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SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS FOR ALL

**Programme:** Erasmus +

**Title:** Schools as Learning Communities in Europe.  
Successful Educational Actions for All

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# SEAs4All

SEAS4ALL project intends to expand in Europe the **scientific, social and political impact** that Learning Communities Project has shown in **more than 700 schools** worldwide



## Learning Communities

Learning Communities is a project based on a set of evidence based Successful Educational Actions (SEAs) aimed at fostering social and educational transformation. Combining science and utopian dreams, the project improves the academic achievement of all students and develops a better coexistence and attitudes towards social solidarity.

Its key features are efficiency, equity and social cohesion.

This educational model is in line with international scientific theories that emphasise two key factors for learning in today's society: interactions and community involvement.



## Results

The essence of the project is to guarantee optimal learning for all children. By providing equal opportunities to create the conditions to achieve the best results for all. By raising expectations, involving families and community in educative activities and promoting interactions, the project achieves:

- Better academic results for all students.
- Increase confidence and motivation for learning.
- Better coexistence and improved attitudes to social solidarity.
- More meaning and quality of learning for the whole community.
- Real participation of families and all social agents in the school.



## Scientific Base

The project and its 6 Successful Educational Actions have a strong scientific base developed by more than 80 researches from various disciplines over 30 years.

Its conceptual foundation is supported by the conclusions of the INCLUD-ED Project (Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education), funded by the European Commission between 2006-2011 and coordinated by CREA in 14 countries. Subsequently, two of the SEAS were tried and tested by the ChiPE Project in a variety of schools in Eastern England.

INCLUD-ED research identified 6 evidence-based Successful Educational Actions, that achieve the best results in both academic outcomes and coexistence in many different contexts. They are universal and transferable.

Tested already across more that 700 schools in 10 countries

around the world, the SEAs are the most effective way to overcome social and educational inequalities.



**Ramón Flecha, Founder of CREA and Schools as Learning Communities Project**

## Created by

The transformation of schools in Learning Communities is a proposal developed by CREA (Community of Research on Excellence for All) at University of Barcelona, in Spain.

## Transformation phases

A school that wants to become a “Learning Community” will pass through the following transformation phases:

### 1. Raising awareness:

Everything begins with the scientific training of all the community involved in the educational process – a preparatory training that must be delivered in an intensive way. It’s time to do some deep thinking about those educational methods which yield the best results. It is also time to analyse the current functions of the school; to identify strengths and weaknesses to determine what actions would best support social inclusion and academic success.

**2. Decision making:** This is the stage where the final decision is made: the school

is going to be transformed into a Learning Community. This decision depends on the consensus of the community through constant dialogue and everyone’s commitment. The decision making process is an induction for the community towards more democratic and community-led action.

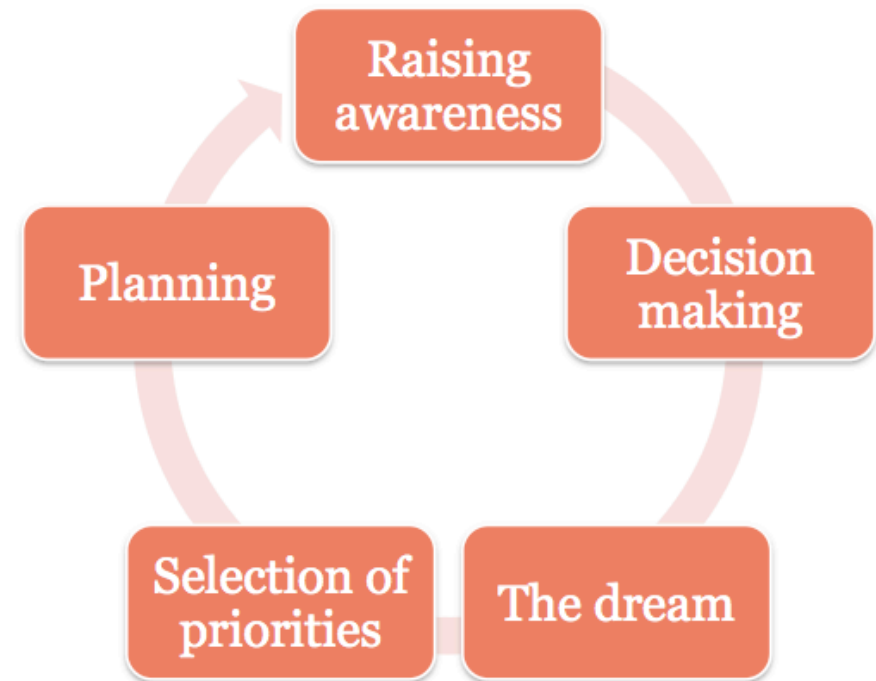
**3. The dream:** The time has come where the entire educational community (students, teaching staff, relatives, management team and non teaching staff) dreams about what they want for the school’s future. It is an exciting and creative process that every school is carrying out and showing in a different way. It’s an important time because it signals the beginning of the transformation.

**4. Selection of priorities:** It is the time when decisions are made as to which are the most urgent priorities and the most relevant dreams as

shared by the whole community. The organization, categorization and prioritization of the dreams are processes conducted by a mixed committee of students, families, teachers and community.

**5. Planning:** It is the time when the school designs the

path they wish to take to achieve the dreams of the community. Also, is the stage to form more mixed working committees that will make this path possible by implementing Successful Educational Actions. This will all stem from an assembly where the whole community take part.





## Successful Educational Actions

The European research project INCLUD-ED identified and analysed a series of Successful Educational Actions – practices that demonstrably increase academic performance and improve the social cohesion and attitudes of solidarity in all the schools observed.

In Europe the outcomes of this study that was carried out in 14 countries have already been included in the guidelines and recommendations of the European Parliament to overcome academic failure and inequality in education.

### 1 Interactive groups

Interactive groups are a form of classroom organisation that so far has generated the best results. It consists of grouping all the students in the class into four or five small groups which are as heterogeneous as possible with respect to level of learning, gender, language, motivation, and cultural origin. Each one of the groups is accompanied by an adult volunteer from the school, the families and/or the community. This person enters the classroom to encourage interaction between the pupils. The teacher prepares as many learning tasks as there are groups (normally 4). The groups change activities every 15

or 20 minutes. The students do the tasks by interacting with each other through egalitarian dialogue. It is the adult's responsibility to ensure that all the members of the group take part and contribute in solidarity to finding a solution to the task. The use of interactive groups diversifies and multiplies interactions and makes the work time more effective.

It is therefore a form of inclusive grouping that improves academic outcomes, interpersonal relationships and coexistence.

### 2 Dialogic Gathering

It is a collective building of meaning and knowledge through dialogue on the best creations of



mankind in disciplines like literature, art and music. They are designed to bring the students closer – regardless of age, gender, culture or ability – to universal classical culture and scientific knowledge gathered by mankind over time. The Gatherings are based on sharing – showing full respect of one's right to speak – those ideas and sections of the project that the participants previously selected

because they caught their attention or stimulated some kind of thought. This generates a very rewarding exchange that allows greater depths into the topics discussed and promotes the building of new knowledge based in an egalitarian dialogue. In the sessions, one of the participants assumes the role of moderator; with the only idea of facilitating and encouraging the equal participation of all the students.

The most experienced Gatherings are the Dialogical Literary Gatherings (DLGs) where people meet to chat and share ideas on a work of classical literature. The classic's option is used due to the fact that these works address the most central issues of people's lives and therefore have stood the test of time; and because this breaks down the barriers of cultural elitists who considered classical literature as a heritage for specific social groups. Access to culture is thus democratised. Dialogical Literary Gatherings have been shown to increase vocabulary, improve oral expression, writing and reading comprehension. It is also an opportunity to boost confidence, reinforce mutual respect and generate solidarity. The DLG is a meaningful experience that helps to transform expectations and attitudes towards education.

### 3 Family Education

The offer of training and education is not only open to the student and teaching staff but also to families and community as well. This SEAS differs to other training for families in that here, families



themselves interact, engage in dialogue and decide on which training to aim for and how it will be undertaken. Training activities can vary but always are orientated towards improving skills and essential knowledge for life in today's society. This means families have an opportunity to help their children with their homework, to read together, to support them in academic issues and at the same time improve their skills and employability. Some examples of Family Training in schools that are Learning Communities are: Languages, Technology, Mathematics and Finances, etc. INCLUD-ED research concluded, among other things, that the academic outcome of children and teenagers does not depend so

much on the educational level previously achieved by the families but on the fact that the parents are also in a process of training. This increases meaning, expectations and commitment to education.

### 4 Educational participation of the community

To ensure the educational success of all students, families and members of the community are encouraged to get involved directly in the processes and school learning spaces including the classroom. Families and community also take part in those decisions that concern the education of their children.

This is fundamentally materialised in two ways:

- With a direct participation in the Successful Educational Actions as described (Interactive Groups, DLGs, Family Education, etc.) as well as in other forms of extended learning time especially in Tutored Libraries and by encouraging more dialogic reading and writing time in more places.
- With the participation in the management and in the organisation of the school through mixed commissions. In a Learning Community, the school governance is developed by a management commission and various mixed commissions. The management commission comprises the management team and representatives of each of the mixed working commissions.



These commissions (made up of teachers, relatives, volunteers and students) are responsible for carrying out the transformations decided on by the school in the dream stage. Approved by the school council, the commissions have autonomy to plan, make proposals and assess all those priorities that have been decided on by consensus. Some examples of mixed commissions are: learning, library, training, volunteering, coexistence, infrastructure etc.

## 5 Dialogic model for prevention and conflict resolution

An equalitarian dialogue and the solid participation of all in the search for consensus are the fundamental bases for this model. It is a preventative model because it involves the community in establishing a guideline for coexistence. Through equal dialogue, we build –in a joint and consensual way– the school rules that everyone must observe and those proceedings that shall be adopted if these rules are

infringed. In this way, the framework of coexistence is accepted and is legitimate for all. The model encourages assemblies and more dialogue spaces where everyone participates and where all arguments are equally heard. The entire community is committed to the creation of a better space for learning.



## 6 Dialogical Pedagogical Training

To develop the Successful Educational Actions, it is important to be trained in its scientific bases, theories and the evidence endorsed by the international scientific community. Moving from assumptions to evidences is vital in education.

To achieve this, it is necessary to refer directly to the most relevant theoretical sources in the world and to the outcomes of the highest level of research into

education. Teachers in particular have to be prepared to know how to argue for their practice and distinguish between opinions and scientific knowledge. Likewise teachers will also begin to assess their training based on results obtained by their students. One way to achieve this is organize a Dialogic Pedagogic Gathering. Knowledge is built up through books that the international scientific community has validated as a benchmark. In this way, they learn from validated and original sources avoiding interpretation, opinions and essays by other authors.

# Dialogic Learning

Dialogic learning happens through equal dialogues, in interactions whereby cultural intelligence is recognised in all people. These interactions are aimed at the transformation of previous levels of understanding and of the socio-cultural context in search of success for all. Furthermore, "Dialogic Learning is produced in interactions, it increases instrumental learning, it encourages the creation of personal and social meaning. It is guided by fundamental principles and in those in which equality and difference are compatible values and mutually rewarding" (In Aubert, A.; Flecha, A.; García, C.; Flecha, R.; Racionero, S.; 2008, Pág 167)

The core of Learning Communities and its seven Successful Educational Actions is Dialogic Learning that is based on seven principles:

## 1 EGALITARIAN DIALOGUE

In a Learning Community the power is always in the arguments and not in the hierarchical position of the person who is talking. Everyone must have the opportunity to speak and to be heard, regardless of their position in the schools, their age, gender, level of education or social class.

## 2 CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

This goes beyond the traditional concept of intelligence and encompasses the comprehension of multiple dimensions of human interaction which include academic intelligence, practical

intelligence as well as communicative intelligence. Everybody has cultural intelligence regardless of their educational level, their language, their socio-economical status or the features of their cultural identity.

## 3 TRANSFORMATION

Education must not focus on adapting the social reality of every student but on the transformation of its context. A schools that is a Learning Community must encourage all sort of interactions that makes changes possible in people's lives. When these interactions are based on equal dialogue, they help to overcome inequalities.

## 4 CREATION OF MEANING

It means making possible a type of learning that is based on the

requests and needs of the people. Whenever the school respects students' cultures, differences by guaranteeing their success in learning, students in turn find a new meaning in education. Learning something socially valued also helps to create meaning.

## 5 SOLIDARITY

Solidarity is make possible the same learning and results to all students, regardless of their social, economic, or cultural background. The objective of maximum learning for all girls and boys, means solidarity. This implies introduce Successful Educational Actions that encourages cooperation rather than competitiveness and mutual consensus rather than enforcement.

## 6 INSTRUMENTAL DIMENSION

Access to instrumental knowledge obtained from science and schooling is essential in order to encourage transformations. When we speak of instrumental dimension we refer to the learning of those fundamental instruments like dialogue, critical thinking and content and school skills that form the basis for living included in current society.

## 7 EQUALITY OF DIFFERENCES

Beyond the homogeneous equality and the defence for diversity which does not take into account equity, equality of differences is the real equality in which everyone has the same right to be and to live differently and at the same time be treated with same respect and dignity.

