



ERASMUS+



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## Protocol nr.141

### Name of the protocol:

Attributes of a learning community

### Sources:

Inspired by SRI (<http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/>) and adapted to the European context by Catholic Education Flanders

### Purpose of the protocol:

Teams can use this tool at the start of a professional learning community. By using this tool, teams start from their prior knowledge on 'what a place of positive learning is.' The participants themselves establish basic attributes of good learning communities through their own & real experiences. The attributes become the basic goals/guidelines for establishing a professional learning community and later on for checking on progress as their new professional learning community develops.

### Materials:

A sheet of paper

### Time:

45 min.

### Roles:

Group leader to introduce the protocol;  
To work in small groups: facilitator, time keeper, presenter, participants

### Process:

1. Participants write about a personal experience in a learning community that they know was a place of positive learning for them. It can be an experience in a club, a group, a school, a course... any group that was a positive learning experience. Their writing should include:
  - a. the reason for the group's existence;
  - b. how the group was structured;
  - c. what they learned;
  - d. how they learned;
  - e. what made it a positive learning place. (8 min.)
2. The participants form groups of 4 and appoint a facilitator, a time keeper, a presenter.(2 min.)
3. Every participant gets 3 minutes to share his/her story. If the participant needs less than 3 minutes to share, the rest of the time is silent time to reflect on what the participant shared. (3 min. each participant = 12 min.)
4. As each story is told, the group picks out the attributes that made that learning community productive and satisfying (e.g. everyone listened to each other, we worked cooperatively to get things done, there was a lot of respect for different opinions...).(8 min.)



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5. Each group makes a list of the 4 or 5 attributes that seem to stand out for them. Sometimes they will be attributes that show up in all the stories, sometimes it will be an attribute that only appears in one story but seems really important to the group. (5 min.)
6. Each group names one attribute in turn while the group leader records on a general list. Any repeated attributes get noted with stars (\*). (5 min.)
7. When the list is complete (the facilitator can reword for a succinct list), the group leader asks the group if this list seems like a good list of attributes to guide the group as it forms its own community of learners. Additions can be made at this time. If anything on the list seems hard to do, or inappropriate to the group, a note to that effect is written next to that attribute. (5 min.)
8. At different points during the seminar/workshop, the 'Attributes of a Learning Community' are checked for development and progress.

**Debrief:**

**Feedback on the use of the protocol:**

1. The same process can be used to look at the attributes of a good learning experience. It gets at the essential elements of what is going on when people know they are learning at a high and satisfying level. The initial question gets changed to "Think about a time when you know you were really learning a lot, and 'enjoying the process'. Write about that time..."
2. Rik has used this protocol many times during national and international Erasmus+ KA1 courses. The participants realized each time a splendid overview of 'attributes of a learning community'. By working with this protocol, you activate the prior knowledge of the participants. All effective professional learning of teachers starts by their prior knowledge. (cfr. Timperley H., 2011, *realising the power of professional learning*, Open University Press, Berkshire - New-York)