

## THE ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS OF DIFFERENT SUBJECTS TO MANIFESTATION OF NON-FORMAL MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE GYMNASIUM

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**SUMMARY.** The article analyses and scientifically evaluates the attitude of teachers teaching various school subjects towards the non-formal musical activity groups: the gymnasium choir, ensemble, etc. The main research questions are: What is the attitude of teachers at various school subjects towards the activities of musical groups in the gymnasium? What changes took place after the establishment of musical groups in the gymnasium? The qualitative research was conducted using the interview method. The attitude to musical groups in the gymnasium was reflected by 7 teachers teaching various subjects: three representatives of the administration and four teachers at different school subjects. The data analysis was performed using the qualitative content analysis method. The research results showed that non-formal musical activities carried out in the gymnasium not only marked the uniqueness of the school, shaped the image of the gymnasium but also united and enabled the participants of the educational process to collaborate and naturally work together for a common goal.

**Keywords:** non-formal artistic/musical activity, music education, teachers' attitude

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## Introduction

Although recently a great deal of attention has been paid to formal education, the approach to non-formal education and its goals is increasingly changing and turning into an integral part of continuous education. According to Lithuania's Progress Strategy "LITHUANIA 2030"<sup>3</sup>, the formal education system, operating in isolation, does not correspond to the ever-increasing technological, social, and economic changes; therefore, it must be enriched with the experience of non-formal education. High educational standards force schools operating in competitive conditions to strive for uniqueness in the context of other schools and to search for their own identity. The school's aspiration to remain attractive and original becomes one of the main strategic tasks and one of the most important criteria that help mobilize the community and strengthen the school's internal culture, which is based on collaboration of all participants of the educational process.

According to Foster<sup>4</sup>, the desire of all people, as social beings, to belong to a certain group and to contribute in a common activity powerfully drives human behavior. Being a member of a team means being not alone because in the team all have a common goal, and the common goal is achieved through a lot of communication. The school, as a community, is that place where challenges can be overcome, and which creates opportunities for enhancing collaboration and unity among all its participants. It is an advanced organization strengthening its individual members, forming personalities, regularly promoting, and mobilizing community events. In this respect, participation in collective art / musical groups, which not only creates opportunities for pupils' meaningful extra curricula activities but also promotes self-realization while acting together, becomes increasingly meaningful. The musical activity is significant in that it brings several benefits to the participant: congruence between wishes and opportunities strengthens self-confidence and opens self-realization possibilities. Participation in the activities of art groups allows to find like-minded people and friends, everyone can feel a significant member of the school community, becoming a visiting card of the school's cultural life. It is not by accident that Ivon & Kušcevic<sup>5</sup> state that it is necessary to promote the school community, especially teachers, to pay more

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<sup>3</sup> Lithuania's Progress Strategy "LITHUANIA 2030".

<sup>4</sup> Foster, D., Lisa. *Five ways emotional self-expression helps motivate your team*, <https://lisadfostercoach.com/2022/07/21/five-ways-emotional-self-expression-helps-motivate-your-team/>, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Ivon, Hicela & Kušcevic, Dubravka. "School and the Cultural-Heritage Environment: Pedagogical, Creative and Artistic Aspects". *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, vol.3, N.2., 2013, pp. 29–50.

attention to the meaning, significance, and purpose of non-formal education not only for the formation of the pupil's personality, the development of his talents and competencies but also for self-development of the school's common, collective activities.

From this perspective, the school's non-formal artistic / musical activities acquire universal significance in any processes taking place at school as an organization. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the issue of non-formal artistic / musical activity arises in various contexts, because this also determines its members' activeness, meaningful activity, success, satisfaction – a strong sense of identity. According to the authors<sup>6</sup>, special attention must be paid to each participant of the educational process, i.e., education must be personalized, recognizing that people have different experiences, needs and aspirations and that learning takes place in different ways and at different paces. Hence, the vision of an advanced society is associated with the knowledge and development of experiences, needs and abilities of every individual of that society. Non-formal artistic / musical activities can be the favorable context promoting the spread of the personality, its creativity, which is measured by rational, common sense.

The analysis of scientific research<sup>7</sup> reveals an increasing interest in the ideas of non-formal education. However, there is a lack of research highlighting the links between the latter educational phenomenon and the school's image. The increasingly acknowledged conclusions of teacher educators about the importance of the person's holistic education throughout all life promote the search for ways to quicken the removal of barriers between pupils and teachers, to promote pupils' learning motivation to learn all school

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<sup>6</sup> Wan, P., William; Chen, H., Shawna &, Daphne, W., Yiu. "Organizational image, identity, and international divestment: A theoretical examination". *Global Strategy Journal*, 5(3), 2015, pp. 205–222; Abawi, Lindy; Carter, Susan et al., "Inclusive Schoolwide Pedagogical Principles: Cultural Indicators in Action." *New Pedagogical Challenges in the 21st Century-Contributions of Research in Education*, 2017, pp. 34–55; Nisser, Desiree von Ahlefeld, "Can collaborative consultation, based on communicative theory, promote an inclusive school culture?" *Issues in Educational Research*, 27(4), pp. 874–891, <http://www.iier.org.au/iier27/von-ahlefeld-nisser.pdf>, 2017; Coyle, Daniel. *The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups*, New York, 2018; Foster, D., Lisa. *Five ways emotional self-expression helps motivate your team*, <https://lisadfostercoach.com/2022/07/21/five-ways-emotional-self-expression-helps-motivate-your-team/>, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Parker, Elizabeth. „A Grounded Theory of Adolescent High School Women's Choir Singers' Process of Social Identity Development". *Journal of Research in Music Education* 65(5), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321111290\\_A\\_Grounded\\_Theory\\_of\\_Adolescent\\_High\\_School\\_Women's\\_Choir\\_Singers'\\_Process\\_of\\_Social\\_Identity\\_Development](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321111290_A_Grounded_Theory_of_Adolescent_High_School_Women's_Choir_Singers'_Process_of_Social_Identity_Development), 2017, pp. 391–392; Yilmaz, Bagde; Gul, Gulnihal; Engur, Doruk. „The Effect of Choral Participation on Middle School Students' Life Satisfaction". *European Journal of Educational Research* 7(4), 2018, pp. 893–899; Westerlund, Heidi. *Visions for Intercultural Music Teacher Education*. Cham, Switzerland, 2019.

subjects, to develop learners' higher self-esteem, confidence to be active members of the school community, fostering the gymnasium's values and traditions. At this point, non-formal musical activities can play a very important role, be a connecting link of activities, providing a basis for collaboration. An increasingly deeper understanding is emerging of the importance of musical education for pupils' cognitive, emotional, and social development. It is assumed in the paper that while forming a good school reputation in the competitive environment, a particular role falls on non-formal musical expression as an element of the school's attractiveness, because this area of education is equated not only with multicultural knowledge but also with the awakening of the emotional beginning, the relation with oneself and the surrounding world, and the development of self-esteem. Teachers who are best acquainted with the school's goals, vision and established traditions can evaluate the contribution of the newly formed art groups to the formation of the school's image. Taking into account these arguments, the attitude of teachers teaching various school subjects towards the art groups' activity, significance and impact on the gymnasium was investigated by raising a problem research question: What meanings do teachers at various school subjects give to the manifestation of non-formal musical activities in the gymnasium?

**The research object** is the manifestation of non-formal musical activities in the gymnasium from the standpoint of teachers.

**The purpose of the research** is to reveal the attitude of teachers of various school subjects to the manifestation of non-formal musical activities in the gymnasium.

### Research methodology

The attitude of teachers teaching various school subjects towards the manifestation of non-formal musical activities in the gymnasium was investigated employing a qualitative research strategy, because qualitative research focus on processes that are important in the context of the analyzed subject<sup>8</sup>. The qualitative research was divided into stages: 1) concept formation (the qualitative research instrument, data analysis methods were considered); 2) planning of the quantitative research and the empirical process (selection of subjects was carried out).

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<sup>8</sup> Bitinas, Bronislovas; Rupšienė, Liudmila; Žydžiūnaitė, Vilma. *Kokybinių tyrimų metodologija*. Klaipėda, 2008; Žydžiūnaitė, Vilma & Sabaliauskas, Stanislav. *Kokybiniai tyrimai: principai ir metodai: vadovėlis socialinių mokslų studijų programų studentams (Qualitative Research: Principles and Methods: A textbook for students of social science study programs)*. Vilnius, Vaga, 2017; Elo, Satu; Kyngäs, Helvi. "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process". *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62 (1), 2008, pp.107–115.

**The research sample.** The study involved 7 persons working in the gymnasium: three representatives of the administration and four teachers of different school subjects (the German language, geography, physical education, and history). All participants of the qualitative research are active members of the gymnasium's community; their selection was carried out directly, in the presence of researchers and an expert. Conducting the research, it was maintained that this group of teachers, which actively participated in classroom and extracurricular activities, could best evaluate the situation of non-formal musical activities in the gymnasium, i.e., the manifestation of non-formal musical activities in the gymnasium and their impact on the gymnasium's community.

**Data collection.** The qualitative research was conducted using a semi-structured interview method, during which the informants were given a questionnaire compiled by the author<sup>9</sup>, consisting of ten questions. The interview method is a convenient way of data collection, as it fully corresponds to the assumptions of the qualitative research methodology, allows the collection of comprehensive data enabling the researcher to obtain in-depth meanings conveyed about the object under investigation<sup>10</sup>.

This paper presents a fragment of the conducted qualitative research, i.e., the analysis of the informants' opinion about the manifestation of musical groups in the gymnasium. Teachers were asked:

- 1) What is your attitude towards the activities of musical groups in the gymnasium?
- 2) What changes took place after establishing art groups in the gymnasium?

All informants were given the same questions, which were analyzed based on the steps of the interview analysis: the interviews were transcribed, paraphrased, conceptualized, respective meaningful units were distinguished, which were then combined into categories and subcategories; empirical generalization of categories and subcategories was performed.

**Research ethics.** The ethical principles<sup>11</sup> of benevolence, confidentiality and anonymity, characteristic of qualitative research, were observed in the study. All participants verbally confirmed that they voluntarily agreed to take part in the study and did not object to recording the interview. Teachers were informed that personal information or facts that allow them to be identified

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<sup>9</sup> This article presents a small part of the more significant results of the qualitative research.

<sup>10</sup> Kvale, Steinar; Brinkmann, Svend. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, USA, 2009; Alvesson, Mats. *Interpreting Interviews*. SAGE Publications. Los Angeles, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Žydžiūnaitė, Vilma & Sabaliauskas, Stanislav. *Kokybiniai tyrimai: principai ir metodai: vadovėlis socialinių mokslų studijų programų studentams (Qualitative research: Principles and methods: A textbook for students of social science study programs)*. Vilnius, Vaga, 2017.

would not be used during the analysis and that the conclusions would be presented in a summary form. Seeking to ensure the informants' confidentiality, their names are encoded, the name of the gymnasium or other information noted during the interviews, which would allow the identification of the respondent, is not mentioned.

## Research results

**Activities of musical groups in the gymnasium.** To comprehensively analyze how research participants evaluate the activities of musical groups in the gymnasium, teachers were given the question: *What is your attitude towards the activities of musical groups in the gymnasium?* Respondents presented their thoughts both about the activities of art groups and about the peculiarities of manifestation of musical groups. Therefore, when analyzing the ideas presented by teachers, a category was distinguished: *Meanings given by teachers to musical activities in the gymnasium*, which according to the number of semantic units was divided into 3 subcategories: *Formation of the gymnasium's image*; *Formation of children's self-esteem*, *The growing popularity of choral culture* (Table 1).

**Table 1**

Category	Subcategory	Illustrating statement
Meanings given by teachers to musical activities in the gymnasium	Formation of the gymnasium's image	"Pupils involved in musical groups undoubtedly create a certain added value for the school and, of course, form the image of the gymnasium." (M6)
	Formation of children's self-esteem	"It is very important that pupils have some kind of extracurricular activity so that they find their vocations in the field they are interested in and want to participate in those activities and realize the self instead of walking somewhere in the yard or being not engaged in any activity. They not only sing but also spend time together, socialise, they discover themselves here." (M1)
	The growing popularity of choral culture	"Children are increasingly braver, they want to express themselves; thus, participation in groups is very important, especially now when choral culture is becoming so popular." (M3)

### Teachers' attitude towards the activities of musical groups in the gymnasium

The utterances of many informants highlight a tendency to identify the activities of musical groups as a certain aspect of the (self-)formation of the gymnasium's image (see Table 1). Teachers state that artistic / musical activities become particularly significant when it is sought to make the gymnasium attractive, unique, able to withstand competition among other gymnasiums of the city, meet pupils' needs, parents' expectations and the like: *"When the choir appeared in the school, we realized that we became exceptional and actually responded to the needs of many pupils; that niche appeared where pupils can discover themselves."* (M2); *"Musical groups create a specific image of the gymnasium through concerts, kind communication and interrelationships."* (M4); *"And that gymnasium choir is so unique – it is a certain element of the gymnasium's image."* (M6). In the informants' opinion, by creating conditions for groups to exist, schools will not only have their unique face but will also create added cultural value: *"A real gymnasium must have art groups. Be it choirs, be it, say, dance groups, brass bands, but this is a very important accent. Let's say, higher educational institutions have choirs and dance groups because that's how they are identified. If we are a gymnasium, we must have art groups."* (M2).

Sharing their thoughts about the activities of musical groups, informants also identify the aspect of forming pupils' self-esteem (subcategory 2). *"(...) in fact, we even didn't think that pupils would get involved so much, would want to work; they don't care about time, that dedication... The choir sometimes becomes more important than lessons."* (M3); *"They express themselves there, find friends, like-minded pupils, they communicate not only on musical topics, maybe they even do homework together."* (M1). Teachers notice that pupils start to open up, interact more, and become increasingly more self-confident: *"They don't get bored with the choir, the repertoire, all those activities... they feel free, more self-confident, and this is very visible."* (M2). It is evident that informants value musical activity as a particularly positive phenomenon, which provides pupils with new experiences that help them identify the demonstration of their will, efforts, activeness and even satisfaction with the educational process: *"I noticed that some pupils are really more self-confident, they just have burning desire to play music, are stubborn to learn those musical parts."* (M5); *"I said straightaway that if you want to attend the choir, you have to be good at other classes as well (laughs), so some children really pay more attention to homework, well, the results from the subject I teach have really improved, I would say, their self-esteem has increased."* (M7).

Based on the analysis of the collected material, another identification of the activities of musical groups in the gymnasium (The growing popularity of choral culture) was distinguished, in which research participants tend to

identify the analysed phenomenon with the increasingly popular choral culture. According to informants, it is very important to notice pupils before they find street friends, get involved in online social networks and other negative phenomena. Teachers believe that the growing popularity of choral activities helps to involve pupils in active school life: “(...) *earlier, pupils were more reserved, school-home; and now children are braver, very curious, they want to express themselves, they all convene to groups (...).*” (M2); “*I think musical activities in school should develop unless that digital world steals them away, but it won’t substitute for that live interaction. So, art groups will exist and there will be many of them and diverse.*” (M1). Utterances of some teachers reveal anxiety because young people often encounter a distorted view of the environment and the person, which is shaped by social networks and the consumer culture dictated by the society. Based on this point of view, according to informants, it is necessary to turn to artistic activities as one of the main mediums where the learners’ perception of the world and values are formed, helping young people to mature, to discover their vocation and place in the world. “*Every child must be noticed before he / she is involved in harmful habits and questionable activities on the street.*” (M3); “*It’s very good that choral activities are becoming so popular and that pupils like them, because we all know how many young people aimlessly swan around in the streets.*” (M4); “*It’s good that those choirs are becoming increasingly popular, but it is known that such activity depends to a large extent on the leader, who somehow manages to get our children interested in attending that choir (...) after all, they have so many temptations (...).*” (M4).

Answering the question about changes in the gymnasium after the establishment of artistic activity groups, teachers provided specific examples that were classified into the category *Change in the gymnasium after the establishment of musical groups* (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Illustrating statement</b>
Change in the gymnasium after the establishment of musical groups	Interdisciplinary collaboration	“The choir smoothly collaborates with subject teachers too.” (M5)
	Change in the attitude towards the artistic activity	“And the teacher’s attitude towards that child begins to change; although she is writing a worse mark, subconsciously she has already put a plus because she saw how that child sang and played music. Through non-formal activities, pupils can show that they have will, patience.” (M6)



	Fostering the culture of communality	“You can get friendly support if you as a teacher are mentioned somewhere in the event, I will receive some applause from the choristers because they are my pupils. A strengthened culture of support is felt in that.” (M6)
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### Change in the gymnasium after the establishment of musical groups

Change is a very broad concept that can mean differences, adaptation, innovations, renewal, and the like<sup>12</sup>. Implementation of change includes encounters with various obstacles, financial difficulties, reluctance to change the usual order, etc. Looking from this perspective, it is important to reveal the teachers' attitude towards the success factors of implementing change after the establishment of musical groups in the gymnasium. Collaborating with other educational institutions, teachers share experiences and novelties, participate in various joint activities not only in events, conferences but also in implementing various projects. When guests from other countries arrive, the gymnasium is best represented by its art groups. Therefore, naturally, the statements highlighted in the first subcategory (Interdisciplinary collaboration) emphasize the important role of the art group in the interdisciplinary aspect, i.e., when collaborating with the teachers teaching other subjects: *“When foreign language teachers need to sing somewhere for an event, we always collaborate with the participants of musical groups.”* (M1); *“We always create the repertoire for the performance together and rehearse together a lot not only with the choir but also with actors.”* (M4); *“There was a German song competition, where we collaborated with the teacher, the group was prepared; there was an English language project, where they sang English songs and rehearsed them together with the English language teachers. The choir helped to add colors to the educational process too.”* (M3).

In the second sub-category (Change in the attitude towards the artistic activity), there is a noticeable change in the informants' attitude towards manifestation of musical groups in the gymnasium: *“Somehow earlier I didn't*

<sup>12</sup> Hurn, J., Brian. “Management of change in a multinational company”. In: *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Nr.44(1), 2012, pp. 41–46; Videikienė, Simona; Šimanskienė, Ligita. „Pokyčių valdymo sėkmės veiksniai organizacijose” (*“Success factors for change management in organizations”*). *Mokslinių straipsnių rinkinys „Visuomenės saugumas ir viešoji tvarka (Collection of scientific articles “Public safety and public order”)*, 2013 (10) Scientific articles, pp.339–356.  
<https://repository.mruni.eu/bitstream/handle/007/15120/Videikien%C4%97.pdf?isAllowed=&sequence=1>.

*give prominence to those concerts, because I wasn't interested (...) I tried to find all sorts of reasons not to go, and now, when the choir's achievements are so high, I always look forward to a new performance.*" (M4). The change in attitude is best reflected by the ever-increasing attendance at the events, as demanding spectators select events where they spend their free time. Attending the events, teachers already know that they will get a lot of positive emotions, that the event will be of high quality "*(...) the further, the more so; even before the pandemic, when we were fascinated by those concerts, other pupils of the gymnasium very willingly attended the concerts.*" (M2); "*All those evenings, where the ensemble and the choir performed, show the emergence of that choral culture, the emergence of culture of events in our gymnasium.*" (M7); "*Those performances of the ensemble and the choir are already as if in our blood during various events as a self-evident part of culture. Even without a survey, we could say straightaway that it is unimaginable that the event could take place without the ensemble or the choir. It is already like a visitor card for all events.*" (M5).

In the third sub-category (Fostering the culture of communality, see Table 2), a new phenomenon in the gymnasium was identified: during events, to support the one who plays music on the stage or to accompany with applause the teacher who goes to receive a thank-you: "*Behavior, whether in the hall or while waiting for concerts or at those events, it seems to me that with every passing year, the strengthened sense of their communality can be felt.*" (M4); "*That friendship of theirs, interrelationships, they feel like a united part of the group.*" (M3); "*You can see how they also support others who are not members of their group during events, they applaud, sing as backing vocalists in the hall.*" (M7); "*It even gives me chills how they united the community in our gymnasium.*" (M3).

To sum up, we can assume that artistic activity is significant in creating a school for all. Strengthened relation, friendship, communication, and interdisciplinary collaboration ensure choristers' active participation not only in the activities organized by the gymnasium but also in the lessons of teachers teaching various subjects – they become active members of the community. An emotional relation is established, successful situations and many pleasant moments are experienced. Manifestation of art not only makes life joyful, enriches the singers themselves, forms self-esteem, changes teachers' attitude towards artistic activities but it can also become a great means of developing school culture<sup>13</sup>.

The person helped by another person can do more. If we acknowledge that informal artistic / musical activities allow persons to experience success, it will mean that they will be able to realize themselves more successfully in life in

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<sup>13</sup> Gruenert, Steve; Whitaker, Todd, *School Culture Recharged: Strategies to Energize Your Staff and Culture*. Alexandria, Virginia USA, 2017.

the future. By carrying out a dual mission – by transferring values, knowledge, traditions and developing the ability to orientate in the changing environment and act flexibly – the school forms the basis of the person's values.

## Conclusions

The conducted qualitative research reveals that the teachers at various school subjects favorably evaluate the artistic / musical activities carried out in the gymnasium. The teachers' utterances revealed a tendency to identify the activities of musical groups as a certain aspect in the (self-)formation of the *gymnasium's image* with the aim of building a good reputation of the school in the competitive environment. In the opinion of informants, artistic / musical activities become especially significant, seeking to make the gymnasium attractive, exclusive, to withstand competition among other city gymnasiums, meet pupils' needs and the expectations of parents and the gymnasium community.

The analysis of the research data significantly revealed an important element identified by teachers, which describes the non-formal musical activity in the gymnasium as a factor in the *(self-)formation of pupils' self-esteem*. From this standpoint, it makes sense to emphasize that the high self-esteem of learners is closely related to learning motivation, demonstration of one's will, efforts, activeness, success and satisfaction with the educational process.

Based on the analysis of the collected material, another aspect of the artistic / musical activity was distinguished, which research participants tended to identify with the *growing popularity of choral culture* in the gymnasium. In the opinion of informants, artistic activities undoubtedly help young people to get involved in the active school life, avoiding negative phenomena, harmful habits formed by social networks as well as consumer and street culture dictated by society. According to teachers, the growing popularity of musical activities helps young people to mature, form values, and discover their vocation and place in the world.

Conducting the research, it was meaningful to find out the reflective attitude of informants, related to changes in the gymnasium after establishing artistic activity groups. In their utterances, teachers accentuated *interdisciplinary collaboration* most, identifying it as an important element in presenting national cultural traditions not only in concerts and conferences but also for foreign guests visiting the gymnasium as part of project activities. Teachers at various school subjects emphasized that integrated lessons and activities increased pupils' motivation to be more interested in a certain subject.

The data analysis allowed recognizing the *change in the attitude towards artistic activity*. Teachers at various school subjects notice that pupils' attendance at art groups also change pupils' behavior – they self-develop

responsibility, will, patience, and a sense of duty at a faster pace. The analysis identified a positive change in the attitude of teachers towards the pupil. This is evidenced by the increasing attendance of the whole gymnasium community at the events. It is important to note that when speaking about the emergence of the quality of events and culture, informants distinguish one very important dimension: musical groups (the choir and the ensemble) are the visiting card of the gymnasium events.

The analysis of the research allowed us to recognize a new phenomenon in the gymnasium, which enabled informants to feel strengthened *fostering of the communality culture*. It is evident that artistic / musical activities in the gymnasium are a medium that brings together not only pupils, teachers but also families to collaborate and work in a team. Musical groups give the school its distinctive face – an identity that creates the culture of communality in the gymnasium.

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