The Well Project

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education Compendium of Good Practice

The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project

2024

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education:
Compendium of Good Practice

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Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education: Compendium of Good Practice in Ireland is the outcome of The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project supported by the Erasmus+ programme.

This version consists of individual contributions from all partner countries and was created for the purpose of uploading the main project outcome to the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform. Should you need information in a more friendly way, please, visit the project website www.erasmus-thewell.eu

FOREWORD

In an era where educational leadership faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities, the need for practical, evidence-based guidance has never been more crucial. This Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education emerges from a collaborative effort among school leaders, educators, and experts across partner countries, united in the Erasmus+ project titled Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning.

Our partnership's primary objective has been to empower school leaders with the tools and strategies needed to cultivate welcoming, collaborative school climates that benefit all stakeholders. This methodology serves as a bridge between aspirational leadership goals and their practical implementation in the day-to-day running of schools.

The content has been structured to address the most pressing challenges faced by modern educational leaders. Whether you're seeking guidance on strategic planning, looking to enhance your data-driven decision-making capabilities, or working to build stronger community relationships, you'll find practical, tested solutions within these pages. The inclusion of stress management strategies and self-care techniques acknowledges that effective leadership begins with personal well-being.

This methodology is not meant to be a rigid framework but rather a living document that can be adapted to various educational contexts and cultures. It represents our collective commitment to continuous improvement in educational leadership and our shared vision of schools as dynamic, inclusive communities of learning.

As you explore this resource, we encourage you to approach it with both an open mind and a critical eye. Adapt these strategies to your unique context, share your experiences with colleagues, and continue to contribute to the evolving dialogue on educational leadership. Remember, effective leadership is not about having all the answers but about asking the right questions and fostering an environment where everyone can contribute to finding solutions.

We are confident that this methodology will serve as an invaluable companion in your leadership journey, helping you create and sustain the kind of educational environment where both students and staff can thrive.

The Well project team

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education Compendium of Good Practice in Croatia

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Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education:
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CONTENT

1 VISION, PLAN AND STRATEGY

Every serious organization must have a well-developed strategy. Principals - managers and leaders need to have a long-term view of the school's future. Without quality plans, school management does not have a bright future.

The initial step in strategic planning is the analysis of the current state of the school. This includes assessing strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities (SWOT analysis), as well as evaluating available resources, student achievements, parent and staff satisfaction, and current trends in education.

Strategic planning in schools, i.e., strategic management - aims and purposes involve determining goals and missions, without neglecting the human, material, and technical resources needed for success.

STEP 1 ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE SCHOOL:

Analysing the current situation in school is a crucial step in the process of strategic planning because it provides fundamental information about the school's current position, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Here are several activities that encompass the analysis of the current situation:

1.   Resource inventory: Inventory committees should conduct a detailed inventory of all resource currently available to the school. This includes human resources (teachers, staff), material resources (teaching aids, equipment, library), technological resources (computers, software), financial resources (budget), and other resources.

2.   Student achievement assessment: Analyse student achievements through grades, standardized tests, research, and other relevant indicators. Identify areas where students are progressing well and those where improvement may be needed. This includes reviewing exam results, grades, knowledge assessments, and student achievements in various areas. It is necessary to identify achievement trends, as well as to identify areas where students are particularly successful or face challenges.

3.   Assessment of teaching quality: Check how teaching is conducted, what pedagogical approaches and methodologies are used, and how teachers adapt to students' individual needs. Also, it is important to analyse the resources and materials used in teaching. Feedback from teachers, students, and parents on the quality of teaching can be obtained through questionnaires or surveys.

4.   Stakeholder satisfaction research: Check the satisfaction of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with the school's work. This can be done through surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

5.   Monitoring teacher satisfaction, development, and mental health: Conduct research or surveys among teachers to learn about their job satisfaction, perception of organizational culture, and opportunities for personal and professional development. This analysis helps identify aspects that support or limit teachers in their work.

Measuring teachers' mental health in school as part of strategic planning can be challenging but is crucial to ensure staff well-being and effective educational processes.

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Here are several steps and strategies that a school can implement:

Surveys and questionnaires: The school can use anonymous surveys or questionnaires to assess teachers' mental health. These tools may contain questions related to stress, emotional exhaustion, perception of support in the work environment, and job satisfaction.

Interviews and focus groups: Organizing individual interviews or focus groups with teachers can provide deeper insight into their mental health. These conversations can allow teachers to freely express their feelings, concerns, and needs, and identify potential challenges they face.

Absenteeism rate analysis: Monitoring the absenteeism rate of teachers due to illness can be an indicator of mental health. A high absenteeism rate may indicate issues such as stress, anxiety, or depression.

Work atmosphere assessment: The school can conduct a workplace atmosphere assessment to evaluate the level of support, collaboration, and interpersonal relationships among staff. A positive work atmosphere can contribute to better teacher mental health.

Mental health education: Organizing educational programs and workshops on mental health can help teachers recognize signs and symptoms of mental health issues and encourage them to seek help and support when needed. Mindfulness, Brain Gym, fractals, hiking, team building

Collaboration with experts: The school can collaborate with psychologists, counsellors, or other mental health experts to provide support to teachers. These professionals can conduct individual counselling, group therapy, or other forms of support.

It is important to emphasize that the approach to teachers' mental health is an important part of a comprehensive human resource management strategy in the school. Regular monitoring and care for the mental health of staff not only contribute to their well-being but also improve the quality of education they provide to students.

6.   Parent and community engagement: Examine the level of parent and community engagement in the school. Analyse how much parents participate in school activities, attend parent meetings, volunteer, and monitor their children's progress. Also, evaluate how the school collaborates with the local community.

7.   SWOT analysis: This analysis identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the school. Strengths and weaknesses relate to internal characteristics of the school, while opportunities and threats come from the external environment.

8.   Resource assessment: It is necessary to analyse the available material, human, and financial resources in the school. This includes reviewing the budget, infrastructure, equipment, staff, and other resources crucial for providing quality education.

9.   Evaluation of the school's physical environment: Examine the physical environment of the school, including the condition of classrooms, sports facilities, library, cafeteria, and other spaces. Assessing safety, accessibility, and overall maintenance helps identify needs for improving infrastructure.

10. Financial analysis: Examine the school's financial situation by analysing the budget, expenses, revenues, and fund allocation. Identify priority areas requiring additional funds, as well as potential sources of additional financial resources, such as grants or collaboration with the local community.

11. Identification of education trends: Monitor contemporary trends in education, including new teaching methods, technological innovations, changes in curriculum approaches, and more. This will help the school remain relevant and prepare students for future challenges.

12. Analysis of demographic and socioeconomic factors: It is important to understand the demographic composition of students, the socioeconomic conditions of their families, and any other factors that may affect educational outcomes.

These data are collected by the school's professional pedagogical department and the class teacher. Students with special socioeconomic status are particularly monitored, and support is provided to them within the school, as well as in collaboration with the Croatian Institute of Public Health, the Social Welfare Centre, and similar institutions.

14. Review of current trends in education: It is necessary to monitor current trends, reforms, and innovations in the field of education to ensure that the school remains relevant and adapts to changes in society and the environment.

Analysing the current situation provides the school with a deeper understanding of its internal and external factors and serves as the basis for identifying priorities and developing strategies for the future. This activity is crucial for successfully leading the strategic planning process and achieving desired goals.

STEP 2 SETTING THE VISION AND MISSION

Based on the analysis of the current situation, the school needs to define its vision - the long-term goal or ideal state it aims to achieve. It is also important to formulate a mission that clearly describes the purpose and values of the school, as well as how those values will be realized in practice.

Vision and mission are key elements of planning and managing an educational institution.

The Vision *is a picture of the ideally imagined future of the school, a clear representation of how the school wants to look in the future*.

The vision provides perspective for long-term desired outcomes and guides the school toward achieving its goals.

It represents an inspiring image of the future that motivates employees and provides direction to the school institution.

Well-defined visions contain foundational ideology and predictable futures.

The foundational ideology of the school's vision represents the core beliefs or values that define the basic purpose and objectives of the school. It represents the philosophical framework within which the school operates and shapes its strategy to achieve its vision. *Here are some key elements of the foundational ideology of the school's vision:*

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1. **Purpose and values:** The foundational ideology encompasses the definition of the school's purpose and values. The purpose of the school can be its fundamental mission that reflects its contribution to society and the education of students. Values represent moral and ethical principles that guide the school's work and shape its culture.

2. **Pedagogical approach:** The ideology of the school's vision may encompass pedagogical principles and approaches applied in teaching and educating students. This includes educational philosophies, teaching methods, learning assessments, and approaches to individualizing education.

3. **Innovation and adaptability:** The school may emphasize the importance of innovation and adaptability to respond to changes in society and education. This may include promoting creativity, technological innovations, flexible curricula, and adaptable teaching practices.

4. **Inclusivity and diversity:** The school's ideology may emphasize the importance of inclusivity and respect for diversity. This includes creating an inclusive environment that supports all students regardless of their personal characteristics, abilities, or cultural backgrounds.

5. **Community partnership:** The school may believe in the importance of partnership with the local community to enhance support for students and achieve better integration of the school with the environment. This may include collaboration with parents, local organizations, the business sector, and other stakeholders.

The foundational ideology of the school's vision provides guidance and inspiration for the development of strategies, policies, and practices that will enable the realization of the vision. It serves as a fundamental framework that informs all aspects of the school's work and shapes its identity and success in achieving educational goals.

Predictable future as part of the school's vision refers to creating an environment in which the school has a clear vision of where it is going and how it will adapt to future changes and challenges. Here are several key elements of a predictable future as part of the school's vision: Strategic planning: The school develops long-term plans and strategies to anticipate future needs and challenges. This includes identifying key objectives, developing action plans, and regularly evaluating progress towards set goals.

1. **Flexibility and adaptability:** The school promotes a culture of flexibility and adaptability to be able to quickly respond to changes in the environment. This may involve adaptable curricula, different teaching methods, technological innovations, and other practices that enable swift adjustment.

2. **Systematic learning:** The school promotes continuous learning and professional development for staff to be equipped to deal with changes and improve practice. This includes regular training, workshops, mentoring, and other forms of support.

3. **Collaboration with stakeholders**: The school builds collaborative relationships with parents, the local community, the business sector, and other stakeholders to work together towards common goals and anticipate future needs.

4. **Monitoring education trends**: The school monitors current trends, research, and innovations in the field of education to stay informed about future directions and practices in education. This

may involve observing technological innovations, new pedagogical approaches, and changes in legislation.

5. **Culture of continuous improvement:** The school develops a culture of continuous improvement where reflection, evaluation, and adaptation are valued. This includes openness to feedback, analysis of results, and continuous search for ways to improve practice.

A predictable future as part of the school's vision ensures that the school is proactive in facing changes and enhances its capacities to remain relevant and successful in the future. This is a key element in ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of the school in a changing educational environment.

*Visions are most defined using the following **three models:***

Self-examination model
"Think Tank" model
Individual staff self-examination model

Models of defining vision:

Self-examination model: This model entails the organization defining its vision through an internal process of self-examination. This means that the organization analyses its internal resources, values, goals, and identity to shape a vision that reflects its essence and desired future outcomes.

"Think Tank" model: This model involves creating a team or group of people within the organization who are tasked with defining the vision. This "Think Tank" typically consists of individuals with diverse perspectives and competencies to collaboratively develop an inspiring vision that reflects the organization's various interests and needs.

Individual staff self-examination model: This model involves involving each employee in the process of defining the vision. Each employee can express their vision of the organization's future and contribute to shaping the vision from their perspective. This model promotes a participatory approach and ensures that the vision reflects diverse viewpoints and ideas within the organization.

Through these models, organizations can approach defining vision in different ways, including internal analysis, teamwork, and employee participation, to create an inspiring vision that will guide them toward success and achieving their goals.

THE MISSION is a statement that describes the purpose of the existence of the educational institution, its core purpose, goals, values, and how the school contributes to society. The mission lays the foundation for the operation of the educational institution, identifies its key objectives and values, and defines its role in society.

The mission determines for whom the school works, what it does, and how it does it. Vision and mission together constitute the highest level of the strategic plan of the educational institution.

Practical creation of vision and mission: Organization of an introductory meeting

The first step in developing the vision and mission of the school is organizing an introductory meeting with members of the quality team, the principal, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders.

The goal of this meeting is to lay the groundwork for the process of developing the vision and mission, achieve a common understanding of the importance of these elements, and motivate all stakeholders to participate in the process.

Education on the importance of vision and mission:

Educating employees about the importance of vision and mission helps team members understand the role of these elements in guiding the school toward common goals. These working meetings may include presentations on successful examples of visions and missions of other schools and exploring the positive effects they have on teacher motivation, student motivation, and the overall atmosphere in the school.

Conversations with school employees:

During this step, it is important to conduct individual and group discussions with various stakeholders in the school, including principals, teachers, parents, students, and representatives of the local community. These discussions aim to gather different perspectives, expectations, and values to create an inclusive process of developing the vision and mission.

Analysis of the current situation:

The quality team needs to conduct an analysis of the current situation of the school, including resources, student achievements, teaching quality, parental involvement, and other relevant factors. This analysis helps the team identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and areas that require special attention when formulating the vision and mission.

Setting core values:

Determining the core values that will serve as the foundation of the vision and mission is also an important step. The team should collaborate with stakeholders to identify key values that the community considers important in the context of education and schoolwork.

Establishing good communication methods:

It is important to establish good and efficient communication methods between members of the quality team, school staff, and other relevant participants to successfully develop visions and missions. This may include regular meetings, online discussion platforms, surveys, and other communication methods.

Sharing the vision, mission, and goals with all employees is crucial for the organization's success for several reasons:

This step ensures that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the importance of the vision and mission, sets the foundation for collaboration, and defines the direction and goals of the school's vision and mission development process.

Sharing the vision, mission, and goals with all employees is crucial for the organization's success for several reasons:

Motivation and engagement: When employees clearly understand the organization's vision, mission, and goals, they feel connected to their work and aware of the importance of their contributions. This motivates them to give their best and engage in achieving common goals.

Consistency and coherence: Sharing the vision, mission, and goals helps align the activities of all employees towards common goals. This ensures coherence in work and reduces the possibility of confusion or conflict in the organization.

Goal orientation: When employees are familiar with the organization's vision and mission, they are better able to orient themselves towards set goals. Understanding the broader context of their work helps them better understand their role and contribution.

Increased productivity: Employees who are informed about the organization's vision, mission, and goals are often more productive because they have a clear purpose and direction in their work. This can result in increased efficiency and better results.

Teamwork: Sharing the vision, mission, and goals encourages teamwork and collaboration among employees. When everyone knows what they are striving for, it is easier to work together towards achieving common goals.

Identification with the educational institution: Understanding the school's vision and mission helps employees identify with the values and goals of the school. This can result in greater loyalty to the institution, increased engagement, and better interpersonal relationships.

Workshops for Vision Development

This step is crucial for creating an inclusive and collaborative framework for the development of the school's vision, ensuring that participants collectively shape a vision that reflects their values and goals.

Workshop Preparation:

Based on the information gathered from previous steps, prepare the structure of workshops for vision development. Determine the topics to be covered, as well as the methods to be used to encourage creativity and collaboration among participants.

Negotiating Key Elements:

In the workshops, encourage participants to negotiate and identify key elements that will constitute the school's vision. These may include shared values, goals, desired educational outcomes, specific characteristics of the school, and other elements that stakeholders consider important.

Creative Brainstorming Techniques:

Use creative brainstorming techniques to stimulate diverse ideas. This includes freely sharing ideas, mind mapping, SWOT analysis, or other methods to generate innovative and inspiring proposals.

Group Work and Team Collaboration:

Encourage group work and team collaboration during the workshops. Divide participants into smaller groups to work together on different aspects of the vision. This will enable better engagement, exchange of ideas, and collaborative shaping of the vision.

Facilitator Leadership:

Engage an experienced facilitator to lead the workshops. The facilitator should have group leadership skills, encourage open communication, and ensure that all participants feel included. Facilitator leadership is crucial for achieving successful workshop outcomes.

Evaluation and Adaptation:

During the workshops, conduct evaluations to gather feedback from participants. If necessary, adapt the approach to the workshops to ensure that desired goals are achieved and that a vision reflecting shared values is developed.

Defining Common Themes:

After the workshops, analyse the results and identify common themes and elements that emerged during negotiations and creative activities. These common elements form the basis for further shaping the school's vision.

Formulating a Draft Vision:

Based on common themes and elements, formulate draft versions of the school's vision. These versions should be subject to further negotiations and refinements but will serve as a starting point for further work.

Involvement of Key Stakeholders:

Ensure the involvement of key stakeholders in negotiating and shaping the vision. This includes principals, teachers, parents, students, and members of the local community. Their active involvement ensures that the vision is representative of all stakeholders.

Plan for Further Steps:

At the end of the workshops, develop a plan for further steps. This plan should include additional workshops, negotiations, and steps toward defining the final version of the vision to be adopted by the school community.

When defining the mission of an educational institution, various methods and approaches can be used to clearly and precisely formulate the purpose and worldview of the organization.

Some of the methods that can be used in defining the mission include:

1. **Workshops and brainstorming sessions**: Organizing workshops and brainstorming sessions with relevant stakeholders of the organization to collectively consider the values, purpose, and goals of the organization and to formulate a mission that reflects the identity and purpose of the organization.

2. **Analysis of missions of other educational institutions**: Studying the missions and values of other educational institutions to gain insight into trends, identify strengths and weaknesses and shape a mission that will contribute to the prosperity of the school.

3. **SWOT analysis:** Analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the educational institution can help identify key elements that need to be included in the mission to align with the internal and external environment.

4. **Stakeholder analysis**: Discussions with stakeholders of the organization, including employees, principals, parents, students, and other relevant groups, can provide different perspectives and contribute to a better understanding of the needs and expectations of all stakeholders.

5. **Analysis of history and tradition**: Studying the history, tradition, and values of the educational institution can help identify fundamental elements that need to be included in the mission to preserve the continuity and authenticity of the organization.

6. **Consultation with external experts:** Involving external experts or consultants can provide additional perspective and expertise in defining the mission of the organization.

Working with Parents:

Hold meetings with parents to inform them about the process of developing the vision and mission. Ask questions to gain their perspectives and learn what they consider crucial for the success of their children and the school in general. You can also organize surveys to gather additional feedback.

Working with Students:

Involve students in the process of developing the vision and mission through workshops, discussions, or special events. Ask them about what they consider important in education, what values they appreciate, and what form of school they desire. This perspective contributes to a holistic approach to the development of the vision and mission.

Collaboration with the Local Community:

Collaborate with the local community through meetings, public forums, or partnerships with local organizations. Gather their suggestions and ideas on how the school can better meet the needs of the community and how you can work together to achieve common goals.

Online Platforms and Surveys:

Utilize online platforms and surveys to enable all stakeholders to express their opinions, even if they are unable to participate in meetings or workshops. Online surveys can provide a broader perspective and complement the information collected through other channels.

Mentorship and Consultations:

Provide mentorship and consultation opportunities for stakeholders who want to further contribute to the development of the vision and mission. Openness to individual consultations contributes to a sense of inclusion and the importance of each participant in the process.

Analysis of Gathered Information:

Analyze all the gathered information from workshops, meetings, surveys, and other sources to identify common themes, values, and suggestions that will be useful in shaping the vision and mission of the school.

This step is crucial for incorporating different perspectives and the needs of stakeholders to ensure that the vision and mission reflect the shared values and goals of the broader educational community.

School Mission Development

Analysis of the Developed Vision:

After creating a preliminary version of the vision, ensure that it aligns with the identified values, goals, and expectations of stakeholders. Analyse how the developed vision reflects the aspirations of the school community and whether it is sufficiently inspiring to encourage engagement.

Identification of Key Elements:

Identify key elements from the developed vision that will form the foundation of the school's mission. This includes defining the purpose of the school, its core values, main objectives, and ways in which the school will contribute to the development of students and the community.

Mission Development Workshops:

This step ensures that the school's mission is well-crafted, accepted by key stakeholders, and integrated into daily operations to serve as a guiding principle for all activities and decisions in the school.

Organize workshops with key stakeholders to collaboratively shape the school's mission. These workshops may involve discussions on defining key words and phrases that will encompass the mission, considering priorities, and setting concrete goals.

Negotiation of Mission Language:

Encourage participants to negotiate the language of the mission, selecting words that clearly communicate the school's purpose. It is important that the language is inspiring, clear, and understandable to all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and the local community.

Mission Formulation:

Based on the analysis of the vision and identified key elements, formulate the final version of the school's mission. The mission should clearly reflect the purpose of the school, its values, and objectives, serving as a guiding principle for all school activities.

Review and Approval:

After formulating the mission, review it to ensure alignment with the developed vision and its acceptability to the broader community. Review the mission with key stakeholders, including principals, teachers, parents, and students, to ensure that everyone supports the formulated mission.

Mission Communication:

Develop a communication strategy to introduce the school's mission to the broader community. This may include organizing meetings, creating informational materials, posting the mission on the school's website, and other activities to ensure that everyone is informed about the new mission.

Integration of Mission into Daily Operations:

Encourage all members of the school community to integrate the mission into their daily work. This may involve aligning curriculum with the mission, organizing events in line with the mission, and continually reflecting on how daily activities contribute to achieving the mission.

Feedback and Adjustments:

Collect feedback on the implementation of the mission and conduct regular evaluations to see how the mission is reflected in the actual work of the school. If necessary, adjust the formulation of the mission to ensure that it continues to reflect the identity and goals of the school.

Continuous Revision:

The school's mission should be a dynamic document that evolves with changes in the school environment and society. Regularly review and, if necessary, revise the mission to ensure that it continues to reflect the best interests of the school community.

After defining the vision and mission, the school should set specific, measurable, and achievable goals that will lead it toward the realization of that vision. Goals should be directed toward various aspects of the school, including academic achievement, teaching quality, teacher development, parental and community support, and effective resource management.

STEP 3 GOALS

Defining organizational goals is crucial for directing activities towards achieving desired outcomes.

Goals should be aligned with the organization's mission, and it is important to establish a hierarchy of goals to ensure their connectivity and alignment with set priorities. Through goal setting, organizations ensure continuity, perspective, and development.

Setting clear goals for the process of developing vision and mission helps focus the team and ensures that the process is structured and directed.

Goals may include clearly defined deadlines, expected outcomes, and communication strategies during the process.

Identification of Key Areas: Based on the vision and mission, identify key areas in which the school aims to make progress and achieve its goals.

Setting SMART Goals: Define goals that are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Goals should be aligned with the organization's vision and mission.

Two different approaches to goal setting in organizations:

Bottom-up approach: In the bottom-up approach, goals are determined at a lower level of the organization, typically by teachers, staff, support staff, teacher activists, and the like.

Employees at lower levels of the organization participate in defining goals and propose their ideas and suggestions. The principal should coordinate and confirm the goals defined at lower levels.

This approach promotes employee participation, increases motivation and engagement, and enables a better understanding of field needs and challenges.

Top-down approach:

In the top-down approach, goals are set at a higher level of the organization, usually by the principal.

Goals are then transferred to lower levels, to teachers, employees, and the school's support staff. This approach ensures alignment with the organization's main strategic goals and provides a clear vision and direction of action.

However, the drawback of the top-down approach may be insufficient flexibility and lack of motivation among teachers.

A combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches can be useful in goal setting as it ensures alignment with the organization's vision, includes different perspectives, and encourages employee participation at all levels.

Goal setting in organizations can be conducted using various criteria to ensure that goals are clear, measurable, challenging, but also achievable.

Two important criteria for goal setting are:

1. **The 5C criterion:** (Clarity, confidence, challenge, consistency, connection)

Clarity: Goals should be clear to all stakeholders in the organization to avoid misunderstandings and ensure alignment in working towards the same goals.

Consistency: Each goal should be aligned with other organizational goals to ensure coherence and synergy between different activities.

Measurability: Goals should be measurable to precisely track and evaluate their achievement and make informed decisions.

Challenge: Goals should be set at a level that presents a challenge but should not be unattainable to motivate employees to achieve results.

Achievability: Goals should be realistic and achievable with available resources and time frames to ensure successful achievement.

2. **SMART criteria**: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound

Specificity: Goals should be clearly defined and precise in what is to be achieved.

Measurability**:** Goals should be measurable to allow quantitative or qualitative assessment of their achievement.

Action: Goals should encourage specific actions and activities that will lead to their achievement.

Reality: Goals should be set in a way that is realistic and achievable with available resources and time frames.

Time constraint: It is necessary to determine the time within which the goals will be achieved to ensure their realization within a specified deadline.

Using these criteria when setting goals helps schools define goals in a way that is clear, measurable, challenging, yet achievable, and directs them towards success and achieving desired results.

2 USING DATA AND RESOURCES FOR DECISION MAKING

The Quality Team in the elementary school plays a key role in enhancing the quality of education, fostering innovation, and ensuring high standards in all aspects of school work. Some of **the main tasks of the quality team** in the elementary school include:

Monitoring and evaluation of teaching:

Conducting regular evaluations of teaching methods and strategies.

Monitoring student achievement and comparing results with set standards.

Identifying areas where improvement is needed and proposing appropriate measures.

In our school, this part is also managed by the school pedagogical department, which includes the school psychologist and pedagogue. They conduct an annual evaluation of each teacher's work, write reports about it, and suggest improvement procedures. They use a monitoring list (we have provided in Padlet) to track the work of teachers.

Development and implementation of the curriculum:

Participating in the development, adaptation, and implementation of the curriculum.

Ensuring that lesson plans are aligned with national standards and guidelines.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum and proposing changes as needed.

Organization of professional development:

Identifying the need for staff professional development.

Organizing and participating in workshops, seminars, and training sessions.

Monitoring the implementation of new teaching methods acquired through training.

Monitoring student progress:

Systematically monitoring student progress in collaboration with class teachers and subject teachers.

Developing an assessment system that reflects students' actual competencies.

Providing support to students with special needs or challenges.

Staff evaluation:

Participating in the evaluation processes of teachers and other staff.

Providing constructive feedback to encourage professional development.

Identifying the need for additional mentoring or support.

Monitoring parental involvement:

Monitoring the level of parental involvement in the educational process.

Organizing parent meetings and collaborating in addressing school-related issues.

Providing parents with information about student achievements and educational programs.

Participation in external evaluations:

Preparing the school for external evaluations by relevant educational bodies.

Collaborating with inspectors and participating in quality assessment procedures.

Implementing recommendations and conclusions from external evaluations.

Fostering innovation:

Monitoring contemporary trends in education.

Encouraging the introduction of innovative teaching methods and technology into instruction.

Organizing workshops and events that promote innovation in the school.

Development of self-evaluation systems:

Developing and implementing a school self-evaluation system.

Studying the results of self-evaluation and identifying priorities for further improvement.

Managing the process of quality analysis and reporting.

Communication with the local community:

Maintaining open communication channels with parents, students, and the local community.

Organizing events involving the local community and promoting collaboration.
Monitoring the needs and expectations of the community regarding the school's educational work.

This team plays a key role in ensuring that the school continually works to improve the quality of education, adhering to standards and responding to the specific needs of students and the community.

Collecting crucial data and resources for decision-making in schools involves several steps to ensure the information gathered is comprehensive, accurate, and relevant. Here's a general procedure for collecting such data:

Identifying Information Needs: The first step is to determine what specific information is required to make informed decisions. This could include academic performance data, student demographics, teacher effectiveness, resource allocation, budgetary needs, etc.

Selecting Data Sources: Once the information needs are identified, schools must determine the *sources from which they can gather the necessary data.*

This may include **internal resources** evaluations, and **external sources** academic research.

Data Collection Methods: Schools can utilize various methods to collect data, including:

Surveys/questionnaires: Administering surveys to students, parents, and staff to gather feedback and opinions.

Interviews/focus groups: Conducting structured interviews or focus group discussions with key stakeholders to gain qualitative insights.
Observations: Observing classroom instruction, student behaviour, or school activities to gather firsthand information.

Existing records: Analysing existing records such as academic transcripts, attendance records, disciplinary reports, etc.

Data Analysis: Once the data is collected, it needs to be analysed to derive meaningful insights. This may involve quantitative analysis using statistical techniques or qualitative analysis to identify patterns, trends, or themes in the data.

Interpreting Results: After analysing the data, school administrators and decision-makers must interpret the results to understand what the data is indicating. This involves identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) based on the findings.

Decision Making: Based on the interpretation of the data, schools can make informed decisions to address identified needs or capitalize on opportunities. This may involve developing action plans, allocating resources, implementing new policies or programs, or adjusting existing practices.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Once decisions are implemented, it's crucial to monitor their effectiveness and evaluate their impact over time. This involves collecting ongoing data to assess progress towards goals and adjusting as necessary.

Feedback Loop: Finally, schools should establish a feedback loop to continuously review and refine their data collection processes based on lessons learned and changing information needs.

By following these steps, schools can ensure that they collect the necessary data and resources to make informed decisions that support student success and school improvement efforts.

Utilizing data and resources for decision-making in schools is crucial for improving educational outcomes, enhancing teaching practices, and fostering student success.

Here's how data and resources can be effectively used for decision-making in schools:

Student Performance Data: Schools can collect and analyse student performance data from:

Assessments (standardized tests and classroom assignments. Analysing this data helps educators identify areas where students may be struggling and tailor instruction to meet their individual needs. For example, if data shows that a significant number of students are struggling with math concepts, the school can implement targeted interventions or adjust the curriculum to provide additional support in that area.

Attendance records: Attendance records of students provide valuable data for school planning in several ways:

Identifying Trends: *By analysing attendance records over time, schools can identify trends in student attendance patterns. This includes identifying periods of high absenteeism, such as during certain seasons or days of the week, and understanding the reasons behind them.*

Targeted Interventions: *Schools can use attendance data to identify students with chronic absenteeism or irregular attendance patterns. This allows for targeted interventions, such as counselling, parent meetings, or academic support, to address the underlying issues affecting student attendance.*

Resource Allocation: *Understanding student attendance patterns helps schools allocate resources effectively. For example, if a particular grade or class has consistently low attendance rates, schools may allocate additional support staff or resources to address the issue.*

Policy Evaluation: *Attendance data can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of school attendance policies and interventions. Schools can assess whether implemented strategies are successful in improving attendance rates and adjust their policies accordingly.*

Early Warning System: Monitoring attendance data can serve as an early warning system for identifying students at risk of disengagement or academic failure. Early identification allows schools to intervene promptly and provide necessary support to prevent further academic decline.

Overall, attendance records serve as a valuable source of data for informing school planning and decision-making processes, ultimately contributing to the overall success and well-being of students.

In the Republic of Croatia, there is a platform at the Ministry of Education level called **"eRudnik."** This platform contains statistics for all primary and secondary schools, including the number of absences for each school and grade, the total number of excellent students, very good students, and those repeating grades. Additionally, using this platform, it is possible to track the number of excellent students at the end of primary school and at the end of secondary school.

https://mzo.gov.hr/ser-skolski-e-rudnik-3419/3419

Dropout Rates / Individual Education Plans/ Behavioural Records:

Individual Education Plans (IEPs), graduation rates, and behavioral records are crucial data for school planning due to several reasons:

Individual Education Plans (IEPs): These plans outline specific goals, accommodations, and services for students with special needs or learning difficulties. By reviewing IEPs, schools can identify the unique needs of each student and tailor educational strategies accordingly. This data helps in allocating resources, providing appropriate support services, and ensuring that all students receive an inclusive and equitable education.

Graduation Rates: Graduation rates indicate the percentage of students who successfully complete their high school education within the expected timeframe. Monitoring graduation rates helps schools assess their effectiveness in preparing students for academic success and transitioning to post-secondary education or the workforce. Low graduation rates may signal areas needing improvement, such as curriculum quality, student support services, or dropout prevention programs.

Behavioural Records: Behavioural records document students' conduct, disciplinary actions, and interventions taken by the school. **Analysing behavioural data provides insights into school climate, safety concerns, and areas of student need.**

Schools can use this information to implement targeted interventions, improve student behaviour management strategies, and create a positive learning environment conducive to academic success.

By leveraging these data sources, schools can make informed decisions, allocate resources effectively, identify areas for improvement, and tailor interventions to support student success and well-being.

Our school implements numerous preventive programs from an early age. In the 3rd grade of primary school, we begin implementing the mental health program **"Alphabet of Feelings," "Brain Gym," "Mindfulness," and "Hiking."** This approach aims to reduce the number of students experiencing emotional and behavioural problems.

Teacher Observations and Evaluations: Schools can use classroom observations

and teacher evaluations to assess teaching effectiveness and identify areas for professional development. By observing teachers in action and providing constructive feedback, school administrators/pedagogues, psychologist can support teachers in improving their instructional practices and meeting the diverse needs of their students.

Parent and Community Feedback: Schools can gather feedback from parents, guardians, and community members through surveys, meetings, or focus groups. This feedback provides valuable insights into the perceptions and priorities of stakeholders and helps schools make informed decisions that align with the needs and expectations of the community.

At our school, we strive to involve parents as much as possible in active participation. We organize lectures for parents on various current topics. In addition to parent meetings, every first Tuesday of the month, all teachers are available to parents in the afternoon. To learn about parents' opinions, satisfaction, or dissatisfaction with the school's work, we use parent surveys. The school has an active Parents' Council with one representative from each class.

Budget and Resource Allocation: Schools must make strategic decisions about budgeting and resource allocation to ensure that funds are allocated efficiently and effectively. By analysing budgetary data and resource utilization, school leaders can identify areas for cost savings, prioritize spending on programs and initiatives that directly impact student learning, and ensure equitable distribution of resources across schools and classrooms.

Professional Development Opportunities: Schools can provide teachers

and staff with access to professional development opportunities that are tailored to their individual needs and the needs of the school community. By analysing data on teacher performance, student outcomes, and school priorities, administrators can identify areas where professional development is most needed and invest in training programs that promote continuous growth and improvement.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials: Schools can use data on student performance, curriculum effectiveness, and instructional practices to inform decisions about curriculum selection, adoption of instructional materials, and implementation of educational programs. By evaluating the impact of different curricular approaches and instructional strategies, schools can ensure that teaching and learning experiences are aligned with academic standards and best practices in education.

Overall, leveraging data and resources for decision-making in schools promotes accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. By collecting, analysing, and acting upon relevant data, schools can make evidence-based decisions that support student achievement, foster educator effectiveness, and strengthen the overall learning environment.

3 EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Boost your team's potential, lead with Confidence!

Outstanding leaders understand the power of self-esteem and its impact on achieving extraordinary results. When individuals believe in themselves, they can accomplish incredible things.

Fostering a Positive Environment:
By creating a supportive atmosphere where everyone feels valued and encouraged, leaders lay the foundation for greatness. Embrace the strengths and unique qualities of each team member - together, we can achieve the impossible!

Unleash your Team's Potential:

As a leader, your role is not just to manage but to empower. Nurture the self-esteem of your personnel and watch them flourish. Encourage their ideas, celebrate their successes, and guide them through challenges. With your guidance, their potential knows no bounds!

Believe in the Power of Possibility:

Envision a future where everyone exudes confidence, surpasses limits, and achieves remarkable milestones. As leaders, it is our duty to ignite that spark, cultivate self-belief, and witness the transformative power unleashed within our teams.

"Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." - Henry Ford

As a business leader, you understand the power of teamwork. Building a strong, united team is the first step, but it doesn't end there. Progress and success are achieved through continuous collaboration, trust, and a shared vision.

Teamwork is an essential aspect of achieving success in any organisation. By fostering collaboration and unity, you can harness the collective strengths of your team members to accomplish shared goals. Here are a few tips to inspire and lead your team towards success:

1 Encourage open communication: Create an environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their ideas and opinions. Encourage active listening and foster open dialogues to facilitate effective collaboration.

2 Foster trust and respect: Trust forms the foundation of any successful team. Encourage team members to trust and support each other, as this builds a positive work environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

3 Establish a shared vision: Clearly communicate the organization's goals and objectives and ensure every team member understands their role in achieving them. When everyone is aligned with a common purpose, they are more motivated to work together.

4 Delegate responsibilities and empower your team: Give your team members the opportunity to take ownership of tasks and projects. Delegate responsibility based on their strengths and skills and provide them with the necessary resources and support to succeed.

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5 Recognise and reward achievements: Acknowledge and appreciate the hard work and accomplishments of your team members. Celebrate successes to boost morale and motivate your team to continue performing at their best.

6 Foster a culture of continuous learning: Encourage professional growth and development for each team member. Provide training opportunities, mentorship programs, and regular feedback to help them improve their skills and reach their full potential.

Remember, success is not just about the result but also about the journey and the relationships formed along the way. By promoting teamwork and practicing effective leadership, you can inspire your team to achieve greatness together.

Leaders, recognizing the importance of continuous learning and training in addressing unconscious bias is pivotal to fostering a more inclusive and empowered team.

By proactively identifying areas of opportunity for education and equipping yourself and your team with the appropriate tools, you can navigate through unconscious bias with grace and empathy.

Embracing diversity and promoting a culture of inclusion not only enhances your leadership skills but also empowers each team member to thrive authentically.

By fostering a work environment that values open dialogue and mutual respect, you create a space where everyone's unique perspectives are heard and celebrated.

Together, we can embark on a transformative journey of growth, and as a result, your leadership and the team will flourish with understanding, compassion, and unity.

The following information was comprised from the thesis

How could school leaders improve the flourishing of teaching staff?

(Thesis submitted to the University of Oxford in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education Hilary Term 2021 Katy Granville-Chapman Department of Education, Wolfson College, University of Oxford Supervisors: Dr Nigel Fancourt and Dr Ian Thompson)

Empowering teachers

Teaching significantly contributes to a thriving society, and enhancing the well-being of teachers brings numerous benefits to schools, education, and the teachers themselves.

Empowering teachers is one of the essential goals of an effective leader. A conscientious leader, dedicated to offering students the best education possible and must ensure that the educational staff feel comfortable and satisfied in their work environment.

Throughout their careers, teachers interact with hundreds, if not thousands, of students, shaping their lives and indirectly influencing those connected to their pupils. It is only logical that by fostering the flourishing of teachers, school leaders can also positively affect the students they teach and the teachers themselves.

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Researchers and educators have pointed out the detrimental effects of stress on teachers within schools, highlighting the negative consequences it brings to the education system and society (Carlyle & Woods, 2002). They argue that teachers cannot effectively impart emotional and social competence to their students if their own emotional and social needs are neglected (Weare & Gray, 2003). Additionally, Bru, Stephens, and Torsheim (2002) discovered a significant negative correlation between students' perceptions of teachers' emotional support and self-reported misbehaviour, indicating that an increase in misbehaviour contributes to higher levels of teacher stress. Thus, there is a strong case for school leaders to prioritize reducing teacher stress and promoting teacher flourishing.

Although research on the influence of school leaders on teacher flourishing is scarce, there is evidence indicating that leaders can indeed impact the well-being of those under their guidance. For instance, Kuoppala, Lamminpaa, Liira, and Vainio (2008) conducted a thorough review and meta-analysis of 109 articles, presenting findings from 27 papers across various regions including Europe, the USA, Australasia, Asia, and Africa. Their analysis suggests that effective leadership correlates with enhanced flourishing in the workplace. Additionally, numerous studies have explored the influence of leaders on different aspects of flourishing.

The flourishing of teaching staff holds not only intrinsic value but also instrumental significance in enhancing human performance and various student outcomes.

It is argued that leaders and teachers can significantly influence the well-being of their teams and students, particularly through the process of emotional contagion. Vijayalakshmi and Bhattacharyya (2012) conducted a literature review, analysing and critiquing empirical and theoretical studies of emotional contagion across various fields, including psychological processes, personality, organizational behaviour, marketing, and consumer behaviour. They conclude that emotional contagion, or the transfer of emotions between individuals, has become a major research area. They assert that it is well-established in the literature that unmanaged emotional contagion can negatively impact work effectiveness (Vijayalakshmi & Bhattacharyya, 2012, p. 363).

In a series of studies, Bono and Ilies (2006) explored the influence of positive emotions in leadership. Their first two studies revealed that leaders' positive emotional expressions were associated with higher charisma ratings in a natural work setting. In the third study, these positive expressions were linked to the mood states of simulated followers. Bono and Ilies (2006) suggest that mood contagion might be a psychological mechanism through which leaders affect their followers. The fourth study used a trained actor to manipulate leaders' positive emotional expressions, aiming to separate the effects of these emotions from other non-emotional leadership traits like vision or inspiration. This study found a positive correlation between leader emotions and follower mood. Although measuring mood objectively and accurately is challenging, Bono and Ilies (2006) argue that their findings demonstrate that both leaders' positive emotional expressions and followers' moods influence perceptions of leader effectiveness.

Positive, supportive, and enriching relationships are essential for a flourishing life (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). A review of literature from 2002 to 2012 found over 18,000 articles on social relationships and health (Tay, Tan, Diener, & Gonzalez, 2012). These studies link positive relationships to numerous benefits, including a lower risk of depression

and psychopathology, better physical health, reduced mortality risk, healthier behaviors, and other positive outcomes (Tay et al., 2012; Taylor, 2011). Leaders can influence various sub-domains of positive relationships, such as received support (objective availability of resources) and perceived support. The relationship dimension is also a well-established component in most major international well-being surveys (Butler and Kern, 2016).

Trustworthiness and other Virtues

Trust seems to be particularly important in cultivating positive relationships. TschannenMoran & Gareis, (2015) say that trust in leaders and amongst teaching staff has been found to be associated with the qualitative nature of professional relationships in schools and the impacts of those relationships on, for example, teachers' practices and student achievement. Relationships and behaviours characterized by benevolence, honestly, openness, competence, and reliability can cultivate trust between principals and teachers, and the presence of genuine trust can thereby mediate other correlates associated with student learning (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

Numerous scholars have provided evidence supporting the notion that there doesn't have to be a trade-off between virtue and performance in organizations. Virtuous organizational performance, as described by Cameron & Caza (2003), involves attributes like compassion, forgiveness, courage, hope, humility, and integrity among members and leaders. These qualities represent instances of 'positive deviance' from typical organizational behaviour (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Sandage & Hill, 2001). The presence and expression of organizational virtuousness have been demonstrated to positively influence relationships, strengthen communities (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bezzina, 2012), promote physical and mental healing for individuals (Gilbert, 2013), enhance organizational resilience (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), foster positive affect (Fredrickson, 2001), and increase engagement (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Dutton et al., 2006).

Therefore, virtues seem to play a significant role in fostering positive relationships and flourishing. There is evidence suggesting that virtuous behaviour exhibited by leaders and teachers in schools is likely to have a positive impact on all.

Meaning and Purpose

Steger (2012) defines a sense of meaning as having direction in life, connecting to something greater than oneself, feeling that life is valuable and worthwhile, and believing there is purpose in one's actions. Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012), in their development and validation of the Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale (CMWS), identify four dimensions of meaning at work: unity with others, developing the inner self, serving others, and expressing full potential (p. 660). These dimensions are influenced by both reality (the current situation) and inspiration (aspirations and ideals). They involve striking a balance between meeting one's own needs and those of others, as well as navigating the tension between reflection (being) and action (doing). Leaders play a crucial role in facilitating the fulfilment of individuals' needs and empowering their followers to meet the needs of others. Additionally, leaders have the capacity to inspire and effect changes in the current reality experienced by teachers, thereby creating conditions that enable teachers to experience all four dimensions of meaning at work.

Leaders and Staff members striving for unity.

The dimension of 'unity with others' pertains to the meaningfulness derived from collaborating with others. It encompasses a perception of shared values and a sense of belonging; it is emphasizing diversity rather than uniformity. This dimension aligns closely with the concept of 'positive relationships'. School leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that their team members feel known, understood, and accepted, both by the leader themselves and by each other, thereby supporting this dimension.

Authentic leadership is fostering an interactive and genuine relationship that develops between leaders and followers. (Walumbwa et al. 2008.) These authentic relationships have the potential to foster 'unity with others' and can also influence the personal growth of individuals, particularly as leaders' authenticity inspires others to behave authentically also.

Research done in the paper/thesis by Katy Granville-Chapman Department of Education, Wolfson College, University of Oxford Supervisors: Dr Nigel Fancourt and Dr Ian Thompson, gave important insight to what flourishing means to teaching staff.

In summary, teaching staff identified several factors that school leaders could influence to enable flourishing: autonomy and trust were the most frequently cited, followed by compassion and support, and growth opportunities. On the other hand, barriers to flourishing that participants perceived leaders could address included unnecessary
workload, lack of trust and autonomy, lack of support, and lack of appreciation and gratitude.

The key takeaway is that the behaviours of leaders towards their team members emerged as critical factors in both enabling and hindering flourishing. Therefore, leaders can significantly impact flourishing by being empowering, trustworthy, compassionate, supportive, appreciative, and grateful. Teachers also expressed a desire for leaders to provide opportunities for growth and to alleviate unnecessary workload.

The research findings also suggests that a new perspective on leadership—specifically, leadership for teacher flourishing—could be a valuable addition to the school leadership literature. Key factors identified from the analysed data for inclusion in such a model include leaders who are compassionate and supportive, trustworthy, who allow teachers autonomy and empower them, who facilitate teachers' growth, and who express gratitude and appreciation for their efforts rather than focusing solely on shortcomings. Additionally, minimizing unnecessary work that lacks meaning and contributes to teacher stress emerged as crucial aspects.

Moreover, the research underscores the complexity of flourishing, which varies significantly among individuals. Therefore, while the findings provide valuable insights, they emphasize the importance for leaders to understand the unique needs of each team member to foster flourishing effectively.

Brown (2018) emphasizes the significance of leaders demonstrating vulnerability as a means to encourage others to also be vulnerable. She argues that this practice not only positively impacts mental health but also fosters trust among individuals.

A large segment was dedicated to presenting information derived from the research findings discussing the identified factors that leaders could prioritize to enhance the flourishing of teachers.

It examines key lessons derived from the data collected, particularly focusing on their contributions. It also suggests practical steps that leaders can take, such as developing an understanding of individual teachers' needs through personal engagement, and collaborating with teachers to design interventions aimed at enhancing their well-being and flourishing in the workplace.

Compassion and Support

Compassion and supportiveness emerged from the data as crucial not only for overall flourishing but also for fostering the growth and thriving of positive relationships. Positive relationships were consistently cited throughout the thesis as a key factor perceived by participants to positively influence their flourishing and one that leaders could impact. Importantly, the literature and data underscore that creating positive relationships is not solely the responsibility of those in formal leadership roles; participants emphasized the importance of cultivating positive relationships with various stakeholders, including pupils, parents, non-teaching staff, leaders, and colleagues. This perspective supports a more distributed view of leadership, which is gaining increasing attention in current research (Gumus et al., 2018).

Support and compassion were also recognized as effective strategies for mitigating teacher stress, which emerged as a significant barrier to teacher flourishing in the research project. This finding was particularly pertinent given the heightened global concerns about teacher stress, which were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the crisis, it was suggested that reducing teacher stress is a crucial way for leaders to enhance teacher flourishing. Teachers which participated in the study reported that when leaders identified sources of stress and collaborated with them to alleviate these issues, it significantly improved their ability to flourish.

This thesis contends that investing significantly in relationships within schools—through mutual support and development, even in the absence of immediate rewards or reciprocation—is crucial. It argues that individuals, regardless of their formal leadership status, can demonstrate compassion and support, aligning with the thesis's assertion that leadership can emerge from any position within an organization. In this context, the research presented in the thesis aligns with Cameron's (2012) perspective that leadership fundamentally involves making a positive impact on others. Moreover, the thesis extends this idea by emphasizing that the positive impact of school leaders should specifically aim to facilitate the flourishing of teaching staff.

The thesis defines compassion, in the context of promoting flourishing, as "the intent to contribute to the happiness and well-being of others" (Hougaard, Carter & Beck, 2018: 1). Within academic literature, compassion is often associated with terms such as care, caregiving, caretaking, support, tenderness, warmth, cooperating, and helping (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Goetz et al., 2010; Kanov et al., 2004; Lilius et al., 2008). These terms closely align with the data gathered in the thesis, where participants frequently used similar language. Support emerged as a key theme that facilitates positive relationships and flourishing. For instance, participants involved in the thesis research expressed sentiments like "A place where everyone thinks about and cares about everyone else" (ML5) and "Feeling supported and valued".

Another aspect of compassion and supportiveness that emerged from the data was empathic concern and understanding, along with acts of kindness and generosity. Empathic concern is a component of compassion, as described in popular definitions within management literature. While

many studies focus on empathic concern in situations of distress, Batson, Early, and Salvarani (1997) have shown that empathic concern can also arise in response to another person's needs.

Lee (2020) discusses how engaging in compassionate actions can activate the brain's pleasure centres. Contrary to empathy, which can activate pain centres in response to another person's suffering, Lee argues that compassionate actions aimed at alleviating suffering or promoting flourishing activate the brain's reward pathways.

Once again Lee (2020) argues that when acting compassionately, individuals prioritize understanding and assisting others rather than attempting to fix their discomfort. This approach involves asking, "What do you need and how can I help?" rather than focusing on alleviating one's own discomfort. Understanding the neurophysiological differences between compassion and empathy is crucial, as it helps in avoiding 'empathy fatigue'.

Engaging in skilful acts of compassion, according to Lee (2020), enhances the flourishing of both the helper and the person receiving help. This perspective underscores the importance of compassionate action in promoting well-being and reducing burnout, thereby fostering positive outcomes for both parties involved.

The findings from the project and insights from the literature highlight several benefits associated with leaders and teaching staff demonstrating supportiveness and compassion. Teaching staff frequently cited acts of compassion and support as facilitators of flourishing, while the absence of these qualities was identified as barriers to flourishing. Grant, Dutton, and Rosso (2017) note that organizations led by supportive and compassionate leaders tend to have lower turnover rates. Employees in such organizations also exhibit higher levels of trust, connectivity with colleagues, and commitment to the organization.

Trust emerged as a consistently reported factor in enabling flourishing across all the open-ended questions in the study. This connection underscores the importance of relationships, which were frequently identified as essential for flourishing. Trust within these relationships contributes significantly to creating an environment where individuals can thrive and contribute effectively.

The thesis stresses that the leadership research consistently indicates that adopting a more compassionate and supportive approach is advantageous both for leaders personally and for organizational performance.

Individuality and Personification

The data collected from the thesis revealed that the factors crucial for individuals to flourish vary significantly from person to person and can also depend on specific contexts. For example, stressors affecting teachers differed widely among individuals, and teachers exhibited varying coping mechanisms in response to these stressors. Moreover, the impact of stressors on hindering a teacher's flourishing can fluctuate over time.

Given these findings, it is recommended that leaders take proactive steps to identify what causes stress for teachers and collaborate with them to mitigate these factors. This may involve offering additional support, actively listening to teachers' concerns, or providing training on stress management techniques. Equally important is for leaders to manage their own stress levels and seek support themselves. This not only safeguards their own well-being but also ensures they are

adequately resourced to support others effectively. Additionally, reducing leaders' stress can mitigate the transmission of stress to their team members through the phenomenon of emotional contagion (Vijayalakshmi & Bhattacharyya, 2012). This approach contributes to creating a healthier and more supportive organizational environment conducive to flourishing for all members.

A recommendation for school leaders aiming to be supportive and compassionate is to prioritize understanding what each individual teacher perceives would enhance their flourishing. This involves actively seeking input from teachers themselves rather than assuming that support and compassion should be uniform for everyone. Leaders can then tailor their support, accordingly, addressing specific needs and preferences identified by each teacher.

Furthermore, it is recommended that leaders invest in building compassionate relationships that nurture their own well-being. This includes fostering supportive connections with colleagues who may be in similar positions, as well as maintaining strong relationships with family and friends outside of work. By cultivating a network of support, leaders can ensure they are emotionally and mentally resourced to demonstrate compassion and provide effective support to those they lead.

In summary, these recommendations aim to create a more personalized and supportive leadership approach that enhances both teacher flourishing and the well-being of school leaders themselves.

The trustworthiness of leaders emerged as a critical factor in fostering teacher flourishing and influencing the quality of positive relationships within the school community. Importantly, the significance of trustworthiness extended beyond leaders to encompass all interpersonal relationships within the school environment. The data highlighted that trust could be cultivated through several key factors identified as crucial for building and sustaining positive relationships. These factors included virtues such as compassion, integrity, and gratitude, as well as a focus on leveraging individual strengths.

Given its fundamental role in leadership and its impact on flourishing, trust deserves further exploration. It is a cornerstone concept in leadership literature known to profoundly influence organizational dynamics and individual well-being. Understanding how trust is developed, maintained, and enhanced can provide valuable insights into fostering a supportive and flourishing school environment.

In their review of the theme of trust, Dirks and Ferrin (2002), underscore the longstanding recognition of trust as a crucial element in leadership, acknowledged by researchers for over forty years. Trust is integral to various leadership theories, particularly those associated with transformational and charismatic leadership styles, where leaders build trust among their followers (Podsakoff et al., 1990). According to Dirks and Ferrin, employees' perceptions of leaders possessing qualities that foster trust are pivotal for leader effectiveness (Bass, 1990).

Participants in this study similarly highlighted the importance of trust as either facilitating or hindering their flourishing. The data collected in this project contributes to the existing literature by providing practical examples of how school leaders can demonstrate trustworthiness. This includes aligning their actions with personal and shared values, displaying virtuous behaviours such as compassion and gratitude, and focusing on recognizing and leveraging individual strengths. These

practices not only contribute to building trust but also enhance leader effectiveness and support teacher flourishing within educational settings.

Appreciation and a focus on strengths also emerged from the findings as critical elements for fostering flourishing.

Gratitude

There is growing interest in how leaders' gratitude impacts followers' flourishing, informed by research in psychology and philosophy. This was relevant to this project, as virtuous behaviour, including gratitude, was identified as crucial for positive relationships and flourishing. McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson (2001) argue that gratitude manifests in virtues and can be conceptualized as a moral affect, akin to other moral emotions such as empathy and guilt. They propose that gratitude functions as a moral barometer, responding to the perception of receiving another's moral actions, and as a moral motive, inspiring the grateful person to act prosocial toward their benefactor and others.

In the context of school leadership, expressing gratitude can significantly enhance relationships and contribute to a positive organizational climate. By recognizing and appreciating the strengths of teachers, leaders can foster an environment where individuals feel valued and supported. This focus on strengths not only acknowledges the contributions of teachers but also encourages their continued growth and engagement. Through gratitude and a strengths-based approach, leaders can effectively demonstrate appreciation, thereby promoting flourishing among their staff.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the research was to investigate how school leaders could enhance the well-being of teaching staff.

Leaders can significantly improve the well-being of teaching staff by fostering, maintaining, and expanding positive relationships; offering opportunities for professional growth, which also strengthen the teacher-leader relationship; positively influence subjective well-being through nurturing relationships; and enhancing teachers' sense of meaning and purpose at work, which also benefits relationships. Thus, the development and maintenance of positive, supportive, and enriching relationships were found to be crucial for leaders to effectively enhance the well-being of teaching staff.

Since anyone can positively influence relationships, facilitate the growth of others, enhance people's subjective well-being (SWB), and potentially reduce pressure on teachers, the concept of school leadership in the thesis is not limited to those with formal leadership roles (such as head of department or head teacher). **Instead, anyone who contributes to the flourishing of others within a school could be considered a school leader.**

The key factors identified as crucial for enabling teachers to flourish, and therefore included in the model, are positive relationships, opportunities for growth, a positive impact on subjective well-being (SWB), and an increased focus on meaningful work. Leaders can enhance the flourishing of teachers by being supportive and compassionate, trustworthy, empowering (giving autonomy), appreciative, and enabling teachers to grow and engage in meaningful work. It is suggested that

leaders require virtuous dispositions to consistently act in ways that promote flourishing. The specific virtues a leader needs to positively influence the flourishing of teachers will vary depending on the relationship and context.

Whilst this research/thesis names numerous leadership styles, it also provides a new understanding of school leadership and its impacts, leading to the proposal of a new model of school leadership: Leadership for Teacher Flourishing (LFTF).

It was found that the actions, dispositions, and decisions of school leaders influenced teacher flourishing, and that by working collaboratively with staff, school leaders can enhance teacher flourishing. Enhancing the flourishing of those in education is not solely the responsibility of those in formal leadership positions. Everyone within a school can improve the flourishing of those around them.

4 SCHOOL AS A PART OF COMMUNITY

In our school, we believe that for optimal socio-emotional and academic development of every child, the partnership between parents and all those working with the child in the school (teachers, members of the professional service, principals, etc.) is crucial.

This partnership is based on mutual respect, open communication, cooperation, and joint problem identification and finding the best solutions.
When we say that the school is part of the local community, it means that the school is not an isolated institution, but rather integrated into a broader social context and interacts with people, organizations, and resources in its environment.

1. **Social Connectedness:** The school collaborates with the local community through various activities such as volunteering, visits to local institutions and organizations, and participation in social events.

2. **Resource Exchange:** The local community can provide additional resources and support to the school, such as expert guests, material donations, and mentorship programs.

3. **Cultural Diversity:** Schools that reflect various aspects of local culture and traditions can provide an enriched learning experience that respects and appreciates diversity.

4. **Family Support:** Collaboration between the school and families within the local community helps create support and partnership in the child's educational process.

5. **Experiential Learning:** Activities involving the local community enable students to gain practical knowledge and skills through experiential learning.

In summary, understanding the school as part of the local community emphasizes the importance of interaction and integration between educational institutions and the broader social environment to create an enriched and relevant learning experience.

Why partnership between parents and teachers?

Common goals: the well-being of children, development of life skills, and academic success.
Mutual assistance in addressing challenges.

Understanding and awareness of different perspectives and sometimes different expectations. Active involvement of parents/guardians in school activities.

The partnership between parents and teachers involves a range of skills:
- Initiative, conversation, negotiation.
- Focus on solutions.
- Active listening to each other.
- Understanding and empathy.
- Acceptance of changes, different perspectives, new activities, and joint action.

Why is it important?
Parents and educational professionals:
- are better informed and can easily monitor the development and progress of the child;
- better understand mutual perspectives and are more open to each other;
- approach the development and progress of the child comprehensively;
- mutually support each other in fulfilling their roles, and;
- parents have the opportunity to contribute to the better functioning of the school.

When the school and parents cooperate well, children progress better and feel safer. Stress and pressure caused by expectations of both the school and parents are reduced. Difficulties are recognized more quickly, and support is provided as needed.

Developing a partnership with parents is crucial for the success of the school and the better education of students. To develop a partnership with parents, we strive to involve them in formal and informal events at the school.

The Parents' Council is an important school body that participates in making important decisions at the school.

The Parents' Council consists of representatives from each class (each class selects its representative through democratic voting). The Parents' Council thus participates in selecting the school's leadership, amending and adopting important legal documents of the school, such as the School Rules, the Code of Ethics, and similar documents.

Here are the events that we organize in our school (some of them happen every year) and engage parents and students:

1.   Halloween Cookie Contest
For the past 10 years, our school has been organizing a baking competition for Halloween. Students make cakes or other sweets at home on the theme of Halloween. They work in pairs or groups with the help of parents, and then bring them to school in the afternoon.
All cakes and sweets are displayed in the central hall of the school. Each one has its own number so that the judging panel does not know the identity of the author of the sweet.
The judging panel consists of parents, teachers, and other school staff. There are several categories in which students compete: tastiest, sweet, most disgusting, most creative. All participants - students and parents, receive a certificate of participation as a token of appreciation. For each category, we award the first three places.

2. Christmas Fair

The Christmas fair is an event through which we aim to foster collaboration among students, teachers, and parents and open the doors of our school to the local community. The principle is to set up stalls on that day where students, with their teachers, display the results of their work. This year, we had stalls with souvenirs such as Christmas angels and decorations, decorations made from forest materials, postcards, jewellery, homemade cakes, pastries, and stuffed pancakes. In addition to all this, we also had a musical program by our talented students, dance, and theatrical performances.

3. Diversity Festival

The Diversity Festival is a public event aimed at bringing together parents, students, and teachers to jointly implement the program. Our school has many students of different nationalities, and we take pride in that. We strive to highlight the advantages and richness of these differences and sensitize students to diversity and acceptance of multiculturalism. The festival had two phases: a program led by our students and another part organized by parents.

Depending on the country they come from, parents prepared a traditional dish from that country, marked it with a flag, and listed the ingredients of that dish. All dishes could be tasted in our dining hall after the program ended. The first part of the program consisted of performances by the school choir, dances, songs, and recitations by students whose homeland is outside of Croatia.

4. Parents-Teachers' Meetings with workshops about specific topic

5. Floral Book Project

Floral Book Project is a project for developing reading skills, love for reading and books. It is diligently carried out by the teachers and students of the second grades in cooperation with our school librarian.

The aim is to encourage second grade students to different ideas in the experiential process of learning, gaining creative experience, stimulating imagination and creativity, enjoyment of reading, achieving a more creative relationship towards compulsory reading, developing environmental awareness among students and encouraging students to become interested in STEM fields.

Students compete in a flower recognition quiz, make bookmarks with motifs from the story, decorations from recycled paper, fragrant paintings from natural materials, and design comics based on the story.

The easiest way to learn about plants is through collecting, drying and arranging plants in a collection called a herbarium. The students try their hand at this interesting process of discovering and preserving individual specimens of native flora. Students also try their hand at making recycled paper and prove that recycling is a useful process because it reduces the use of natural raw materials and protects the environment!

With their teachers and the school librarian, they also visit the insect exhibition - a permanent exhibit of the City Museum Varaždin - Entomology Department and the Garden Centre, where they learn interesting and instructive information about the plant and animal world.

At the end of the project, competitive games called Dandelion Competition Games are organized in our sports hall, in which students from the second grades take part **together with their parents, grandparents**! Developing sportsmanship, cheering on competitors, smiles and joy on the faces of our students (and parents) are the best reward for such activities and it has positive effects on our school community.
The students show the results of joint work in the project – imaginative and creative works to their parents at the exhibition after competitive games and refreshments.

6.   Erasmus Projects where parents are hosts to students from foreign countries
Parents understand the benefits of the Erasmus program and participate as needed in its implementation. In the Erasmus project "Digital Citizens in Modern Europe," parents of our students temporarily hosted 15 students from Sicily. They proved to be good hosts, and during that project, parents and teachers had to closely collaborate with project coordinators and further connected with them, became more open and ready to cooperate with teachers.

Here are several steps that can be taken to involve parents in formal and informal school events and to ensure their participation in the Parents' Council:

Communication: Regular and transparent communication with parents is essential for building a partnership. The school should regularly inform parents about activities, events, and important decisions through newsletters, emails, social media, or meetings.

Open House: Organizing open houses, parent meetings, workshops, and events at the school allows parents to meet teachers, principals, and other parents and participate in the school's life.

Working with the Parents' Council: The Parents' Council should be active and involved in key school decisions. It is necessary to ensure that parents have access to information about the work of the Parents' Council and to provide them with an opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions.

Parent Education: Organizing educational workshops and lectures for parents on important topics such as parenting, upbringing, adolescent mental health, and academic success can help parents better support their children at school and at home.

Collaboration with the Local Community: Partnering with local organizations, parent associations, and other institutions can provide additional resources and support for school activities and encourage parent involvement in school events.

Feedback: Regularly seeking feedback from parents about their needs, interests, and satisfaction with the school's work allows the school to adjust its activities and decisions to better meet the needs of parents and their children.

Through these activities and engagement in the Parents' Council, the school can build a partnership with parents that contributes to better education and the well-being of all students.

It is important for schools to be an integral part of the community because:

Schools that are connected to their communities often have access to a broader support network. This can include community resources, volunteers, and partnerships with local businesses or organizations, all of which can enhance the educational experience for students.

When schools are involved in their communities, they can tailor their curriculum to reflect the local context, making learning more relevant and meaningful to students' lives.

Schools that actively engage with their communities foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion. This can lead to stronger relationships between students, parents, teachers, and community members, creating a supportive environment for all involved.

Communities can offer valuable resources to schools, such as expertise, facilities, or funding. By collaborating with the community, schools can access these resources to enhance learning opportunities for students.

Teachers can ensure that schools are an integral part of the community by:

Building Relationships: Teachers can establish and maintain positive relationships with parents, community members, and local organizations. This can involve attending community events, participating in neighbourhood meetings, and reaching out to community leaders.

Incorporating Community Resources: Teachers can integrate community resources into their lesson plans and activities. This might involve inviting guest speakers from the community, organizing field trips to local landmarks or businesses, or collaborating with community organizations on projects.

Parental Involvement: Teachers can actively involve parents in their children's education by encouraging parental participation in school activities, volunteering opportunities, and parent-teacher conferences. This fosters a sense of ownership and investment in the school community.

Service-Learning Projects: Teachers can engage students in service-learning projects that address community needs or issues. This allows students to apply their learning in real-world contexts while making a positive impact in their community.

Open Communication: Teachers can maintain open lines of communication with parents and community members, keeping them informed about school events, initiatives, and opportunities for involvement. This helps to build trust and transparency within the community.

What we do in our school is organize cooperation with:

- **local NGOs such as "Udruga zipka"- "**ZIPKA" Association of Foster Parents for Children and Youth of Varaždin County was established in 2007 with the aim of promoting, developing, and improving foster care for children and youth. The association gathers around fifty foster parents for children and youth in Varaždin County, involves children and youth, recognizes their needs, and works on improving the quality of life for children and youth from foster families. They regularly conduct promotional activities of the Association through promotional booths, exhibiting creative works of fostered children and foster parents, distributing promotional leaflets, and providing information relevant to foster care.

- **"Udruga gredica"** The Association for Promoting Sustainable Living "Gredica" is a non-profit organization based in Varaždin. The main goal of the association is to promote and implement practical local solutions related to a wide range of sustainable living practices.
  The association is primarily known for its successful project of a community garden called "Čudesni vrtovi" (Miraculous Gardens), which currently involves more than 100 citizens from the Varaždin area.

Additionally, the association regularly organizes and conducts highly attended lectures and workshops in the field of sustainable living, covering topics such as ecological agriculture and gardening, renewable energy sources, ecological construction, ecological (urban) transportation, alternative economy, alternative social models, and more.

 "Zelena čistka" The Green Cleanup is part of the global Let's do it! movement and the annual World Cleanup actions, which gather active citizens and organizations in the largest volunteer project in human history. Our school participates in this initiative with its students, teachers, and parents.

By cleaning our own environmental corner together, awareness is raised about the impact of human activity on the environment and the importance of responsible waste management with the goal of preserving the environment, nature, and the planet Earth, our common home.

Croatian Institute of Public Health: Within the Croatian Institute of Public Health, the Tasks of the School Medicine, Mental Health, and Addiction Prevention Service include:
- Coordination, professional guidance, and supervision of school medicine activities;
- Improvement of health care for school children and students;
- Monitoring and improvement of the health of school children and youth;
- Monitoring health indicators of school children and youth;
- Improvement of the health of school children;
- Coordination, professional guidance, and supervision of mental health and addiction prevention activities;
- Prevention of mental illnesses and disorders;

Police Department- Varaždin Police Station regularly collaborates with our school, holding lectures and workshops every year aimed at educating children and youth about the dangers of traffic. In the first grade, prevention police officers work with the youngest students to equip them with the skills for safe traffic navigation. They familiarize students with the meaning of traffic signs and practice safe crossing at pedestrian crossings and using traffic lights.

MIŠ - Museum and School- MIŠ - Museum and School is an educational program of the City Museum of Varaždin designed for elementary and high school students, which lasts throughout the school year and includes:

- individual and group visits to permanent exhibitions and temporary displays
- guided tours of exhibitions by experts
- thematic lectures
- thematic educational and creative workshops, playrooms.

- Students use these activities with appropriate passes, which are co-financed by the City of

Varaždin for Varaždin elementary schools, while students of Varaždin high schools and elementary schools in Varaždin County finance the purchase of tickets themselves (with favorable discounts if all students of the school are included in the program).

For each organized visit to a museum content, students from Varaždin elementary schools also receive special stamps/stickers, and at the end of the school year, the class with the most visits is rewarded by the Museum with a special excursion.

We have have had a mountaineering section at the school for 12 years now, which gathers over 120 students from our school, from grades 3 to 8, and collaborates with **local mountaineering associations** and the **Croatian Mountaineering Association**. Additionally, the school cooperates with the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service, which conducts demonstration exercises of mountain rescue operations and teaches students the basics of providing first aid.

The community of technicians-They provide student education on modelling and wood processing, as well as offer free workshops for students during school holidays.

Every educational period (term) we organize several free lectures for parents on topics related to upbringing, mental health, addictions, learning methods, and similar subjects. Very often, we invite professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, general practitioners, police officers, volunteers, and similar experts to our lectures.

Additionally, class teachers arrange workshops for parents, and the topics depend on the individual needs of the students in that class or on the current issues facing that class. For example, some of the topics include peer violence and how to recognize a child having issues with peers, how to reduce mobile phone usage, growth mindset versus fixed mindset, high school enrolment for students, and similar topics.

5 CREATING COLLABORATIVE, INCLUSING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Collaborative school environment refers to a learning atmosphere where students, teachers, staff and sometimes parents work together towards common educational goals.

This type of school environment is characterized by a culture of cooperation, shared responsibility and mutual respect where the collective effort is aimed at enhancing the educational experience and outcomes for all participants.

Some of the **key aspects that define collaborative school environment** are shared vision and goals, team-based learning, open communication, inclusive decision making, supportive peer relationships, collaborative use of technology, shared leadership, community partnership, collaborative problem solving and celebration of success.

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In essence, a collaborative school environment is one where the entire school community works together in a cohesive, supportive and respectful manner to create a positive and effective learning experience for all students.

Having **shared vision and goals** mean that the school community, including administrators, teachers, students and parents collaboratively develop and commit to a shared vision for the school, such creating a welcoming and motivating outdoor classroom in the schoolyard or improving literacy rates or fostering a culture of inclusivity.

Having **Professional learning communities** means that students regularly engage in group projects and activities where they must work together to complete the assignments, solve problems and obstacles and achieve common objectives. In our school this happens when we have some public event for parents, such as celebration of the School's Birthday- all the participants of the programme practice throughout the years and in the end they all must fit in a joined programme. There are also learning programmes offered as extracurricular activities during the school year (robotics, chemistry classes, language classes etc).

Open communication among the staff is on a high level in a collaborative school environment. It means that they are regular meetings and communication channels where teachers and staff, students and parents can voice their ideas, concerns and feedback.

If students and parents are included in decision making processes regarding school policies, curriculum choices and event planning it is a way of **inclusive decision making.** It this process sit is also important to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered.

In school environment students should be encouraged to see each other's struggles, challenges and needs and help each other through peer tutoring programs, mentorships which are initiated by the teachers.
Achievements, both individual and collective, are celebrated through assemblies, newsletters and social media with the aim of fostering a sense of pride and community.

The benefits of a collaborative school environment are numerous, and they have a profound impact on both students and teachers. improved academic performance, enhanced problem-solving skills, development of social and emotional skills, increased motivation and engagement, greater inclusion and diversity, enhanced critical thinking, teacher collaboration and professional growth, enhanced resource sharing.

Overall, a collaborative school atmosphere creates a dynamic, supportive, and enriching educational environment that benefits both teachers and students, leading to enhanced learning outcomes, professional growth, and a positive school culture.

The school environment also plays a significant role in shaping teachers' motivation. A positive, supportive, and collaborative school environment can greatly enhance teachers' enthusiasm, dedication, and overall job satisfaction.

When school leaders provide **clear communication, resources, and encouragement,** teachers feel valued and supported, which boosts their motivation. This is Administrative Support.

Opportunities for growth and development, such as workshops, training, and career advancement, motivate teachers to improve their skills and stay engaged in their profession. This is Professional Development opportunities.

A culture that promotes **collaboration among teachers** fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. Teachers are more motivated when they can collaborate, share ideas, and solve problems together. Teamwork and collegiality are an important aspect of collaborative school environment.

Positive interactions with students, where teachers see the impact of their work on student growth and achievement, provide intrinsic motivation. The greatest opportunities for teachers to bond with their students and to really get to know them and earn their trust, happen out of school, such as on school trips, hiking trips, workshops and sport events.

Positive interactions with students outside the traditional classroom setting can greatly enhance the teacher-student relationship, providing opportunities for deeper connections and intrinsic motivation for teachers. These interactions occur in various settings, such as school trips, hiking trips, workshops, and sports events. Here's how these activities contribute to building strong relationships and motivation:

Out-of-school activities allow teachers and students to interact in a more relaxed and informal environment. These interactions help teachers understand students' personalities, interests, and strengths beyond academic performance.

Engaging with students in different settings helps build trust and mutual respect. When students see teachers participating in and enjoying activities with them, it humanizes teachers and fosters a sense of camaraderie.

Holistic Understanding of Students
Teachers can observe students' skills and talents that might not be evident in the classroom, such as leadership, teamwork, creativity, and resilience. This holistic understanding helps teachers tailor their teaching strategies to better support each student's development.

Teachers gain insights into students' interests, hobbies, and potential challenges, allowing them to provide more personalized support and encouragement.

Students are often more motivated and engaged in activities they enjoy outside the classroom. Teachers can leverage these interests to create more engaging and relevant learning experiences back in the classroom.

Participating in activities where students feel successful and appreciated reinforces positive behaviour and attitudes, which can translate into better academic performance and classroom behaviour.

Our school has a 14-year-old practice of hiking and integrating teaching outside the classroom walls. We have noticed positive changes such as enhanced academic outcome, better self-regulation of emotions, physical and mental health and we see the reason is participation in outdoor activities.

Out-of-school interactions between teachers and students play a vital role in building strong, trusting relationships and enhancing intrinsic motivation for teachers. These experiences contribute

to a more dynamic, engaging, and supportive educational environment for both students and teachers.

Regular recognition and appreciation of teachers' hard work and achievements boost their morale and motivation. This can be through formal awards, verbal praise, or public acknowledgment.

Schools that promote a healthy work-life balance with reasonable workloads, flexible schedules, and support for personal needs help reduce burnout and increase motivation.

Team building activities for school staff can help foster collaboration, improve communication, and build a stronger.

Team building is important in a school setting because it enhances collaboration an improves communication among the staff. Team building activities facilitate better communication among staff, helping teachers and administrative personnel to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, and how to work together more effectively.

By engaging in team-building activities, staff members form stronger personal and professional bonds, which can lead to a more cohesive and supportive work environment.

Conducting team building activities boosts morale and motivation. Those activities can make staff feel valued and appreciated, leading to higher job satisfaction and morale.

A motivated team is more likely to be enthusiastic and committed to their work, which can lead to improved performance and a positive school culture.

Collaboration and positive staff relationships have a significant impact on students and their academic results. When staff work well together, they set a positive example for students, demonstrating the importance of teamwork and cooperation. A cohesive staff can provide more consistent and effective support to students, improving their academic and social outcomes. A supportive work environment leads to better overall performance and well-being for both staff and students.

Team-building exercises can help staff learn effective conflict resolution strategies, reducing tension and improving the overall work environment.

These activities foster understanding and empathy among colleagues, making it easier to navigate and resolve conflicts amicably.

Team building often includes professional development components that enhance skills such as leadership, communication, and project management.

A strong, positive school culture is built on trust, respect, and collaboration among staff, which can be reinforced through regular team-building activities.

When staff members know how to work well together, they can accomplish tasks more efficiently and effectively. A positive and engaging work environment can lead to lower staff turnover, saving the school time and resources in recruiting and training new employees. Team-building activities help ensure that all staff members are aligned with the school's goals and mission, working together towards common objectives.

In summary, team-building activities are crucial for fostering a collaborative, motivated, and productive school environment, benefiting not only the staff but also the students and the wider school community.

Overall, a positive school environment that supports teachers' professional and personal needs, fosters collaboration, and recognizes their efforts creates a motivating atmosphere where teachers can thrive and remain dedicated to their profession.

An inclusive learning environment is one that provides equitable opportunities for all students to learn, grow, and succeed regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or circumstances. It is characterized by practices, policies, and attitudes that recognize and value diversity and actively work to reduce barriers to learning. Here are the key components and benefits of an inclusive learning environment:

Key Components of an inclusive school environment:
- Curriculum materials and teaching methods that reflect and respect the diversity of the students.
- Tailoring teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students.
- Using a mix of visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning activities to accommodate different learning styles.
- Providing materials and resources that are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities.
- Access to additional support such as special education, counselling, and tutoring.
- Having a resource room where students can get extra help with coursework.
- Anti-bullying programs and peer mentorship initiatives.
- Collaborative Learning: Encouraging students to work together and learn from each other.
- Ongoing training for educators on inclusive teaching practices.
- Workshops on cultural competence and strategies for differentiating instruction.
- Involving families and the community in the educational process.

School policies that promote equity and inclusion. Policies that support the enrolment of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

Physical spaces that can be adapted to meet different learning needs.
Classrooms with movable furniture to accommodate group work and individual study.

Benefits of inclusive environment:

- Students perform better academically when they feel included and supported.

- Inclusive environments increase student motivation and engagement.

- Higher attendance rates and participation in school activities.

- Inclusive practices help close achievement gaps between different groups of students.

- Improved performance among students from historically marginalized groups.

- Students learn to work and live in a diverse society.

- Better preparation for global citizenship and multicultural workplaces.

- Students feel valued and confident in their abilities.

- Greater willingness to participate in class and take on leadership roles.

- A welcoming and respectful school environment benefits everyone.

- Lower rates of bullying and discrimination.

- Students and teachers develop strong collaborative skills.

- Effective teamwork on projects and better teacher collaboration on student support.

- Ensures that all students have access to the same educational opportunities.

By incorporating these key components, schools can create an inclusive learning environment that benefits all students, promoting both academic success and personal growth.

Our school tries creates inclusive environment by organizing school events such as:

DIVERSITY FESTIVAL

Organizing a Diversity Festival at school, where students of different nationalities present their cultures, achieves many positive goals and benefits for the entire school community. It is important for various reasons:

Promotion of Multiculturalism and Tolerance:

The Diversity Festival helps students learn about different cultures, traditions, and customs, reducing prejudices and stereotypes. Students can taste food from various countries, listen to music, and watch traditional dances, encouraging openness and acceptance of differences. We have engaged students' parents as well, since they oversaw presenting traditional meals.

In our school canteen we have prepared a little feat for everyone who has participated in the Diversity Festival. We had traditional Croatian, Kazakhstan, Albanian, Gypsy, Russian, Ukrainian food on the table. There were also recipes displayed next to each of the meals. Parents, teachers, students and all other guests mingled after the official programme and students' performance.

The participation of all students, regardless of their background, in organizing and performing at the festival strengthens the sense of community and belonging within the school. Rehearsals and joint activities during festival preparations promote collaboration and teamwork among students but also bond teachers and parents.

The festival provides educational content that complements the school curriculum through practical learning about different cultures.

Through interactive presentations and exhibitions, students become more aware of cultural diversity and the richness it brings.

Exhibitions showcasing traditional costumes, handicrafts, and artworks from various countries. The festival creates a platform for dialogue among students, parents, and teachers, where they can exchange ideas and experiences and learn from each other.

Students who present their cultures gain confidence and a sense of pride in their heritage. Performances of traditional dances or songs by students in front of an audience provide them with an opportunity to showcase their skills and knowledge.

The festival involved parents and community members, strengthening the ties between the school and the broader community. Parents participated as volunteers or present cultural customs and food from their country, actively contributing to the festival's success. Students learn to put themselves in others' perspectives and develop empathy towards their peers from different cultural backgrounds. All these activities and achievements contribute to creating a positive, inclusive, and educational atmosphere at school, recognizing and celebrating cultural diversity as a value and richness for the entire community.

6 STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SELF CARE TECHNIQUES

What is stress and how can we help ourselves?

The stress reaction is a normal adaptive reaction by which our organism tries to respond to internal and external stimuli changes. These changes represent a departure from usual or ideal functioning, and can even be positive (eustress), although we mostly talk about those that we consider unfavourable or that scare us - distress.

Our body, as well as our mental state, is in a constant process of adaptation to external and internal conditions, our environment, and the stress reaction serves as a useful evolutionary tool.

During the stress reaction, the body mobilizes energy, prepares for action (fight or flight) and stores energy just in case of long-term troubles. If we do not have developed life skills to deal with stress, stress can cause difficulties and be unpleasant to us, even functional health problems can occur, i.e. psychosomatic difficulties or sometimes even permanent diseases (in which other factors also play a role, i.e. a combination of factors).

We call events and situations that cause us stress, i.e. a stress reaction, stressors. Some events and situations are commonly known stressors, i.e. represent stressors for most people, e.g.:

- death of a close person

- serious illness of a close person or ourselves

- divorce and problems in partner relationships

- major financial difficulties

- natural disasters and extraordinary situations in society

- situations dangerous to life and health

- job loss

- legal persecution

- significant failure at work or school

- and even your own wedding and the birth of a child

However, some stressors are also individual, conditioned by our previous life experiences. Previous stressful experiences make us particularly sensitive to the same or similar topics. That's why it's good to know your inner self, to know where our sensitive places are.

In addition to the above, each of us can be more resistant or more sensitive to stress. In this, not only do genetics play a role as our predispositions, but also learned skills for dealing with stress, which should be part of the basic life skills. I separate these skills into two categories-

- skills to maintain stress readiness
- skills for acute stress

Skills for maintaining stress readiness

Just as we maintain a car or some household appliances, we should also maintain our good psychophysical health. One thing is not possible to separate from the other, as they say "A healthy spirit in a healthy body" and vice versa. The connection between "mind and body" is a two-way street. Maintaining a good state of mind and body makes us ready to defend against possible difficulties, be they about a virus, bacteria, or load due to different events affecting both components. As we maintain a good physiological immunity, we should also nurture our psychological resistance. We call it good mental hygiene, and in the languages of some countries you will also find the term "psych hygiene". Therefore, it is necessary to maintain good mental hygiene.

Colloquially, it could partly be called "an orderly life". Continual concern for an orderly lifestyle makes us more resistant to stress.

Mental hygiene includes:

- enough hours of sleep and quality sleep

- quality and regular diet of moderate quantity - regular meals prepared from as fresh as possible and less processed foods, suitable for current activity, varied

- physical activity - the human body was created for movement, it is desirable to include aerobic activity in every day - walking, fast walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, etc., which can also include cleaning the apartment faster, climbing stairs...

- rest - very important for modern society, where value is often measured by effectiveness and time spent at work; every organism must rest, during rest our physical and mental resources are renewed and re-established homeostasis of the organism

- pleasant social activity - humans has a social brain, the very beginning of our life depends on the relationship with another person (sucking, providing warmth and protection), the way we were created - positive social contact and connection to us has a calming effect, gives us a sense of security and tranquillity

- contact with nature - we came from nature and with nature we are inextricably linked, everything we do affects the rest of the living and non-living world and vice versa; walk in the park, forest, meadow, bathe in the sea or lake, realize contact with the rest of the living and non-living world has a favourable effect our mental health (and this is a kind of connection!)

- activities that represent pleasure for us – research on depression and depressive episodes showed that our mood is positively affected by pleasant activities and activities which give us a sense of achievement. It is important that we do not include only big events, rather incorporate theorising, we can provide in an "ordinary" day; pleasant activities are those we enjoy, and some of them might be ones we share with other people while others are specific to us and a smaller number of other people, examples can be: watching a movie, bike riding , talking with a friend, etc.

- activities that give us a sense of achievement - as with the previous item, let's think about the activities that we can do in an "ordinary" day because that's how most of our days are; what brings us a sense of accomplishment will certainly depend on our starting position and we should not be guided by some general rules or what is characteristic of other people, e.g.

- if we don't like washing dishes, the achievement will be not procrastinating and washing dishes or practicing playing the piano 30 min a day, use body milk after showering, cleaning the desk after every working day, but also bigger things, which sometimes happen daily, pass an exam, finish studies, save money, win a medal in swimming....

Each of us should make a list of our enjoyable activities and activities that bring us a sense of accomplishment, regularly supplement them (or perhaps cross something out) in accordance with new experiences ("next winter I'm going to learn to ski and maybe I'll find that it's rather fun") and it is necessary to have them somewhere "in sight" - **WHEN THE MOOD FALLS, WE WILL NOT EASILY REMEMBER WHAT IT IS THAT FIXES IT FOR US. S**teering depending on the mood daily, it is necessary to alternate these two types of activities. I am currently writing this text, which gives me a sense of accomplishment, and now I'm going to take a break and bake a cake, which is on my indulgence/enjoyable list of activities.

- work - work is healing for a person, and there are many reasons for this, so throughout history, many proverbs related to work as, for example, in work is salvation; through work and general activity it is possible to "reshape" many emotional states, to spend the energy of mobilizing emotions (such as, for example, anger), but also of others ("to shake out sadness on paper", "to paint your pain")

- application of relaxation techniques - when we talk about relaxation techniques, we usually associate them with crisis situations, i.e. when the problem has already appeared, but regular

application of relaxation techniques is an excellent way to maintain balance of the nervous system, i.e. optimal condition and preparedness, while it does not have to be about relaxation techniques in the narrow sense, i.e. techniques designed by psychologists such as autogenic training, progressive muscle relaxation, but also about what each of us finds relaxing, for example, a bath, a walk in the park, aromatherapy, maybe a massage, caressing our pet, and others; every day we should devote at least 15 minutes to active relaxation; the simplest way of managing the state of the nervous system is relaxation breathing.

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION/ADVICE

Activities that serve to eliminate, i.e. "waste" energy that accumulates in the body due to small or large daily of stress are aerobic activities. Aerobic activities are those where during the activity there is an increased activity of the cardiovascular (the heart works faster than at rest) and the respiratory system (we breathe rapidly), increased oxygen supply to the muscles and which are carried out at a medium intensity, but for a longer time. Metabolic processes in muscles occur in the presence of oxygen (to which the word «aeroban» refers). (Opposite to these are anaerobic exercises that occur with insufficient oxygen delivery to the muscle cells - it is an intense and short effort - sprint running, weightlifting, etc.). Examples of aerobic exercises: jogging, i.e. slow running for a minimum of 20 minutes, swimming, brisk walking, cycling. Since aerobic exercise takes time, it ensures the consumption of energy mobilized by stress from energy reserves in the body.

Skills for acute stress

In addition to maintaining general readiness, i.e. a good state of the organism, we also need skills that we will apply when found in direct contact with the stressor. If the stress reaction has not started yet, but we are near the stressor proximity to a stressor means that we enter a situation that we know causes us stress, whether it is general or for us. Specific stressors, e.g. taking exams, time constraints, reading official e-mails, driving uphill, etc.

The following can be applied:

- relaxation techniques - relaxation breathing, autogenic training, progressive muscle relaxation, imagination in combination with relaxation breathing, etc.

Relaxation techniques should be applied before entering a situation that causes us stress and/or as soon as we feel that something could cause a stress reaction because sometimes, we cannot predict the stressor. If we have practiced relaxation well techniques as part of mental hygiene, it will be sufficient to apply their shortened version.

We know that the body and the psyche are connected, so physical calmness, i.e. a relaxed state, has a favourable effect on our mental state as well.

- cognitive (thoughtful) encouragement and support, and in case of catastrophizing - rational processing of thoughts and focus on impact.

- information and planning of possible actions (problem solving) - if we are well informed about what to do in our situation causing stress could be potentially dangerous (because that is what makes the situation stressful), what is the nature of the danger, whether it really exists

rationally, how we usually react to it (knowing ourselves) and how we can help ourselves in case of the potential danger actually materializing, the situation will be less disturbing, for example, when we know what the stressor will be (a difficult exam/schooling, medical procedure), we will feel less anxious because there is not something completely unknown in front of us; with the mentioned exam, we can for example find that we are afraid, that we might be scared or be that nervous that we will "block" so we can plan a possible course of action - relaxing before the exam, focusing on the questions instead of your own thoughts of possible disaster, maintaining relaxed breathing while responding and as a last resort asking for a short break or help from the professor.

- awareness of one's own stressors - sometimes we know that certain situations present us with stress, but we have a hard time grasping what is causing us to be so scared of them; for example, in the exam situation above, these can be: fear of failure, fear of parents' reaction, fear of feelings shame in front of the professor, etc. humour - humour and laughter have a relaxing effect;

- humour helps us to distance ourselves from the situation, we see it as less devastating and more "general" which gives us more strength and enthusiasm to solve it.

If the stress reaction has already started

If in a stressful situation the stress reaction has already started, our body will mobilize a large amount of energy (for evolutionarily conditioned fight or flight). This energy can cause problems for the body, if we don't use it somehow. It's possible apply the following:

aerobic physical activity - will use the mobilized energy that is characteristic of the stress reaction

Only after aerobic physical activity will we be able to effectively apply relaxation techniques, problem solving, i.e. methods problem solving, humour, cognitive techniques, etc.

Each of us has developed and uses different ways of dealing with stress, and the totality of these ways constitutes a "style coping with stress". By studying the style, we determine how functional and appropriate it is for situations, and whether its application leads to our well-being. It should always be remembered that the brain is "plastic", which means it is capable of change, and that we learn all our lives, so it is also possible to change our style of dealing with stress.

And let's not forget, stress reaction is a normal, adaptive reaction by which our body responds to changes in the external and internal world.

Please contact cft.hrvatska@gmail.com for any additional information.

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Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education Compendium of Good Practice in Czechia

The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project

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Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education:
Compendium of Good Practice in Czechia

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CONTENT

1. VISION, PLAN AND STRATEGY

= solid foundation in common values

Does your school have a clearly articulated vision? Did you know that a vision can be an effective tool for motivating and strengthening communication within the teaching staff? Does every teacher on the teaching staff share and believe in the school's vision? How can a vision help in decision making? Can vision improve teaching? How can the vision be used to address different school situations? Vision is perhaps one of the most important qualities a leader can have because it provides impetus and direction not only for the leadership team, but for every member of the team.

The most important skill in today's world for individuals and communities is to choose a path in a specific direction towards a specific goal (focus). In an information overloaded world, where our knowledge and ideas are scattered in different directions, **achieving anything of value** requires **a defined goal**. Like all of us, schools have different priorities that they are reminded of in different ways every day, but to be truly visible and effective, priorities must have a clear direction and purpose. In a school, everyone involved (called a stakeholder: student, teacher, principal, parent, staff member, ...) should know:

- WHAT they want to achieve (defined objectives)
- WHY they want to achieve these things (defined philosophy, vision and mission),
- HOW to achieve this (strategic plan developed).

Let's take a look at the steps to go through when developing goals, visions, strategies and plans. Vision, plan and strategy are key elements that together determine the direction and future development of any organisation, and the school is no exception. Each of these elements has a specific role to play in the planning and management process and there is a close link and connection between them. In the Czech education system, vision and strategic planning are often neglected, but a clearly defined school vision is also the basis for leadership effectiveness and contributes significantly to a healthy school climate.

The vision provides direction and inspiration, defining the end goal or state the school wants to achieve. The strategy then determines what steps, methods and means will be used to achieve that vision. Plans are more specific and detail the tasks, resources, timelines, and responsibilities needed to implement the strategy. This process allows for systematic and meaningful planning, which is essential for successful and effective school leadership.

A school vision is an inspirational statement that describes or visualizes a long-term goal or ideal for where the school is headed. The vision answers the question of what kind of place we want our school to be. It is an aspirational picture of what the school wants to achieve in education and what values it wants to represent. The vision should be motivating enough to unite the school community and provide direction for all future planning activities.

The school's strategy then specifies how the school will achieve its vision. It includes the set of actions, initiatives and approaches that the school will take to meet its long-term goals. Strategy refers to decisions about the use of resources, prioritisation of activities and the setting of short and medium term goals that will progressively bring the school closer to its vision.

The school plan is then a detailed elaboration of the strategy into specific projects, programmes and activities with clearly defined responsibilities, time horizon and identification of resources. The plan translates the strategy and vision into concrete actions that can be monitored and evaluated. It helps ensure that the day-to-day operations of the school are aligned with longer-term goals and aspirations. The link and connection between the school's vision, strategy and plan is crucial to the success of the school.

The vision provides the **inspiration and the goal**, the **strategy** defines the **path** to achieve this goal, and the plan presents the **concrete steps** along the way. These elements should be coordinated and regularly reviewed to ensure that the school remains on track to achieve its long-term goals and fulfill its mission. Where to start, how to do it - i.e. WHAT, WHY and HOW?

The main goal of creating a school vision is to provide impetus and direction not only for school principals, but also for every member of the teaching staff. A vision is essential for effective leadership because it defines the future state the school is striving to reach and helps focus the school's strategies and actions toward that goal. A clearly articulated vision contributes to the overall development of the school. It supports not only the development of the school as a whole, but also the individual growth and development of its staff and pupils.

Don't forget:
"... the more people share and align with the vision of the school, the greater the impact of the vision.
... the basic goal should be the child, his learning and development
... monitor the implementation of the vision systematically, in partial steps, in daily actions, at the moments when decisions need to be made, reflecting on the progress of the team and individuals in achieving the vision."

The school strategy itself is a comprehensive plan that defines the direction the school will take in terms of education and development. It aims to achieve the stated aims and fulfil the vision of the school, thereby ensuring quality education for all pupils.

The school's strategy should be:
- **Clear and understandable:** all members of the school community (teachers, students, parents, school management) should have a clear understanding of where the school is going and what its goal is.
- **Ambitious but achievable:** goals should be challenging but realistic given the resources, opportunities and specific needs of the school.
- **In line with the school's values and principles:** the strategy should reflect what is important to the school and what it wants to achieve in the long term in the field of education.
- **Flexible:** the strategy should be able to respond to changing conditions in the field of education, pedagogy and social development.
- **Communicable:** the strategy should be clearly and comprehensibly communicated to all stakeholders (teachers, pupils, parents, school management, the founder).

Developing a school strategy involves several key steps:
1. **Analysis:** a thorough understanding of the internal workings of the school (strengths and weaknesses, SWOT analysis) and an analysis of the external environment (opportunities and threats, PEST analysis).

2. **Setting a vision and mission:** defining where the school wants to go in education and how it wants to achieve its goal (e.g. to become a leader in inclusive education, to achieve above average results in PISA tests).
3. **Setting strategic goals:** specific and measurable educational goals to be achieved within a certain timeframe (e.g., reduce the number of low-achieving students by 10%, increase the number of students involved in extracurricular activities by 20%).
4. **Developing an action plan:** A detailed breakdown of the steps that need to be taken to achieve the goals (e.g., introducing a tutoring program for low-achieving students, expanding after-school activities).
5. **Strategy implementation:** putting the strategy into practice and ensuring its implementation (involvement of teachers, pupils, parents and school management in the implementation of the strategy).
6. **Evaluation and update:** Ongoing evaluation of the strategy and its update depending on the development of the situation and the results achieved (e.g. evaluation of the effectiveness of the tutoring programme, monitoring of pupils' involvement in extracurricular activities).

A school strategy is an essential tool for the successful functioning and development of any school in the field of education. It helps the school work towards achieving its aims and vision in an effective, sustainable and inclusive way, ensuring quality education for all pupils.

Other sources:

Examples of good practice, where it works, inspiration:
- Vision 2028 and strategic goals of the school, Gymnasium České Budějovice, https://portal.csicr.cz/Files/Get/8df3ec91-4159-4aa2-8065-c32d2e438a6b
- Primary School and Kindergarten Rozdrojovice: https://www.zsmsrozdrojovice.cz/vize-a-strategie-skoly
- Nový Bydžov Primary School: https://www.karlovka.cz/index.php/o-skole/strategie-skoly

I want to know more:
- Manual for Strategic Management and Planning in Schools, NPI https://projekty.npi.cz/media/materialy/projekty/strategicke_rizeni/Odborne_materialy_KA02/Manual_strategickeho_rizeni_a_planovani_ve_skolach.pdf
- School Development Strategies "Brief and Clear", an e-book download for free https://strategieskoly.cz/

Practical tip for the end:
- *Involve all relevant parties, including teachers, pupils, parents and school management, in the process of developing the vision, strategy and plan.*
- *Use brainstorming and facilitation methods to encourage creative thinking and idea sharing.*
- *Be flexible and ready for change. A strategy should be a dynamic document that can evolve and change over time.*
- *Don't be afraid to ask for help and support from external experts.*

Creating a vision, strategy and plan is a challenging but important task that can lead to the long-term success of a school. If the principal asks the right questions and involves all relevant parties in the process, he or she has a good chance of creating a strategy that is effective and sustainable.

In addition to the questions below, the principal may ask other questions that are specific to his or her school and its context. It is important that the principal focuses on what is best for the school and its pupils and considers all relevant factors when developing a vision, strategy and plan.

Creating a vision:
- What values and principles do we want our school to uphold?
- What is the ideal shape of our school in the future?
- What are our strengths and how can we use them to achieve the vision?
- What are our weaknesses and how can we overcome them?
- What are the opportunities we can take to achieve the vision?
- What threats can prevent us from achieving the vision?

Strategy development:
- What are our strategic goals to help us achieve our vision?
- What actions do we need to take to achieve our strategic goals?
- Who will be responsible for the implementation of each activity?
- What resources will we need to achieve our strategic goals?
- How will we measure and evaluate the success of our strategy?
- How will we continuously update the strategy and respond to changing conditions?

Creating a plan:
- What specific steps do we need to take to implement each activity?
- When will these steps be implemented?
- Who will be responsible for the implementation of each step?
- What resources will we need to implement each step?
- How will we monitor and evaluate progress in implementing the plan?
- How will we respond to potential problems and obstacles?

Implementation:
- How will we involve teachers, pupils, parents and other stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy?
- How do we ensure that everyone understands the strategy and its objectives?
- How will we motivate and support teachers and pupils to implement the strategy?
- How will we resolve any conflicts and disagreements?
- How will we monitor and evaluate the impact of the implementation of the strategy on pupils and teaching staff?
- How will we continuously adjust and update the strategy in response to lessons learned and experience?

2. USING DATA AND RESOURCES FOR DECISION MAKING

= what to build and what to build from
What data do directors use to make their decisions? What resources, standards do they use? What support does national legislation provide for leaders?

In the Czech Republic, education policy is guided by several strategic documents that determine the direction and goals of education at various levels. In particular, the following key documents are the basic source for decision-making:

1) **The Czech Republic's Education Policy Strategy 2030+, approved by the government in 2020, sets two** main strategic goals: to focus education more on the acquisition of key competences and to reduce inequalities in access to quality education. It also defines five strategic lines, including transforming the content and methods of education, equal access to education, supporting teachers, increasing professional capacity and funding

2) **The long-term plan of education and development of the education system of the Czech Republic for the period 2024-2027**. This strategic document, which determines the direction and priorities for the development of the education system at the national level, is developed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) and has several important roles and functions in the education system

   a) **Strategic planning**: sets long-term goals, priorities and the actions needed to achieve those goals. It helps to coordinate and direct the efforts of all stakeholders, including schools, educational establishments, funders, and other institutions.

   b) **Education policy support**: provides a framework for the development and implementation of education policies at national and regional level. It ensures that all initiatives and reforms are in line with the overall vision and objectives of the education system.

   c) **Resource allocation:** helps to prioritise the allocation of financial, human and material resources. Identifies areas that require increased attention and investment in order to achieve the set objectives.

   d) **Evaluation and monitoring:** sets criteria for assessing the progress and success of education policies and measures. It allows for continuous monitoring and evaluation of implementation and achievements, which is crucial for adjusting and improving strategies.

   e) **Promoting innovation and development**: supports innovation and development in education by identifying new trends, technologies and approaches that can improve the quality and efficiency of the educational process. It also promotes cooperation between educational institutions, research organisations and industry.

   f) **Ensuring equity and inclusion**: one of the key goals of the long-term plan is to ensure equal access to quality education for all students regardless of their socioeconomic status, geographic location, or other factors. The document sets out measures to promote inclusive education and reduce educational inequalities.

For example, the current Long-Term Plan presents the STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL EDUCATION in the form of the DIRECTIVE MEASURES, in which it emphasizes recommended actions for schools in the following priority areas, which are the main topics of education in the Czech Republic:

- *Education for sustainability*
- *Digital learning and artificial intelligence in education*
- *Education of children and pupils with insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction*
- *Well-being, mental health, safe environment and promotion of physical activities*
- *Equality of opportunity in education*

Based on these strategic documents, regional strategies are created, which through the influence of the founders (municipalities, regions, churches, the state, private entities) have an impact on the strategy of education in schools.

Legislative and strategic documents:
1. **School Act (Act No. 561/2004 Coll.)**:
   - Basic legislative framework for the functioning of schools in the Czech Republic. It defines the rights and obligations of schools, school facilities, teaching staff and pupils.
2. **Framework Educational Programme (FEP)**:
   - A central document that sets out the compulsory learning outcomes and content for each school level. Each school develops its own school curriculum (SCP) based on the RVP.
3. **Act on Teaching Personnel (Act No. 563/2004 Coll.)**:
   - It regulates the qualification requirements for teaching staff, their rights and duties.
4. **Decree on Primary Education and Certain Requirements for Compulsory School Attendance (Decree No. 48/2005 Coll.)**:
   - It specifies the details of the organisation and conduct of basic education.
5. **Strategy of the Czech Republic's education policy until 2030+**:
   - A long-term strategic document that defines the goals and priorities of the Czech education system.
6. **Annual Report of the Czech School Inspectorate (CSI)**:
   - A document providing feedback on the quality and effectiveness of education in individual schools based on inspection surveys.

Primary School Management Structure:

1. Director:
- **Roles and Responsibilities**:
   - The head of the school, responsible for the overall management and administration of the school.
   - Responsible for legislative compliance, strategic planning, financial management and personnel policy.
   - It coordinates the development and implementation of the school education programme (SEP).
   - It communicates with parents, the founder (usually the municipality or district) and other relevant bodies.
   - It organises and leads the pedagogical councils, which are key for decision-making on pedagogical matters.
   - Responsible for the health and safety of pupils and staff.

2. Deputy Director:
- **Roles and Responsibilities**:
    - o Supports the Principal in all aspects of school management.
    - o He or she is usually responsible for specific areas such as the organisation of teaching, timetabling, coordination of extra-curricular activities and supervision of school projects.
    - o He shall act for the Director in his absence.

3. Teaching staff:
- **Roles and Responsibilities**:
    - o It consists of teachers, special educators and other professional staff.
    - o They ensure the educational process and work according to the school educational programme (SEP).
    - o They actively participate in pedagogical councils and contribute to the development of the school.

4. School Counselling Centre:
- **Roles and Responsibilities**:
    - o It includes a school psychologist, an educational counsellor, a special educator and possibly other specialists.
    - o It provides support for pupils with a range of educational and personal needs, including those with special educational needs.
    - o Works with parents and teachers to solve educational and training problems.

5. Administrative staff:
- **Roles and Responsibilities**:
    - o They include administrative staff, janitorial, maintenance and other staff who run the school.
    - o The administrative staff takes care of the school agenda, accounting, communication with parents and other administrative tasks.

Use of internal and external resources:

The headteacher needs to use not only knowledge and experience, but also strategic thinking and the ability to make good decisions. In today's information age, there is a wide range of data and resources available that can greatly facilitate the work of school principals and lead to more effective and accountable management.

How can elementary school principals systematically use both internal and external resources to make informed and effective decisions?

Internal resources
Internal resources include documents and data that are generated directly within the school. These include:
- **School Curriculum (SCP): the** basic document specifying the school curriculum, which must be in line with the Framework Education Programme (FEP).
- **Student performance:** data from internal assessments (e.g. tests, exams) and external assessments (e.g. national testing).
- **Internal school documents:** these include internal policies, guidelines, minutes of meetings and other documents that regulate the running of the school.

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- **Absenteeism and attendance:** student attendance data that is key to tracking attendance and identifying absenteeism issues.
- **Teacher evaluation and feedback:** regular teacher evaluation and feedback provide information on the quality of teaching and the improvements needed.

External resources

In addition to internal sources, there is also a wide range of external sources that can provide school leaders with valuable information and evidence to inform their decision-making. These include:
- **Annual reports of the Czech School Inspectorate (CSI):** they provide a comprehensive assessment of the state of the education system, the quality and efficiency of education.
- **Statistical data from the Czech Statistical Office (CSO):** includes data on schools, classes, pupils, teachers and other aspects of the education system.
- **Methodological portals and websites:** for example, the RVP Methodological Portal and Edu.cz provide a wide range of methodological materials, guides and up-to-date information on education and schooling.
- **Professional associations and networks:** participation in professional associations (e.g. the Association of Primary School Principals) provides access to professional information, training and opportunities to exchange experiences and best practice.
- **Qualitative research and case studies:** research carried out by organisations such as PAQ Research provides valuable insights into good practice in schools.
- **Online Courses and Training:**Courses focused on leadership development, using data for decision-making, and other relevant topics provide principals with new skills and approaches for effective school management.

Using data and resources to make informed decisions is a key skill for effective primary school leadership. In the next section we look in more detail at how these resources can be used in practice and how to work effectively with them.

Additional resources and information:
- **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS)**: main regulator and provider of policy, legislation and strategies. msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr
- **Czech School Inspectorate (CSI)**: body that inspects and evaluates schools. www.csicr.cz/cz/
- **Edu.cz:** Unified Methodological Portal of the Ministry of Education; www.edu.cz/
- **Association of Primary School Principals:** offers support, professional information and opportunities for principals to share their experiences. www.adzs.cz/
- **Strategy of the education policy of the Czech Republic until 2030+:** msmt.gov.cz/vzdelavani/skolstvi-v-cr/strategie-2030
- **Long-term plan of the Czech Republic 2023 - 2027**: DZ ČR 2023-2027 - edu.cz, www.edu.cz/strategie-msmt/dlouhodobe-zamery-cr-a-kraju/dz-cr-2023-2027/
- **Long-term plan of the Zlín Region:** zlinskykraj.cz/strategicke-a-koncepcni-dokumenty-0
- NPI Methodology Portal: https://rvp.cz/

3. EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

= pedagogical leadership
How to build a functional team at school? Why is teamwork important in school? What support can teachers get from the leadership? How to get teachers to develop further? What is pedagogical leadership?

Empowering teachers and cultivating their own and teachers' leadership skills is a key aspect of effective school leadership. Principals must be able to delegate responsibilities and encourage the existence of cross-functional teams to ensure the continued development and motivation of teachers. Here are some approaches, resources and methods to achieve this:

1) **Wellbeing Support**
Wellbeing in school encompasses the overall well-being of teachers and students in five main areas: cognitive, physical, emotional, social and spiritual. It is important for teachers to provide an environment that supports their mental and physical health, which contributes to their performance and motivation.

2) **Positive interpersonal relationships**
Fostering positive relationships between teachers, school leaders, students and parents is essential. Studies show that teachers who have good relationships in the workplace and receive support from management and colleagues have higher job performance and a lower risk of burnout.

3) **Adaptation and support for beginning teachers**
Systematic support for beginning teachers is essential for their successful integration into the school environment. The National Institute of Education, in collaboration with the Teacher Platform, has produced booklets with guidance on how to support new teachers during the first years of their career. These materials include model adaptation plans and recommendations for school leaders and inducting teachers.

4) **Professional development and training**
Regular training and professional development are key to keeping teachers motivated and professional. Seminars, workshops and other forms of training provide teachers with new skills and knowledge that they can apply to their teaching and guidance of pupils.

5) **Social skills and teamwork**
The development of social skills between teachers and pupils promotes cooperation and effective communication. The methodical development of activities that promote mutual listening, cooperation and teamwork can significantly improve the school climate and working environment.
By taking these steps, school leaders can effectively empower teachers, promote their leadership skills and create an environment where teachers feel motivated and valued.

Educational leadership: the key to successful school leadership
Changes in education are rapid and constant. Educational leaders must be able to adapt to new challenges and use the latest knowledge in the field of pedagogy and psychology.
Educational leadership is more than just school administration. It is the ability to inspire, motivate and lead other educators to achieve excellence in teaching. An educational leader is not just a manager, but also a visionary who can set direction and create a positive school climate.

What characterizes a pedagogical leader?
- **Vision: a** clear and inspiring vision for the future of the school that motivates all stakeholders.
- **Communication:** ability to communicate effectively with teachers, students, parents and other school partners.
- **Empathy:** A deep understanding of the needs and feelings of others.
- **Expertise:** Deep knowledge of educational processes and the ability to apply this knowledge in practice.
- **Adaptability:** the ability to adapt to change and respond to new challenges.
- **Delegation:** the ability to give responsibility to others and support their development.
- **Development:** a constant pursuit of your own development and that of your colleagues.

How to develop pedagogical leadership?
- **Education:** participation in professional seminars, conferences and leadership courses.
- **Mentoring:** working with an experienced mentor to provide feedback and support.
- **Reflection:** Regular reflection on own work and the work of the school.
- **Collaboration:** teamwork and cooperation with colleagues.
- **Reading literature:** keeping up to date with current trends in education.

What are the benefits of educational leadership for the school?
- **Improving the quality of teaching:** Teacher leaders promote innovative approaches to teaching and increase student motivation.
- **Creating a positive school climate:** teacher leaders build an atmosphere of trust, respect and cooperation.
- **Increase teacher satisfaction:** educational leaders support the professional growth of their colleagues and create favourable working conditions.
- **Improving student achievement:** educational leaders focus on the individual needs of each student and support their success.
- **Raising the prestige of the school:** a school led by a pedagogical leader is perceived as innovative and successful.

Effective delegation of activities

Delegation is a key skill for any good director. It allows him or her to focus on the strategic goals of the school while developing their teachers. How to do this effectively?

1. Clearly defined tasks
- **Specific goals:** each task should have a clearly defined goal that is understandable to the person who is to perform it.
- **Expected results:** the Director should clearly articulate what he/she expects the outcome of the activity to be.
- **Resources:** the teacher should have all the necessary resources to complete the task (time, materials, information).

2. Clear communication
- **Open dialogue:** the Director should be prepared to explain the reason for the delegation and answer any questions.

- **Clear instructions:** instructions should be clear, concise and specific.
- **Regular feedback: the** Director should provide regular feedback and report on the progress of tasks.

3. Trust and responsibility
- **Delegation of authority:** along with the task, a certain amount of authority needs to be delegated so that the educator has the ability to decide how to carry out the task.
- **Taking responsibility: the** teacher should feel responsible for the task and its results.
- **Support:** the Principal should be prepared to provide support when needed.

4. Development of teachers' competences
- **Appropriate tasks:** tasks should be adapted to the competences and experience of individual teachers.
- **Opportunity to learn:** delegation should be an opportunity for teachers to gain new experiences and develop their competences.

5. Regular evaluation
- **Evaluating the results:** once the task is completed, it is important to evaluate the results together and identify possible areas for improvement.
- **Process refinement:** based on the assessment, the delegation process can be adjusted for future tasks.

6. Teamwork
- **Information sharing:** delegation should be part of a broader system of teamwork where information is shared and tasks are coordinated.

Examples of activities that can be delegated:
- Preparation and implementation of educational programmes
- Organisation of school events
- Cooperation with parents
- Managing the school website or social networks
- Responsibility for specific projects

Why delegate?
- **Freeing up time for the principal: the** principal can focus more on strategic issues and school development.
- **Teacher development:** teachers gain new experiences and increase their responsibility.
- **Increased efficiency:** delegating can help tasks get done faster and more efficiently.
- **Teacher motivation:** teachers feel more involved in the school.

Effective delegation is an art that is constantly being perfected. The key is building trust, clear communication and mutual cooperation.
Other sources:
Examples of good practice, where it works, inspiration:
- NPI - Leading Schools Portal: https://vedemeskolu.npi.cz/leadership (comprehensive methodologies and support materials for school leaders)

- CSI Methodological Portal: https://www.kvalitniskola.cz/ (criteria for evaluating the quality of school leadership)
- Articles and publications wellbeing at school (Learning Together) (Wellbeing at School) (Inclusive School) (Ucitelska Platforma)
- The article "What affects teachers' work ability": (FF - Vital Teacher).

Other sources:
https://www.ucitelnazivo.cz/blog/pedagogicky-leadership-v-cr-reditele-jako-hybatele-skutecnych-zmen-v-ceskem-skol

Recording of the House of Commons Conference January 2023: https://www.renatazajickova.cz/vzdelavaci-forum/92-konferece-pedagogicky-leadership-v-cr.html
https://vedemeskolu.npi.cz/leadership

Eduin article: https://www.eduin.cz/clanky/ucitelska-kvalita-neni-konstanta-vyznamne-ji-ovlivnuje-pedagogicky-leadership-rika-alexis-katakalidis/
https://www.rizeniskoly.cz/tema/pedagogicky-leadership

Diploma Principals as pedagogical leaders. When there is time and energy left.: https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle/20.500.11956/121109/120369640.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

CEDEFOP The professional development of teachers and VET trainers is essential to help them fulfil their many roles: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9177_cz.pdf

Dissertation THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND SELF-FLEXION OF A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER ON SOLVING PROBLEM SITUATIONS IN THE SCHOOL CLASSROOM: https://is.muni.cz/th/45606/fss_d/Disertacni_prace.pdf
Thesis: https://theses.cz/id/apskp4/1992757

Vital Teacher: https://www.vitalniucitel.cz/clanky/co-ovlivnuje-pracovni-schopnost-ceskych-ucitelu

Practical tip 1:

Teamwork in schools is key to effective education. Use the following process to **empower teachers and build functional teams**:

1. Analysis of the current situation
- **Questionnaire survey:** find out teachers' views on the current collaboration, their needs and expectations.
- **Interviews with educators:** deepen the findings from the questionnaires and identify strengths and weaknesses of the current system.
- **Analysis of school documents:** assess how teamwork and professional development are reflected in school rules, policies and other documents.

2. Creating a vision and goals
- **Together with teachers:** define a clear vision for teamwork and professional development.
- **Specific goals:** set measurable goals, e.g. increase in the number of collaborative projects, improve teacher evaluation of collaboration.

3. Building functional teams

- **Team skills:** organize workshops focused on developing communication skills, conflict resolution, effective collaboration.
- **Role in the team:** Clearly define the roles of each team member and their responsibilities.
- **Regular meetings:** establish regular team meetings to share experiences, solve problems and plan future work.

4. Support for professional development

- **Individual plans:** support teachers in creating individual professional development plans.
- **Mentoring:** introduce a mentoring programme in which more experienced teachers support their colleagues.
- **Educational offer:** offer a variety of educational activities, e.g. seminars, conferences, study visits, supervision, coaching.
- **Financial support:** provide funding for teacher training.

5. Pedagogical leadership

- **Leadership development:** offer leadership development training programmes for leaders and experienced educators.
- **Delegation of responsibility:** Actively delegate responsibilities to teachers and create space for their initiative.
- **Promote autonomy:** support teachers' autonomy to make decisions about their work.

6. Evaluation and feedback

- **Regular evaluations:** establish a system for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of teamwork and professional development.
- **Feedback:** provide constructive feedback to teachers and encourage reflection.

7. Communication and cooperation

- **Open communication:** create an atmosphere of open communication and mutual trust.

Other possible areas:

- **Working with parents:** involve parents in school activities and build partnerships.
- **Cooperation with the school's surroundings:** Establish cooperation with other schools, organizations and institutions.
- **Use technology:** use modern technology to support teamwork and communication.

Practical tip 2:

A teacher for the 21st century and their eight roles
Source: the European teacher as a reflective practitioner Skills for the 21st century in education Alena Jůvová , Ondřej Duda Marjolein de Vos , Paul Stuit Chantal Velthuis

1. **The teacher as a facilitator/facilitator** guides the learner, helping them to "learn to learn" by forming their own thoughts and opinions, analysing ideas and taking responsibility for their own learning through self-discovery and dialogue. When the teacher finds that the learning process is not going satisfactorily, he or she tries to change what is happening in the classroom.

2. **As a presenter/lecturer, the teacher** knows and can use different ways of presenting information to stimulate learners' self-motivation and curiosity through lecture, interpretation, discussion,

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questioning. The teacher does not separate knowledge acquisition from knowledge application, but instead integrates them into the same lesson.

3. **The teacher as a human being** treats his students as equal human beings, not as their superior. He is authentic, admits when he doesn't know something or when he makes a mistake.

4. **The Teacher as Lifelong Learner** By John Hattie: "The greatest impact on student learning occurs when teachers become students in their own teaching and students become their teachers." The 21st century teacher is 100% a 21st century learner - modeling all 21st century skills and learning them with their students.

5. **The teacher as skill builder** is committed to the acquisition of knowledge and its application through specific skills needed especially in the 21st century. The 21st century teacher reflects on the mindset, dispositions or habits of the learners and always recognizes that true learning is the development of these knowledge, skills and dispositions.

6. **As a professional, the teacher** works with the expected outcomes in mind, co-working with other professionals to improve the quality of his/her work. Professionals are always prepared to do the best possible job in the circumstances, focusing on the unseen opportunities and not dwelling on the problems.

7. **As a mentor/mentee, the teacher** works closely with his/her students to develop their potential as human beings, as learners, as citizens, as future professionals, and as potential leaders; he/she knows the importance of lifelong learning for success in the 21st century. Therefore, the teacher devotes time to mentoring students and developing their thinking, knowledge, skills, dispositions, habits, so that they can apply themselves in 21st century society and have the opportunity to make a difference in this world.

8. **Teacher as creator** Regardless of the number of methodological materials created for teachers, the learning process is still based on the interaction between teacher and student. The creative teacher opens the classroom to the world to create opportunities for pupils to work with a variety of materials and activities. Creative teachers help students to discover not only the world but also themselves, trying to focus students' minds into discovering deeper truths, speculations, assumptions, retellings, theories and hypotheses, encouraging them to analyse but also to question what we call truths. Creative teachers are thus constantly looking for innovative ways to improve learning, new activities, encouraging group discussions and sub-projects that help to engage students in the learning process. Creative teachers use intuition to find and portray "teachable moments" in a lesson or activity. Creative teachers develop their skills to understand when it is an appropriate time to praise efforts, invite students to continue, let students or the group tackle challenges on their own, or step in and lend a helping hand. (UNICEF, 2018, pp.

5. SCHOOL AS PART OF THE COMMUNITY

= **support and motivation**
How does a community school work? How to use family and community partnerships? What are the opportunities and ways to involve parents, staff, community members, students in the daily life of the school?

Building and maintaining reciprocal family and community partnerships is a key aspect of creating an inclusive, caring and culturally responsive school environment. This chapter focuses on ways to effectively engage parents, staff, community members, and students in the daily life of the school, making the school an integral part of the larger community.

Community school
A community school is more than just a place where children learn. It is a vibrant community centre that connects education with the needs and interests of local people. Unlike traditional schools, community schools place a strong emphasis on collaboration with students, parents, teachers, as well as other community members such as local businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies.

The basic principles of a community school:
- **Collaboration:** all members of the community are involved in decision-making about the school's operations and in shaping the educational programme.
- **Openness:** the school is open to all members of the community and offers a wide range of activities for all ages.
- **Individual approach:** each pupil is unique and the school provides individual support and care.
- **Local connection: the** school is based on the needs and interests of the local community and uses local resources.

How does community manifest itself in school practice?
- **Parental involvement:** parents are active partners of the school. Parents can participate in teaching, organize events or help with administrative tasks.
- **Community projects: the** school works with local organisations on joint projects such as park clean-ups, cultural events and volunteering.
- **Lifelong learning:** the school offers educational programmes not only for children but also for adults.
- **The school as a social centre: the** school building is also used outside of school hours for various community events such as meetings, lectures and sports tournaments.

Benefits of a community school:
- **Improved student achievement:** students in community schools often have better educational outcomes because they feel more motivated and supported.
- **A stronger community: a** community school helps to strengthen relationships between people and creates a sense of belonging.
- **Innovative education:** community schools often experiment with new methods and approaches to teaching.
- **Better preparedness for life:** Students in community schools are better prepared for adult life because they learn to work together, solve problems and be active members of the community.
- **Inclusive environment:** working with families and the community helps create an inclusive environment where every student feels accepted and respected. This is particularly important for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or with different needs.

- **Preventing problems**: strong relationships between school, family and community can help prevent problems such as bullying, violence and abuse.

What are the specific benefits for each stakeholder?
- **Pupils:**
  - Better results at school
  - Higher self-confidence
  - Better social skills
  - Sense of belonging
- **Parents:**
  - Better understanding of the learning process
  - The opportunity to take an active part in the upbringing of your children
  - Relations with other parents
- **Teachers:**
  - More support when working with students
  - Opportunity to collaborate with experts from different fields
  - Enrichment of teaching
- **School:**
  - Positive image in society
  - Better cooperation with local organisations
  - Opportunity to obtain funding for various projects

Building partnerships between school, family and community is an investment in the future. Strong relationships bring many benefits to all parties involved and contribute to a better future for our children.

Community Engagement Strategies

1. **Programmes for parents and volunteers**
   - Creating programs that allow parents to be actively involved in school activities. For example, the 'Day for School' programme connects teachers with volunteer practitioners who can enliven lessons and provide inspiration for pupils (Day for School).
2. **Eco-school**
   - The Eco-School programme not only promotes environmental education but also involves the local community in the life of the school. Schools involved in the programme work on projects that have a positive impact on the surrounding environment and community, which helps to build the school's reputation and increases its attractiveness to parents and pupils (EcoSchool).
3. **Parental involvement in teaching**
   - Inviting parents to be directly involved in teaching or leading extra-curricular activities can strengthen relationships between school and families. For example, parents can lead clubs or participate in field trips and hands-on activities with pupils (EDUzín - Education).
4. **Community Action and Volunteering**
   - Organizing community events such as school garden work, festivals, fairs or concerts can bring families and community members into the school. These activities not only strengthen relationships but also encourage volunteering and active participation (A Really Healthy School).
5. **Use of the school garden**
   - The school garden can be a gathering place for parents, students and community members. Projects like the Edible School Garden involve the community in growing and tending the

garden, which encourages community collaboration and education about sustainable living (Truly Healthy Schools).

Recommended resources

- **Day for School**: denproskolu.cz
- **Eco-school**: ekoskola.cz
- **Let's Involve Everyone**: Practical Hints and Tips to Effectively Involve Parents and Community Members in School Activities (Zapojmevsechny.cz).
- **A really healthy school**: Methodologies and examples of good practice for public involvement in school projects (Really Healthy School).
- **Co-education: examples of good practice**: inspiring examples from practice that show effective implementation of inclusive education in schools. archive-nuv.npi.cz
- **Principles of inclusive education**: a detailed description of the principles of inclusive education and practical guidance for teachers on how to effectively involve all pupils in the educational process. inkluzivniskola.cz
- **Examples of good practice - MŠMT ČR**: Examples of non-traditional methods of work, school projects and ways of assessing pupils that support inclusive education. msmt.gov.cz
- **Wellbeing in schools**: practical advice and methodologies to promote mental health and wellbeing in schools. wellbeingveskole.cz
- **Teacher Leadership**: practical tips and methods for teacher empowerment and leadership development. edutopia.org
- **Principal Live**: an initiative to support the development of leadership skills of school principals through practical programmes and training. reditelnazivo.cz
- **Inclusive school**: Seminars, workshops and other resources to support inclusive education. inkluzivniskola.cz
- **"Start Together" programme**: a programme supporting an inclusive and collaborative learning environment. zacitspolu.cz

Examples of good practice

1) **Elementary school Trávník (Přerov)**:
   a) The school has significantly improved its reputation and engaged the community through the Eco-School programme, leading to positive changes in the perception of the school by parents and the public (Eco-School).

2) **Elementary school Církvice**:
   a) Parents lead a hiking club and other extracurricular activities, which fosters cooperation and a sense of belonging between the school and families (EDUzín - Education).

3) **Kutná Hora Forest Nursery**:
   a) It regularly organizes cider-making and brigades that attract current and former parents and children, creating a safe and cooperative atmosphere (EDUzín - Education).

6. A COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT THE SCHOOL

= education for all

How does inclusive education work? How to work with a heterogeneous group of pupils in the classroom? How to work with a pupil with special educational needs? What support do schools offer to pupils with special educational needs? What guidance services exist in schools

Inclusive education is key to ensuring that every pupil feels welcome at school and has equal opportunities to learn. This chapter aims to provide practical tools and strategies for creating a collaborative and inclusive learning environment that respects the individual needs of all learners. In the Czech Republic, in addition to the Education Act, the Decree on the Education of Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Gifted Pupils (No. 27/2016 Coll.) addresses the issue. This decree regulates in detail the conditions for the education of these pupils and specifies the support measures that schools must provide. These include, for example, teaching assistants, special aids and adaptations to the curriculum as part of the concept of school counselling centres.

Inclusive education is an approach that ensures that all pupils, regardless of ability, background or special educational needs, are educated together. This means that the school creates an environment where every pupil feels part of a community and has equal opportunities to succeed.

Key elements of inclusive education
- **Respect for Difference:** we recognise that every pupil is unique and has their own strengths and needs.
- **Collaboration:** we create an environment where students work together and learn from each other.
- **Adaptability:** we adapt our teaching to meet the different needs of our students.
- **Support:** we give pupils the support they need to succeed.

How to create a collaborative, inclusive learning environment

1. **Cooperation with teachers:**
    - Regular meetings where educators can share their experiences and good practices.
    - Collaborative planning of lessons taking into account the needs of all pupils.
    - Professional development focused on inclusive pedagogy.
2. **Cooperation with parents:**
    - Regular communication with parents about pupils' progress and needs.
    - Parental involvement in school activities.
    - Joint goal setting for the pupil.
3. **Collaboration with other professionals:**
    - Teamwork with school psychologists, special educators and other professionals.
    - Using their expertise to support pupils.
4. **Adaptation of teaching:**
    - Differentiation of teaching according to the individual needs of pupils.
    - Use of different teaching methods and materials.
    - Adapting the classroom environment to make it accessible to all students.
5. **Student Support:**
    - Providing individual support to pupils who need it.
    - Creating a safe and supportive classroom environment.
    - Developing pupils' social skills.
6. **Rating:**
    - Regular assessment of pupils' progress and teaching effectiveness.

o   Adjusting teaching based on assessment results.

Creating a collaborative, inclusive learning environment is a process that requires patience and cooperation from all stakeholders. Through this approach, we can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed and develop.

At the heart of an inclusive and collaborative school environment are principles and practices that promote equal access to education, respect for diversity, collaboration and active involvement of all members of the school community. Here are the key elements of such an environment:

- **Equal access to education**

Every pupil has the right to a quality education regardless of their individual needs, abilities or disadvantages. Schools must ensure that all pupils have access to the necessary supports and resources to enable them to participate fully in the learning process.

- **Differentiated teaching**

Adapting teaching methods and materials to the individual needs of pupils is the basis of inclusive education. Teachers should use a variety of teaching strategies that take into account the different learning styles and abilities of pupils. Differentiated teaching includes, for example, group work, individual tasks, projects and other activities.

- **Support for cooperation**

Collaboration between teachers, pupils, parents and the wider community is key to successful inclusive education. Schools should encourage open communication and cooperation at all levels, for example through regular meetings, workshops and joint projects.

- **A safe and supportive environment**

An inclusive school must create a safe and supportive environment where all students feel respected and accepted. This includes preventing bullying, promoting positive relationships and developing pupils' social and emotional skills.

- **Teacher professional development**

Regular professional development for teachers focused on inclusive education is essential to ensure effective support for all pupils. Schools should provide training and resources to help teachers develop their skills in working with diverse groups of learners.

- **Pupil participation and involvement**

Active involvement of students in decision-making processes and learning activities promotes their responsibility and commitment. Pupils should have the opportunity to participate in the development of school rules, the planning of activities and the evaluation of their work.

Examples of good practice in creating an inclusive environment

1. Project "Start Together"

The "Start Together" project focuses on inclusive education through a community approach and collaboration. Pupils meet in a morning circle to share their feelings and plans for the day. This approach promotes communication, empathy and cooperation between pupils. In addition, pupils engage in project-based learning that is differentiated according to their individual needs and interests.

Activities:
- Morning circle
- Project teaching
- Differentiated tasks and activities according to the individual needs of pupils
- Parental involvement in school activities and projects

Source: Start Together (Inclusion UPOL)

2. Labyrinth School in Brno

Labyrinth School in Brno is an example of a school that has successfully implemented an inclusive and collaborative learning environment. The school uses assistive technology and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to support pupils with special needs. Collaboration between teachers, school psychologists and special educators is key to identifying and addressing the needs of pupils.

Activities:
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Assistive technology to support learners
- Regular meetings of teachers and education experts
- Inclusion workshops and training for teachers

Source:Labyrinth School (Inclusive School)

3. Erasmus+ Project "Inclusive Schools"

This international project aims to share best practice between schools from different countries. The schools involved in the project share strategies and activities that promote inclusive education. The project includes teacher and student exchanges, joint workshops and seminars.

Activities:
- Teacher and student exchanges
- Joint workshops and seminars
- Sharing best practices and strategies between schools
- Creating materials and resources for inclusive teaching

Source:Erasmus+

4. School and Community: promoting mutual learning

As part of this initiative, schools actively work with local communities, organising joint events and projects that involve parents, local organisations and other community members. This approach strengthens school-community relations and promotes an inclusive environment.

Activities:
- Joint community events and projects
- Involving parents and community members in school life
- Partnerships with local organisations and institutions
- Creating community gardens and other shared spaces

Source: Eduzměna Region (MSMT CR)

Recommended resources
- **Inclusive school**: Resources and materials to support inclusive education. inkluzivniskola.cz
- **Eduin**: Articles and studies on inclusive education and students' rights. eduin.cz
- **Care without barriers**: information on legislation and rights of children with special educational needs. pece-bez-prekazek.cz
- **Situation report on inclusive education**: documents and reports on inclusive education in the Czech Republic. msmt.gov.cz

Other sources:

https://zapojmevsechny.cz/clanek/36-poradenske-sluzby-a-skolni-poradenske-pracoviste

Good SPP practice: https://zapojmevsechny.cz/clanek/skolni-poradenske-pracoviste-pod-lupou-dobra-praxe-v-zakladni-skole-v-milovicich

7. MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

= wellbeing
Do the pupils enjoy coming to your school? How do teachers perceive the school atmosphere? Do you have a happy and stable teaching staff? Is your school a safe environment for students, teachers for you, the principal?

Educational environments can be very challenging and stressful, both for school leaders and for teachers and other staff. Maintaining enthusiasm and motivation, as well as the ability to inspire others, are key to successful school leadership. In this section we will attempt to look at principles and recommendations that can help improve the mental health and wellbeing of school staff.
Wellbeing at school

Wellbeing in education is considered the key to the harmonious development of children. Wellbeing, figuratively speaking, is an interrelated concept that concerns both pupils and teachers. Both parties are an integral part of the school environment and their mutual satisfaction and well-being have a major impact on the overall school climate. In general terms, wellbeing is a state in which we can develop our full physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual potential in a supportive and stimulating environment and live a full and happy life with others.

1. In the physical domain, it is related to health and safety and is influenced by physical activity, healthy eating, sleeping patterns and making conscious choices about healthy lifestyle and environment.
2. In the social domain, it is related to empathy, sense of belonging, establishing and maintaining relationships and cooperation with others, and communication skills.
3. In the spiritual realm, it is related to knowing and fulfilling the meaning of our existence, values and ethical principles.
4. In the emotional domain, it is related to positive self-perception, emotion recognition and self-regulation. It is reflected in the ability to trust oneself and others and in resilience to cope with adverse situations.
5. In the cognitive domain, it is related to critical thinking skills, problem solving and creativity. It is reflected in the way information is processed, judgements are made and also in the motivation and persistence to successfully achieve set goals

Source: wellbeingveskole.cz

Promoting wellbeing at school
To promote wellbeing in education, the introduction of measures and principles focusing on the following areas helps:
Culture and environment
- The school should have wellbeing included in its vision as a key element. This vision is then shared by the whole school community, which recognises the positive relationship between pupils' wellbeing and their educational outcomes.
- Opportunities to promote wellbeing are openly discussed in the school and are related to both pupils and staff.
- The school creates an environment in which staff and pupils show respect for individual differences and adopt a positive approach to the expected behaviour of pupils.
- School staff are supported in professional development focused on wellbeing (their own and pupils') and creating a positive school climate.

- The outdoor and indoor areas of the school are pleasant and safe. They allow for social interaction between pupils, physical activities and relaxation. Pupils and their parents are involved in their improvement.
- The school promotes healthy eating.
- The school uses a single digital platform for teaching, communication and collaboration.
- The school has a system in place for the early identification of individuals whose wellbeing is at risk and has facilities to support the education of pupils with special educational needs.

Learning
- The basic principle applied by all teachers is the expectation of success from every student.
- Teachers in the school use teaching methods and forms that promote cooperation and active involvement of pupils.
- It is evident that pupils experience the joy of learning, which is linked to a sense of achievement and individual progress.
- Formative assessment is widely used in the school to support the achievement of educational goals and the development of pupils' self-esteem.
- Teachers apply differentiation and individualization in education, taking into account the needs of individual pupils, including those with special educational needs.
- They are supported by management in their professional development in this area and in putting the skills they have acquired into practice.
- Digital technologies available to all pupils are used appropriately to personalise (individualise) learning.
- The achievement of educational objectives in this area is supported by proven methodologies and programmes using active learning methods.
- Pupils have ample opportunities and support in the classroom to develop competences for looking after their own wellbeing and mental health.
- Pupils show motivation to learn and a positive and responsible attitude to school work and homework.
- The school recognises a wide range of pupil achievement, seeking to cover as wide a spectrum of pupils' talents and strengths as possible.
- Pupils are thus systematically supported in planning and managing their own career paths, especially in the transition to higher education.
- Teachers are well supported by the school counselling centre in providing support measures for their pupils.

Partnership and cooperation
- Respectful relationships and mutual cooperation are promoted in the school through a wide range of agreed formal and informal means.
- The school management recognises the importance of the wellbeing of its staff and supports it through a wide range of specific measures.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan and evaluate pupils' learning together.
- The school purposefully promotes the involvement of parents of pupils in planning the development of the school and encourages parental participation in the school by appropriate means.
- The school builds and maintains collaborations with important partners and service providers.
- The school management supports the involvement of its staff in professional networks.
- The school establishes and maintains links with educational leaders and other schools to share good practice.
- Support for new teachers is implemented in the school.

- The school management provides individualised support to staff in times of increased workload or personal crisis.

Citation and source: wellbeingveskole.cz ([Good practice indicators and examples of measures - wellbeingveskole.cz](#))

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education Compendium of Good Practice in Ireland

The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project

2024

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education:
Compendium of Good Practice in Ireland

Authors: Michael Gallagher and Ruth Randles

Photo: Pixabay

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education: Compendium of Good Practice in Ireland is the outcome of The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project supported by the Erasmus+ programme.

CONTENT

CHAPTER 1 – VISION, PLAN AND STRATEGY

At St. Nicholas' National school, also known as Claddagh National School, we pride ourselves on our friendly, open community of learning where children of all backgrounds and abilities can learn and play together in happiness and safety. The school is a mainstream primary school in Galway City. We value inclusivity - of all backgrounds and abilities - and strive to create a setting that enables all pupils' sense of belonging in a community that values their identity, individuality and unique attributes. Our school is entitled to DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Urban Band I status, meaning it is amongst the schools in Ireland with the highest levels of disadvantage.

DEIS, the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, was launched in 2005 and remains the Department of Education's policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children from disadvantaged communities. DEIS provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and an integrated School Support Programme (SSP).

Our school presently has 270 students, 48% of whom are from non-Irish backgrounds. Many students arrive throughout the school year with very limited English language skills. This diversity of ethnicity and language has presented an exciting range of new opportunities for our students and staff, laying a pathway towards cultivating a truly global worldview for us.

Our school also was one of the first in Galway to incorporate a specialised class for children who are on the Autistic Spectrum. At present, we have four dedicated classes for 23 children on the Autistic Spectrum. These students are included in all school activities and celebrations and many integrate for parts of the day into the mainstream class setting, with the ultimate aim of integrating children into mainstream classes full-time, if appropriate for their needs and abilities. We also work with parents, outside agencies and secondary schools to prioritise and ensure successful transitioning to secondary school for these children. A novel approach we practice in this area is reverse integration, whereby children from the mainstream classes go to ASD-specific classes for activities or games, thus further encouraging integration and social-skill development for all children involved.

We have 71 students in the mainstream with diagnosed low-incidence special needs. Of these, nine have a diagnosis of ASD. Depending on their specific diagnoses and individual needs, these children receive a certain amount of in-class or individual support and may have access to a special needs assistant. In recent years, the school has lost a number of special needs assistants, and the pressures and challenges involved in catering for the needs of these children in the mainstream have increased.

Claddagh National School has a well-deserved reputation for promoting interculturalism, and some of our staff has advised at governmental level regarding the integration of minority students, as well as working with children who reside on a long-term basis in Direct Provision for Asylum Seekers. Our project coordinator has spoken several times at the Oireachtas on the issues of Integration of Migration Children and has represented Ireland at EU conferences on this subject.

Aside from our school's ethnic diversity and strong ethos of inclusivity, we operate within the context of a range of other factors that influence the planning and implementation of teaching and learning. Being a DEIS-designated school, many of our children experience a home environment of social, educational and economic disadvantage.

A relatively large number come from backgrounds with a historically high incidence of early school-leaving, and we work to identify children at risk. In an effort to combat this, our school participates in the DEIS School Completion Programme (SCP), and implements a number of specific measures designed to encourage school retention through the teenage years, e.g: a free homework club; a programme of mindful movement; play, art and music therapy; and a variety of sports programmes. We have participated in a mentoring and homework initiative with our local university whereby the university students worked after school with children who had been identified for the SCP. Not only are children supported in their schoolwork, but they also get to know people who have successfully completed secondary school and gone on to third level education.

Committed to innovating, as well as learning and implementing best practice in all areas, our school continues to embrace the many challenges brought about by the diversity of backgrounds and abilities in our student body, turning them to the advantage of the entire school community. In doing so, we aim to sustain and build upon the open, humane and tolerant culture of which our school is rightly proud.

As an Urban DEIS Band 1 School we actively promote inclusion of all students and reduction of early school leaving. We are always looking for new and successful ways of promoting a positive and affirming school community. We have strong project management skills and experience in the area of European projects and the ability to see projects through from the planning stages through to the evaluation and final report submission phase.

As mentioned above, our school accepts refugees/migrants/asylum-seekers on a rolling enrolment basis from a nearby Direct Provision centre (The Eglinton Hotel). These children, because of their backgrounds and family circumstances, often require intensive levels of English language support. Unfortunately their living conditions often give rise to depression, tension and a variety of psychological needs. We endeavour to involve external psychological services and arrange play, art and music therapy to support these students.

A number of our teachers have received training in a Health Service Executive/Dept. of Education programme called 'Zippy's Friends'. This is a new positive mental health programme aimed at 5-7 year-olds of all abilities. It teaches skills to cope with problems that may occur in adolescence and adulthood. We are currently delivering weekly lessons to teach them how to cope with everyday difficulties, to identify and talk about their feelings and to explore ways of dealing with them.

The school has also been awarded the Blue Star Programme award. The Blue Star Programme (http://www.bluestarprogramme.ie/) provides classroom activities that help foster better understanding and knowledge of Europe and how it affects the lives of Irish citizens.

Every second year we host a One World Week and International Day that is well-attended by parents, community members and local dignitaries. It celebrates our unique Claddagh heritage while recognising the beautiful diversity and changing nature of our school culture. Our school also engaged in a successful pilot project opening Galway's first Family School to welcome the Polish Community.

As a school we are striving to become as digitally literate as possible. One of our staff and project team members has wide-ranging expertise in this area and gives courses online and face to face to other teachers to enhance their knowledge and IT skills in the classroom. The ASD classes, along with the mainstream classes, use IT daily to help the students communicate and learn more efficiently. The school has acquired new iPads and upgraded to a faster broadband service which we hope will further support a

digitally friendly school environment. Another one of our project team members has been instrumental in sourcing high quality IT resources that are appropriate for children on the autistic spectrum.

Our school community benefits greatly from having a full-time Home School Community Liaison coordinator. She works constantly to reinforce and build further partnership between pupils, teachers, parents and local community organisations to improve the educational welfare of the children in our school.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) are an integral part of our school. A very positive ethos of active participation and interaction between teachers, students, parents and SNAS is strongly encouraged, which, in turn, benefits the student.

As a school Principal, the most fundamental duty is to lead learning and teaching. Continuous professional development of our teaching staff is the most effective tool in the promotion and implementation of current best practice in all subject areas. Our principal works closely with school staff, Board of Management, School Completion Programme (SCP), TUSLA (Child and Family agency) and our local management committee. Modelling participation in continuous professional development for all staff is also a very important part of the role.

Aside from our school's ethnic diversity and strong ethos of inclusivity, we operate within the context of a range of other factors that influence the planning and implementation of teaching and learning. Being a DEIS-designated school, many of our children experience a home environment of social, educational and economic disadvantage.

A relatively large number come from backgrounds with a historically high incidence of early school-leaving, and we work to identify children at risk. In an effort to combat this, our school participates in the DEIS School Completion Programme (SCP), and implements a number of specific measures designed to encourage school retention through the teenage years, e.g: a free homework club; a programme of mindful movement; play, art and music therapy; and a variety of sports programmes. We have participated in a mentoring and homework initiative with our local university whereby the university students worked after school with children who had been identified for the SCP. Not only are children supported in their schoolwork, but they also get to know people who have successfully completed secondary school and gone on to third level education.

Our school has one teacher with a special post in early intervention in the areas of mathematics education who implements the "Maths Recovery Programme" and a team of teachers who work in a team teaching capacity to implement the Ready Set Go Maths Programme in the lower end of the school.

Our school principal, Michael Gallagher, is a member of The Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN). He is also an active member of The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) which is a professional development organisation for leaders in Irish School communities. We maintain close links with Galway Education Centre and we have cooperated with them on many Erasmus+ projects in recent years. We would like to continue this relationship in the upcoming project. We are members of a schools completion project on the westside of Galway city, this Local Management Committee targets early school leavers in two second level schools and in four primary schools, it is known as Galway Westside School Completion Project (SCP). The project is government funded.

The in-school management team is made up of four AP1 teachers (Assistant Principal first level) and eight AP2 (Assistant Principal level 2) teachers. We would like to focus on the training activities of equal opportunities and effective leadership. We have a very effective school leadership team.

Free image on Pixabay

CHAPTER 2 – USING DATA AND RESOURCES FOR DECISION MAKING

Introduction

At Claddagh School, we recognize the significance of utilising data and resources effectively for decision-making processes. Our approach involves various methods to collect data from diverse stakeholders within our school community, including pupils, parents, teachers, and the Board of Management. This document elaborates on our methodology for data collection, analysis, and the pivotal role of participation in The Well Project in enhancing our data utilisation.

Data Collection Methods- employed during the Well Project

Surveys

We employ Google Forms to conduct surveys among our pupils, parents, teachers, and the Board of Management. These surveys serve as valuable tools for gathering insights and feedback on various aspects of school life, curriculum implementation, and community engagement.

SCOT Analysis

The Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats (SCOT) analysis techniques are integral to our strategy. This approach involves engaging with staff and the Board of Management to assess our current position, identify areas for improvement, and strategise around key initiatives such as School Self Evaluation (SSE) and curriculum implementation.

Special Interest Groups

We actively engage with special interest groups within the school, such as the Green School Committee, Nurture Groups, and Parents' Association. Through these interactions, we collect data on specific areas of focus, such as sustainability, student well-being, and parental involvement.

The Well Project

Participation in The Well Project has been immensely beneficial to our data collection and utilisation efforts. Through this project, we engage in (LTA) sessions to enhance teacher skills and disseminate experiences at various levels within the school community. This includes participation in training programs at the University of Galway, Erasmus training at University College Dublin, and sharing insights at staff meetings and school management levels.

Key Areas of Focus

Our data collection efforts are rooted in addressing key areas essential for a DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) school:

1. **Attendance**: Recognizing the fundamental importance of attendance to student progress and attainment.

2. **Retention**: Implementing strategies to improve student retention rates.
3. **Transitions**: Supporting students during transition periods within the school.
4. **Attainment**: Monitoring and enhancing student academic achievement.
5. **Literacy**: Promoting literacy skills development across all grade levels.
6. **Numeracy**: Fostering numeracy skills through targeted interventions and curriculum enhancements.
7. **Partnership with Parents and Others**: Collaborating with parents, community members, and external stakeholders to support student learning and well-being.

Data Analysis and Policy Direction

All data collected is meticulously collated and analysed before being presented to staff, management, and parent bodies. This analysis informs our policy direction and strategic planning efforts. For example, based on the data collected, our focus within the Mathematics Curriculum has shifted towards implementing the "Maths Talk Strategy" to improve numeracy skills across the school community.

Conclusion

At Claddagh School, our commitment to data-driven decision-making is strengthened by our participation in The Well Project. By leveraging various data collection methods and engaging with stakeholders, we continuously strive to improve our practices and ensure the success of all our students. We have upskilled our staff and school management through meaningful engagement in The Well Project.

3. EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

In Ireland, the emphasis on empowering teachers and fostering leadership is pivotal in creating a nurturing and effective educational environment. Teachers play a foundational role in shaping not only the knowledge and skills of their students but also their values, resilience, and capacity to contribute positively to society. Leadership development among teachers enables them to advocate for their students, embrace innovative teaching methods, and engage meaningfully in school improvement. This approach enriches the learning experience, fostering well-rounded adults who are ready to contribute to the world around them.

In Ireland, several programs and initiatives focus on empowering teachers and developing leadership skills within the educational system. Here are some of the key approaches and programs:

1. Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST): The PDST provides ongoing training and professional development in various areas, from curriculum support to leadership skills. PDST's courses help teachers stay current on best practices and emerging educational trends, preparing them to be leaders in their schools.

2. Droichead Program: This program supports newly qualified teachers through mentorship and professional guidance. It emphasizes continuous learning and growth, fostering a supportive environment that helps new teachers build confidence and leadership skills.

3. Centre for School Leadership (CSL): CSL is a joint initiative between the Department of Education, the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD). It provides structured professional learning opportunities and mentorship programs for school leaders and teachers aspiring to leadership roles.

4. Instructional Leadership Programme (ILP): This initiative trains teachers and school leaders in Ireland to improve teaching and learning practices. By focusing on instructional leadership, teachers gain the skills to enhance their classroom methods, fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

5. Middle Leadership Roles: Schools in Ireland encourage teachers to take on middle leadership roles, such as department heads or coordinators for specific subjects. These roles allow teachers to develop their leadership potential, drive school initiatives, and contribute to decision-making processes, often acting as a bridge between school management and teaching staff.

6. Postgraduate Programs in Educational Leadership: Many Irish universities offer postgraduate programs, such as a Master's in Educational Leadership, for teachers who want to deepen their understanding of leadership in education. These programs cover topics like organizational management, policy, and innovative teaching methods, equipping teachers to take on greater leadership responsibilities.

LIFT (Leading Ireland's Future Together) is an innovative national initiative in Ireland designed to develop leadership skills across society, including within the education sector. Founded in 2018, LIFT is a nonprofit organisation with a mission to build a culture of strong leadership by encouraging individuals to embrace core leadership values and behaviours.

LIFT's Core Values and Approach
It focuses on eight core leadership values:

1. Listening – Improving communication and fostering mutual understanding.

2. Positive Attitude – Maintaining optimism and inspiring those around you.

3. Competence – Encouraging expertise, accountability, and continuous improvement.

4. Determination – Building resilience and perseverance.

5. Respect – Cultivating a culture of mutual respect and support.

6. Empathy and Understanding – Developing emotional intelligence and relational skills.

7. Honesty and Integrity – Upholding ethical standards and authenticity.

8. Accountability – Encouraging personal and collective responsibility.

LIFT uses a unique "Roundtable Process" to integrate these values into participants' daily lives. This involves small groups of participants who meet regularly to discuss each value, reflect on how it applies to them, and set personal goals to live that value. The program emphasizes peer learning and personal accountability, fostering a supportive environment for leadership growth.

LIFT in Education

LIFT has been embraced within the Irish educational sector as a means to support both teachers and students in developing leadership skills. Some of the ways LIFT impacts the education sector include:

1. Training for Teachers and Principals: LIFT offers specific programs for educators, helping them build leadership skills that benefit their personal and professional lives. These programs equip teachers with values-based leadership skills, which they can then bring to the classroom and school community.

2. Empowering Student Leaders: Many schools now incorporate LIFT's roundtable sessions as part of student leadership programs, where students engage in discussions around the eight core values. This helps students develop essential life skills, such as accountability, empathy, and resilience.

3. School-Wide Culture Shift: By embedding LIFT's values throughout the school, schools can foster a more positive and inclusive culture. Teachers, students, and staff work together to live these values, creating a cohesive environment where everyone is encouraged to be their best.

4. Mentorship and Peer Learning: LIFT's model also encourages mentorship and peer-to-peer learning, where teachers and students alike can learn from each other's experiences, insights, and feedback. This collaborative approach aligns well with the emphasis on community and collaboration within Irish schools.

5. Ongoing Impact and Evaluation: LIFT's impact is continually assessed through feedback from participants and schools. Schools involved in LIFT report higher levels of engagement, improved school culture, and an increased sense of responsibility and well-being among students and staff alike.

Broader Community Impact

Beyond individual schools, LIFT's leadership training helps cultivate a nationwide culture of empathy, accountability, and respect. LIFT's presence in educational settings supports Ireland's broader goals of cultivating future leaders who are not only competent but also ethically and socially aware.

How to Get Involved

Schools or teachers interested in integrating LIFT can access training programs, workshops, and LIFT facilitators who can guide them through the roundtable process. Many Irish educators have taken the initiative to become certified LIFT facilitators, bringing these values directly to their schools and becoming role models of values-based leadership.

In summary, LIFT's approach provides a structured, community-centred way of instilling leadership values at all levels of the educational system. This not only helps teachers and students develop as leaders but also fosters a strong, values-driven community within Irish schools.

4. SCHOOL AS PART OF THE COMMUNITY

A school thrives as part of a broader community, and this partnership is vital for its development and success. Embracing this relationship with local communities can enhance educational experiences, foster community spirit, and promote mutual support. Claddagh national school has engaged in many projects which highlight the importance of this unique relationship.

- **Guest Speakers**: Our local historians and King of the Claddagh, Michael Lynskey has frequented our school on many occasions. He enjoys sharing his experiences and knowledge with students.
- **Open Days**: We host various events where families and community members can visit the school, participate in activities, and engage with teachers and students.
- **Cultural Celebrations**: We especially love to organise events that celebrate local traditions, music, and arts, encouraging community participation. Drumadore, a local drumming group, recently delivered a two-day workshop for every class level. The positive impact on teachers and students for overall wellbeing was apparent. We have a melting pot of nationalities and cultures that love to engage and learn from each other.

- **Drama group**: Children from 3rd and 4th classes were enthralled by the expertise of local drama company, Branar. They performed an exciting drama in their classroom. Making partnerships and connections with our community is centre to The WELL Project. This connection is one to continue for many years.

- **Volunteering Opportunities**: We encourage parents and community members to volunteer in classrooms, sports, or after-school programs.
- **Parent Workshops**: Being part of a DEIS school, we have a designated Home School Liaison Officer who communicates with parents and offers workshops on parenting, health, and education topics, fostering a supportive community network.
- **School Gardens**: We have begun to develop our school garden that involves students in growing food, promoting sustainability, and providing fresh produce to the community.
- **Nature Trails/ Forest Schools**: Currently, our third classes engage in Forest Schools where they develop outdoor learning spaces and utilise local parks and natural areas for educational activities.

Being part of the community is crucial for our school for several reasons:

1. Holistic Development

- **Social Skills**: Interaction with the community helps children develop essential social skills, such as communication, teamwork, and empathy.
- **Emotional Well-being**: A sense of belonging fosters emotional security and boosts self-esteem among students.

2. Cultural Awareness

- **Local Identity**: Engaging with local history and culture helps students develop a strong sense of identity and pride in their heritage.
- **Diversity Appreciation**: Exposure to different community perspectives encourages understanding and respect for diversity.

3. Real-World Learning

- **Practical Applications**: Community involvement provides hands-on learning experiences that connect classroom knowledge to real-world situations.
- **Skill Development**: Students can acquire practical skills through community projects and collaborations, preparing them for future challenges.

4. Support Systems

- **Resource Sharing**: Partnerships with local organizations can provide additional resources and support for both students and families.
- **Safety Nets**: A strong community network can offer assistance to families in need, creating a safety net for vulnerable students.

5. Increased Engagement

- **Parental Involvement**: When schools engage with the community, it encourages parents to become more involved in their children's education, fostering a collaborative environment.
- **Motivation**: Students often feel more motivated when they see their learning connected to their community and when their efforts have a tangible impact.

6. Building Lifelong Relationships

- **Networking Opportunities**: Community engagement allows students to build relationships with local leaders, mentors, and professionals, enriching their future opportunities.
- **Continuity**: Strong ties between schools and communities can lead to ongoing support as students progress through their education.

7. Promoting Civic Responsibility

- **Active Citizenship**: Involvement in community initiatives instils a sense of responsibility and encourages students to become active, engaged citizens.
- **Leadership Development**: Students can develop leadership skills through participation in community projects and initiatives.

Conclusion

Claddagh National School prides itself as a community school that cherishes and thrives on its involvement with our locality. By recognizing and nurturing this relationship, schools can create a more enriching, supportive, and effective educational environment for all students. The collective effort of educators, families, and community members is essential for fostering growth and development in education.

5. CREATING COLLABORATION, INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Creating collaborative and inclusive learning environments in schools is vital for numerous reasons. It is essential for fostering a positive educational experience. Here are several key reasons highlighting their importance:

1. Diverse Perspectives

- Enhanced Learning: Collaborative environments bring together diverse viewpoints, enriching discussions and fostering critical thinking. Students learn to appreciate different perspectives and ideas.
- Cultural Awareness: Inclusive practices help students understand and respect cultural differences, promoting empathy and global citizenship.

2. Social Skills Development

- Communication: Working in teams helps students develop strong communication skills, learning to articulate their thoughts and listen actively to others.
- Conflict Resolution: Collaborative settings provide opportunities for students to navigate disagreements and find solutions together, building resilience and problem-solving skills.

3. Increased Engagement

- Active Participation: Inclusive learning environments encourage all students to participate, leading to higher engagement and motivation. When students feel valued, they are more likely to contribute.
- Ownership of Learning: Collaborative learning fosters a sense of ownership over the educational process, encouraging students to take initiative and responsibility for their learning.

4. Support for Individual Needs

- Personalized Learning: Inclusivity allows educators to tailor instruction to meet diverse learning needs, ensuring that every student can access the curriculum and succeed.
- Peer Support: Collaborative learning often involves peer mentoring, where students support each other's learning, creating a network of assistance and encouragement.

5. Building a Positive Classroom Culture

- Sense of Belonging: An inclusive environment helps all students feel welcome and accepted, promoting a strong sense of belonging and community within the classroom.
- Reduced Bullying: By fostering respect and understanding among students, inclusive practices can help reduce instances of bullying and exclusion.

Conclusion

Creating collaborative and inclusive learning environments not only enhances educational outcomes but also fosters essential life skills. By valuing diversity and promoting teamwork, schools prepare students to thrive in an interconnected world, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to succeed. It is essential for nurturing well-rounded, socially responsible individuals. These practices promote educational equity, enhance student engagement, and prepare children to thrive in a diverse and interconnected society. By valuing inclusivity and collaboration, schools can cultivate an atmosphere where every student can succeed and contribute positively to their communities.

Over the past two years, Claddagh national school has been involved in a pilot programme entitled Ability Awareness Programme. It highlights the importance of demystifying childhood onset disabilities for children with AEN (Additional Educational Needs). It has been delivered to 3rd and 4th class groups over a six week period.

Content of Ability Awareness Programme for School-Aged Children

- Lesson 1: The many ways we MOVE
  (Understanding and adapting to physical disabilities)

- Lesson 2: The many ways we EXPERIENCE the world
  (Understanding and adapting to sensory processing difficulties)

- Lesson 3: The many ways we COMMUNICATE
  (Understanding and adapting to speech and language difficulties)

- Lesson 4: The many ways we BEHAVE
  (Understanding and adapting to behavioural difficulties)

- Lesson 5: The many ways we LEARN
  (Understanding and adapting to specific learning difficulties)

- Lesson 6: The many ways our body WORKS
  (Understanding and adapting to medical challenges)

The programme aims to:

- Developing Empathy from a Young Age to aid understanding differences: Early exposure helps children appreciate and respect diverse abilities.
- Compassionate Actions: Empathy nurtures supportive behaviours and kindness among peers.
- Enhancing Social Skills and Positive Interactions: Encourages inclusive play and collaboration.
- Conflict Resolution: Teaches constructive ways to handle disagreements and understand different perspectives.
- Building a Supportive Community and Inclusive Environment: Fosters a sense of belonging for all students.
- Parental Involvement: Engages parents in promoting diversity and inclusion at home and in the community.

Long-Term Benefits of Early Implementation:

- Academic and Emotional Growth
- Holistic Development: Balances cognitive learning with emotional and social growth.
- Self-Esteem: Boosts confidence by creating a supportive and understanding school environment.
- Lifelong Skills:
- Critical Thinking: Solution-based approaches to challenges encourage innovative thinking.
- Resilience and Adaptability: Prepares children to face future societal and personal challenges with confidence.
- Preparing for a Diverse World
- Global Citizenship: Early lessons in empathy and inclusion equip students to thrive in a diverse, globalised society. At Claddagh we like to view our school community through a global lens.
- Leadership: Empathetic children often grow into leaders who value and promote diversity and inclusion.

This format should effectively convey the importance and long-term benefits of the Ability

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Awareness Programme for school-aged children, emphasising the need for early implementation.

Conclusion

Creating collaborative and inclusive learning environments not only enhances educational outcomes but also fosters essential life skills. By valuing diversity and promoting teamwork, schools prepare students to thrive in an interconnected world, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to succeed. It is essential for nurturing well-rounded, socially responsible individuals. These practices promote educational equity, enhance student engagement, and prepare children to thrive in a diverse and interconnected society. By valuing inclusivity and collaboration, schools can cultivate an atmosphere where every student can succeed and contribute positively to their communities.

6. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SELF CARE TECHNIQUES

Stress is a natural response to challenges or pressures often characterized by feelings of anxiety, tension, and overwhelm. For teachers, stress can arise from various sources, including workload, student behaviour, administrative demands, and the emotional needs of students. Managing stress effectively is essential for maintaining well-being and ensuring a positive learning environment. Here are some strategies teachers can use to manage stress:

1. Self-Care

- **Physical Health**: Prioritise regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep. Physical well-being can significantly impact your ability to cope with stress.
- **Mindfulness Practices**: Engage in mindfulness or relaxation techniques, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga. These practices can help reduce anxiety and improve focus. As part of staff wellbeing, yoga classes are delivered by an experienced member of staff each month, in our school hall. Yoga mats are provided

2. Time Management

- **Prioritise Tasks**: Identify essential tasks and prioritize them. Break down larger projects into manageable steps to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- **Set Boundaries**: Establish clear boundaries between work and personal time. Designate specific hours for school-related tasks and stick to them.

3. Seek Support

- **Collaborate with Colleagues**: Build a support network with fellow teachers. Sharing experiences and strategies can provide encouragement and practical solutions. In our school, staff meetings are timetabled to allow collaboration between same class teachers and special education teachers.
- **Professional Development**: Attend workshops or training sessions focused on stress management and resilience-building techniques.

4. Foster Positive Relationships

- **Open Communication**: Maintain open lines of communication with students, parents, and colleagues. Addressing concerns early can prevent stress from escalating.
- **Build a Supportive Classroom Environment**: Encourage a sense of community in the classroom. Positive relationships with students can reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction.

5. Engage in Professional Reflection

- **Reflective Practice**: Regularly reflect on your teaching practices and experiences. Identify stressors and think about strategies to address them.
- **Celebrate Successes**: Acknowledge and celebrate your achievements, no matter how small. Recognising your successes can boost morale and motivation.

6. Develop Coping Strategies

- **Identify Triggers**: Recognize what specifically triggers your stress. Understanding your stressors can help you develop targeted coping strategies.
- **Practice Problem-Solving**: Focus on solutions rather than dwelling on problems. When faced with challenges, brainstorm potential solutions and take proactive steps.

7. Limit External Stressors

- **Media Consumption**: Be mindful of the media you consume, especially news that can increase anxiety. Limit exposure to stressful content when possible.
- **Personal Life Balance**: Engage in hobbies and activities outside of school that bring you joy and relaxation.

8. Professional Help

- **Counselling or Therapy**: If stress becomes overwhelming, consider seeking professional help. A counsellor or therapist can provide strategies to cope with stress more effectively.
- Psychologist Shane Martin presented an innovative and engaging seminar to all staff ' Your Precious Life' - How to Live it Well (Health and Happiness). Leadership wellness is a paramount objective of The WELL Project. This seminar supports the area of stress management strategies and self-care techniques greatly.

Conclusion

Managing stress is crucial for teachers to maintain their well-being and effectiveness in the classroom. By implementing self-care strategies, fostering supportive relationships, and developing coping mechanisms, teachers can create a more balanced and fulfilling professional life. Prioritising mental health not only benefits educators but also positively impacts their students and the overall learning environment.
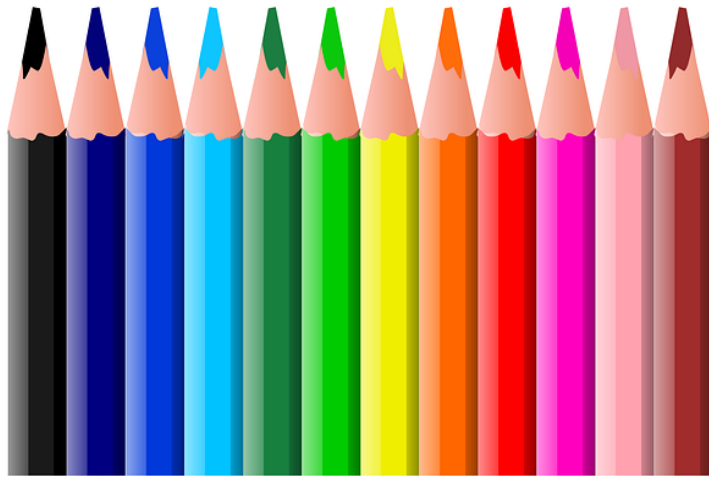
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Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education Compendium of Good Practice in Portugal

The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project

2024

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education:
Compendium of Good Practice in Portugal

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Photo: Uni Ateneu

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education: Compendium of Good Practice in Croatia is the outcome of The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project supported by the Erasmus+ programme.

FOREWORD

In an era where educational leadership faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities, the need for practical, evidence-based guidance has never been more crucial. This Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education emerges from a collaborative effort among school leaders, educators, and experts across partner countries, united in the Erasmus+ project titled Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning.

Our partnership's primary objective has been to empower school leaders with the tools and strategies needed to cultivate welcoming, collaborative school climates that benefit all stakeholders. This methodology serves as a bridge between aspirational leadership goals and their practical implementation in the day-to-day running of schools.

The content has been structured to address the most pressing challenges faced by modern educational leaders. Whether you're seeking guidance on strategic planning, looking to enhance your data-driven decision-making capabilities, or working to build stronger community relationships, you'll find practical, tested solutions within these pages. The inclusion of stress management strategies and self-care techniques acknowledges that effective leadership begins with personal well-being.

This methodology is not meant to be a rigid framework but rather a living document that can be adapted to various educational contexts and cultures. It represents our collective commitment to continuous improvement in educational leadership and our shared vision of schools as dynamic, inclusive communities of learning.

As you explore this resource, we encourage you to approach it with both an open mind and a critical eye. Adapt these strategies to your unique context, share your experiences with colleagues, and continue to contribute to the evolving dialogue on educational leadership. Remember, effective leadership is not about having all the answers but about asking the right questions and fostering an environment where everyone can contribute to finding solutions.

We are confident that this methodology will serve as an invaluable companion in your leadership journey, helping you create and sustain the kind of educational environment where both students and staff can thrive.

The Well project team

CONTENT

1 VISION, PLAN AND STRATEGY

VISION

Agrupamento de Escolas João da Siva Correia is an educational organisation that stands out for the quality of its teaching, for inclusion and for the relevance of the activities it promotes, making it a benchmark institution. The aim is for it to continue to be recognised for the quality of learning that allows students to fully develop their abilities, promoting and valuing the merit of each individual, fostering active citizenship, structured on fundamental values. To this end, the motivation and mobilising action of the entire educational community is essential. The aim is to be a learning community based on educational quality standards, respectful of humanistic, democratic and solidarity values.

MISSION

Our school grouping (Agrupamento de Escolas João da Silva Correia - AEJSC), like all Portuguese public schools, is entrusted with "a public service mission, which consists of equipping each and every citizen with the skills and knowledge that will enable them to fully exploit their abilities, actively integrate into society and make a contribution to the economic, social and cultural life of the country".
The AEJSC's mission is to:
1.   to provide a quality public education and training service, providing students,
teaching staff and non-teaching staff with an educational environment that promotes motivation, mutual support and critical thinking.
2.   to develop the necessary support to help young people become independent citizens integrated into the community, with knowledge, skills and know-how that, as well as enabling them to continue their studies and/or enter the labour market, will enhance them individually as human beings for their role in society.
       To this end, the AEJSC is organised according to a streamlined and participatory structure, based on management guided by strategic objectives, underpinned by a system of transparency and dialogue, along with the rationalisation and sustainability of resources.

VALUES

       The vision and mission assumed here are based on the following values: trust, dialogue, demand, work, rigour, creativity, transparency, respect, equality, tolerance, solidarity, democratic participation, merit and responsibility. By respecting and promoting these values, the ultimate goal of the school - to train autonomous, inclusive and critical citizens who are ready to face the challenges of society - will be achieved.

MOTTO

       We are AEJSC - rooted in the school's logo (the fingerprint), a symbol of identity and a mark of belonging. This motto is intended to strengthen the identity and cohesion of the community, uniting it through a strong sense of belonging and sharing.

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SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths
- Existence of self-assessment mechanisms for the different areas as a management support tool and support for organisational and pedagogical improvement.
- Vision and strategy orientated towards the integral formation of the student, the quality of learning and the promotion of the educational environment.
  Development of a wide range of initiatives and projects that promote diversified learning and healthy behaviour.
- Valuing the recreational, cultural, sporting, artistic and scientific dimensions.
- Recognition by the educational community and local society.

Weaknesses
- Insufficient number of PNDs;
- Basic and Secondary School facilities;
- Much of the technological equipment is obsolete;
- Internet connection

Opportunities
- Partnerships and protocols with various organisations;
- Close collaboration with the local authority;
- Community recognition;
- Launch of the public tender for the refurbishment of the Primary and Secondary School.

Threats
- Birth rates contributing to a decrease in the number of students;
- Number of students per class;
- Pandemic context.

AXES OF INTERVENTION

Axis 1. Identity and culture of the AEJSC; **(Action plan - Annex 1)**
Axis 2. Educational success and integral student development; **(Action plan - Annex 2)**
Axis 3. Quality of educational service provision **(Action plan - Annex 3)**

2 USING DATA AND RESOURCES FOR DECISION MAKING

The implementation of the methodology presented is approved, monitored and evaluated by the general council. This educational project will be systematically monitored by:

1. a continuous evaluation throughout the development of the process, making it possible to make occasional changes/reformulations, if necessary;
2. an annual evaluation to detect obstacles in the realisation of the project and identify/define ways of overcoming them;

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3. final evaluation, to be carried out at the end of the four-year period, in order to take stock of what has been achieved in relation to the initial project.

The evolution of the indicators will be assessed annually and a report drawn up for this purpose

(Annual monitoring document – Annex 4).

The results of the annual evaluation will be communicated to the educational bodies and stakeholders **(Annual results presentation – Annex 5)** and publicised in the most appropriate way **(Teams and https://aejsc.pt/documentos-orientadores/)**. The results will be analysed so that the process is dynamic and involves all those involved in decision-making developing an improvement plan **(Improvement plan – Annex 6)**.

3 EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

By offering relevant, quality ongoing training, the school prepares teachers for the challenges of today's educational context, thus benefiting students and the educational community as a whole.

In accordance with the school's educational project, the analysis of monitoring data and suggestions made by teachers, we draw up a training plan for teachers every year **(Training plan – Annex 7)**. This plan is drawn up by the school and implemented in partnership with the local training centre.

This training is available free of charge in the form of short courses and continuing training workshops of 25 or 50 hours, covering topics of transversal interest to all teachers and topics of more specific interest to the subjects they teach.

It is also a concern that there should be training on offer for teachers who hold leadership positions in the school because it is considered essential that these teachers are properly informed and feel confident in exercising effective leadership.

4 SCHOOL AS A PART OF COMMUNITY

The school plays a fundamental role as an integral part of the community. It is not only a place of learning, but also a centre for social interaction, personal development and building support networks. Here are some ways in which the school connects with and contributes to the community:

Education and Development: The school is responsible for providing formal education to students, empowering them with the knowledge and skills they need to become productive members of society. This not only benefits individuals, but also enriches the community as a whole by providing a solid foundation for economic and social growth.

Erasmus projects are and should continue to be an essential tool.

This international experience provides a wide range of benefits, such as exposure to different cultures, languages and ways of thinking, which enriches their education and makes them more adaptable and culturally aware. Participating in an Erasmus project boosts the development of students' personal and professional skills. They learn to adapt to new environments, work in multicultural teams, solve problems creatively and communicate effectively in intercultural contexts, skills that are highly valued in today's globalized job market. The main objective is for the school to always have an Erasmus offer for each level of academic and professional education.

Community Integration: The school serves as a meeting point for members of the community. Events such as parent-teacher meetings, cultural presentations, science fairs and sports competitions not only engage students, but also attract families and other community members, fostering a sense of belonging and cohesion.

Resources and Services: Schools often offer resources and services to the community, such as libraries open to the public and accessible sports facilities. These resources help improve the quality of life and general well-being of local residents.

Community Partnerships: Our school has a great tradition of establishing partnerships with local organisations, businesses and institutions to enrich the students' educational experience and offer additional learning and development opportunities. These partnerships can include internships, mentoring programmes, collaborative projects and volunteering initiatives. Our biggest partners are the Town Hall and the Parish Council, which support us with infrastructure, student transport and the vast programme of extra-curricular activities they offer to schools in the municipality. However, in addition to these partners, we have many others who are fundamental to the effective development of this project:

- Police - Safe School Project
- Health Centre
- Commission for the protection of young people at risk
- Municipal Library
- ...

Civic Engagement: The school plays an important role in developing students' civic engagement by teaching them about social responsibility, civic rights and duties. This prepares students to become active and informed citizens, capable of making a positive contribution to the community.

In short, the school is not only a place of academic learning, but also a vital component of the community, providing education, social connection and resources that benefit all its members.

All the activities organised by the school and our partners and involving our students are compiled in the Annual Activities Plan, which is published on our website:
(https://aejsc.inovarmais.com/paa//viewer/app/index.html#/home)
and on our social networks:

https://www.instagram.com/agrupamentojsilva?igsh=MTg1eWJ2aTByZG1k

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100072958254111

5 CREATING COLLABORATIVE, INCLUSING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Creating collaborative and inclusive learning environments is fundamental to promoting the academic and personal success of our students, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities or individual characteristics. Here are some strategies that should be the basis of our practice:

Promote diversity: Celebrate and value students' cultural, ethnic, linguistic, social and skill differences. Encourage the participation of all students, recognizing and respecting their diverse perspectives and experiences. In addition to the daily support that the school offers to these students, either by teachers dedicated to them or with tutoring from colleagues, at the end of each year an exhibition open to the community must be held to promote flavors, dances and traditions. of each country.

Encourage collaboration: Implement learning activities that encourage students to work together on projects, group discussions, problem solving, and other collaborative activities. This helps students learn from each other, develop social skills, and build a sense of community in the classroom.

Foster effective communication: Promote a culture of mutual respect and active listening. Ensure that all students have equal opportunities to express their ideas and opinions. Encourage clear, respectful and constructive communication between students and the teacher.

Adapt teaching to individual needs: Recognize and respond to the diverse learning needs of students by offering different modalities of instruction, support materials and assessment strategies. Use a differentiated approach to meet each student's academic, linguistic, emotional, and developmental needs. It is in this sense that the school is investing in creating dedicated rooms where students with special needs can develop practical classes suited to their needs. Furthermore, we consider it very important to create active learning and teaching spaces (https://aejsc.pt/escola-digital/).

Promote accessibility: Ensure that the learning environment is accessible to all students, including those with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities. This may include adapting materials, using assistive technology, organizing physical space, and providing individualized support as needed **(Photos - Resource centre for students with special needs – Annex 8)**.

Build a sense of belonging: Create a welcoming and inclusive environment where all students feel valued, respected and accepted. Promote the building of positive relationships between students and the teacher, and encourage collaboration and cooperation among members of the school community.

By implementing these strategies, educators can create more inclusive and collaborative learning environments in which all students feel valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

6 STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SELF CARE TECHNIQUES

Stress management at school is fundamental to promoting a healthy and positive learning environment for students, teachers and staff. Because we understand the impact that stress management and the promotion of self-care techniques have both in the short term on the management of day-to-day behaviour and in the medium and long term on the formation of physically and mentally healthy citizens, it is the school's concern to develop a set of activities that try to work in this area:

- encourage outdoor activities;
- develop mindfulness sessions in primary school classes **(Mindfulness project – Annex 9)**;
- continue to develop the emotional intelligence club for middle school and high school students **(Emotional Intelligence Club Plan – Annex 10)**;
- continue to promote the health club for teachers and assistants, where they can take part in nature walks and enjoy socialising **(Health Club Project – Annex 11)**.

Please contact direcao@aejsc.pt for any additional information.

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Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education Compendium of Good Practice in Romania

The Welcoming Environment for Leading and Learning Project

2024

Methodology of Effective Leadership in Education:
Compendium of Good Practice in Romania

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CONTENT

1 VISION, PLAN AND STRATEGY

In Romania, school managers are supported through a series of initiatives and programs implemented by the Ministry of Education and other entities involved in the field of education. Here are some ways school managers/leaders are supported:

- **Training and professional development:** There are training and professional development programs exclusively for school managers, covering aspects such as institutional management, leadership, education law and other skills necessary for effective school administration.
- **Resources and guides:** The Ministry of Education and other organizations provide guides, manuals, and other practical resources for school managers to help them manage various aspects of schoolwork, such as managing human, financial and material resources.
- **Consultancy and support:** School managers can benefit from the support and consultancy offered by school inspectorates, educational advisers, and other specialized organizations to solve the administrative and pedagogical problems encountered in their work.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** School managers are subject to regular processes of monitoring and evaluating their performance, which may include school inspections, student performance assessments and other tools to assess the quality of the educational process and institutional management.
- **Access to additional funding:** In some cases, school managers can access additional funding for specific projects and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education in their schools, such as projects to modernize school infrastructure or programs to develop the skills of students and teaching staff.

In Romania, lesson plans for school leadership are often integrated into in-service training programs for teachers and school managers. These lesson plans aim to develop the leadership and management skills needed to effectively run an educational institution. Here are some examples of topics and content that can be included in lesson plans for leadership in schools:

- **Principles of educational leadership:** Exploring the fundamental concepts of leadership in the educational context, including defining goals and vision, effective communication, decision making, and team motivation.
- **Strategic planning and implementation:** Developing and implementing a strategic plan for the educational institution, including setting priorities, identifying needed resources, and evaluating progress toward achieving goals.
- **Assessing and improving school performance:** Using data and performance indicators to assess the quality of the educational process and student outcomes, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and develop strategies to increase school performance.
- **Ethics and values in leadership:** Examination of the ethical and moral aspects of leadership in education, including respecting the rights of students and staff, managing moral dilemmas, and promoting educational values and principles.

In Romania, there are various practical activities and initiatives aimed at promoting and developing leadership in schools. These include:

- **Workshops and seminars:** Organization of workshops and seminars where school managers and teachers can learn and practice leadership, management, and communication skills under the guidance of experts in the field.
- **Mentoring programs:** Implement mentoring programs where more experienced school managers can share their experience and knowledge with less experienced ones, providing them with support and guidance in developing leadership skills.
- **Simulations and practical exercises:** Organization of simulations and practical exercises where school managers can practice decision-making, problem-solving and crisis management skills in a safe and controlled environment.
- **Projects and collaborations:** Encouraging school managers to initiate and participate in projects and collaborations with other educational institutions or organizations in the community, which promote innovation, the exchange of best practices and the improvement of the quality of education.

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2 USING DATA AND RESOURCES FOR DECISION MAKING

In Romania, the education system is increasingly emphasizing the use of data and resources to make informed and effective decisions within schools. Whether it is about improving the quality of education, managing resources or implementing educational projects, decisions based on concrete data become essential for the evolution and success of the system.

First, the use of data allows for a better understanding of students' needs and their academic performance. For example, the results of national tests or school assessments can be analysed to identify weaknesses in the educational process and to develop personalised remedial strategies. In addition, data collected from monitoring student participation, progress, and feedback from parents and teachers provides a clear picture of areas that require further intervention.

On the other hand, the efficient management of resources, be they financial or material, is equally important. In a complex education system, such as the one in Romania, it is essential that funds and equipment are distributed properly. Analysing data on resource use can help school principals and authorities prioritize investments in infrastructure, educational technologies or professional development programs for teachers, thus maximizing the positive impact on the entire learning process.

In conclusion, the integration of data and resources in the decision-making process is an important step for the modernization and efficiency of the educational system in Romania. This ensures a more strategic approach, oriented towards the real needs of students and school communities, thus contributing to increasing the quality of education.

The use of data and resources in the decision-making process in the Romanian education system brings multiple benefits, contributing to the improvement of the quality and efficiency of education. Here are some of the main advantages:

- **Improving academic performance:** Analysing data on student outcomes allows weaknesses to be identified and corrective measures to be implemented. Teachers can tailor teaching methods to better meet the individual needs of students, thereby increasing the success rate.
- **Efficient allocation of resources:** By using data, schools can direct financial and material resources to areas that need it most, such as infrastructure, technology, or teacher training. Thus, resources are used with maximum impact.
- **Promoting equity:** Data helps to identify disparities between different groups of students (e.g. by rural or urban environment, or socio-economic conditions). This information allows measures to be taken to reduce inequalities and provide equal opportunities for all students.
- **Better-informed decisions:** Data provides an objective basis for decision-making, reducing the risks associated with intuitive or subjective approaches. Thus, decisions are better informed and are more likely to produce positive results.
- **Monitoring progress and impact:** By constantly collecting and analysing data, schools and authorities can track the evolution of initiatives over time.

Individualised Learning Plans (Planuri Individualizate de Învățare, PII - in Romanian) have become an essential tool in Romanian schools, designed to help students reach their maximum potential. These plans are mandatory and customized to meet the unique educational needs of each student, addressing specific gaps in knowledge or skills. This tailored approach is especially useful for students who require additional support, such as those with learning difficulties or those needing extra help to align with the curriculum.

By implementing PIIs, teachers can more effectively monitor a student's progress and make necessary adjustments throughout the academic year. These plans focus on key areas such as literacy, numeracy, communication, and even social and behavioural skills. Through structured activities, students can overcome challenges, promoting both academic achievement and personal development. Schools that adopt these plans often see improved student engagement and academic outcomes, making PIIs an integral part of contemporary education in Romania.

For detailed examples of individualised lesson plans, you can explore resources like
- ✓ EduPedu: https://www.edupedu.ro/
- ✓ Revista Educatiei Acasa | Platforma educationala online, centrul de excelenta Eurotrading

For Romanian school managers, the use of data and resources for decision-making can be crucial in improving the quality of education and in the efficient management of the institution. Here are some ways school managers use data and resources to make decisions:

- **Analysing student academic performance**: School managers use tests, exams, and assessment score data to assess student academic performance.
- **Managing financial resources:** School staff and leaders use financial data to effectively manage the school budget.
- **Monitoring student and staff attendance and absence:** By tracking student and staff attendance and absence data, school managers can identify absenteeism issues and take steps to address them.
- **Curriculum and educational program planning:** School managers and teachers use data on student academic performance and feedback received to plan curriculum and educational programs accordingly.

The resources can be used in Romanian schools by school leaders in several ways to improve the educational environment and ensure the success of students and teaching staff. Here are some ways and times to use these resources:

- **Planning and professional development of teaching staff:** Resources can be used to organize workshops, seminars or professional training courses for teachers and teaching staff. These may cover topics such as teaching and assessment methods, use of technology in education, classroom management, innovative pedagogical approaches, etc.
- **Implementation of special education programs and initiatives:** Resources can be used to develop and implement special education programs such as early intervention programs, literacy programs, support programs for students with special needs, etc. They can also be used to support initiatives to promote health, civic education, culture, and sport in school.

- **Increasing access to educational resources:** School leaders can use resources to ensure equal access to teaching materials and educational resources for all students, regardless of their financial resources or other social conditions. These may include purchasing textbooks, additional learning materials, online library subscriptions, or other digital resources.

To make good decisions in a school in Romania, it is essential to have access to accurate and up-to-date data and information about students' academic performance, their attendance and absence, feedback from parents and teaching staff, available financial resources, the state of school infrastructure and so on. This data can provide a clear insight into the needs and problems existing in the school.

The ability to analyze and evaluate the available information is essential to understand the situation in depth and to identify the right solutions. It involves critical, analytical, and synthetic thinking skills to assess the options and consequences of possible decisions. Decision making in a school often involves ethical and moral issues. These are 3 main steps for a good decision making in schools:

➢ Identifying and clearly defining the problem or objective

➢ Collecting and evaluating relevant information

➢ Choosing and implementing the best solution

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A. Assessment of needs and resources

- Carrying out an assessment of decision-making needs in schools in Romania, including the identification of problems and challenges faced by teachers, students, and the school community in the decision-making process.

- Assessment of existing resources, including infrastructure, financial resources, and decision-making skills of teaching staff.

B. Developing a culture of decision-making

- Promoting a culture of openness and transparency in decision-making, encouraging the involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the local community.

- Organizing training sessions and workshops for teachers and school staff to develop their decision-making skills and promote an understanding of school decision-making.

C. Implementation of effective decision-making mechanisms

- Development and implementation of clear and transparent procedures for decision-making in the various areas of school activity, such as curriculum planning, management of financial resources, administrative policies, etc.

- Establish school-wide decision-making structures and committees that include representatives of all stakeholders and are responsible for assessment and decision-making in various areas.

D. Continuous monitoring and evaluation

- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the decision-making process in the school, to identify opportunities for improvement and to ensure compliance with the principles of transparency, efficiency, and democratic participation.

- Collecting regular feedback from all stakeholders and adjusting the strategy based on the needs and suggestions expressed.

3 EMPOWERING TEACHERS AND CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

In Romania, teacher empowerment and leadership skills development are essential for transforming the education system. Teachers are not just transmitters of knowledge, but educational leaders who shape future generations. By cultivating these skills, teachers become better prepared to inspire, manage change, and create a more collaborative and effective educational environment.

Teacher empowerment

Empowerment starts with the continuous training of teachers. Professional development programs provide teachers with modern teaching tools and access to new educational technologies. These programs help them to be more adaptable and innovative, improving their teaching methods. They also provide support in managing student diversity, whether it is special needs or cultural and socio-economic differences.

For example, through initiatives such as the "CRED" program (Relevant Curriculum, Open Education for All), teachers in Romania are supported to integrate new skills and technologies into their daily activities, thus creating a more interactive and attractive approach for students
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Developing leadership skills

Developing leadership skills in education is about more than managing your classroom or a school program. Teacher-leaders must be able to influence and motivate not only students, but also peers and the school community. They play a key role in implementing educational change, working together to identify innovative solutions and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.
An example of this is the "Teach for Romania" program, which supports teachers to develop leadership skills, teaching them how to be more effective in schools with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These teacher-leaders become true agents of change, helping to reduce school dropout and increase the academic success rate in disadvantaged communities.

Impact on the education system

Empowerment and leadership not only improve the individual performance of teachers, but also contribute to the modernization of the entire educational system. Teachers who feel supported and able to make decisions take a more active role in developing the curriculum and improving the learning environment.
By cultivating educational leadership, schools in Romania benefit from more effective management, better collaboration between staff and improved relationships with students and parents. This leads to an increase in school performance and overall satisfaction within educational communities.

Below you can check a practical and inspirational case study on empowering teachers:

Title: "Improving Human Resource Management in Our School: Case Study"

! Context:

The headmaster of a secondary school in a small town in Romania faces a series of challenges related to the management of human resources in his institution. He observes that the level of satisfaction of teaching staff is low, and absenteeism and staff turnover are increasing. He realizes that a new and innovative approach is needed to address these issues and improve the working environment in the school.

! Step 1: Identify the problem

The headmaster realizes that the low level of satisfaction of the teaching staff is related to several aspects, including poor communication, lack of recognition of their contributions and efforts, as well as the lack of opportunities for professional development and career advancement.

! Step 2: Gather information and evaluate options

The headmaster begins to collect feedback from teaching staff through anonymous surveys and individual interviews. Through these, he aims to better understand the reasons for dissatisfaction and identify possible solutions.

! Step 3: Choosing and implementing the solution

Based on the feedback received from the teaching staff and the good practices identified in his research, the headmaster decides to implement several initiatives to improve human resource management in his school. These include:

Improving communication: The headmaster introduces regular communication sessions with teaching staff to share relevant information and to listen and respond to their concerns and suggestions.

Recognition of efforts: The headmaster implements a program to recognize the contributions and achievements of the teaching staff, through the awarding of awards and public appreciation.

Professional development: The headmaster organizes and supports training and professional development programs for teaching staff, offering them opportunities for continuous learning and career advancement.

! Result

The working environment becomes more collaborative and positive, helping to improve the quality of education offered to students and to strengthen the prestige and reputation of the school.

In conclusion, teachers in Romania, through professional development programs and leadership initiatives, become central pillars of educational reform, actively contributing to increasing the quality of education and training future leaders of society.

Simple lesson plan for promoting leadership in schools in Romania

Objectives:

- ✓ Understanding the concept of leadership in the educational context.
- ✓ Identifying the key qualities and skills of an educational leader.
- ✓ Exploring ways in which educational leaders can influence and improve the school environment.

Materials required:

- ⬥ Board or video projector.
- ⬥ Worksheets for participants
- ⬥ Markers or colored pencils

Duration: 60 minutes

Activities:

Introduction (10 minutes)

- ✓ Presentation of lesson objectives and the importance of leadership in education.
- ✓ Launching the open discussion: "What does it mean to you to be a leader in the school?"

Defining educational leadership (15 minutes)

- ✓ Outline the basic definition of leadership and discuss how it applies to the educational context.
- ✓ Identify the essential characteristics and qualities of educational leaders, such as empathy, effective communication, vision, and decision-making ability.

Exemplifying educational leaders (15 minutes)

- ✓ Presentation of examples of successful educational leaders from Romania or other countries, highlighting their achievements and the impact they had in their school communities.
- ✓ Discussion: What can we learn from these leaders and how can we apply their principles to our own practice?

Practical activity: Identifying leadership qualities (15 minutes)

- ✓ Groups of participants are divided into small teams and asked to identify the most important qualities of an educational leader.
- ✓ Each team presents its findings to the whole group and argues for its choices.

Application in practice (5 minutes)

The end of the lesson is devoted to discussing ways in which participants can apply leadership principles and skills to their own educational practice.

Evaluation:

- ✓ Informal assessment of participants' participation and involvement in discussions and activities.

✓ Gather verbal or written feedback on the usefulness and relevance of the lesson to developing leadership skills.

4 SCHOOL AS A PART OF COMMUNITY

In Romania, the school plays an essential role within the community, functioning not only as a place of formal education, but also as a catalyst for social and cultural development. The relationship between school and community is a deep and interdependent one, with mutual benefits that contribute to strengthening social cohesion and improving the quality of life.

The educational and formative role of the school in the community
The school is not limited to teaching the subjects in the curriculum, but contributes to the formation of students' character and values, preparing them to become active and responsible citizens. Students develop social and collaborative skills, learning how to interact and contribute to the common good of the community. Also, through various educational projects, the school encourages civic involvement and the development of the spirit of initiative.

In some regions of Romania, extracurricular programs and volunteering activities organized by schools play an important role in developing relationships between school and community. These activities include environmental projects, charitable actions, or partnerships with various local organizations, which provide students with a practical perspective on their role in society.

The school as a cultural center of the community
In many localities, especially in rural areas, the school is the cultural center of the community. Events, local holidays, and meetings between community members take place here, becoming a place of interaction and socialization for all generations. In addition to school events, such as celebrations or art exhibitions, the school provides space for public debates and other community activities, strengthening the bond between generations and between various social groups.

For example, projects such as "Different School" involve the entire community, from parents to representatives of the local administration and non-governmental organizations, thus creating a bridge between formal education and the social needs of the community.

Partnership between school and community
In the modern context, the school is increasingly collaborating with local authorities, NGOs and other institutions to respond to the needs of the community. Through partnerships, educational and social projects are developed that address important issues such as early school leaving, social inclusion or health education. These partnerships contribute to improving school infrastructure, organising relevant extracurricular activities and supporting children from vulnerable backgrounds.

In conclusion, school in Romania is much more than a simple place of learning. It is a pillar of the community, a space for social, cultural and civic development, which actively contributes to the creation of a cohesive and healthy social environment. The relationship between school and community is crucial for the future of education and for the progress of Romanian society.

Below you can check a practical activity for school managers in Romania as a collaborative approach:

Description: A practical activity that school managers in Romania (ant not only) could carry out to improve their leadership and management skills could be to organize a project to improve the quality of education in their school.

Title: Project to improve the quality of education

Purpose: Elaboration of an action plan and implementation of concrete initiatives to improve the quality of education in the school, under the leadership of school managers.

Stage 1

Assessment of the current situation: School managers and the management team constitute a project team and carry out a detailed assessment of the current situation of the school in terms of the quality of education, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the educational process.

Stage 2

Goal setting: Based on the initial assessment, the project team sets clear and measurable goals for improving the quality of education in the school, as well as realistic deadlines for achieving them.

Stage 3

Action plan development: School managers work with the project team to develop a detailed action plan that includes specific initiatives to achieve the set goals, resources needed, responsibilities, and deadlines.

Stage 4

Implementation of initiatives: The project team implements the action plan, under the supervision and coordination of school managers. These initiatives could include, for example, the development of continuous training programs for teachers, the implementation of active learning methods in the classroom or the strengthening of partnerships with the local community.

Stage 5

Monitoring and evaluating progress: School managers monitor and evaluate progress in implementing the action plan, identifying potential obstacles or problems, and adjusting the plan accordingly.

Stage 6

Evaluation of results: After the completion of the project, school managers and the project team evaluate the results achieved against the initial objectives and identify lessons learned and good practices that can be applied in the future.

5 CREATING COLLABORATIVE, INCLUSING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In Romania, creating a collaborative and inclusive learning environment is essential to meet the diverse needs of students and ensure that all children have equal access to quality education. Schools that promote this type of environment provide students with a safe and supportive space where they can learn from each other, develop social and academic skills, and feel an integral part of the educational community, regardless of their social, ethnic background or individual abilities.

Creating a collaborative environment
A collaborative learning environment is based on constant interaction between students and teachers, but also between students. This is achieved through teaching methods that encourage teamwork, debate and mutual learning. Group activities and interdisciplinary projects are frequently used to develop collaborative skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking. In Romania, these methods are increasingly implemented through programs such as "Different School," which emphasize learning through practical experiences and social interaction.

Inclusion in education
An inclusive learning environment ensures equal access to education for all students, including those with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds. Romania has made significant progress towards the integration of children with special needs in mainstream schools, in accordance with European legislation. Teachers are trained to tailor teaching methods to meet the individual needs of each student, and Individualized Learning Plan (PII) programs help personalize education for students with learning difficulties.

Schools also try to promote cultural diversity and reduce discrimination by integrating elements into the curriculum that reflect Romania's ethnic and cultural diversity. This is particularly important in areas with diverse populations, such as those in Roma communities, where social inclusion remains a major challenge.

Benefits of collaboration and inclusion
Schools that embrace a collaborative and inclusive environment not only promote academic success, but also develop important social skills such as empathy, respect, and the ability to work with people from different backgrounds. Students from these backgrounds are more likely to become active and responsible citizens, capable of contributing positively to the community. In addition, the inclusion of all students in educational and extracurricular activities gives them equal opportunities to succeed in the long term, both in their careers and in their personal lives.

Thus, promoting a collaborative and inclusive environment in schools in Romania is an important step towards modernizing and streamlining the education system, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Inspirational case study

Context:

> Elena Pop is the director of a Secondary School in a provincial town in Romania. The school has approximately 600 students and 45 teaching staff, and faces various challenges, including declining student numbers, aging infrastructure, and limited resources.

The Challenge:

> Elena faces several challenges as a school principal, including improving school results, modernizing school infrastructure, and effectively managing limited financial and human resources.

Objectives:

> ✓ Increasing the school performance of students through the implementation of active and differentiated learning strategies.
> ✓ Modernizing school infrastructure to create a safe and stimulating learning environment.
> ✓ Improving communication and involvement of the local community in school life.

Actions:

> - It developed a medium-term strategic plan to guide the school's development over the next three years, focusing on the established objectives.
> - Projects were initiated to rehabilitate the school's infrastructure, including renovating classrooms and modernizing technological equipment.
> - Promoted collaboration with parents and the local community by organizing open educational events and programs.
> - Effectively managed the available financial resources, prioritizing investments according to the priority needs of the school.

> - School performance has increased and the pass rate in national exams has improved significantly.
> - The school's infrastructure has been modernized, creating a more pleasant and safer learning environment for students and teachers.
> - Relations with parents and the local community have strengthened, and their involvement in school activities has increased.

6 STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SELF CARE TECHNIQUES

In Romania, stress management strategies and self-care techniques are becoming increasingly important, as the pace of modern life affects the physical and mental health of people, including students and teachers in the education system. Every individual experiences stress to some extent, either due to academic pressures or professional and personal responsibilities. Therefore, it is essential for both students and teachers to learn effective self-care and stress management techniques to maintain a balance between personal and professional or academic life.

Stress management strategies

One of the most effective methods of managing stress is to identify its sources and learn how to manage them before they become overwhelming. In Romania, increasing attention is being paid to developing resilience and the ability to adapt to challenges through techniques such as:

- **Breathing and meditation techniques:** By simply focusing on deep breathing, individuals can reduce stress and anxiety levels. Breathing exercises are very accessible and can be practiced anywhere. Mindfulness meditation also helps to be aware of the present and reduce the impact of negative thoughts.
- **Exercise:** Regular physical activity is an effective way to release accumulated tension and improve mood. Even a short walk outdoors can help reduce stress and increase energy levels.
- **Time management:** Effective time organization and prioritization of tasks help reduce stress. Creating a clear list of tasks and goals helps to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

The impact of these strategies in education

Applying these techniques in schools helps not only to improve the mental health of students and teachers, but also to create a more productive and harmonious educational environment. Students who manage their stress well are more focused and motivated, and teachers who prioritize their self-care have more energy and resilience in the face of challenges in the classroom.

Impact on Education

Research shows that schools that implement stress management and self-care strategies observe enhancements in both student performance and behaviour. For example, students who engage in stress-reduction practices often demonstrate improved focus and active participation in class, which correlates with increased academic success.

Resources for Further Information

For additional insights and practical resources, consider the following:

Asociația Națională a Consilierilor din România: This organization provides valuable resources and training for school counselors focused on enhancing student mental health.

Ministerul Educației Naționale: The Romanian Ministry of Education offers guidelines and policies aimed at promoting mental health and well-being within schools. Check their site for details. Ministerul Educației

Mindfulness Romania: This organization advocates for mindfulness practices in educational settings, offering workshops and resources designed for both teachers and students. Learn more here Homepage - Mindfulness Romania

In conclusion, integrating stress management strategies and self-care techniques into daily life, both in schools and outside of them, is essential for maintaining a balance between physical and mental health in Romania, providing fundamental support for increasing the quality of life.

In summary, prioritizing effective stress management and self-care techniques in Romanian schools can lead to healthier learning environments that support academic achievement and foster emotional resilience.

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