

Learning cities and communities

A learning city or community promotes lifelong learning for all. Learning is part of self-fulfilment, personal and social wellbeing. A learning society must be built province by province, city by city, and community by community.

The present document is an output of the pilot project developed within a partnership between Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, the Israeli Municipality of Modi'in, the Israeli Federation of local Authorities, the Modi'in Multidisciplinary Center for Learning Cities and the LiberEtà University in Udine in the field of lifelong learning. The project was created and is still ongoing thanks to a historic collaboration between the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, the LiberEtà University in Udine and the Modi'in Multidisciplinary Center, which is a center of excellence for lifelong learning and the incubator of the Learning city model in Israel.

The main objective of the project is to create and propose structured opportunities for discussion and learning to policy makers, local authorities, educational academic institutions and civic society as a whole of the two countries.

This Manifesto is a collective intellectual product composed by 45 students, facilitators, teachers and representatives of an international learning community (Israel, Italy, United Arab Emirates), during an initiative started in January 2022, with remote working groups, and concluded with ad hoc joint training event hosted in the Italy Pavilion at EXPO Dubai 2020 (February 23th, 2022) "Co-creation Lab - Breaking Classroom Walls: Learning For Life, Anytime, Any Place, Anyway".

The project explores individual connection to crucial social and environmental issues, through expanding learning experiences, outside school boundaries, promoting innovative thinking and effective meaningful learning, enhancing active citizenship, requiring the student to be in the center, empowering the student to be an independent learner

Within this mutual project, characterizing aspects of Learning and utilizing the city as a learning space, and more specifically during the Co-Creation Lab, a digital platform was created on "Miro", in order to share information and encourage interaction while developing insights through discussion as well as processing learning experiences. The data accumulated on this platform, produced the following outputs on the various categories:

Images of desirable futures

The following, is a variety of inspiring images of desirable future conditions that make a city and community a learning community and environment.

We, as students, imagine:

- Students develop their own knowledge through the guidance of teachers and community representatives that point out where to find information, and facilitate and encourage personal and cultural growth.
- Learning more about jobs and professions by having direct contact with experts that can teach us about their specific knowledge. Learning from people who are not school educators and volunteer to help students learn from different sources.
- Classes taking place all over the city, outside, in landmarks and in historical points of interest.

- Resource exchange with retired people and between age groups, who have more life experience but also knowledge, and young people as a reciprocal learning. This exchange enriches young people with more tools to get closer to desirable futures and motivates seniors to feel useful.
- Several schools and mixed (intergenerational) working groups collaborate in the development of projects.
- Free accessible libraries, community gatherings for different cultures, age groups and disabled people to share knowledge and experience. For example, this is achieved with the creation of reading zones (even outdoor), spaces to express creativity (where everyone can share his art, such as graffiti or other forms of expression) and interactive parks with open air exhibition (as a way of outdoor learning and knowledge exchange).
- Deeper communication between different cultures nurture cities “without borders”, where citizens accept and appreciate cultural differences and collaborate when needed, as a way of learning through different communities. This is made possible also by an improvement of mobility, which makes connections easier and faster
- Healthcare is cheaper.

Previous successes and resources

We do not start from scratch, we have successful experiences and resourceful experiments: by sharing and appreciating them we could go furthermore effectively and quickly. Previous successes and resources constitute the platform from which to move forward in developing Learning Cities.

These are a few:

- Field trips in locations to learn about ongoing projects in the city and the region addressing sustainability and renewable energy. In fact, thanks to the Municipalities and community, outdoor learning spaces (named “ecology spaces”), enriched by open-air exhibitions, museums and cultural events, were established. Another example is a community garden inside the school: the garden is managed by students with help from agricultural experts.
- Debate panels about ongoing issues promoted active citizenship in the city, especially concerning environmental quality improvement.
- Peer tutoring in school is promoting students’ and teachers’ collaboration.
- We cooperated with the Municipality to find native people to teach us about languages and experts to teach us science, all coming from different countries.
- Teachers have time to organize learning events outside of school especially about curriculum in civics and cultural roots of the territory. Through school social action programs, we have begun to help people in the community, gaining skills in asking the right questions to learn from a variety of skills and experiences, taking the best from our territory to develop the community as a learning city.
- We interviewed experts from the municipality about sustainability and other sectors in our city. For instance, we were able to discover GETC GO, a project which is developed under the form of permanent

cross-border cooperation and consists in the creation of a cycle lane that goes through the border between Italy and Slovenia.

- Budget and resources have been defined and made available for special programs and equipment in terms of available computers and Internet connection to develop materials and social media in the classrooms, which students can use as learning tools.

Small actions: our commitments and the necessary support for concrete developments

The great explorations or the most ambitious enterprises are composed of single steps: the “small actions” are those actions that are feasible right now and represent our personal commitment and specific requests for support in the development of learning communities.

These are some of the commitments we intend to make:

- Raising the awareness of what is a learning city within our educational community (promoting further projects like this).
- We, as teachers and school leaders, will make learning activities outside the classroom more accessible, also increasing the number of educational field trips in collaboration with local community.
- We, as students, will be more involved in the community by launching projects to start the process of becoming a city of learning, with periodic meetings and debates.
- We, as teachers and students, will connect more what is happening in the world and in the community to the topics of teaching.

These are some points about the support we would need to make tangible developments towards a desirable future:

- Municipality could establish a structured communication with students and learning communities (like a municipal coordinator or a line of communication) on city and environmental issues.
- The local administrators could provide the students and teachers with facilities or support for ecological public transportation to places where active learning can take place.
- Education managers could set a predetermined lesson period for collaborative projects with / within the local community that could encourage outdoor reading and discussions on current knowledge.
- Teachers, educators, and education managers should be more aware of their students' psychological well-being, encouraging a safe learning environment.
- Educators and trainers should help to increase in developing skills for collaborative learning and improving peer tutoring and student mentoring.
- Education/school managers could offer professional training on teaching outside the classroom.

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