



SYMPRAXIS - School Partnership for Democracy in Education

A [EUDEC Greece](#) pilot project approved by the greek Ministry of Education for application in public schools for all ages from January to June 2019 and awaiting approval for 2019-2020

Sympraxis literally means acting together, collaboration.

The SYMPRAXIS project is based on communication and cooperation between Greek teachers and students of preschool, primary and secondary education and democratic schools abroad.

Students and teachers from Greek state schools will work together to incorporate democratic education tools into the classroom. Democratic schools are invited to accompany us in this process as we work on subject areas such as:

- Democratic Education: The Structure and Beyond
- Democratic Education: EU Legislation and Human Rights
- Race and Gender in Democratic Education
- Democratic Educational Practices

These are some sample subject areas and there can be a lot of flexibility.

The goals of this project include:

- raising awareness on the existence of democratic schools
- promoting a healthy exchange of practices
- creating a space for reflection on and assessment of the results of everyday practices
- enhancing dialogue on democracy in greek schools
- giving greek students and teachers the chance to experience participatory processes (like assemblies) on the base of equality - for some, for the first time
- raising awareness on minors' rights
- motivating students, teachers and parents to join us for educational change

The partnership will be built among the corresponding schools and involves exchange of ideas, projects and intercultural activities, based on the collaborative use of Wikis.

The proposed educational program, adapted to the Greek context, remodels the four dominant tools of democratic education, which have been implemented with positive results for almost a century in democratic schools across the globe.

Any Democratic school can participate by contacting us here: syn.praxisxoleiwn@gmail.com.

SYMPRAXIS is an intervention program in the classroom, completed in three phases.

Teachers act as facilitators using the research-practice model proposed to create the experience of democratic operation in the classroom.

Teachers and students experiment with and apply the practices of democratic education and the results of the **School Partnership for Democracy in Education** are shared with the whole school community.

The proposed model applies to:

a) Students b) Teachers

The proposed model applies to:

a) Preschool: For the morning program or the full-day program

b) Primary: All grades

c) High School (Gymnasium): All grades

d) Lyceum: First and Second grades

The SYMPRAXIS project is shaped and developed to operate in conjunction with the existing school life framework and the curriculum of each grade.

The SYMPRAXIS project proposes:

(a) the development of a democratic culture in the school context, which involves teaching and learning at a level of common values, without the need for extra time, familiarizing students with responsibility and commitment to the observance of common agreements.

b) four basic practices (dialogue circle, teacher-facilitator, class council, conflict resolution committee) as pedagogical tools for the teacher who wishes to promote the principles of democratic education, which can be applied when needed, taking advantage of either the 'flexible zone' (primary school), or on the basis of subjects contained in the textbooks on human relations, values, democratic principles.

(c) the adoption of experiential and active learning methods in all subjects so that students gain the experience of democratic operation of their learning.

Therefore, apart from the four basic practices, the model proposed by the SYMPRAXIS project (see below) does not relate to a particular subject but to an **experiential method** that can be included in any lesson without having to omit anything from the curriculum. Therefore, within the teaching time of each subject, the teacher aims both at the cultivation of the students' democratic consciousness and at the experiential approach of learning through a variety of techniques.

The proposed model applies to:

- a) General Education Schools
- b) Vocational Education Schools
- c) Music High Schools
- d) Art High schools (Gymnasia-Lyceums)
- e) Sports Schools
- f) Schools of Ecclesiastical Education
- g) Schools of Special Education throughout the country

The proposed model can be used in the framework of:

- Curriculum / Courses of the Study Program *

It concerns all teaching subjects with a cross-thematic approach

* for Primary school this includes the teaching time of the full-day program and the 'flexible zone'

- Optional school activities - programs

Wellbeing/humanities Education (Democracy, Human Rights, Children's Rights),

Cultural programs (Values, culture, social and historical study of these values and the interaction between them).

Environmental, looking for sustainable development in their city/region (sustainability values, mutual respect, solidarity, respect for the environment, decisions to improve the environmental and social conditions of the school and/or the neighborhood)

Erasmus + and etwinning with possible collaboration with schools of the European Community EUDEC in interschool partnerships.

In particular, the **four basic practices** are directly applicable to preschool age, as they are fully relevant to the cognitive domains of the Interdisciplinary Unified Curriculum.

At all levels, they enrich and cultivate speech, allowing students to experientially practice their social and emotional skills. Conflict resolution, as a process, also promotes creative thinking, as it is based on the production of many, good and original ideas to improve relationships within school. The Dialogue Circle, the Instructor-facilitator and the Council not only do not interfere with the objectives of the

curriculum but support and enrich the learning process by creating opportunities for experiential learning and ensuring a climate of friendship and cooperation.

The class council promotes creative and critical thinking and can make decisions for interventions in the class environment and beyond it. It can be used in the context of the 'flexible zone' for the 1st-4th Primary grades as well as in cross-curricular courses in Greek, Religion, Environmental Studies, Visual Arts, etc. and for the 5th and 6th grades of primary school in the context of Social and Civic Education, Greek, Religion, etc. (due to the possibility of connecting with concepts such as "communication", "mutual respect", "solidarity", "democracy", "active citizen", etc.) and other courses. When the Council deals with exceptional incidents, the time / duration of the discussion will be agreed upon by the teacher and the students. **In primary education the class council will not take longer than the time allocated to the 'flexible zone'. In secondary education, the class and school council is determined by the student communities regulation and is already practiced in many schools, so it can be practiced in the time determined institutionally.**

If the Teachers' Association decides accordingly, it is possible to integrate the SYMPRAXIS proposals into a school activities program (in all grades). This is suggested and recommended as it promotes the co-operation of different disciplines in order to approach different aspects of democratic education so that participating students (outside school hours for secondary education) have a more systematic and meaningful contact with the whole philosophy.

In addition to the four basic practices, the general philosophy of diffusion of the democratic spirit throughout the school is expected to activate the cooperation of different disciplines to design mutually reinforcing and complementary activities. As with any school activity program, this activity will inspire educators and students to work creatively and autonomously using a variety of means of expressing and applying democratic practices.

The experiential activities that will be proposed during the training sessions and which, of course, will be enriched by each participant's proposals, draw on areas such as:

1. Theater
2. Rhetorical and communication skills
3. Creative thinking and imagination - techniques for producing ideas
4. Environment and Sustainability
5. Teamwork and cooperation - social skills
6. Education in values
7. Education in Human Rights
8. Leadership skills - participatory leadership techniques
9. Cinema and creating video / short films
10. Visual arts and education

The members of the SYMPRAXIS support team are experienced educators and facilitators in experiential education on research / theoretical and practical levels in adult education and in non-formal

learning groups. The creation of a reference manual, in which specific activities will be recorded, is the first priority after the establishment of the school network of the SYMPRAXIS project.

It goes without saying that in such a creative learning environment pupils will practice democracy within their school life by taking initiatives, proposing activities and co-shaping the daily teaching practice.

The proposed program will be implemented by:

The schools' teachers.

The program can be implemented by teachers of all disciplines/subjects.

It will not be applied by anyone other than school teachers. **So it will not be necessary to give a classroom entry permit to any third party. The SYMPRAXIS program is selected by a teacher or group of teachers of the school, implemented by themselves and does not require a specialist's visit.**

For the implementation of the proposed training program, no financial contribution is required for the participants (the students or the schools).

Time required for development - implementation of the proposed program.

No extra hours are required for the implementation of the program, as it is implemented in the framework of the curriculum. In preschools and in elementary schools it is implemented during the hours of the 'flexible zone', with an interdisciplinary approach. In secondary schools it is implemented cross-curricularly in various teaching subjects and in the institutionally foreseen hours for student councils. The hours that will be allocated relate to the planning of the school and of each teacher involved.

The proposed program is intended for application:

Within the school. The only case of implementation outside the school grounds is the optional study visits related to the program, e.g. Greek parliament.

The proposed program is to be implemented:

At a certain time in the school year. January to June.

The design of the proposed program provides for the evaluation of its implementation results.

A final report will be submitted by the teachers involved and will be studied by the SYMPRAXIS support team, as well as during the final feedback meetings to be scheduled after the completion of the

program, with the support team and the teachers involved. At these meetings, teachers can input their impressions, reflections and present the results of the program in whatever form they wish.

Program tracking / evaluation:

In the School Partnership for Democracy in Education project, the educators act as researchers of their work, applying the model of research-practice (observation, reflection and practice).

For this purpose, it uses the **Observation Calendar** as a logbook. The calendar records the design, organization, implementation, methodological tools, etc. It also records the reflective processes of both students and educators in terms of each completed activity.

In the observation calendar educators can record the dynamics that develop in the classroom, how students respond to democratic practices and their interaction as the program is implemented.

The observation and evaluation axes may be as follows:

- *Do all students take the floor? Are all views respected? Is there an effort to synthesize different views? Are there autocratic behaviors? Who expresses these and how does the group react? Are there isolated students?*

The calendar gives educators, beyond the ability to observe the class, the opportunity to reflect on their action, which can lead to feedback and redesigning of activities.

Clearly this is a personal text that will not be publicized, so there is no privacy issue. However, if an educator wishes to share a text or extract from the calendar for discussion and reflection in the feedback meetings and within whichever context s/he chooses, this will be an elective way to review the program. So the calendar is a tool of self-assessment and aims to record practices, both for their reproduction and for their improvement through diffusion processes.

At the end of the program, the teachers who will participate will present in whatever form they wish (thesis, excerpts from their calendar, presentation) how they themselves experienced the application of these practices.

This will also be the official instrument for evaluating and monitoring the program.

Since it is a decision of the Teachers' Association, as is the case in all school programs, there is no need for signed consent from parents.

Regarding the use and publication of photos and texts produced in the classroom in the framework of a program, the Personal Data Authority directives will be followed.

Training / informing educators:

The training /information and the support of the educators will initially be carried out with the brochure to parents, which will be drafted in co-operation with the headmasters and teachers of each school, so that parents can contribute to the formation of democratic culture.

In particular, the program material will be developed gradually in the first year of implementation and will be compiled into a handbook. Thus, in the future, during the training activities, the teachers in training will be provided with analytical bibliography and applied material. In addition, dissemination and updating will take place via the website, where good democratic education practices will be posted, additional educational material, etc.

The SYMPRAXIS team in partnership with EUDEC Greece and other educational institutions, is organizing a conference and workshops on Democratic Education on the 2nd and the 16th of February 2019 in Athens where teachers will be educated and informed about these techniques, as well as about the action plan of this programme.

Members of the team have already participated in conferences and organised, in collaboration with School Activity Directors, two two-day workshops on 28-29 / 9/2018 and 2-3 / 11/2018, with a total duration of **25 hours each**, attended by **70 teachers**. Feedback, both primary and secondary education, has been particularly positive and encouraging.

The workshops were facilitated by members of the SYMPRAXIS team and the Hellenic Association for the Promotion of Rhetoric in Education and co-organized with wellbeing, health and culture program directors. The overall objective is to exchange and explore in depth the democratic processes that educational activity can involve.

Monthly meetings of participating teachers will be organized to discuss issues in a *World Café*. In these monthly meetings impressions, observations, ideas and suggestions for improvement will be shared. The group of participating teachers will function as a learning and practice community, applying the whole philosophy of the program. The educators themselves will propose project-expanding activities and, of course, teaching each other in their particular areas of interest will be encouraged. In Athens and other cities similar groups already exist, with which SYMPRAXIS will collaborate, such as the Frenet Network and the Teachers Rhetoric Group. The meetings - seminars will be free of cost and not in school hours.

In addition, co-operation and mentoring with colleagues from democratic schools abroad will be made possible by using online collaboration tools during off school hours. This practice will help to strengthen the theoretical and practical training of Greek teachers.

Additional information

The SYMPRAXIS project has the unique characteristic of responding at all education grades as the educator's attitude towards teaching. It has the expected outcome of activating students and developing active citizenship through democratic processes as living attitudes in their day-to-day schooling. The main component of the project is plasticity as a property of creating new cognitive schemes and social representations.

Details of the team that designed the SYMPRAXIS :

Angeliki Konstantinou studied English Language and Literature (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki). She holds a postgraduate diploma titled "Studies in Education" (Hellenic Open University).

Valia Loutrianaki is a philologist-educator (Arsakeio Psychiko), PhD candidate, who teaches the postgraduate "Rhetoric: theory and practice" degree of the University of Athens and President of the Hellenic Association for the Promotion of Rhetoric in Education.

Christiana Moschou is a graduate of the Department of Philosophy-Pedagogy-Psychology and Theatrical Studies of the University of Athens and of the postgraduate Psychopedagogy of Integration of the Aristotle University. She is a PhD candidate of the Universidad Veracruzana Institute of Educational Research in Mexico and the School of Fine Arts, Department of Theater of the Aristotle University.

Nayia Boemi works as a teatrologist in schools (primary and secondary education). She is a graduate of the Department of Theater of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and she has a postgraduate degree in Social and Historical Anthropology from the University of the Aegean

Alexandra Nakou is a preschool teacher and a PhD candidate in the Department of Communication and Mass Media of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She is a graduate of the postgraduate program "Communication Technologies and Information in Education" of the Department of Early Age Education at the University of Athens.

Christina Nomikou studied pedagogy, theology and sociology. She holds a bachelor's degree in General Education and PhD in Environmental Education / Sustainability Education at the Department of Education for the Preschool Age of the University of Athens.