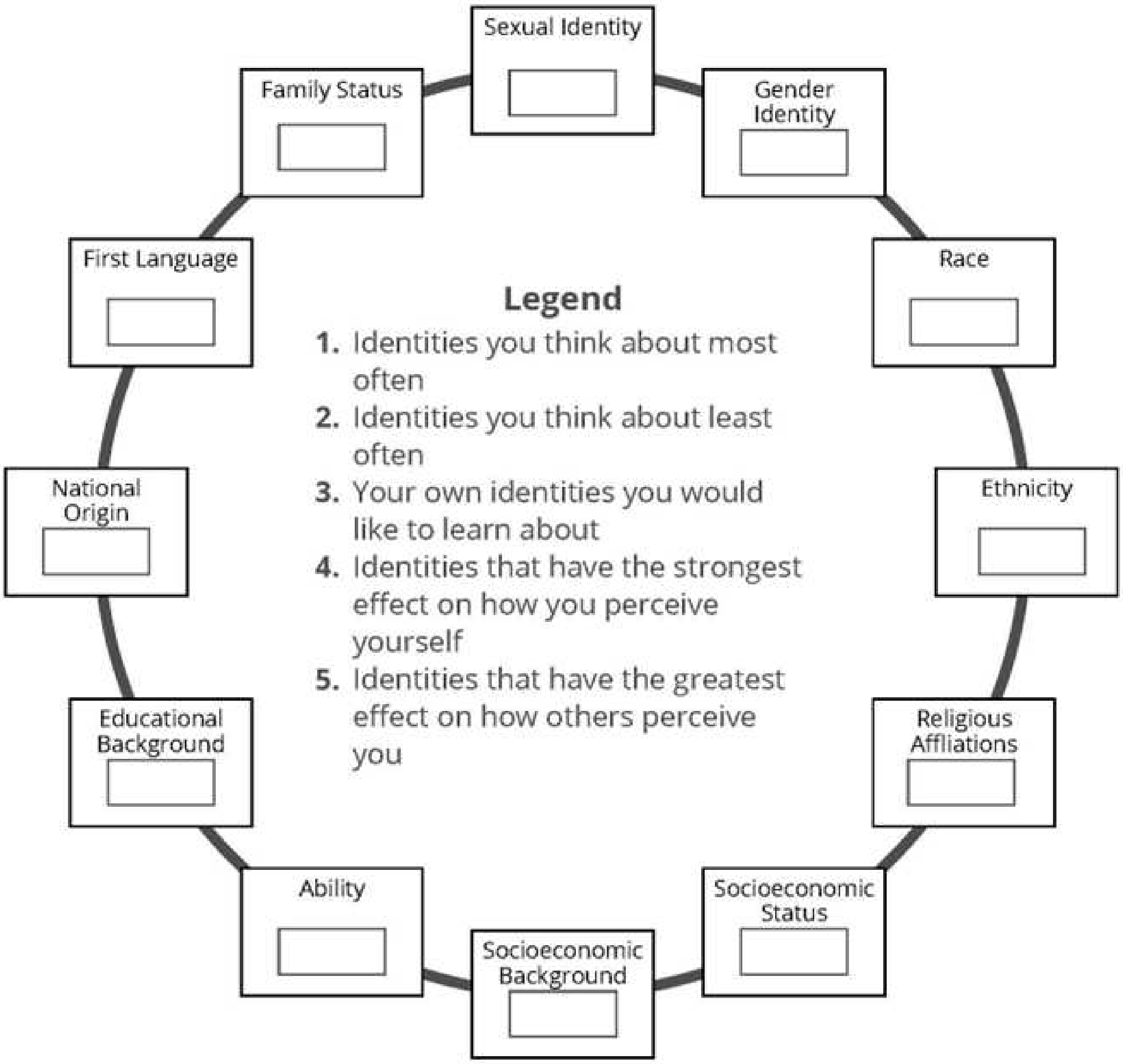
The Identity Wheel

INCLUSIVE TEACHING
Supporting All Students in the College Classroom

CTL

Overview

Activity: Complete the Identity Wheel



Overview

Activity: Complete Identity Wheel

Instructions:

As explained in the online course, please consider your identities in relation to the numbered reflective questions listed in the legend below. Each question asks you to consider how you think about your identities. Each box on the wheel represents a different facet of identity. Type in the number that corresponds with each reflective question as it relates to a particular identity facet. The legend for each number association is as follows:

1. Identities you think about most often
2. Identities you think about least often
3. Your own identities you would like to learn about
4. Identities that have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself
5. Identities that have the greatest effect on how others perceive you

For example, if you think about your ethnicity most often, and it's also an identity you'd like to learn about, you would enter 1 and 3 into the "ethnicity" text box, as shown below:

Ethnicity
1, 3

Adapted from Michigan State University, Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement. "Social Identity Wheel." n.d. Accessed June 12, 2019. http://servicelearning.msu.edu/upload/toolkits/Social-Identity-Wheel.pdf and from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. "Social Identity Wheel." 2017. Accessed June 12, 2019. https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/2017/08/16/social-identity-wheel/

Reflection questions for the Identity Wheel

1. Which aspects of your identity did you mark as particularly meaningful to you? Why?

2. Which aspects of your identity did you mark as less meaningful? Why?

3. Why do you think about some aspects of your identity more than others?

4. Which aspects of identity hadn't you thought of before completing this activity? Why do you think that is?

5. What aspects of your identity do you think are apparent to students? Which aspects may they not perceive as readily?

6. How do you think your identities impact your interactions with your students in the classroom space?