



## Language across the Curriculum: Building a Learning Community

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### Abstract

*This paper reports on ongoing research with the aim of exploring the development of a learning community focused on Language across the Curriculum in a context where the school language (Swedish) is surrounded and much influenced by the national majority language (Finnish) in practically all domains. The research project came about as the school in question wanted to enhance their support for the development of the students' competence in Swedish. The school and its supporting foundation turned to Åbo Akademi University for facilitation in the form of a 3-year research and development project. With experience in action research and language support, I became the facilitator for the part of the project working with the collegial competence building of the teachers in grades 1 to 9, which in brief includes enhancing demands as well as teachers' support strategies for students' reading, writing and speaking Swedish across the curriculum. One year into the project, follow-up interviews have been conducted with five of the teachers. The results suggest that collegial in-service professional development around didactic tools together with prevailing awareness of the situation has been fruitful starting points to take necessary steps towards an increase in concrete efforts. Among these, forming teams that plan, shadow and evaluate each other's teaching as well as teachers educating for strategies in several subjects in targeted classrooms merits mention. The learning process for individual teachers shows much variation; however, the collegial efforts form a necessary gear to drive the larger process on. The main challenge is for teachers to find the time for development work. Regarding the introduction of new didactic tools, a majority of teachers prefer presentations/lectures during collegial meetings to individual reading. However, there is variation regarding how useful colleagues find collegial meetings: some find it useful to learn about ongoing work in other subjects and grades, whereas others would like to focus more on developing specific skills together with teachers of the same subjects and/or grades. At a minimum, since meetings tend to take place late afternoons, they need to be efficiently managed with a variation of content that teachers find meaningful.*

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