

# Managing Educator Team Collaboration for Service-Learning Projects

Approaches to Service Learning Tested in the School for Sustainable Living and Roots & Shoots Programmes under the Collegial Support Project “Educational Leaders in Education for Sustainable Development”



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



*Motto:*

*“May the guiding star and rudder of our didactic be this: to search out  
and discover a rule in accordance with which teachers teach less and learners  
learn more; the school contain less noise and confusion, but more enjoyment  
and solid progress.”*

*Comenius*

## Acknowledgements

This guidebook has been prepared under the project “Educational Leaders in Education for Sustainable Development” co-financed by the European Union’s ERASMUS+ programme. We are thankful to all those who took part in its preparation, whether they were consultants and expert guides of the Jane Goodall Institute (Austria), the Green Foundation (Slovakia) and SEVER – The Rýchory Centre of Environmental Education and Ethics (Czech Republic) or educators from organisations involved in this project.



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## How To Work with the Guidebook

This guidebook is divided into two main components: the theory section and the practical section. The theory section introduces the concepts and issues of service learning and collegial support. It also acquaints the reader with service-learning programmes in the field of sustainable development.

The practical section provides proven tips and tools for your teamwork. This is complemented by the words of educators who have tested the method during the project and want to share their experience (their quotes are italicised and specially formatted). Another added element are so-called practical recommendations, with details on the methods of interest compiled from different educators' feedbacks. Also provided are real-life examples of the tools presented (SWOT analysis, collaborative plan, objectives) that were used by some teams in preparing their service learning projects.

Last but not least, the guidebook's practical section contains a chapter on individual schools involved in the project and their own presentations of how they experienced collegial support and service-learning projects.

# Introduction

Since the 1990s, we have been working with schools on environmental education with a view to developing student sustainability competencies. Service-learning programmes such as the School for Sustainable Living have been our main vehicle in delivering this effort.

Looking back at the twenty years of work, we are wondering: How successful have we been? Where are the young people who experienced our programme today? Did they really learn how to implement a sustainability project? Did every young programme participant learn a worthwhile lesson for their life, such as the belief that the way our environment is shaped is in our hands? Did their programme participation strengthen their attachment to local natural and cultural resources? Did every programme participant learn as much as possible given their dispositions?

Based on our observations and evaluation reports, we found that the programme depends, in many aspects, on the leadership of a single educator who had attended a short training course, obtained a copy of the guidebook and relied on our consulting support. We know that the programme's implementation requires relatively demanding preparation and planning, responsiveness to participants' needs, the ability to adapt processes and procedures to the situations that may emerge during project teaching, which is largely "in the hands of the participants". And when seeking answers to the above questions, we have to include reflection in our programme as well.

So far, the programme was often led by a single person. Due to lack of experience or guidance, some of these leaders focused rather on technical procedure, i.e. implementing the programme in line with the guidebook. Yet we do not find that sufficient. When a programme is implemented by a team of educators, each participant is able to acquire a lot more knowledge, skills, and sustainability competencies.

This is why we found collegial support an appealing method: Two heads are better than one. Indeed, it is a partnership of people who share the topic at hand and can provide interesting input and support to one another. Moreover, this systematic form of teamwork in managing an educational programme for young people reflects what participants themselves are expected to experience in a service-learning programme. In working on their projects, students are led to experience cooperation, planning together, and critically looking back at their own work.

Prepared under the project "Educational Leaders in Education for Sustainable Development", the guidebook is primarily intended for a group of people who choose to implement a service-learning programme. Such a programme involves not only educators, leisure centre or community outreach workers, but ideally also experts, young people's representatives, local councillors, parents and other community leaders who share the topic of choice and TOGETHER want to:

- consult, collaborate with their colleagues and reflect their classroom instruction,
- work consistently as a team to implement service-learning projects,
- make a greater impact on programme participants by growing as professionals and enhancing one another's classroom instruction,
- aim at the principles of service learning,
- achieve something useful for their local community by teaching in, about, for and through the community.

*„If you want to know whether it was easy or hard to work on these projects using Collegial Support, there is no real answer to that. It was a time when we did not only have to think about our own classes, a time with lots of talk about school, work and student progress but also about personal experiences. It was a time of getting to know new people we could learn from and now call our friends. It was a time when not only students learned from teachers but also teachers from students. It was a time of juggling various duties the best we could and sometimes not succeeding. But above all it was a time we were not alone, whether we needed help or whether there was a reason to celebrate. So the best way to describe Collegial Support is: 'You are not alone and we are working together!'“*

# Theory Section



# 1/ What Is Service Learning?

Service learning is an educational approach that promotes involvement in activities to address local community needs and attains educational goals through that involvement. Instruction is centred on performing specific activities to help the community. Service-learning programmes typically aim at a broad spectrum of student competencies and specifically at strengthening place attachment. They seek to provide a pragmatic and progressive learning experience in satisfying community needs. Participants (in our case, groups of young people) get involved in service learning/community projects to apply what they have learned at school in addressing the practical needs and problems of their community.

Service learning can be exemplified by the School for Sustainable Living and Roots & Shoots programmes described below, in which the method of collegial support was also applied.

## School for Sustainable Living<sup>1</sup>



*The School for Sustainable Living (SSL)* is a programme to assist schools in improving the environment and quality of life in their community. Students, teachers and the local community undertake projects to promote sustainable living in the community. In this way, students learn important life skills.

Students at the participating schools join other community partners to think about what they can do for the development of their community or the area around school. By gradually implementing the changes proposed together, they make a difference in the place where they live and study (implement their local Agenda 21). In doing all this, they take into account the sustainable development of their local community and the world. This is a practical example of local-level implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 2015–2030 and national sustainability policy strategies.

Divided into seven steps, the SSL programme brings together project-based learning and community-based learning by implementing projects in the context of overarching local issues (natural, cultural, historic, economic, socio-political). The goal of all its activities is to make a product that enhances the community.

## Program Roots & Shoots<sup>2</sup>



*Roots & Shoots* is a global educational programme led by British naturalist Jane Goodall. It currently encompasses over 8000 groups in 130 countries. Its primary goal is to spark young people's interest in local problems and foster "compassionate leadership" to make a better world.

The programme helps students become acquainted with the contemporary problems of their local community and develop key competencies for solving those problems (such as strategic thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication skills and others).

Based on the service-learning method, Roots & Shoots prepares students in four steps (1. Get Engaged, 2. Community Mapping, 3. Take Action, 4. Celebrate and Evaluate) to implement their own project for the community.

Based on the story of Dr. Jane Goodall and other selected public figures, students gradually discover the context of sustainable development. Through debating current societal challenges, mapping their local problems and surveying public opinion, they select adequate topics for their projects. The educational process is framed by class teamwork with the help of teachers and the local community (parents, libraries, clubs for seniors, various associations, businesses etc.) Local governments also play an important role in preparing and implementing student projects by providing feedback, official authorisations, but also material support or funding.

<sup>1</sup> [www.skolaprozivot.cz](http://www.skolaprozivot.cz)

<sup>2</sup> <https://rootsandshoots.global/>

Educators play a key role in both programmes, namely as guides/facilitators accompanying their teams throughout the project. They undertake discussions with students, ask about their opinions, and steer them towards the right solution if necessary. They create a comfortable and safe space for self-actualisation, reflection, and solving individual problems.

## 2/ What Is Collegial Support?

*We see collegial support as an opportunity to learn together.*

The concept of collegial support is a broad one. Our approach to it was informed by experience of a project named Spirála [The Spiral] and approach of three tees: planning together, teaching together, reflecting together. We tested the 3T approach at selected schools and sought our own suitable method for collaboratively led service-learning programmes.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of educational programmes based on the principles of service learning, we defined collegial support as collaboration between two or more participating educators who share their interest and a topic, here a desire to implement a service-learning programme of education for sustainable development (ESD). The educators work together to prepare and plan their programme, implement it together, and together reflect the processes and educational outputs aimed at developing sustainability competencies. The collegial support process unfolds in four stages described below.

**Practical recommendations:** One way of implementing collegial support is co-teaching where the (more experienced) "lead" teacher conducts the lesson while the other colleague plays an "auxiliary" role by helping and observing the lead, recording notes and feedback, learning from their more experienced colleague. This relationship may appear asymmetrical, it is not hierarchical but one of collegial support. Although this sharing of experience is basically one-way, it relies on mutual trust and learning. Here, too, the 3T principles are followed.

*Why can collegial support help us introduce a service-learning programme?*

The School for Sustainable Living and Roots & Shoots programmes are based on an interdisciplinary approach and project learning, creating larger educational units of interrelated activities. Collaboration of several colleagues is necessary because the project management and implementation crosses the boundaries of individual subject areas. The lessons based on the principle of collegial support provide enough time to explore a topic from several perspectives, in its multiple dimensions, and taking advantage of interdisciplinary overlaps.

**Practical recommendations:** The teachers working together, preparing, implementing and reflecting activities together, all that provides good examples for the students as they perceive the teacher-to-teacher collaboration. When lessons are built in this way, they enhance the overall classroom and school climate. In a way, teachers "transfer" their collaboration onto their students and subsequently into the life of the entire school. Simply put, when students observe, often see and perceive collaborating teachers who respect and help one another, they adopt and model those strategies.

<sup>3</sup> KOŠTÁLOVÁ, Hana. Scénář 3S: forma kolegiální podpory. [The 3T Scenario: A Form of Collegial Support]. Nový Jičín: Krajské zařízení pro další vzdělávání pedagogických pracovníků a informační centrum Nový Jičín, příspěvková organizace, 2015. ISBN 978-80-87744-12-3.

## *What kind of competencies are developed by the collegial-support-based interdisciplinary approach?*

- the ability to step back from one's discipline (subject areas of specialisation),

“ „Regular sessions with fellow teachers and our mentors were a great help because they sometimes took a different perspective on things.“ ”

- perspective taking,

- the ability to identify and connect different content when implementing educational activities with content from other subject areas,

“ „My colleagues were happy to get involved in the project and the students loved the project days. However, we found it challenging to prepare and integrate all grades together.“ ”

- emphasising reflection: understanding context, discussing any difficulties and problems that may arise, sharing experiences,

- team members' personal and personality development. Educators often appreciate getting to know new forms of instruction and new perspectives on teaching as such.

At the same time, collegial support offers a motivating aspect through new methods and the collaboration of pedagogues. Collegial support helps distribute the burden of responsibility as several colleagues take part in planning, implementing, reflecting, evaluating. The colleagues take advantage of division of labour during preparation (assigning who gets what etc.) and then join forces again.

## *What are the benefits of collegial support for learners?*

- It ensures better and more comprehensive understanding of a topic by providing a shared variety of perspectives, dimensions, disciplines, subject areas.
- It may help increase educational quality but also develop mutual assistance and support.
- The new constructionist teaching methods enhance participants' growth by introducing them to a new approach and teaching how to reflect, ask questions etc. Collegial support makes that experience available to many more participants. Moreover, educators have observed benefits for special needs participants, who may experience success as a result of novel teaching methods.

“ „We often debated the option of using collegial support for our regular school topics so that the children could experience more often the links between contents covered by different courses.“ ”

“ „Implementing Collegial Support in a project has been an excellent idea. There is no easier way of working for us, because many subjects are included and all help to accomplish a large job. The children finally understand why they need math, biology, geography, etc.“ ”

Collegial support improves interaction and brings about organisational change at school, in the community etc. Educators often witness improved interpersonal relations: sometimes in the supporting team, sometimes more generally; they are more likely to talk about their personal lives. Collaboration is strengthened among both educators and participants.

„We immediately accepted the idea of the ‘Collegial Support’ method. Oftentimes, teachers are considered as ‘lone fighters’ and this is somehow correct. Normally we are alone in our class, ‘team teaching’ is only an exception, we prepare our classes alone, grade papers alone etc. To realize such an important project alone seemed impossible from the very beginning. However, exactly this ‘lone fighter idea’ is supposed to be eliminated through the method of ‘Collegial Support’ so that all participants gain in the end: the teachers who work together toward their goal, facing all obstacles and problems as a team, but above all the pupils who get a positive and lasting experience as they work with different teachers, on different subjects and using different methods.“

### Managing collegial support and service learning

We in the Leaders Project build collegial support on the **3T approach**. The acronym means three times together: two or more educators prepare their lessons together, implement them together, and reflect them together. The colleagues share the creative process, joining forces to identify their main as well as particular objectives and to find ways of attaining them. The colleagues start their journey as a team. Together they seek and find solutions, overcome barriers, support and inspire one another, and learn.

#### What does 3T look like in practice?

A small group of educators who share a common topic (here service learning and ESD) meet to agree on a rhythm of collaboration, define shared and personal objectives, and elaborate a plan for the intended duration of their collaboration (ideally based on a needs assessment). They plan lessons together, implement the planned lesson/unit, and then meet to reflect implementation.

**Practical recommendations:** Defining your main objective (what the participants want to achieve and where they want to arrive) is a highly important stage and may take a relatively long time. To choose and agree on the main objective so that everyone perceives its gravity and necessity is an important means to tapping every participant’s internal motivation and engagement. Your long-term plan should be treated as a living document that is continuously elaborated throughout the project.

#### Conditions for 3T in practice

- **regular scheduling** (rather have shorter meetings but meet regularly and frequently),
  - **the presence of a leader** (pioneer, driver) – someone who continuously provides others with inspirations, ideas and other sources of motivation,
  - **a critical friend** (an external pair of eye, a mirror) – someone who is not part of the team of collaborators but is selected by them. It has to be someone they trust, such as another colleague, another educator. This is often someone with more experience in the field.
- Their task is to provide feedback in accordance with the team’s demand. In our project, individuals this role were referred as consultants, mentors or coaches,
- a safe space and clear ground rules,
  - **support from other leaders** (school principal, local council etc.),
  - **a desire for professional growth** and to facilitate active involvement of participants.



# Practical Section



# 1. Collegial Support Tools

The following chapter focuses on the way teams implement their projects. We distinguish four main stages every team goes through:

1. the IDEA stage,
2. the PLANNING together stage,
3. the IMPLEMENTING together stage,
4. the REFLECTING together stage.

In this process, the team starts by defining the project's technical (administrative) parameters, then undertakes initial analysis, formulates its vision and specific objectives, then proceeds to the implementation itself, and finally evaluates its effort.

## 1.1 Tools for the Idea Stage

Collegial collaboration starts with an important preparatory stage in which the team performs analysis to define a collaborative plan and a set of objectives. You can follow the procedure below which outlines how to set up a team, how to take care of it, how often to meet, and how to approach the analysis and your objectives.

### Setting up a Collegial Support Team

Several guidelines can be helpful in putting together a well-functioning collegial support team:

- **The team leader is a key figure.** This should be an open-minded individual with communication and leadership skills, who is able to win the team's trust and to take a supportive and non-directive approach to others, and who is willing to grow and remedy any lack of mentoring and coaching competencies. The internal mentor's adequate personality is halfway to success.

**Practical recommendations:** The team leader should acknowledge his dual roles. They lead the team and at the same time they want to be a part of the team.

- **The team members are brought together by shared interest.** Teams are better off with educators of different backgrounds. What matters most is your personal willingness to grow, test new methods, reflect.
- **Your shared topic is key.** Especially for new teams, defining a shared topic is a good way to start collaboration – whether it's service learning or ESD.

**Practical recommendations:** Reserve enough time for mapping your topic so that it is truly shared by all members of your team.

### Taking Care of your Team

The internal mentor should continuously build relationships with team members, creating an environment and a safe space for a well-functioning collegial collaboration.

*„For the Collegial Support method to be successful, being able to completely rely on your teammates is essential.“*

### Meetings: Time and Regular Scheduling

In collegial support, the rule of thumb is “rather have shorter meetings but meet more frequently”. According to experience, one meeting per month is an ideal frequency.

- A minutes form for your meetings

# TEAM MEETING MINUTES

Date and time: .....

Meeting place: .....

Attended by: .....

Meeting objective: .....

## Agenda and notes:

Topic 1: .....

Topic 2: .....

Topic 3: .....

## Any tasks:

Task	Responsible individual	Deadline
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....

## Next meeting's topics:

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Analysis

The analytical work in our project is centred upon service learning and ESD in an organisation (school, community) and finding ways to enhance service learning and ESD.

### Analysis: What You Want to Change and Why

Do you want to work together to achieve something useful for your community? Do you have a team to work with? Your first analytical goal is to describe how you are doing. Then you will decide in what areas you and your participants want to make a difference and what kind of resources and opportunities you can tap to that end.

*Note: Your analysis may reveal other issues that the team finds more pressing and to which the analysis, especially SWOT analysis, may tend; but this can be a useful finding for the educator team.*

## SWOT Analysis

SWOT is a universal analytical technique for evaluating internal and external factors that influence the success of a given idea. It seeks to identify and subsequently limit weaknesses, enhance strengths, find new opportunities, and recognise threats. An organisation should use the opportunities available and prevent threats.

- Include primarily facts and objective factors, not assumptions or speculations. What you include in your analysis should ideally be measurable. Measurement makes the analysis more relevant.
- Build on teamwork and other people's opinions. Your colleagues will support what's important and objective: only things agreed by several people count.
- Distribute your factors into the four SWOT quadrants.

*Example SWOT analysis from the project:*

### STRENGTHS

- Network (the principal)
- Motivations
- Skills
- Set of ideas
- Contacts/networks (businesses etc.)
- Creativity
- Team spirit
- Dedication

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Being outside with the students
- Nice view
- Supporting the students
- Plants make friendlier interiors

### WEAKNESSES

- Funding
- Too little patience
- Too many opinions
- Too little time
- Planning issues
- Students losing interest

### THREATS

- Class teamwork
- School holidays
- Funding
- Too little time
- Weather (outdoor projects)
- Implementing the idea

**Assess what can be done about it.** Find ways of taking advantage of your situation or, alternatively, improving it. Your SWOT analysis will yield best results with a strategy for implementing follow-up measures. To that end, use the following quadrant-to-quadrant assessment.

- How to use your strengths to tap your opportunities? Use the S–O assessment.
- How to tap your opportunities to eliminate or reduce your weaknesses? Use the W–O assessment.
- How to tap your strengths to avert your threats? Use the S–T assessment.
- How to reduce your threats in relation to your weaknesses? Use the W–T assessment.

## Objectives

To put together a shared educational objective for your teamwork, build on the results of your analysis. Subsequently, your members should define their personal development objectives.

### Team members' personal objectives

Working together with one's colleagues is a learning experience for each team member. One often learns more than in theory courses. Define what you want to learn and what you want to improve at. Reflect on your progress, regularly take a moment to look back and see if this is happening. To that end, use your portfolio: a practical tool that documents your inspirations, educational outputs and activities, thus providing a picture of your progress.

## Defining SMART(ER) objectives

SMART/SMARTER is a mnemonic device used primarily in project management but also in personal development, education etc. It helps us define what we want to achieve so that we can assess whether it has been achieved. Formulate your objectives so that they are:

- **Specific:** You want to know exactly what you want to change and what you want to achieve (e.g., planting a lime tree avenue, traffic calming in front of the school building, renovating a monument, teach students how to examine a text critically, implement facilitation in class...).
- **Measurable:** You want to be able to tell what you have achieved and monitor goal attainment (e.g., plant twenty lime trees, install ten benches, critically analyse five texts, make at least five attempts to facilitate student discussion in class...).
- **Accepted:** All those involved should know and agree with the objective (e.g., get school principal, your local council to sponsor your plan, first survey public opinion, obtain consent from your students, their parents...).
- **Realistic:** You have the capacity to attain the objective (with the help of your partners, colleagues, when deploying existing staff, funds and other capacities...).
- **Timed:** For each objective, define by when it should be attained (e.g., within 12 months, by/during year X...)

For a properly defined objective, all of the above conditions should be met simultaneously.

The project yielded the following examples of shared objectives:

- To work as a team on creating, implementing and reflecting four thematic days for students, parents and the public in the school garden. In the context of each season of the year, we will prepare a set of activities and tasks that can be completed by the end of the academic year.
- To make our school a greener place during one academic year. To demonstrate this through small activities which, however, can have a great impact if we work together. We want the children to begin to understand the complex relationships between them, their actions and the consequences. Or, to quote Jane Goodall: "Each of us makes a difference every day we are on this planet, and we have the choice to use the gift of our lives to make this world a better place".
- Every first Tuesday afternoon in a month, starting in May, we will open to the public an information centre for regional food at our school. This includes organising, once a month, a seasonal marketplace for regional food and other regional products.

## Example personal objective:

I want our students to use the school garden more often for instruction and to explore it in all its seasonal transformations. I also want them to visit the garden not only for their favourite playtime but also for research, observation, testing natural laws etc.

### Practical recommendations:

- Join your colleagues to clarify your respective expectations and define your ideal take-aways from the project: what each of you wants to learn (define both your shared main objective and your personal objectives).
- Explore the competencies developed by your team project and delimit the area in which your interdisciplinary collaboration will take place: which topics can be covered during which lessons, units etc.
- Present your plans to school management and explain how you and your school will benefit from service learning, what kind of objectives and outputs you want your students to attain during project implementation. Clarify your respective needs.

“Having a common goal that we all worked so hard to achieve helped us stay focused most of the time. Still we came up with many additional topics that we wanted to include or workshops that we thought might be interesting if we had time left during the project – as education for sustainable development suddenly appeared to be in everything we did.”

## 1.2 Planning Tools

Team members prepare together – undertake shared planning of their lessons, units, activities etc. – continuously, at regular team meetings. Ideally, the shared plan for your team precedes the planning of individual team members' personal development.

### Team Plan: Approaching Change

Before setting out on your journey, work together to plan it. Define your direction, your goal, write down your halting places and junctions. Your plan is a living material. You are going to adapt it and add details continuously as needed. Just make sure that your plan remains meaningful. And that you own it!

### What should your plan contain?

- names of team members,
- an overarching goal (one related to service learning) that is specific (and SMART if possible),
- the activities that will take you to your objectives,
- a schedule and estimated duration of activities.

## Collaborative Plan

Name of school: .....

Educational programme: Roots & Shoots Slovakia

Project: Educational Leaders in Education for Sustainable development

Duration: September 2019 to June 2020 (extended to Dec. 2020 due to COVID-19)

**1. Project team** .....

Group leader (coordinator): .....

Team members: .....

Consultant: .....

**2. Our motto/vision:** Colleagues and students work together to support the children's personal development and strengthen their confidence so that they realise their ability to perform selfless service to their community.

**3. Our (educational) goal (ESD & SMART):** Use collegial support to make room for collaboration both among teachers (to prove it feasible) and between teachers and the R&S student team. To get all team members actively involved in implementing the ESD project during the academic year of 2019/2020.

**4. Key activities (to attain the goal):**

- regular (weekly) educator meetings for collegial support (3T),
- regular lessons for students (every Tuesday after lunch) with a view to preparing a team R&S project/campaign ,
- regular sessions with the consultant (monthly by e-mail/telephone, every 6-8 weeks in person): mentoring, guidance, discussion, evaluation.

**5. Impact measurement (how to find out whether our goal has been met)**

- educational outputs (a collection of student works, the projects themselves...),
- interviews with the students,
- interviews with the educators (midterm and final evaluation).

## 6. Plan of action

When (month)	R&S step/ Leaders stage	What	When	Who
November 2019	R&S 2019/20, STEP 2: COMMUNITY MAPPING	<p><b>crowdfunding course</b></p> <p><b>regular educator team meetings</b></p> <p><b>regular student team meetings</b></p> <p><b>team mapping retreat</b></p> <p><b>selecting the project topic</b></p> <p><b>questionnaire</b></p> <p><b>consultation with municipal leaders</b></p>	<p>Nov 15</p> <p>Nov 5, 12, 19, 26</p> <p>Nov 5, 12, 19, 26</p> <p>Nov 6, 2019</p> <p>Nov 12, 2019</p> <p>by Nov 19, 2019</p> <p>at the end of the month</p>	<p>Amanda, Melissa, Kimberly</p> <p>Victoria, Melissa, Kimberly</p> <p>everyone</p> <p>everyone</p> <p>everyone</p> <p>Kimberly, Melissa</p> <p>Kimberly or Melissa</p>
December 2019	R&S 2019/20, STEP 3: TAKE ACTION	<p><b>regular educator team meetings</b></p> <p><b>regular consulting sessions</b></p> <p><b>reviewing the selected project site</b></p> <p><b>planning the project implementation options</b></p> <p><b>preparing the campaign schedule</b></p> <p><b>regular student team meetings</b></p>	<p>Dec 3, 10, 17</p> <p>online contact</p> <p>Week 1</p> <p>Week 2</p> <p>Week 3</p> <p>Dec 3, 10, 17</p>	<p>Victoria, Melissa, Kimberly</p> <p>Melissa</p> <p>everyone</p> <p>everyone</p> <p>everyone</p> <p>everyone</p>

### Practical recommendations:

- Start by brainstorming about suitable sites for the lessons that will contribute to the implementation of your project.
- Define your rules of cooperation and communication. Do the same with others involved in the implementation of your project.

## 1.3 Tools for the Implementation Stage

### Forms of collegial support for service-learning programmes:

- One team member implements the lesson and others observe, subsequently provide feedback and suggest how they themselves can follow up on the lesson as part of the planned project.

**Practical recommendations:** In this goal-oriented arrangement, one educator formulates a desired goal and the other educator provides feedback with regard to that goal. It is recommended for the feedback provider to answer a maximum of two questions on a given topic.

- **Co-teaching:** Two colleagues with similar or divergent backgrounds work together. For example, a biologist invites an environmental protection expert or two biology teachers prepare their lessons together, teach them together and subsequently reflect them together.
- **Parallel instruction:** Identically planned lessons are taught by each educator separately with their own group. After the lessons, the planners get together to share their educational outputs, for instance, and reflect what went well and what should be changed before the next lesson.
- **Open lessons:** An educator offers a tested lesson for demonstration to people outside the team. You can do this if you seek feedback on whether your new lesson or method is working. Invite your colleagues or even outsiders to your lesson. At the end of the lesson, take the time to listen to their comments.

*„The Collegial Support method is perfect for science projects. Working with teachers as well as students and creating something great about sustainability and resource conservation seems to me an excellent opportunity to make a difference in environmental issues.“*

### Open event: Presenting your project to the community

It is time to enter the stage and present what you have achieved together. Your open event is for you to conceive, promote and organise. It is open to other local people.

- **Collaborative team teaching:** thematic modules; field trips; station teaching, often with multiple student teams. Such events will facilitate the multidisciplinary implementation of your team project.

#### Practical recommendations:

- Meet regularly. Agree in advance on the date of your meetings and the time you are willing to devote to your project.
- Plan your lessons together. The goal is to make the best lesson plan possible with existing resources: there are no more ideas for improvement and you have explored any doubts that may have come up.

## Your portfolio

Treat your portfolio as a way of measuring your project's impact.

**It may serve as:**

- a tool for personal and team development, professional growth, self-reflection and continued learning,
- a material for team meetings and ongoing planning of your team effort,
- a way of documenting for future reference your preparations and the know-how obtained,
- a practical way for the team to stay on track, avoid getting lost.

### Practical recommendations:

Your portfolio can be kept online, on a shared drive, on paper. It can be illustrated, handwritten... whatever your team is comfortable with.

**Example questions that should be answered in the beginning and kept for reference in the course of your work:**

- *How am I currently doing, how are we doing as a team?*
- *What do I/we want to change?*
- *An outline of my/our procedure*
- *What kind of support do I/we need?*
- *How do we demonstrate meeting our objective? How can we tell if it has been attained?*
- *How is our effort going to impact on the participants?*

**Your portfolio should consist of the following**

- **your team plan and the objectives** you want to attain within a defined time period,
- your portfolio should also contain the **shared plan** for ongoing reference, your meeting notes and follow-up tasks, reflections of your colleague's lesson and their implications for both your colleague and you personally,
- **the materials produced in the course of your effort** that document your journey: your preparations, example completed lesson worksheets, photos of activities,
- **evidence of objective attainment:** copies of student works, completed worksheets, student reflections of your lessons,
- **self-reflection:** reflections organised by lesson, your comments on what may have contributed to your participants' outcomes and what can be changed in future to improve the outcomes or make them available to more participants.

## 1.4 Tools for the Reflection Stage

### I reflect, therefore I am

How do you feel about your portfolio work? Are you using your portfolio for mapping your growth? And how are you doing on your plan's objectives? Are they reflected in your lessons? After spending some time on your project, take a moment to look back and adapt your plan to reality. You may want to change some things, scrap others, or take a detour. Nothing is off limits as long as you know why you're doing it.

**Reflection** is an intentional process. The art of reflection is something that has to be learned. In the process, one works with new experiences, reflecting them and contextualising them in order to make learning more effective in terms of its goal. The reflective exercise should cover the entire time period of your collaboration.

### What to focus on in your reflection

Your reflection may relate to two areas: objectives (i.e. educational content) and learning processes. But feelings can be reflected as well.

#### When reflecting on the attainment of your objectives, think about:

- what a participant has learned about things they did not understand before,
- how it can benefit them, where they might find it useful,
- what remains unclear to them, what answers they would like to know,
- whether they had to change any aspects of their former thinking about the topic.

#### When reflecting on learning processes, think about:

- what helped a participant gain new knowledge,
- which learning methods have (repeatedly) proven useful in certain situations,
- what should be changed before the next lesson because it has not proven useful,
- whether a situation you found confusing emerged during your activity.

### Approaching reflection in practice

Your team should meet as soon as possible after teaching the lesson. Reflect your lesson step by step, review situations and activities with regard to your objective, also review educational outputs. Assess participants' performance and products with regard to your objective. Compare your perspectives to participants' self-evaluations. Try to identify how your participants are doing on an objective, how they are thinking and what they have learned.

### Basic principles of reflecting together

- Your team should reflect as soon as possible after teaching the lesson.
- The goal of your reflection is not only to reach conclusions that are immediately useful for follow-up but also to contribute to ongoing learning (personal development) and to make a lasting difference in the participant's thinking.
- Throughout the process, the educators should record all their notes and materials in their portfolio so that they can later evaluate their procedure and development, then record their conclusions as well.

### Things to remember:

- the art of reflection is not readily available, it requires training,
- it takes time. This needs to be factored in: plan more time for reflection, rather than less,
- one needs to get used to reflection, learn it, recognise its benefits.

### What reflection is not:

- a lecture on any topic,
- a stereotypical experience,
- a discussion between people,
- a shallow account of the qualities of a previous activity (a "what I liked/did not like" questionnaire),
- a technical assessment of the activity's implementation,
- a discussion with a single dominant frame or explanatory model used for a phenomenon or behaviour,
- individual psychotherapy

## Reflecting your project upon its conclusion

Summarise what went well and what requires more work. Take inventory of your personal and team objectives, portfolios, plan and analysis. What has changed, what have you learned and which aspects are you going to benefit from in the following years? And what is going to happen to your team? It is only up to you whether this is it or there will be another plan.

*„Collegial Support can absolutely be recommended. Not only is the learning factor of all participants, pupils as well as educators, considerably higher but in spite of all the circumstances, fun and joy were not neglected either during the whole project duration. An enormous plus of this method is the possibility to get to know one's pupils and colleagues better and in a totally different way. This would never have happened so intensively during everyday school life.“*

### Example Feedback Methods:

#### 1/ Reflective Process Guide

The reflective process guide can be a useful tool for reflection. It recommends how to proceed reflecting step by step. Full compliance is not necessary: one always adapts to the constraints of time, activity duration, and why we seek reflection in the first place.

- Description of the situation: The steps you have taken
- Feelings (emotions): How did you feel? When did you feel good and when bad? Why so?
- What did you learn? (And did you meet your objectives?)
- What worked well so that you can repeat it next time? What did not work and should be done differently next time? And how?
- Describe a specific benefit. What is your takeaway? How are you going to use it?

! If necessary, make sure to allow everyone to “vent” their emotions before the process begins.

#### **Practical recommendations:**

Watch the following three things:

- DURATION: You have 15 minutes for your reflection
- SPEAKING TIME: Each team member should have a say
- TOPIC: Keep track of your session's goal (to identify successful aspects of communication)

#### 2/ Instructions for the five fingers method

- On an A5 or A4 sheet of paper, trace the outline of your hand (your palm with fingers).
- Write down your name inside the palm.
- Inside each finger, write down your answers depending on what you think about today's lesson.
- Write legibly so that you or someone else can review your text later.
- If nothing comes to mind with regard to a finger, go on to another finger. You can return to this finger later.

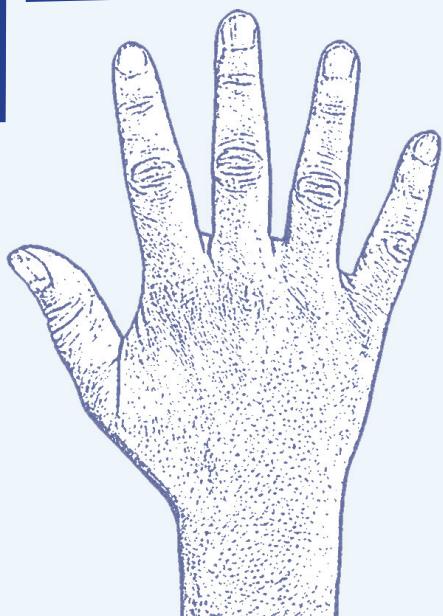
**INDEX FINGER:** It typically points to something that deserves attention or is important. Write down here what you found relevant about the topic, what needs to be remembered.

**THUMB:** Giving someone the thumbs up signals that it's going to be all right. Write down here what you liked, what you appreciated.

**MIDDLE FINGER:** Showing it to someone is quite unflattering and therefore we don't do it. Yet the topic or the presentation may have contained something that made you upset, something you were not comfortable with. Write it down inside the middle finger.

**RING FINGER:** Since it is used for wedding rings, among others, it serves as a place for emotions, feelings. Write down what touched you, what you identified with, what brought out your emotions, what was your kind of spirit.

**PINKY:** In the popular rhyme, a little piggy cried 'wee wee wee'. Write down what would have deserved more attention, what was not sufficiently explained etc.



### 3/ The Mini Survival Kit Method

Show a series of items (or photographs thereof) – a USB flash drive, keys, an eraser, a candle, a battery. Ask the following questions:

-  USB flash drive: What did you save?
-  Keys: What opened up for you?
-  Eraser: What would you remove?
-  Candle: What enlightened you?
-  Battery: What helped you recharge?

Other methods of reflection may include reflective cards or pictures.

**Practical recommendations:** When you are done teaching a lesson (unit, activity), get together to reflect. Spend enough time for each step on your pathway through the project. Keep in mind which steps you are dealing with and what kind of objectives or competencies they are supposed to develop. Start your reflection by looking back at how your participants did in class, what helped them succeed, what hampered them.

## 2. Case Studies

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the activities implemented during the Leaders Project. All the contributions were written by the educators themselves. The goal is to share experiences, demonstrate how specifically collegial support and service learning can be implemented, but also to suggest any pitfalls and possible ways of addressing them. The international team yielded two examples from the Czech Republic, two from Slovakia and two from Austria. This diverse sample provides a valuable set of experiences and approaches from different social-political contexts that may be inspiring for a broad spectrum of this guidebook's readers. At the same time, as reflected by the educators in their texts, some parts of the implementation process were influenced by the difficult situation caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

### Bildungscampus Sonnwendviertel (Austria)

Melanie Schultmeyer and Desiree Heidenreich

Together with our mentors and two of our colleagues, we were able to undertake various projects. The children decided to build a hamster house for the hamsters in our school garden and they wanted to raise money by selling upcycled goods at the school's Christmas market. Additionally, we built outdoor furniture using old pallets and made our garden greener by reusing old tires as flowerpots. The team and the children were highly dedicated because of all the small achievements made throughout the project. It was important to us to make the children see that everything in life is connected somehow and that we need to take care of nature and animals in order to have a good life ourselves. It was an amazing experience to see what is possible when people work together to create something. Of course, planning took a lot of work and we faced some obstacles during the process but reflexion and regular team meetings helped to find solutions for everything. We would definitely do it again. We are all very proud of the project results and are looking forward to celebrating as soon as that will be possible again.



“

*„For all those who want to try a service-learning project, we have one more thing to share: In the beginning we only saw the workload that we were facing and we did not know where to begin. We felt overwhelmed with all the small steps and the duration of a whole year. But making a plan on who could take over which part helped us a lot and small achievements kept us all going even if we did not manage to finish everything. So our final words to you: It is not important to do things perfectly, it is important to try! We believe in you.“*

”



## BG BRG Purkersdorf (Austria)

Sigrid Lichtenwallner and Tatjana Bauer

The project started with the students' idea of "greening" our school building with different plants to change the atmosphere positively. Fortunately, our two consultants and several teachers helped us with the implementation. In order to collect money for the required materials, the project class organized an afternoon where many of the school's younger children baked gingerbread, which was sold at the school's Christmas bazaar. On several project days, the students were able to build pallet furniture and flowerboxes themselves and plant in them seedlings they had grown themselves. Our greatest goal, a green vertical wall with living plants, could unfortunately not be completed due to the pandemic. But we are hoping to finally achieve this goal with the help of several colleagues and even the parent-teacher association.

The project was not only educational, but also brought us teachers closer to the students – it was a really nice and highly personal experience. During one school year, we could witness not only the evolution of the project but also the development of thinking and problem solving in our students.

In order to implement such a huge project, there have to be precise planning and many motivated team members. This was often a great challenge, but in the end, we are very proud of the goals we have achieved. We are really looking forward to project completion and the celebration, which we would have planned already! :-)

“

*"The results and the emotion respectively emerge after having achieved together something really great, having reached the goal. Looking back as a team at the long way travelled together, the efforts quickly recede into the background. With this in mind: Try things out, learn from our mistakes, make your own mistakes, fall down, get up, go on! None of this matters as long as you work as a team!"*

”



## Košice School of Applied Arts (Slovakia)

Ing. Zuzana Samčíková

The reason for getting involved in the project was to become leaders by improving teacher cooperation. Our teacher team planned most of the project in the hallways because we have difficult schedules and the planning of meetings was generally the most difficult thing in the project. We had very good cooperation with the school psychologist about student team leadership and motivation.

Our student team had two ideas for the project: either green plant walls for the PC rooms or an educational set for handicapped children: a folder book for children, a calendar, a flowerpot, a stand, seed and soil. The notice board was a very good tool for us: we used it for information and voting for ideas. Our students chose the set for handicapped children. Then they devised the name of the book by the notice board: the mascot's final name is Plantik.

Using online sources, we prepared a campaign for the StartLab crowdfunding portal. In the time of distance education, the students had to try working in small groups with the teacher team. Teachers and alumni prepared the StartLab campaign video. We contacted schools to check their interest in the educational aid and one of our students went to a school for handicapped children in Liptovsky Mikulas to take pictures. Some good ideas, like the plant stand and others, were not realised because our students could not study and work at school. Some good ideas, like the plant stand and others, were not realised because our students could not study and work at school.

The crowdfunding method used this year in the project served as a valuable practical example for the course of Practical Economics. 17- and 18-year-old students liked the practical demonstration and found crowdfunding to be applicable to their professional lives as artists. We are excited to have prepared a very nice project, one useful for us as well as for the children.

**“** „We found out that together we can bring ourselves to begin and finish what we can do. As Diana Ross aptly noted: ‘You know, you do need mentors, but in the end, you really just need to believe in yourself.’ And I believe this applies to the teacher and student teams alike.” **”**



## Slatina nad Bebravou Primary School (Slovakia)

Ing. Mária Duláková

We are a small school with approximately 100 pupils from the small village of Slatina nad Bebravou and eight surrounding villages. All of us teachers and most of our pupils took turns participating. The Green Foundation also invited us to join the Team Leaders project.

First of all, we took a list of teachers who wanted to get involved in the project. There are three of us volunteering, the project is not included in the curriculum, we chose to meet regularly, once a week after classes. Our project is supported by the principal but this kind of project-based teaching is not foreseen in the curriculum of the school or any subject area. This is why we agreed to meet with our students on a voluntary basis, at school after classes. Our team consists of 7th and 8th graders. In the beginning, after a few sessions, we picked a community in which we wanted to do our project. After visiting that community, we brainstormed what could be changed, improved. And only then came the final decision on the project our pupils chose for the academic year: to renovate the municipal library of Timoradza. We slowly worked our way through the planning of the successive steps: visiting the library and taking measurements, visiting the local mayor and informing the locals at a council meeting. Each session with the pupils was preceded by one among us educators. Some pupils found this preparatory and theoretical part too abstract and dull; they lost their motivation and interest, with some gradually dropping out. When the new year began, we finally got back on track and the pupils knew what they were supposed to do, then came March and a three-month break due to the coronavirus. It was demanding, everything pretty much came to a halt. Then we went right on to the summer holiday. So for half a year, we did not see one another and made no progress.

In September 2020, we gradually got our project going and once again, before the campaign was launched, our pupils stayed at home. We started a WhatsApp group for communication and we are slowly carrying on.

Our StartLab campaign is just finishing and we have successfully raised the target sum. We are about to invite local businesses to help us with the paint job by donating some material etc. We are preparing rewards for our supporters, and still ahead of us is the demanding physical, and certainly dynamic, part of the project.

“

*“We opened up a new topic: Our projects are more successful and more attractive for the community when they are included in the educational process.”*

”



## Lukavice Primary School (Czech Republic)

Mgr. Jitka Hájková

We have been cooperating with SEVER – The Rýchory Centre of Environmental Education and Ethics for a long time. We were invited to join SEVER's project and work on a team project at our school. Since we are a small collective, we often work in this way. Regardless, we found this to be an opportunity to advance our collaboration even more.

Building the team was easy. It consists of all form tutors of the primary school and the afterschool care educator. This is how we're used to working together. Another challenge was to define our goals, both personal ones and ones for the team. Given the need to spend more class time outside, we chose increasing the use of the school garden for lessons to be our main goal. Thus far, the garden was primarily used for recreation, extracurricular gatherings, and teaching practical subjects.

We defined the theme of our project as THE SCHOOL GARDEN'S FOUR SEASONS. All our efforts were to culminate in four thematic days. Therefore, we got together and started planning. Then we did some more planning. And planning is what we mostly have done so far.

The first thematic day that we planned together, WINTER in the School Garden, was called off due to bad weather. There was no snow. The second thematic day, SPRING in the School Garden, was planned at the time the Czech government started passing lockdown measures to combat the pandemic. We eventually implemented it through distance learning, formulating different garden challenges for the students (in the fields of arts, research, sports, and using all the senses to explore one's garden). This challenge worked out well and gave us an unexpected boost.

INDIAN SUMMER in the School Garden was the first thematic day that we all implemented together in the school garden. We did not hesitate and as early as on September 8, we ran out into the garden to take casts of our traces, do some research, roast some apples, crawl through the spider's web etc. The weather was favourable, the objectives were met.

The final thematic day was again called off due to the nationwide school lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Our AUTUMN in the School Garden is ready. As soon as the weather permits, we and the children will venture out to explore the autumn face of our garden. We are hoping to make it before winter sets in.

We are going to keep developing our collegial lessons as much as we can and take them wherever we will be allowed to go...



“What was beneficial about our involvement in the project? We are better able to listen to one another and work together as a team, something that is also reflected in our work with students.”

## Zbyslavice Primary School (Czech Republic)

**Mgr. Iveta Buryanová**

At the beginning of the projects, my colleagues and I defined a plan with the activities that we intended to accomplish during the year. One of the tasks was meeting with my colleagues every month, debating our teaching portfolio and the project activities for children, and mutual collegial support during peer observation.

It was the development goal of our school to create two to four outdoor project activities, to embed the topics in our neighbourhood, to raise awareness of ecosystems among students, to acquaint them with the history and surroundings of their village, and to integrate all that in our lessons. We conducted two project activities on the topics of water and local transportation. We found it practical to cooperate across grades and to divide students into smaller groups. The activities were concluded with an evaluation and feedback session at the level of both students and educators. The projects shed light on different ways of planning and how to approach topics and goals from a different perspective. During the portfolio making session, we realised that maintaining one's professional portfolio is a worthwhile activity, one closely related to defining one's goals. This is where collegial support comes in. Thus, we learned how to appreciate one another, ask open-ended questions and provide mentor-like feedback on any weaknesses.

In the project, we embraced collegial support in planning our project activities, some of which can be applied in afterschool care as well. Despite the project's time requirements, our students loved the experiments – something we may want to prepare more often. Collegial support made the process of defining objectives easier and more reasonable. Shared activities and smaller groups of students helped us get to know our students better.

“

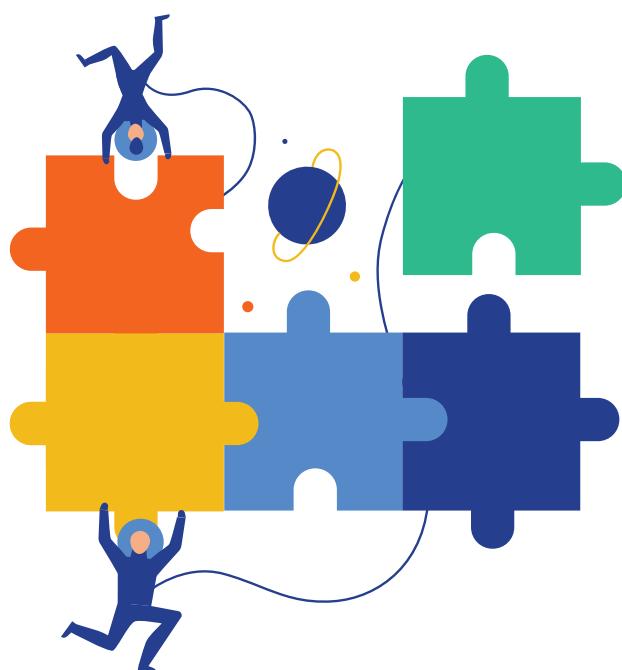
*“We opened new topics related to the goals and vision of the school as a whole. We discussed one another's ideas, personal goals, what we'd like to change about the school's operation and teaching and what we can do to make that happen.”*

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## Managing Educator Team Collaboration for Service-Learning Projects

Approaches to Service Learning Tested in the School for Sustainable Living and Roots & Shoots Programmes under the Collegial Support Project “Educational Leaders in Education for Sustainable Development”

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Středisko ekologické výchovy SEVER Horní Maršov, o.p.s.

Green Foundation, nadácia

Jane Goodall Institut - Austria

Created under project No. 2018-1-CZ01-KA204-048166 Educational Leaders in Education for Sustainable Development

Year of publication: 2021

Book design: Zora Mazáčová

Download your copy at [www.skolaprozivot.cz](http://www.skolaprozivot.cz)

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The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

