

For schools, the starting point for engaging in the program can be one or more of the following modules:

MODULE 1: INSTRUCTION

Teamwork, communication, effective coordination, and independence in dealing with problems are becoming increasingly important – not only within the realm of social participation but also in professional training and in the work place. Today's teacher-centered classes with their emphasis on lecturing and their rigid 45-minute grid will not help to develop the skills described above.

Module 1 is designed to develop ways and means of focusing and structuring social processes in learning, asking questions such as the following: How can schools enable young people to experience real responsibility and reflect this responsibility in the classroom? How can instruction contribute to teaching social skills and to motivating young people to participate in democratic processes? How can teaching be organized so as to challenge and support young people who have different talents and abilities, learning habits and interests?



MODULE 2: LEARNING IN PROJECTS

Projects offer excellent learning conditions and incentives. If common goals, cooperative methods and learning techniques, and the solution of real problems are at the center of instruction, individual decision-making skills and individual responsibility are strengthened, encouraging the development of social and social-cognitive knowledge.

Two aspects are decisive for the success of a project: First, projects have to be professionally planned and implemented. Second, projects must not serve as a marginal token program. Both their scope and quality have to guarantee their lasting place in the school, both inside and outside the classroom.

MODULE 4: SCHOOLS IN DEMOCRACY

Schools should be open towards their social environment. They should cooperate with external partners such as youth services or local companies and allow them to play a part, both inside and outside the classroom. In order to develop a feeling of social responsibility in the school and in the community, students and actors in civil society must come to perceive the school as part of the community – thus a sense of social responsibility can develop.

MODULE 3: SCHOOLS AS DEMOCRACY

Young people regard politics with skepticism. Nevertheless, political initiatives that address their own real-life problems are highly important to them. Since school plays an important part in the life of young people, it must offer them opportunities for participation. An increasing number of schools is developing forms of participation with real influence on the decisions and on the organization of the schools themselves. Dealing with differences in everyday life, resolving conflicts in a constructive manner, accepting and acknowledging individual strengths and weaknesses are also part of the responsibilities of a democratic educational culture and should be established in schools at each level.

The decisive element structuring the program is the **NETWORK**, i.e., a regional network of six to eight schools pursuing similar goals of school development within the program.

The following are some effects arising from working together in school networks:

- Exchange of experiences, methods and instruments
- Mutual advice and support
- Organization of joint workshops and seminars
- Stabilization of the development process in the participating schools



About the program



School is the only institution able to reach all young people and obtain their support for democracy. How can schools use this opportunity? What kind of assistance and support do they need?

LEARNING & LIVING DEMOCRACY is a joint educational development program of the Federal and State governments within the framework of the Commission for Educational Planning and the Promotion of Research, BLK (Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung). The program started in the spring of 2002. More than 200 general and vocational schools in 13 German states participate in the program. In an attempt to make classrooms and school as a whole a more democratic place for learning, the program aims at promoting participation in civil society among young people. It was also conceived as a response to violence, right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, and the increasing disenchantment with politics and politicians among young people.

The program has two main goals: promoting **DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCIES** and developing **DEMOCRATIC CULTURE IN SCHOOLS**. Learning democracy (i.e., acquiring civic skills) and living democracy (i.e., practicing a democratic way of life) are the best ways of dealing with violence and other problems. Democratic decision-making skills, i.e., firm loyalty to democracy coupled with a rejection of violence, require long-term learning processes that combine knowledge, practice, experience, and critical judgement. Thus, democracy can be experienced as a way of sharing one's life at school. Simultaneously, democracy can be the very subject of learning.



Support

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

The projects within this program promote educational development, using the key concept of a „Learning School“. The goal is a sustainable improvement process that allows for participation of as many stakeholders as possible (pupils, students, teachers, parents, local partners).

A Learning School requires continuous change and development. A Learning School continually reflects its own progression, whose methods have proven successful and whose measures are needed in order to develop a democratic school culture. A Learning School seeks to transfer successful experience to the entire educational system.



Up to this point, systematic educational development and evaluation have not been the natural responsibility of individual schools. Our program offers assistance and support by central and local coordinating offices in the following areas:

- Procedural counseling
- Exchange of experience
- Networks
- Workshops and seminars
- Skill development
- Self-evaluation
- Documentation and transfer

Funded by:



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