

Learning communities

A valuable proposal to organize a school in full time.



“**Learning Communities**” is a proposal of social and cultural transformation that begins in school but transcends it. Located in the perspective of dialogue learning proposes to achieve three objectives: educative quality, equity and social cohesion. Its main premises are that school education needs community participation, and that learning occurs through equal dialogue between people.

In the 1990s, the Centre for Research in Theories and Practices for Overcoming Inequalities (CREA) of the University of Barcelona, based on the knowledge accumulated by the international scientific community and in collaboration with the main authors of different disciplines around the world, promoted the implementation of **Learning Communities** in the stages of compulsory education.

People learn together, using the same tools and in the same environment. In the usual working methodology in schools, it is the teaching staff who impart knowledge, and it is the students who listen. In learning communities, students become the protagonist of their own education and take responsibility for what they learn.

Community participation is conceived in a broad sense: it involves families, social organizations, teacher training institutes and universities, governments and other civil society organizations (clubs, NGOs, neighborhood centers, etc.). Learning Communities weeds a network among the various actors involved in school activities, empowering interactions to achieve a common goal: for all students to achieve the best learning outcomes to be included in today's society.

A school that works with this perspective is organized as follows:

- Small groups of **students of different levels, cultures** and genders are formed. This enhances values such as tolerance, respect and equality.
- Communication and participation are **encouraged**, so that all opinions of students are heard and taken into account.
- In each group there is usually an adult, who can be the teacher, a family member or a volunteer; however, learning **stems from the interaction between children** in the group.

- You work on the same task and the role of the adult is simply to motivate.
- Help is encouraged among students in such a way that there is collaboration **and not competence**. In this way the value of solidarity is worked.
- Responsibility in education is shared, since all the people involved assume an important role: parents, students, volunteers and family members...

Children, as well as adults and society at large, benefit from learning **communities** in the following ways:

- Children learn **to socialize and** get to know other younger or older children more closely.
- People are found to be the same regardless of religion, race or gender.
- Shyness when speaking in public gradually disappears because children **learn to give** their opinion and to have that opinion respected and taken into account.
- Different opinions arise **and you learn to listen** and make a healthy and informed critique.
- You learn from mistakes to achieve the solution to a problem, just as it does in real life.
- **Classes are much more dynamic and fun**, and you learn more because it is not the same a solitary and silent learning in front of a book, than a group learning debating and sharing.
- Motivation grows, so classes are interesting, and students will want to go to class because they enjoy it.
- Society, in general, also benefits because children are educated in respect, **teamwork, communication and** will therefore be critical and more open-minded adults.

Learning **communities today** are not only in schools, but they are also in institutes, in universities and even on the internet or on social networks like Facebook. However, communities created on social media are **more focused on sharing interests** than learning in common, so in these cases, you often talk about communities of interest.

We also find learning communities in companies

A learning community **can even arise within a company when** multiple people come together to focus on learning new software, for example, so that:

- They rely and help each other in the problems that arise.
- They learn from each other.
- They work as a team.
- They share solutions.

There is a lot of information on the web about learning communities. We suggest the <https://www.comunidaddeaprendizaje.com.es/> website that brings together a network of schools in the Spanish and American sphere that are organized from this pedagogical option, meaningful experiences are shared, and virtual training is offered to teachers.

In each country, there is a reference organization in the proposal, which can be accessed to know how to get involved in the project. One of the reference schools in our field is *Colegio Escolapios de la Cartuja* in Granada.

Without a doubt, it is worth knowing this project and valuing what could be useful to incorporate into our school project at full time.