

1

Connecting Classrooms to Communities: An Introduction to Place-Based Learning



Interview with Jiří Kulich, expert in Place-Based Learning

What is Place-Based Learning and how does it differ from other educational approaches?

Jiří Kulich: *Place-Based Learning uses the local environment as a unifying context for learning – meaning that everything we need to learn can be learned through the place. It connects learning with local nature, culture and community. It strengthens the relationship with a place, supports cooperation between schools and local residents, and contributes to the development of active citizenship.*

Place-Based Learning is not only learning about a place or learning outdoors. It is also learning through place – where the place becomes a means of understanding broader social issues and connections, such as climate change. At the same time, it is learning for place, where students work on real topics and the results of their work can contribute to the quality of life in their surroundings.

What principles are behind Place-Based Learning?

Place-Based Learning works with twelve principles that help teachers think about how to use place meaningfully in education.

If you are starting with Place-Based Learning, there is no need to immediately create large projects. I would recommend starting with an activity about the place that you already do in your teaching and considering whether you can include another principle. For example, whether students can only get to know the place, or whether they can also look for connections, cooperate with people from the local area, or propose solutions to real problems.

How can teachers gradually integrate Place-Based Learning into teaching?

The principles of Place-Based Learning can be incorporated into teaching at different levels depending on the teacher's experience and the readiness of students.

We can start with simpler activities, for example by enriching teaching with local examples and connections. Gradually, we can move towards more demanding activities – such as field trips around the local area, working with local experts, or using local resources in teaching.

With growing experience, more complex projects can emerge, in which students cooperate with the community on real challenges and look for solutions that have meaning for their surroundings.

What can specific projects based on Place-Based Learning look like?

There are many possibilities. Students can participate, for example, in restoring green spaces and neglected areas, creating recreational places, caring for water bodies, organising climate awareness activities, or projects focused on upcycling.

Such projects connect schools, local authorities and communities. They create important partnerships and give students the experience that their work has a real meaning. For teachers, these activities can be more demanding in terms of preparation and coordination, but they bring students greater purpose, motivation and a deeper learning experience.

Does a school have to start with a large community project?

No, it is not necessary to start with a large project. Even a simple local stimulus can become a learning space.

If you feel that there is nothing in your municipality that could be used in teaching, try looking, for example, at a church. It offers topics ranging from architecture, history and geology, through acoustics, rituals and spatial orientation, to the nature surrounding it.

A river, a railway station or another local place can serve as inspiration as well. Each of these places opens opportunities for connecting different subjects and developing different competencies.

The important thing is to look for the phenomenon, the treasure of the place – a unique phenomenon, event, person, story or reality that is characteristic of that particular place.

How can teachers find a suitable place as a source of learning?

Try to ask yourself: What is your local phenomenon? What is unique about your place? What stories do these places offer? Every place has its own story and can become an opportunity for exploration, inquiry and connecting the school with the surrounding world. The teacher's role is not only to provide information, but to help students discover the place, understand it and find ways to care for it.

Why is place so important in education?

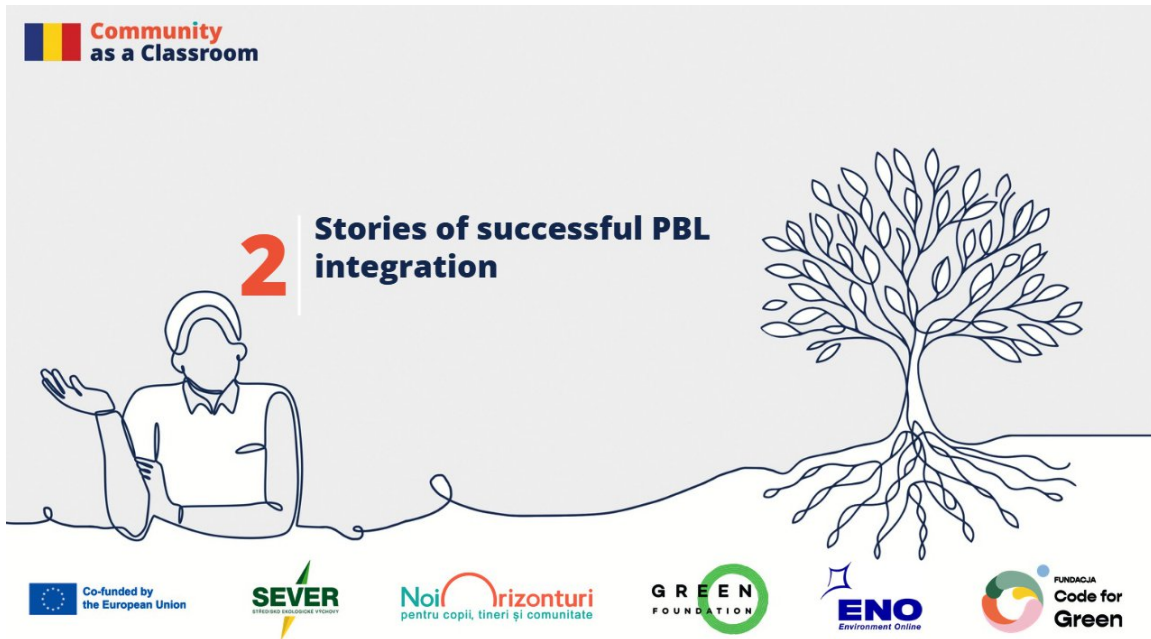
When students develop a relationship with a place, they strengthen their sense of belonging – to their community and to the world around them. Place-Based Learning brings understanding, the joy of discovery and the desire to explore. Above all, it gives students the experience that they can truly make a difference. Students are not only recipients of information. They become people who know their place, understand it and can contribute to its future.

What message would you give to teachers who want to start with Place-Based Learning?

Look at the places that your students carry in their hearts. What stories do these places offer? How can you transform them together with your students? Connect learning with place and community. In doing so, you will strengthen not only students' knowledge and skills, but also their courage to search for solutions and create meaningful change.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Romania
 Organisation: Noi Orizonturi Foundation
 Contributors: educational experts, teachers, programme managers

What is Place-Based Learning?

Alina Mustata, educational expert: *PBL is a new understanding of space that provides us with learning. This space extends from the level of a classroom concept, within a school, to understanding that the place surrounding us the community, which includes people, places, spaces, objects, nature, and the environment offers all these possibilities to explore and discover. These are the opportunities that allow us to learn about, for, and through these places, objects, and people, in order to connect from this micro-universe to the wider space, in the universe around us, and to understand things about other countries, other people, and other cultures.*

What are the easily replicable aspects of Place-Based Learning?

David Pirneci, History and Social Education Teacher: *Teamwork. In our community, people work very well in teams, and they are eager to explore this skill. As a teacher, I have managed to correlate the content much more effectively with the students' real-life context, making connections between content and students' reality. Then, every time students presented what they accomplished in teams, the other members provided*

positive feedback by highlighting three positive aspects they observed in the project and one aspect that could be improved.

What were the students' reactions?

Rodica Arapu, French language teacher: *I was surprised and, I can say, truly delighted to see students who were previously less active in the classroom suddenly very eager to work and respond.*

David Pirneci, History and Social Education Teacher: *After students completed activities using the Action Bound application, I noticed how well they work in teams, and by the end of the first activity, they wanted to do PBL again the following week. And this motivation came from them, not from us.*

Place-Based Learning without significant resources?

David Pirneci: *First of all, they need to see this method as a challenge, an internal challenge that leads to much more effective results.*

Rodica Arapu: *I taught expressing what you like and dislike in the schoolyard, so in the park, using pebbles, leaves, color schemes, and trees, and it was free. At the library, I used what was available there, bookshelves, tables and could teach in the same way without spending anything. My physics colleague used the school sports field, running tracks, and the children brought measuring tapes from home, again at zero cost.*

How does Place-Based Learning improve teaching?

Rodica Arapu: *A major benefit of changing teaching was the exploitation, in a positive sense, of creativity. A teacher designing lessons using this methodology is forced to reinvent themselves, working with what they have.*

David Pirneci: *Firstly, I used the reflection journal much more often, almost every history lesson. After that, I integrated student feedback much more effectively.*

What impressed you about improved teaching?

Maria Butyka, general director New Horizons Foundation: *I think what impressed me most is that PBL methods help children think critically, be very curious, and be amazed at how many fantastic things exist in their community that they would never have considered and perhaps would not have used without guidance in the learning process. I believe this is the strength of the methodology itself.*

Benefits brought to the school by the Place-Based Learning methodology

Alina Mustata, educational expert: *Place-Based Learning* The benefits for a school implementing this methodology occur at all levels. Students are more motivated to learn, more engaged, and easily develop their competencies.

Teachers acquire new skills, such as interdisciplinary teaching, which increases their motivation, sense of purpose, and joy.

The school gains highly engaged teams of teachers who are capable of implementing projects and attracting new resources, continuing this cycle of learning, joy, and motivation for both teachers and students.

How did the Place-Based Learning methodology reach the New Horizons Foundation?

Maria Butyka, general director New Horizons Foundation: *At the Noi Orizonturi Foundation, we rely heavily on experiential learning and service-learning for the community, and Place-Based Learning is a much broader umbrella that includes community service. The Service Learning project represents the highest level a child can reach when aiming to address real community needs and become a problem solver.*

We realized that it is very challenging for Romanian children to truly examine community needs and perform real analysis, while also needing to stay connected to the community. Therefore, PBL-specific methods are used in Impact clubs or schools where we run Service Learning to help children spend more time analyzing community needs, identifying values, and mapping resources.

For teachers who have not implemented Place-Based Learning

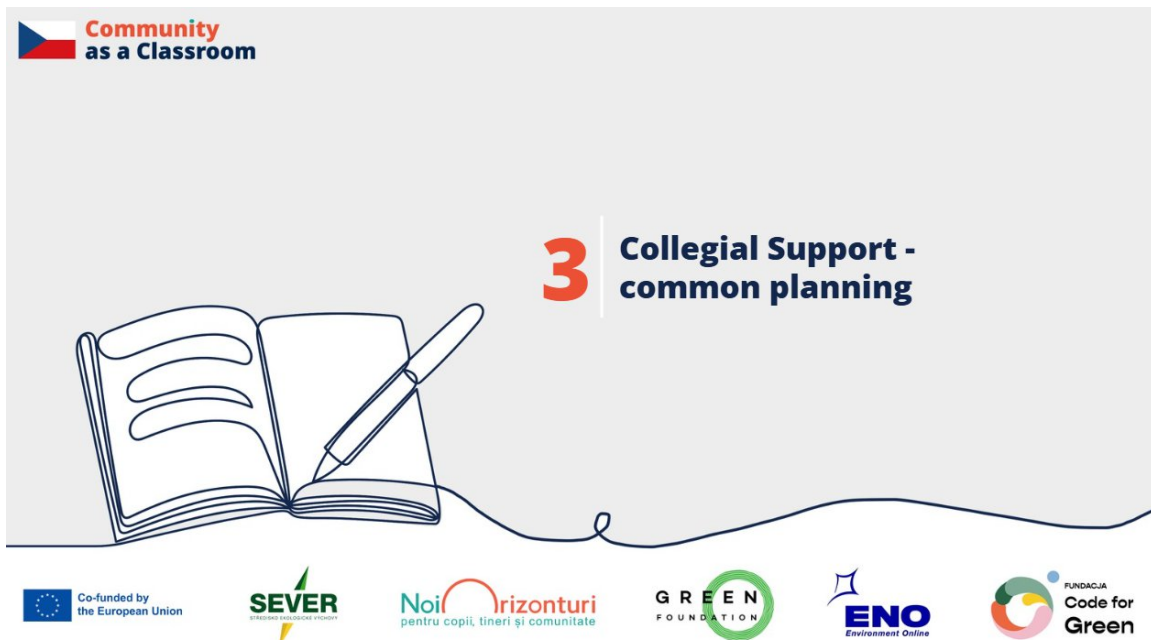
Andreea Tabun, program manager New Horizons Foundation: *I would tell teachers to have the courage to try, above all, because it is an extremely valuable tool that helps them teach their subject better, helps students connect more closely with the school by learning from a community space, and creates stronger relationships between the community and the school, as well as between students, teachers, and the community.*

David Pirneci: *Although it may seem difficult to implement at first, this method forces you to overcome any obstacle to become a learning facilitator, not just a content deliverer. This barrier can be easily overcome through teamwork and implementing projects with the help of students.*

Rodica Arapu: *My message would be: dare to try. You will have more engaged students, more interesting lessons, guaranteed student motivation, and if you take full advantage of the space around you, it tells you what you need and what is not useful. Learning is possible through place anytime and anywhere. Success!*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





What is collegial support and what forms can it take?

Jakub Vebr, methodological expert, SEVER Centre:
Collegial support can take different forms of cooperation. In short, it can be described as the 3Cs: collaborative planning, collaborative learning and collaborative reflection.

It is a partnership between two or more teachers who try out new approaches that can have the greatest impact on each student's learning. They create together, solve problems together and learn together.

What motivated you, as school leadership, to introduce collegial support at your school?

Mgr. Daniela Havelková, Deputy Headteacher, Primary School no. 4 Jičín:
It was probably necessary because we are a large school. We have talented people who try to share their work. They have always talked to each other and cooperated a little bit "secretly".

And we wanted to bring this cooperation to the surface. That is why there is a certain gentle pressure from the leadership to ensure that people actually meet regularly and in an organised way and plan ahead.

It also helped us greatly that we have now been involved for the fifth year in the project "Helping Schools Succeed", where sharing and collegial support are one of the main pillars of learning.

We consider learning from each other much more beneficial. We have open lessons, for example classroom observations, which other teachers can also attend.

And I think, actually I know, that we are already at the stage where teachers say: “We actually no longer need organised training.”

Because in this way we learn much more. We see teaching directly. Or we can even record it and look at it in more detail. Then we reflect on the whole lesson and teachers really learn much more there than in regular training.

So at the beginning it may have been a certain external pressure, but the ground was already prepared. That is the credit of the school leadership.

What are the main principles of successful collegial planning?

Jakub Vebr, methodological expert, SEVER Centre:
It is definitely regular meetings, a clear shared goal, dedicated time and full attention given to the goal, and a safe environment that is important to build together. Start small – with a few people you understand and with whom you can cooperate well.

How does collegial support work at your school?

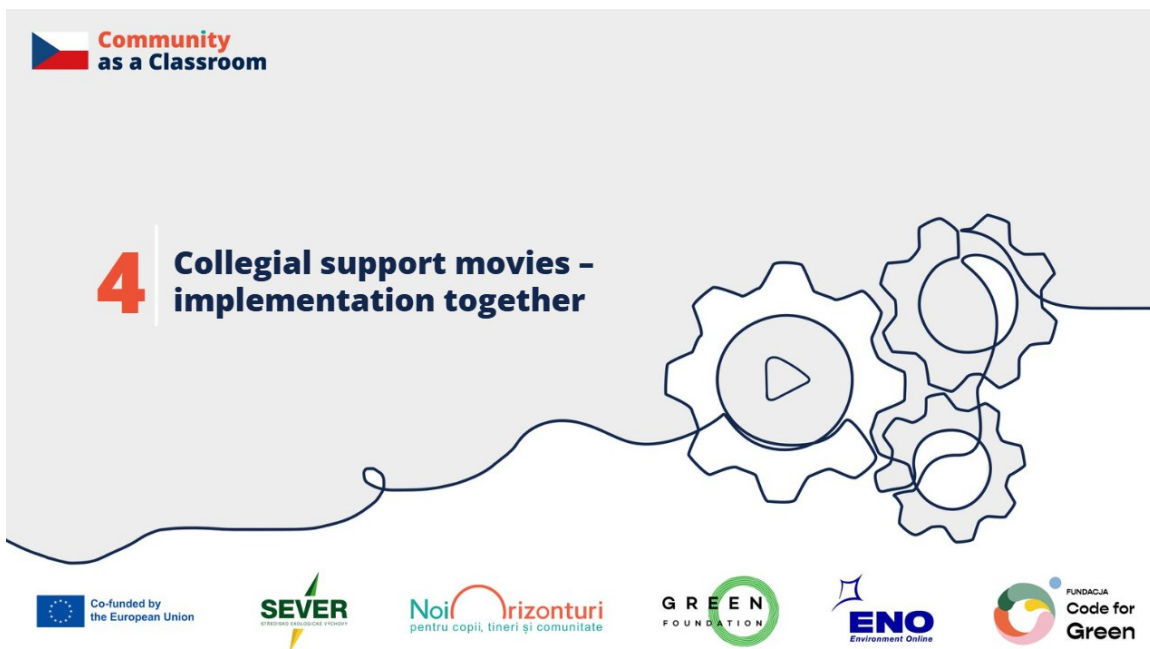
Jan Havelka, teacher, Primary School no. 4 Jičín:
We regularly meet in a small four-member team where we share our ideas and suggestions. Then we move them further to methodological meetings.

Eva Budínská, teacher, Primary School no. 4 Jičín:
For several years now, regular meetings of teachers from primary and lower secondary levels have taken place once a month. This is where we try to present our main ideas. But what happens afterwards depends on my colleagues. They come up with something new.

We share our main vision – where we want to go, what we expect from it and what we can do to achieve it.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Collegial support among colleagues is the foundation on which we build quality teaching and effective change in schools. Together, we can inspire one another, share experiences and create an environment where every pupil finds support.

How can collaboration among colleagues be the key to successfully introducing changes in schools?

Eva Budínská, Primary School Jičín: *Two heads are better than one. Yes. We can transfer other people's ideas into our own field or subject, for example, and I think it is beneficial for children as well.*

Jakub Vebr, Methodologist at the SEVER Centre: *Collaborative teaching can take various forms depending on the level of cooperation, the number of teachers involved and the aims of the lesson. One example is joint lesson planning. Teaching takes place together, followed by shared reflection.*

Another form is tandem teaching, where teachers lead a lesson together. They either take equal roles or one of them takes a more observational role. A specific form is an open lesson, which allows colleagues who are not usually involved in the teaching to attend. They observe the lesson and provide feedback. In longer-term projects, different subjects are connected, which makes interdisciplinary cooperation suitable. A team of teachers focuses on one topic from multiple perspectives.

What project was created through collegial collaboration at your school?

Eva Budínská, Primary School Jičín: Together, we created the project “With Number Four to the Summit”. During the nine years of compulsory schooling, pupils visit a different hill or mountain in each year. At first, these are located in the town and its surroundings, and gradually the area expands. In the ninth year, we finish at Sněžka, the highest mountain. However, we created this as a pilot programme, which all first-grade classes will go through.

How do you evaluate it?

Eva Budínská, Primary School Jičín: I think it is great. Along the way, we have twelve stations that introduce different topics connected with the mountain – its history, geology, and we have even involved English, German, mathematics and Czech language.

Every shared project, meeting or experience brings new energy and transforms the school. Let us learn to listen to each other and to the place where we live. This is where real change begins.

What has the project on collegial collaboration and place-based learning brought you?

Šárka Sattlerová, Primary School Býšť: Thanks to the project, we are also closer to nature because we are trying to truly notice the places around us and bring them into the school environment. It leads everyone towards a sense of responsibility for the place where we live, and this is where we see its meaning.

We have built new friendships because we are a very large school and there are many teachers whom I only meet occasionally. By getting everyone involved and by everyone contributing, new relationships and new friendships have been created, which is great.



Country: Slovakia
 Organisation: Green Foundation
 Contributors: teachers, school principals

How did the reflection and assessment process support your team's learning and cooperation?

Teaching team from Private Grammar School Dneperská, Košice, Slovakia:

Teacher 1: *The assessments were an interesting form, so I really liked that our mentor in this project prepared such activities where we didn't actually know what we wanted, we just answered and we came up with things that wouldn't have occurred to us at first moment. It also bonded us, I mean so collegially, that we found breakthroughs, and maybe some new doors opened for us.*

The second thing is that things that wouldn't have occurred to us at first and the assessments were mostly positive. We also found a few, I don't know if I would call them negatives, but things that we can improve in the future, change slightly and make it even better, so for me those assessments were always beneficial.

Teacher 2: *It was also interesting that we had these meetings in different places, at the Zvolen Castle, and in the east of Slovakia in Ecocenter SOSNA, and it always had some connection with that place where we were and that was also nice about it.*

Teacher 3: *I think we've moved forward as individuals, but also as a whole team, mainly because our minds have been opened to how to teach children in a place based way. So that children understand the environment they're in during those lessons and so that they can go deeper into the topic at specific moments in that lesson.*

What is the key to successful collaboration in Place-Based Learning?

School Principal, Detva Primary School: *So, we worked together on the preparations of lessons according to the topics and according to the grades. We always agreed in advance in some informal conversation what it would be about, what we wanted to prepare.*

Then we set aside some moments together, really in today's busy time there is no extra free time. But we always found some moments together where we actually met formally with a plan, an intention and according to what we agreed. Basically, in the discussion we resolved what would happen in which grade, in which class.

Teacher 1, Detva Primary School: *Since I started participating in projects where more people are working, I've found that it's much more enriching for me.*

What did you value most about collegial cooperation?

Teacher 1, Private Grammar School Dneperská: *What I liked most was that we each brought our own element to it, we came up with an idea and we weren't like, "It can't be done", we had been in the mode: „let's try." We found a lot of connections and they were beneficial meetings because we enriched each other mainly in cross-curricular ways. We also found a lot of overlap between individual subjects and therefore it moved us forward in this project.*

Teacher 1, Detva Primary School: *Interdisciplinarity brings a mirror to teachers' rooms. Suddenly, it is not enough to be only an expert. Respect, communication, tolerance, but also effective planning and reflection are important too.*

What would you recommend to teachers who are starting with collegial support?

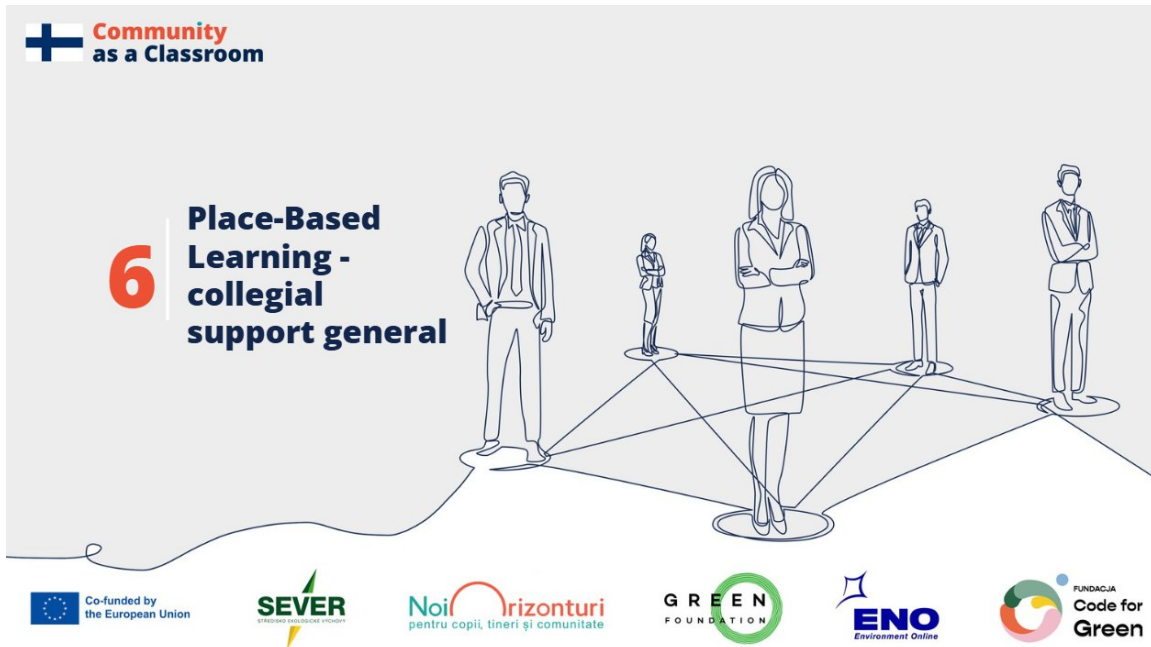
School Principal, Detva Primary School: *I would advise teachers who are just starting out with this kind of collaboration not to be afraid of new things, but to go for it. It is a*

completely new way of learning, the feedback received from the students was very good, we teachers also learned a lot, for example, that it is useful to look at one topic from multiple perspectives.

Teacher 2, Private Grammar School Dneperská: *So, in my opinion, the school leadership is essential, then there is the collective of teachers who want to work on it, but of course we do it all for the children.*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Finland
 Organisation: ENO Environment Online
 Contributors: teachers

How can collaboration, sharing feedback and supporting one another transform the teaching experience?

Sami Rätty, The Utra School: *There were actually four of us on this team, three class teachers and one special education teacher. We worked very closely together throughout the entire project, meaning we had to align the schedules of four teachers and then also the schedules of three classes. That was of course a challenge at times, but we managed it well. The tasks were divided evenly among everyone, and everyone had their own role, which each person carried through successfully. I didn't see any problems in how we implemented this. We managed to coordinate the collaboration well.*

We simply took whatever lesson it was that day, whatever subject, - and if it was agreed upon we integrated the project work into it. So, there were of course challenges at times when coordinating a large group, but in my opinion we succeeded, overall it went quite well.

Henna Hulmi: *Teamwork at grade level is already strong at our school, which made this easier. I personally also felt that it worked very well, responsibilities were shared based on individual strengths. There was always someone who took more of a leading role, but planning was done together.*

Mike Miikkola: *Regarding grade-level teamwork, we have a meeting time scheduled once a week in our timetable, so in that sense, we come together once a week anyway, which made it easier to discuss these things. Of course, it does take time away from other subjects, where it would also be needed, but it helped, because we had that time reserved once a week in the schedule.*

Anni Joronen, The Marjala School: *We had our grade-level team, meaning my colleague Sanni-Kaisa and I planned and held meetings together. In addition to that, other Green Flag School -teachers and other staff members were involved as well. We also had a multidisciplinary learning week related to the local environment.*

Teachers from the entire school participated, with some activity stations planned by other teachers. Some were planned together as a whole school, so there was a lot of close collaboration.

Janne Salin, The Kontioniemi School: *Collaboration went extremely well, and in everyday weekly life, we work together constantly with other teachers and adults. From planning lessons to learning modules. This felt like a very natural part of the process. In my view, the workload was shared evenly, and responsibilities were always clearly considered according to the situation. Later on, when a third person joined to plan these sessions, we again sat down together and discussed how to proceed and who would take responsibility for each area.*

Jaana Räisänen, The Normaalikoulu Secondary School: *We were two biology and geography subject teachers, and our team worked very well. We were both present in all lessons, planning and reflecting together what to do next?*

There was no strict division of tasks, - except perhaps when contacting someone, one of us would contact one place, and the other another, so there was some sharing of communication. But it worked well for us. That was probably because we were both subject teachers sharing the same workspace making scheduling easy, and our lessons were scheduled at the same time at the beginning, which also helped.

How can school management support and encourage the implementation of Place-Based Learning?

Mike Miikkola: *School management gave us free rein. We worked independently together as a grade level, and we did not request special support. Nor was it specifically provided, nor were we restricted. We had the freedom to work, although of course it is limited by working hours, and obtaining paid extra time or to get separate compensation is quite difficult.*

Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: *The school management responded very positively and strongly encouraged us to participate. This method clearly supported our school's values and practices so it was seen as a very positive initiative.*

Sanna Huovinen: *With the approval of school management we embarked on this project, and they also provided concrete support, especially in arranging the timetable in a way that made joint projects possible. It is very important to feel that the management is involved.*

Jaana Räisänen: *School management was interested in hearing about what we had done, that we had taken part in such a project and perhaps made students' or youths' voices heard beyond our school.*

When there were joint meetings with other schools, we were able to arrange substitute teachers, so resources were found that way. And then of course the timetables were also arranged so that lessons could be held simultaneously.

What would you recommend to teachers who are starting with Place-Based Learning?

Mike Miikkola: *We cannot just do activities; learning must take place. Good advance planning and time allocated for it, - as my colleague Sami mentioned, a place in the timetable, how the project continues to provide a framework for implementation and progress.*

Anni Joronen: *Planning takes time and effort, especially when implementing outdoor learning. You need ideas and guidance, and that requires time and effort. We noticed that it demanded much more from us.*

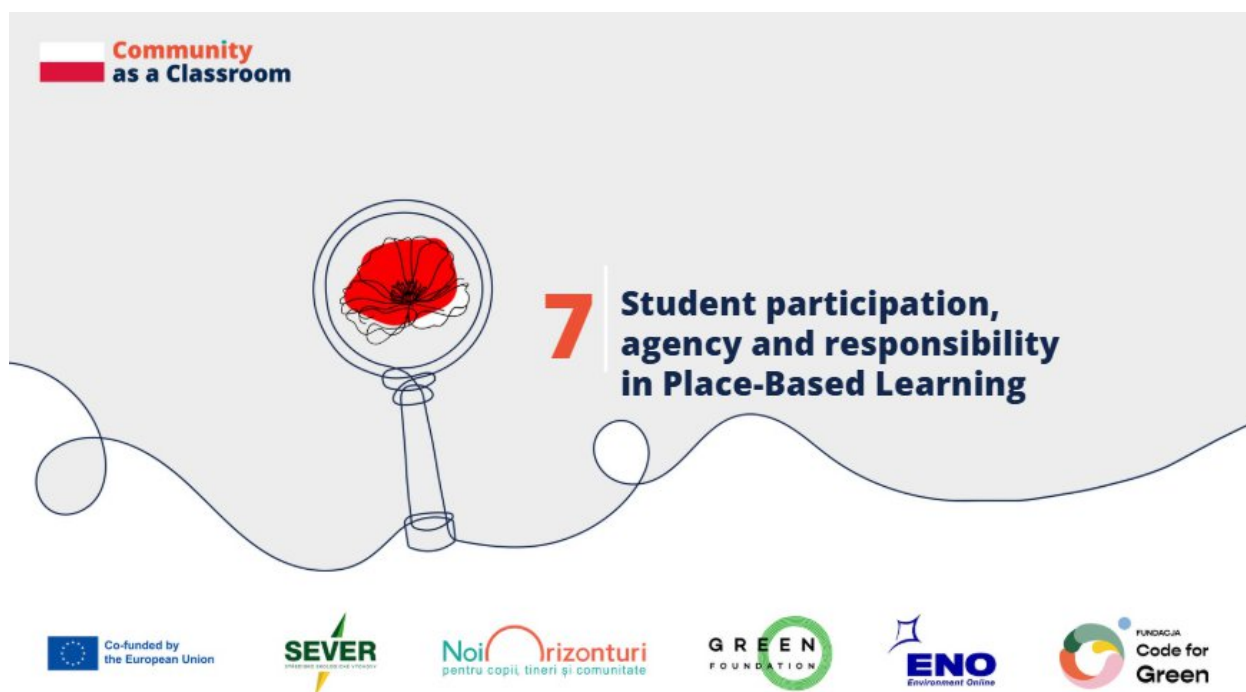
Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: *When we moved into the environment to learn from what was there, it also required teachers to prepare and plan more. Like all collaboration, at the beginning it requires discussion But it is worth approaching it with an open mind, because collaboration usually gives more than it demands.*

Janne Salin: *I would encourage it strongly, if there is any opportunity to plan broader learning units together and collaborate with other teachers or adults. My personal experience is that it gives much more than it takes. You get to learn new things yourself, use your own strengths, and learn from the strengths of others.*

Jaana Räisänen: *Just approach it with an open mind. You don't need everything ready at the start. A basic idea, focus "What are we investigating?" and some sort of structure is enough. As the work progresses, new ideas will emerge. So just approach it with an open mind, and start doing it!*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Poland
Schools: SP nr 31 in Zabrze and IV LO in Zabrze, Poland
Voices: teachers, students and PBL expert from Code for Green

Why is participation important in PBL?

Participation in Place-Based Learning means more than simply engaging students in activities. It means giving them agency – the opportunity to influence what they learn, choose the issues they want to explore and take responsibility for their own learning.

Katarzyna Krulicka, Polish teacher, SP nr 31 in Zabrze: *“Participation is more than engagement, it’s agency. Giving students a voice liberates education and builds community.”*

How do students experience having a real choice?

Students from IV LO in Zabrze reflected on how it felt to decide what they wanted to learn and work on.

„Well, I definitely felt responsible, because in the workshop I could bring up a topic that we don’t usually discuss at school, because, for example, the curriculum doesn’t cover it or we don’t have the time. And that’s also why I felt that way — because all the knowledge I shared stayed in others’ minds.”

„I felt good, because finally someone took my opinion to heart, and that I could finally learn about things I wanted to know, and what I always wanted to study.”

„I felt like I had the opportunity to choose, and I could decide for myself, what I wanted to learn, what I wanted to study, what I wanted to explain, what I wanted to talk about. And it just felt really good that I could simply choose. And I felt appreciated — that as a student I could teach someone how to research and take care of nature. I feel good knowing I was able to do that.”

From students to experts in their community

An important moment came when students organised workshops for local residents and shared the results of their work.

Anna Foltyn-Simka, chemistry teacher, IV LO in Zabrze: *“I think what will stay with us the longest is the memory of those workshops we conducted for the residents. We were very nervous, wondering if we could make it work, if anyone would come, if anyone would want to listen to you – young people who carried out research.”*

The experience changed the students' perception of their own role: *“You might have thought: ‘What do we know? We don't have any experience yet, we're not experts.’ But you became experts for those residents. I think that really boosted your confidence and will stay with you for a long time.”*

What is the teacher's role?

Authentic participation requires a different role for the teacher. Instead of determining every step, the teacher creates conditions in which students can identify issues that matter to them and choose how they want to address them.

Małgorzata Wójcik-Dudek, lecturer, Code for Green: *“To speak of authentic participation in PBL and of authentic engagement with space, students must feel that the problem and the space matter to them, and that the engagement arises from a genuine, real experience of the place where students learn, live, and for which they want to be responsible. To feel responsible for their space, they must identify a problem — a local problem — to solve. Of course, the teacher can support them in this search, but the teacher should never be the leader. They can draw attention, suggest things, but the choice must always be made by the student. The teacher is also responsible for creating a friendly atmosphere filled with educational tools — which should not be imposed either, but rather chosen by the students themselves, matching those tools to both the local issue and their own sensitivity and capacity for agency. The teacher should never be the leader, but should create an atmosphere of openness, care, friendship, and engagement, as well as attentiveness to all the ideas, students bring to the project.”*

What changed?

Giving students greater autonomy had a visible effect on their motivation and curiosity.

Anna Foltyn-Simka: *"You know, while observing students at work, I saw their smiles, energy, and the fact that because it was them who decided what to do, it increased their curiosity. We did more than we even planned to do. Whenever we went on a trip, they always wanted to test this water, that water... It's such a wonderful feeling for a teacher, for someone guiding them, to see that by giving them a bit of space, they used all of it to its full potential. I'm truly happy that they were so active, enthusiastic, and engaged in this project."*

Key message for other schools

Katarzyna Krulicka: *"Participation is not just a method – it's a way of thinking and learning. Students who take responsibility for their learning are also leaders in their communities. So let students act – and see what they can achieve."*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Finland

Organisation: ENO Environment Online

Contributors: teachers

How does sustainable development appear in the Place-Based Learning approach?

Sanna Huovinen: *Sustainable development is not just a concept, it is a responsibility. Place- and community-based learning gives students the skills to take care of their own communities as well as their ecosystems where through learning meaningful local action is carried out.*

Sustainable development came up in my opinion very well during the visit of an expert artist guest and when she told how she had collected these items that we had used. So there were items starting from sofas that had been dismantled and usable objects and materials had been salvaged.

Jaana Räisänen: *Of course, sustainable development, environmental education have already been highlighted in the curriculum fit that social sustainability, ecological sustainability fit into it really well. And depending on what the object under examination is, I believe that almost anywhere they can, to a certain extent, be woven into it.*

Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: *We have a parish hall nearby so with them we collaborated. We actually visited almost monthly there at the parish hall. Similarly, in cooperation with them, a meadow was established in the parish hall yard. With this, we aimed to influence*

biodiversity loss and increase the biodiversity of our area. So we went to build that meadow. there last year.

Sami Rätty: *We focused more on the history of the local environment, but on the other hand, when you think about it, we also visited, when we were in the Utra islands and elsewhere, where sawmills had operated, we examined with the students how human activity has affected environmental transformation, how river routes were altered and so on, so that sawmills could operate.*

Through that, yes, it definitely influenced various aspects of environmental responsibility, by at least making students think that our actions have impacts, that how we act and treat nature has consequences.

Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: *Behind our school's Green Flag program there is a very beautifully worded idea, that we believe every child must fall in love with their local environment and nature, and that creates the desire to protect it. That is why it is very important that we take our children and young people as part of the local environment and the local community, because only something that is personally meaningful to you is something you want to protect.*

How would you define the relationship between Place-Based Learning and environmental education?

Mike Miikkola: *They complement each other, and overlap to some extent, depending on the perspective and what the teacher emphasizes. In short—they complement each other.*

Janne Salin: *PBL as a method does not necessarily need to be limited to only, for example, environmental studies as a subject, but the method offers opportunities to integrate many different subjects, not just one specific one.*

Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: *At least I see that environmental education is kind of embedded in this method, meaning that the perspective was constantly present of how we take care of our local environment, how we use it sustainably, how we protect it, but I feel that this method specifically broadened the idea of how we can use the local environment in other ways as well, not only in terms of nature.*

How does learning outside the classroom enrich the learning experience?

Jaana Räisänen: *As I mentioned earlier, we spent a lot of time outdoors and reflected on areas important to young people, which certainly enriched their learning, and they got to have an impact. For example, through the survey, on their local place, or there may be some influence or at least they learned how one can potentially influence things. Whatever it may be. Often young people may think that this is pointless, that it has no significance, but here I would say they experienced their work as meaningful.*

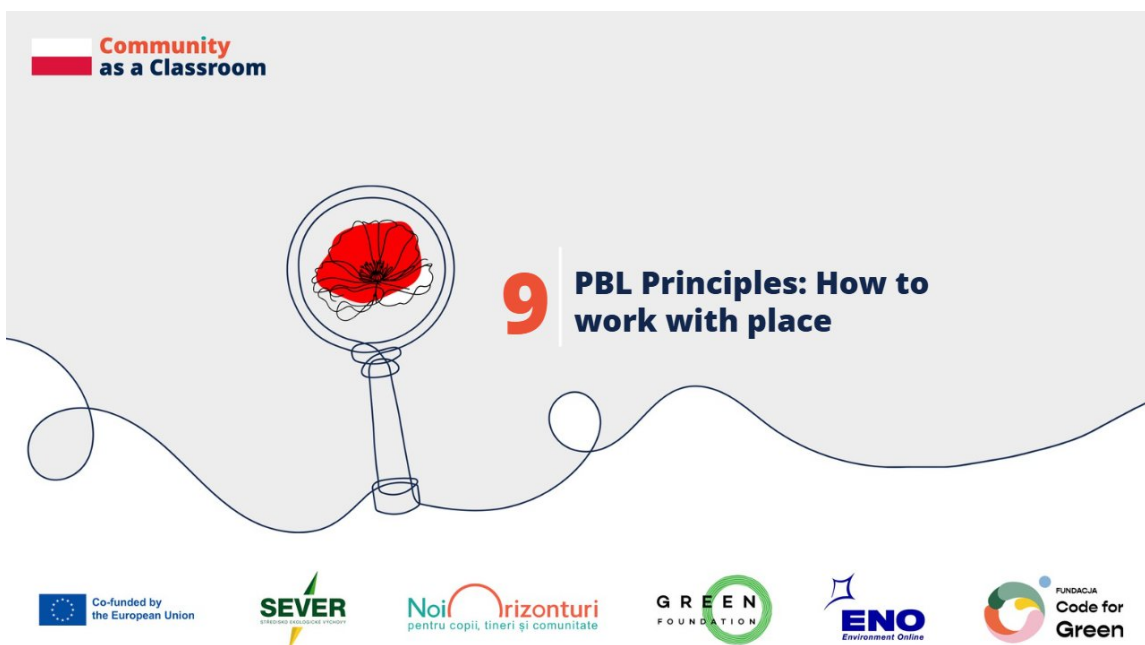
Henna Hulmi: *Whenever we leave the classroom, go outside, into the local environment, it always enriches learning and also sparks students' interest in a completely different way.*

Janne Salin: *In that sense, whenever you get to an environment that naturally provides stimuli, such as visiting a museum, for example, where there were authentic artifacts and furnishings related to the theme and topic, it has a great impact on how memorable or tangible the learning is.*

Sami Rätty: *If outdoor learning is not already a school practice, then this is a good way to introduce it. It provides certain frameworks for implementing learning outdoors. So I definitely see that this has potential in the future, as it is developed further, this is a very good method. It becomes more concrete and more meaningful for students— outdoor learning and familiarization with the environment. So thumbs up for this!*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Poland
 Schools: Primary School no.5 in Zabrze, Primary School no.26 in Zabrze, Primary School no.31 in Zabrze
 Contributors: teachers, students, local activists

Place as a starting point for meaningful learning

Małgorzata Krakowczyk, teacher at Primary School no.5 in Zabrze: *A place is more than just a backdrop. It's a space where learning becomes reality. Working in a place students know helps develop a sense of belonging and civic responsibility in students.*

Understanding the history and identity of a place

Marlena Malek-Blaszczyk, the initiator of the community garden in Zabrze:

Why is it important for young people to learn about the place they live in?

I think it's important because everyone should know the history of where they live, their roots. It's important because the way a place looks now results from the processes that took place here in the past. Such knowledge teaches us to think about how the world works and how such processes also happen elsewhere.

Learning from local stories and personal memories

Magdalena Gościński, forest activist in Zabrze: *What stories, what knowledge should be passed on to young people? Honest, true, not made-up, but the kind we've gathered partly through stories, partly through local history. Not the grand, political one written somewhere high above, but the one that's close, personal. In the stories of grandparents, uncles, aunts, neighbors.*

When the place becomes a learning resource

Agnieszka Kedzierska-Lemańska, teacher at Primary School no.26 in Zabrze: *During the project, we didn't need books or textbooks because we went out to the ponds with our students. We went to the shore of something they described with words and images. We took photos, then painted pictures, wrote poems. From these works, we created our little book, which we're very proud of, and the students are too, because this is a tangible proof of the project's successful conclusion.*

This is something that will stay with them for a long time, something they can be proud of, and something that they can really keep for the rest of their lives somewhere on their shelf and they'll remember that they took part in such a cool project.

Ewa Dunajewska-Ozimek, teacher at Primary School no.31 in Zabrze: *Thanks to participating in many projects, students above all felt that they can take action the effects of which are felt not only in their neighborhood, where they live, but also in the entire city.*

Building agency through connection with place and community

Małgorzata Krakowczyk, teacher at Primary School no.5 in Zabrze: *Teachers should help their students understand the value of the place where they live. where they live. People often praise what's far away, they long for things that are unknown to them, and fail to notice many beautiful places around them.*

Thanks to such projects, students get to know their surroundings and start to notice its beauty. By talking to experts who care about a sustainable environment, they experience a sense of certainty that there are more people who care about a naturally functioning ecosystem.

Through conversations with the local community, they feel they have agency. Giving students agency, allowing them to truly make decisions about their own actions and choices undoubtedly helps build citizens who are aware of their own values.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Finland
 Organisation: ENO Environment Online
 Contributors: teachers

How did multidisciplinary appear across different subjects when applying the PBL method?

Sanna Huovinen: *In the two projects we worked on, interdisciplinarity was clearly visible. The projects included environmental studies, history, arts and crafts in a versatile way as well as everyday life skills.*

Jaana Räisänen: *There was geography, health education, history and social studies. In mother tongue lessons, students could write essays, write essays, or do podcasts, or whatever they felt inspired to do. In this way, Finnish language and literature were also included.*

Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: *In environmental studies, students went birdwatching and explored our nearby forest. During the project, it turned out that many of our students had never visited this stream forest before. It is a very beautiful area, but unfortunately unfamiliar to many students. In social studies, we covered Finland's system of governance, Parliament, ministers, and the role of the President. How these work in Finland.*

Coincidentally, local elections were held last spring, so we went to Marjala to examine election advertisements. This allowed us to connect the subject to what students could

see in their own environment and to understand that these candidates are members of their local community.

Anni Joronen: In religious education, the parish hall was actively used, and a representative from the parish visited the school frequently. So that was included in the project Regarding the history of Marjala, our former principal Mr. Jari Huusko took fifth graders on cycling trips to visit eight or nine historical sites in the area. Through this, students learned about local history.

Mike Miikkola: Utra plays a significant role in the history of Joensuu, and there is a great deal of information available. In Finnish language lessons, students worked on informational texts, they practised research skills, and writing. Mother tongue was strongly present, as well as history because we have it a lot around here environmental studies including visual arts, log-driving work was done.

Many subjects could be integrated, and of course the fact that physical activity came automatically. Physical activity is not always about going full speed, drenched in sweat, but simply that when you move, it is good!

How can a multidisciplinary PBL approach become part of everyday school life?

Sami Rätty: In my opinion, very well. Using the environment is already an important part of our teaching, and using the local environment and getting to know the local surroundings is integrated very well, in my opinion, into our teaching. Since outdoor learning is already strongly part of our school's program, this program integrated into it extremely well. I didn't see any problems with it.

Henna Hulmi: The method, in my opinion, integrates very well, and can actually be included in almost every subject. And also into the curriculum. In terms of timetables, in our teams we still have allocated hours and flexibility in such a way that we were able to get shared time. And then we have the MOK week, to which this was connected, and made things easier for us in terms of scheduling. So that all three classes could participate well. History, of course, played a major role for us here.

Time really had to be arranged for it. That perhaps shows in the curriculum content of history, that it is not directly — of course there is also the history of the local environment there, but also a lot of other history. At that point, the schedule almost became tight, especially with history.

Janne Salin: PBL fits very well into the curriculum, for example, in the contents of environmental studies it directly mentions this kind of module, where students carry out or prepare an advocacy project like this, where, if possible, it would be good to use the local environment and the local community. So, as mentioned earlier, perhaps the challenge was more about the number of lesson hours, about what could be fitted naturally into the lesson framework.

Sanna Huovinen: In primary school, doing and planning projects is relatively easy, because we can change the timetables of our own classes quite easily.

Anni Joronen: Very well indeed – the Green Flag activity has been part of our everyday life here in Marjala for over years already. And in addition, we also had a multidisciplinary learning module week, which was basically organized entirely around this PBL. So the local environment was our theme there.

How did the MOK Week support the implementation of multidisciplinary PBL?

Henna Hulmi: This whole project culminated and came together during the MOK week the multidisciplinary learning module week. MOK week, meaning multidisciplinary learning module, means that there is a theme. It can be, for example, diversity – last year we had this PBL project. And then, across subject boundaries, meaning that the theme is integrated into many subjects. Very often, MOK week in practice is one week during which it is implemented, but it can also take place over a longer period of time, and in smaller parts.

We then had a guest, Ismo Björn, a university historian, talking about the history of the Utra area. And that was really very nice. He showed old photographs there, and then also images from the present time. And it inspired the students a great deal, because the present day was close to them, and then they could compare what it looked like earlier on.

And then we had the water workshop one day, meaning we were down by the river studying water bugs, what could be found in the water or along the shore. And then we had the Seppo game platform, where spots had been created concretely for these historical sites, such as the Utra sawmill, the church, and the glass factory. Were there – of them approximately? And in addition, there were spots related to recycling, which the students visited in groups.

How was the Seppo platform used as a tool during the MOK Week?

Anni Joronen: Well, the Seppo platform was an absolute success. If there were actually funding for something like that for everyday, full-time use, the students were so enthusiastic about the platform. And they were like, "Yes, I know where this place is!" "Now let's run there!" It was an absolute success. It was so engaging that absolutely everyone joined in, every single one of them was fully involved, so it really was an amazing thing!

What were the perspectives and experiences of teachers in implementing a multidisciplinary school project?

Mike Miikkola: First of all, the challenge was how to find the time. We have a lot of content in the curriculum, across all subjects. And there are quite a few lesson hours in relation to what is expected of us. And all subjects also require work and planning from the teacher. So finding the time was challenging. And if there is little time, creative ideation is difficult.

Sanni-Kaisa Martikainen: One major benefit of this method was that the students clearly really liked the increased amount of time spent outdoors. So in the spring, when we asked a bit about the highlights of the year that had stuck in their minds, almost everything was related to what we had done as part of this project. So the students liked that teaching and our school days became more varied.

Jaana Räisänen: Looking at one topic from so many different angles, and how many different themes or subjects were connected to it — that was perhaps the most significant observation. On this basis, it would be good to implement this again, so that if you do it together with another teacher, it would be good if the lessons could take place at the same time.

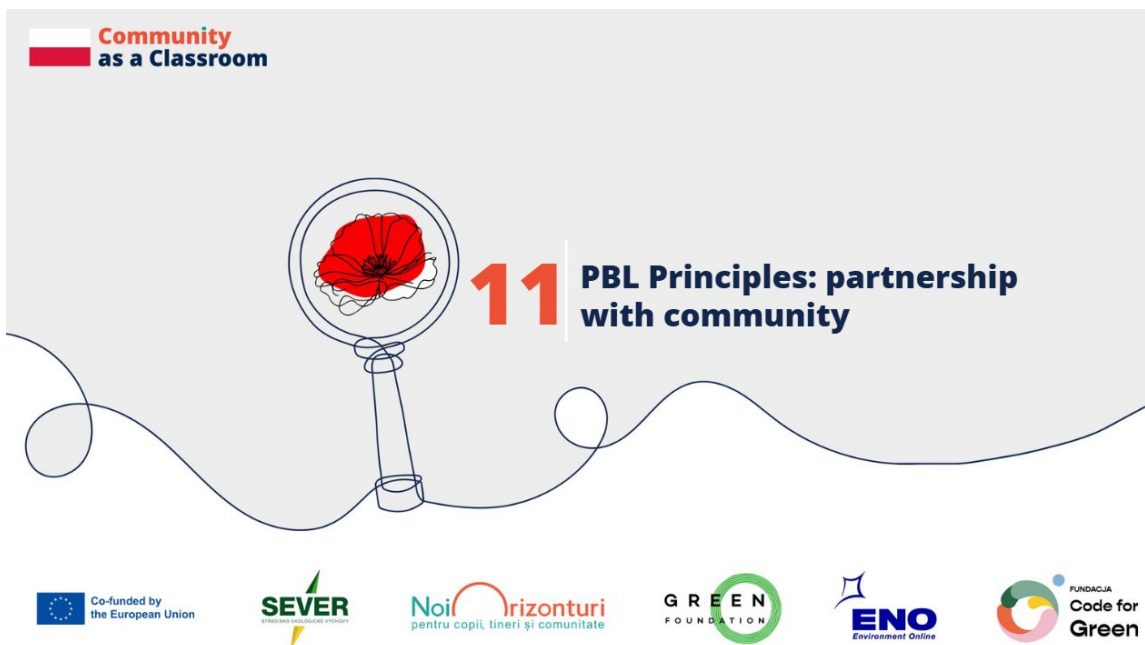
Or that there would be time for planning, that time would be reserved in advance, because it does require, for example, planning work, especially if you are working with a teacher from a different subject at the same time. Especially with a teacher from another subject, you have to think about scheduling issues.

Janne Salin: Perhaps something like this came to mind, how we could achieve multidisciplinary, perhaps combine different subjects. There is always some purpose for each subject, so one must, in a way, also as a teacher be careful that the content and

subject tasks have meaning and purpose, why they are done, so that they then connect to the larger whole.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Poland
Schools: Primary School no.5 in Zabrze, Primary School no.26 in Zabrze, Primary School no.31 in Zabrze
Contributors: local activists, teachers, headteachers

Community as a learning partner

Marlena Małek-Błaszczyk, the initiator of the community garden in Zabrze:

Do you see the point of working with young people?
Absolutely. Especially now, the intergenerational exchange of knowledge is interesting because the pace of technological progress is so fast, both older and younger people can learn from each other.

What did you gain from working with young people?
I feel I'm constantly learning, because young people really have a completely different perspective than more mature people, so you can always learn something new from them.

Learning from experts and local partners

Małgorzata Krakowczyk, teacher at Primary School no.5 in Zabrze: *First and foremost, I value building new relationships. Students meet peers who, like them, are involved in similar environmental initiatives. This gives them a mutual feeling of motivation and confidence that what they are doing is good and meaningful. Students gain new*

knowledge not from textbooks, but from experts and local authorities, realizing that together, as a group, they can achieve a lot.

Sylwia Kot, the headteacher of Primary School no.26 in Zabrze: *Our school is a school with long tradition. We have existed for 110 years here in the Mikulczyce district of Zabrze. We are not just an educational institution, but a center for local community life.*

We try to encourage them to build relationships with us through cooperation with other institutions with which we carry out various projects. Among them, it is worth mentioning the municipal library of Zabrze, the botanical garden, the MOPR - the Municipal Family Support Center, we also work closely with the District Council.

We organize not only projects but also events, like fairs or Christmas dinners for people with disabilities. We also cooperate with the University of Silesia in Katowice, creating educational projects that broaden the educational perspective for our students.

Our school also works with local businesses that share our values and want to help us grow. Our school shows that partnership is an important step in the development of both children and schools.

Building networks through environmental projects

Małgorzata Krakowczyk, teacher at Primary School no.5 in Zabrze: *Our school regularly takes part in both local and international environmental projects. We started with the "Dotknij nauki" ("Touch the Science") project, then "Make it Open," and annual local initiatives like "Zobacz płuca" ("See the Lungs") and "Naturalnie w Zabrze" ("Naturally in Zabrze".) Through participation in such initiatives, I made connections with people who introduced me to the Erasmus+ "Community as a Classroom" project. I found this initiative very appealing and decided to take part.*

Partnership develops responsibility and agency

Katarzyna Krulicka, Primary School no. 31 in Zabrze: *Education does not happen in isolation. Thanks to the Place-Based Learning technique, we have all learned that. Our students, through collaboration with local institutions like the University of Silesia in Katowice, have learned responsibility, agency, and collaboration skills.*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country:

Organisation:

Contributors: teachers

Green

Slovakia
Foundation

How can Place-Based Learning be implemented within one subject?

Teacher 1, Sliach Elementary School: *We worked on the project "My vision of the village", where students as a group, as a whole, worked, participated in this project, got involved and proposed changes for our village and for a better quality of life in the village. First, we had a joint lesson about facts about the village, about history, so that they could learn how our village was created.*

Then, on the way from school, for example, they had to notice what they liked about the village, what they were satisfied with, what they were not satisfied with, and gradually, through a form of brainstorming, we came up with proposals for what they would like to change. That was the main meaning of the observation. They had to choose a maximum

of three proposals regarding facilities, buildings or cultural or sports events. In groups students created projects, then conducted a survey on the project they would like to propose. That was actually the result of the class event . They asked only local citizens, people living in our village, five questions maximum.

With these statistics, which they actually included in their final project, we went to the mayor's office. And there we presented the projects to her and it was a great success. The mayor actually wrote down all the ideas, children were actually heard and they seemed to grow, it was really a satisfaction for them for all of the work.

How can Place-Based Learning look like in a specific subject such as geography?

Teacher 2, Sliač Elementary School: *We determined in geography where the city of Sliač is located, we determined the geographical coordinates, we found out the area of the city according to some calculations, the students also had to find on the maps surrounding mountain ranges, which are the rivers that flow through the city of Sliač. We were able to determine, for example, what is located north, south, east, west of the place where we are and the children took pictures of it, which means that they were then able to orient themselves in that part of the city.*

We started solving geography tasks outside, that means directly in the terrain, in the local landscape. It goes without saying that they could also be solved inside, in the classroom, that means at a certain time if it rained and so on, that it could be adapted to the conditions, but because the teaching changed, we went outside. It means that we realised an outdoor activity, and the children experienced it completely differently than if it were only in the classroom.

How can Place-Based Learning be applied in Slovak language lessons?

Teacher 3: *There are so many topics that we can tackle in Slovak subject, and for this year I chose the topic of street names in Sliač. What streets do we have, who are they named after, how did they come about? We did this with various tables, we linked it with the subject of geography, since the students had to orient themselves in Sliač and on maps, and it was fun for the children. In my classes, during block lessons, we dealt with the names of streets in the city of Sliač.*

This consisted of several steps, which we divided into individual parts, so at the beginning we wrote down the names of the streets using a map, the internet, and various maps that I brought. Then we sorted the streets alphabetically, and then we came to the final step, where we wrote down the individual names in the table I had prepared. And whether they were Slovak or foreign celebrities, geographical names, some locations that determine the names of the streets.

The students had fun, they learned a lot of new things, because many of them didn't know who their street was named after, and it refreshed and expanded some of their memories and gave them new ideas. And not only for them, but also for me, because I'm not directly from Sliač and I learned a lot of new information.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country:

Slovakia

Organisation:

Green

Foundation

Contributors: teachers

How can Place-Based Learning be integrated across multiple subjects?

Teacher 1, Grammar School Dneperska: We decided to set up Place Based Learning at our school in a space that our school community knows intimately. It was the Košice city district named Nad jazerom (Above the lake), which is not only the site of our school, but also the home of several of our students and some employees. The common entry theme of Place Based Learning method at our school was the search for an answer to the question "why is Dneperská street named as Dneperská street", with the subtitle "tell me where you live and I will tell you what various historical, social, cultural or other aspects of life are associated with this place". All this and even more is hidden in the usually unusual public designation of spaces, streets, squares, city districts, in a word, urbanonym. It is a designation whose informational added value many of us often do not even realize. So let's take a look together at how it all turned out.

How can PBL be integrated into Slovak language and literature?

Teacher 2, Grammar School Dneperska: *Place Based Learning is a method that can be used in any subject. Within the Slovak language and literature, there is a lot of space for communication and style, for specific stylistic units it is necessary to go outside, artistic description, interview, and so on. All the children were excited when the lesson was different, or was outside the classroom and when it motivated them to perform better than regular tasks.*

How can the same PBL project be connected with art education?

Teacher 3: *As a teacher, I like to introduce elements into teaching that connect, for example, art with a specific real environment. Our students were supposed to design descriptive signs for Dneperská Street, where they connected their creativity with a specific place they know.*

It wasn't just about drawing pictures, they were designing something that also had informational and community value. The children were imaginative, happily presented their creations, and realized why streets have their names and what the significance of the signboards is.

How can the same PBL project be connected with IT education?

Teacher 4: *In the computer science class, as part of Place Based Learning, we searched for all the information about our local area, Nad Jazerom, and then we passed this information to the artificial intelligence language model and tried to have it generate a new coat of arms for us. The students really enjoyed it because it was creative work, they compared these coats of arms with each other, and the class was held in a very nice atmosphere.*

How can the same PBL project be connected with mathematics and geography?

Teacher 5: *We can use Place based Learning outdoors in both mathematics and geography. We visited the local post office in the Nad Jazerom with our students. In*

mathematics, we can count the number of steps taken by postmans, we can calculate the areas of the districts that the students have obtained. In geography we can draw these districts on a map.

The students really enjoyed the activity, they were interested in the fact that they were at the Nad jazerom post office. They also liked that they were learning outside the classroom, that they were outdoors.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country: Romania
 Organisation: Noi Orizonturi Foundation
 Contributors: educational experts, teachers, programme managers

Service Learning as an experiential learning method

Andreea Tabun, program manager New Horizons Foundation: *Service Learning is an experiential learning method, meaning learning through experience, in which students leave the classroom, go into the community, identify and solve a problem in the community, while simultaneously connecting content from the subjects they study at school math, biology, arts, and so on. It is a service for the community and learning at the same time.*

Iuliana Micu, Early Childhood Education Teacher: *At first, I was curious and interested to find out what this project was about. Then I became enthusiastic as I realized I could combine education with social responsibility.*

Vasilica Moghior: *Having a fourth-grade class, working on a project about the local community, when I saw this type of Service Learning project, I said it fit perfectly with our need to learn as much as possible and to facilitate long-lasting learning for the children in this generation.*

What is the difference between Service learning vs. Volunteering?

Iuliana Micu: *Learning through community service is based on the school curriculum and can be applied across all curricular areas, linking to school subjects, whereas volunteering is informal learning, without a connection to the school program.*

Vasilica Moghior: *Community service involves all age groups, including family members like parents and grandparents, neighbors the village or town becomes a huge classroom.*

Would you recommend this methodology to other teachers and why?

Andreea Tabun: *The methodology of learning through community service, Service Learning, is an active methodology; it involves active learning by students, which means they engage more in their educational process.*

For teachers, obviously, this is a good thing, because it means students are more involved in their classes. It also creates better relationships among teachers within the same school, better relationships between students and teachers, and better connections between the community, students, and teachers, as well as the possibility to link the subject matter you teach with concrete actions in the community where you live.

The New Horizons Foundation is part of this European network of organizations implementing Service Learning, both in the classroom and in non-formal settings. Teachers who develop such projects in their schools can even win one of the annual awards offered by the network and the foundation.

Alina Mustata, educational expert: *Because teachers, first and foremost, can adopt this methodology because the curriculum supports interactive methodologies, and because it is worth it. I have seen teachers extremely motivated to come, prepare lessons together with their colleagues, and this teamwork and the support they receive is something very valuable to them.*

Another very valuable aspect, which all teachers mentioned, is that they gain more confidence in what they do, feel more competent, and are recognized by colleagues and school management for their results and efforts.

What does Service Learning Improve in the Classroom?

Alina Mustata: *First of all, I noticed real joy, the real joy of teachers who worked together and managed to create a way to make learning relevant and enjoyable for students. This brought them a lot of happiness, motivation, and an increased sense of professional competence because the curriculum skills came to life; they were seen in real-time, practiced by the children.*

What is the recipe for Success?

Andreea Tabun: *To have successful Service Learning projects in schools, the most important thing is to start from a real need in the community we work with and connect it to content and learning objectives from the school curriculum, then involve the community. Successful schools that carried out successful Service Learning projects involved the community, stakeholders, parents everyone. They collaborated well with other teachers and, in the end, evaluated, reflected, and drew conclusions from the educational experience.*

Why do you use Service Learning at the New Horizons Foundation?

Maria Butyka, general director New Horizons Foundation: *The mission of the New Horizons Foundation is to empower children and young people to become the best version of themselves, to develop themselves, their community, and the world they live in. I believe this is a strong enough reason to make the world a better place.*

Another reason is that Service Learning brings immediate change into the lives of children and empowers them to see themselves as agents of change. Indeed, it prepares them for the future because it develops life skills they will use in family, home, and other social contexts but through Service Learning, they see they can do it now, even if they are seven, ten, twelve, or eighteen years old.

Why do we use Service Learning at the New Horizons Foundation? Another reason is that we can reach a very large group of people quickly. Children have a need to see relevance in what they are learning. From year to year, more and more teachers in Romania, and even children and students, request activities that have meaning both in school and for the community, connected to the community.

In this regard, the New Horizons Foundation has taken on a national mission to promote the Service Learning methodology in every school in Romania that is where we aim to reach. We even created a community of Service Learning practitioners in Romania, with a series of national partners, and we are part of the European network of organizations implementing Service Learning projects. Every year, we organize national awards for effective Service Learning practices, even at the European level.

Service Learning Projects Delight Teachers Too!

Iuliana Micu: *When I started in kindergarten, I had only 8 children, and now I have 31. Children also came from neighboring localities because we did a lot of things for them, and they came to the kindergarten. I had almost no absences, only 2-3 children missed school during the year.*

Vasilica Moghior: *In these projects I do with children, I gained a connection with the students, which is very important, the trust they have in me, the connection with their families, but most importantly, the connection with you, New Horizons , for which I thank you!*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.





Country:

Organisation:

Noi

Orizonturi

International

Foundation

Contributors: educational experts, teachers, programme managers

Why does Place-Based Learning matter?

Robert Bogdanffy, Board Member New Horizons Foundation: *Place Based Learning and Service Learning alike are extremely important to rebuild part of the fabric of society that was destroyed during communism. Romania has been reeling and has been struggling to recover a part of social capital that has been destroyed during that time. What Romanians can do is to encourage this type of learning in the classroom and outside of the classroom, to explore their surroundings, to understand local cultures and understand the problems around them, near them, that impact their daily lives.*

Stefan Stancu, Advocacy Ambassador New Horizons Foundation: *I think that our communist history forced us to go silent about doing good. But the people never stopped doing good in their private meetings or private households. And I think that we need to hear after that period and what better cure than to get socially involved in your community. And this is exactly the thing that Place Based Learning and Service Learning are teaching us, to see that doing good and making good around you it's the best solution we have right now.*

Maria Butyka, General Director New Horizons Foundation: *I could say that in Romania, and not only in Romania at a global level, but especially in Romania we are facing a lot of challenges, both socially and economically. There are a lot of uncertainties, a lot of changes even at the educational level in this period. And I consider that PBL as a methodology in itself makes very fast and very direct the connection between school, or what children learn at school, and the reality and daily life of children.*

I consider that it is very relevant that when they are in an educational context the child will see the connection between what he learns at school and what happens in his daily life. And his life happens in a community, right? I think there are very few children who do not live in a community. So, through the access to activities in the field of PBL, the child manages to connect better to his community.

Do national policies influence Place-Based Learning?

Robert Bogdanffy, Board Member New Horizons Foundation: *Unfortunately, most of the traditions hinder Place Based Learning. It starts with the classroom where you are not encouraged to do collaborative learning. It's very much individualistic. Critical thought is not encouraged as much as it should be. So it is absolutely crucial to combat these vestiges from the past and to start looking towards solutions locally, start looking towards the implementation of critical thinking, not just learning about it, but actually doing.*

Stefan Stancu, Advocacy Ambassador New Horizons Foundation: *There is a 'common law' in our country that learning only takes place inside, in the classroom. And I also think that is the right time to challenge that mindset, that learning is a growing place, a growing process, and it can take place in various environments.*

Andreea Tabun, Program Manager New Horizons Foundation: *There are no policies, as far as I know in Romania, who help implement PBL in schools. They would be recommended to exist. There are some practices in schools through which students go out in the community during their excursions, the school week, the green school, and so on. But these are not done with the purpose of intentional learning. And then maybe the focus should be put here, on the part of learning. Connecting the place with the objectives and with the learning from the subjects that are taught in school.*

Alina Mustata, Education Expert: *In Romania, in the school field, there is encouragement at the policy level to implement such methodologies. However, in reality, the practices in school are still plagued by administrative difficulties, the lack of experience of the teachers in working together, in preparing lessons together, in delivering lessons together and meeting to give feedback. And this can be done by using*

the PBL methodology, to hope to change the school culture in the long run and to create a more pleasant and efficient education.

Be persuasive, in 20 seconds:

Robert Bogdanffy: *I think the best tool to disenfranchisement, to combat disenfranchisement, is to equip youth and young adults alike with the necessary tools, to give them the tools to be able to recognize and solve problems in their own communities. This is something that will help them throughout their lives, and this is something that we need to pursue.*

Maria Butyka: *I would recommend that the educational policies that are being built in Romania, but also at the European level, do not ignore the needs of children, young people, and students. I consider that educational programs that are not aligned with the needs of the community and children cannot be sustainable.*

Alina Mustata: *I would say that the well-being of people, communities and societies in general, actually depends on this relationship that we build when we are children and learn, and which brings us in the long run the desire to contribute to invest in the future, to stay in the country, to stay in Romania to stay in a certain community. And then all this learning that we do abroad deserves to be passed on. That is where this relationship is created.*

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

