

**Chernivtsi Secondary School, Ukraine**  
**«Learning how to make democratic choices»**  
**«The Youth of Sadhora take action»**  
**by Yuliia MINTYANSKA, teacher, and Oksana BUBNOVA, student**

We took part in this issue because we wanted to create our «ideal school». An institution where all the members (pupils, parents, teachers, the administration) are equally represented, there is mutual respect among all of them. The pupils are free to speak about their ideas, they are encouraged to be leaders, and they are encouraged to make changes in the school and community in general. In addition, we want to create an environment where all members of the school can take part in planning and creating a better future.

At the beginning school and community members gathered and discussed important issues about our school and how to create solutions in a democratic way. Our first step was to increase transparency at our school. We did this by releasing all main documents on our web page for public use. Our next step was to elect a new student government. Also local students gathered to discuss the problems of different schools in our region. After that we worked on some tasks that we identified: lack of understanding about Democracy, small number of classrooms, stadium quality, and environmental problems. Everything that we've planned went well.

While our process has gone well, in general, we've had a few challenges:

- \*hired new teachers for different reasons
- \*some teachers had entrenched ways of thinking
- \*there was a lot of additional work (extra meetings, new lessons, workshops ...)

As for results, the project gave us the opportunity to broaden our horizons. The school welcomed a volunteer from the USA who is helping us better understand English, democratic societies and our future opportunities with technology. Furthermore, the new lessons/courses about Democracy in our middle and high schools are included in the curriculum. We also have a new playground, 4 new rooms, a bicycle rack, a composter pile and the most important thing is teachers and pupils who are inspired with new ideas and who can try to make changes in our school.

This is what we would say to a colleague who is about to start the same kind of project:

- you should actively involve all members of school in the process
- don't be afraid of implementing new ideas
- don't forget to take into consideration all interests of the different members of the school and in the community
- all decisions should be made in a democratic way
- if you want to change something you should start with yourselves.