



The Learning Culture Ladder – For Kindergartens and Schools

-A framework for developing resilience, flexibility, effective collaboration and leadership in response to challenges.

© 2025 Hans Holter Solhjell

Use the Learning Culture Ladder to assess your current situation and reflect on the next steps for team and organisational development.



PLS Kulturtrappen is part of the PLS framework. Read more about it: www.famlab.no/pls-learning-culture

11 Authoritative practice is implemented as an continuous learning process aiming to foster optimal conditions for learning, collaboration, trust, well-being, and mental health.

10 Skills and understanding continue to develop and become more stable. Shared mental models are well established and actively used. Co-creation of situational images and understanding. Clear positive changes in mastery, co-operation and well-being.

9 High psychological safety within the adult group. It is safe to make mistakes, seek support, receive feedback, and learn from others. Openness to difficult information. Shared situational images are developed and updated. Significant effort is made to strengthen individual skills.

8 Adults take full responsibility for their own learning process, even though it can be difficult and relapses occur. Shared mental practice models are sought and used. Experience of better and more competent support in the collaboration between adults.

7 Adults shift to a skills-based authoritative leadership approach. Want and actively seek knowledge and support for their own learning of leadership skills. But underestimate the necessary learning effort needed to make oneself.

6 Experience of good will, problems are recognised and taken seriously and a lot of work is being done. Many meetings, reports, plans, measures, etc. are tried. But it lacks practicality, precision, coordination, follow-up, adjustments, perseverance and has low effect.

5 Frustration is on the rise. Adults believe they have 'tried everything', remain open to change, but hope for "quick-fix" solutions focused on changes on part of the child. Their behavior trends more toward authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful approaches.

4 Adults communicate in a shorter, harsher and more control-oriented way, without explanations, guidance, perspective taking and problem solving. Problems are hidden and not recognised. Superficial focus on reputation and protecting one's own self-image.

3 Insecurity in the adult group. Fear of making mistakes. Preoccupation with blaming others for their mistakes. Adults disclaim responsibility, pointing to the child, aspects of the child, other adults and factors outside their own circle of influence as the main cause.

2 Adults believe the child and/or other adults are primarily responsible for learning and change. Communication and co-operation between adults breaks down. Un-coordinated, fragmented and non-updated situational pictures.

1 Frequent use of coercive measures, punishment and control-oriented communication. Alternatively, permissiveness or neglect foster chaos and rule of the strongest.

Team Reflection Questions

1. Where are we on the development ladder?
2. What are our strengths when facing challenges?
3. What constructive skills and practices do we already have?
4. What internal challenges limit our ability to collaborate and learn?
5. What organizational, systemic, or cultural factors hold us back?
6. What should we do less of or stop doing?
7. How can we better support each other in solving challenges?
8. What is our next step to strengthen collaboration and learning culture?

(Note: The model is informed by theories of dynamic systems, learning organisations, organisational culture, psychological safety, transformational leadership, complexity management, self-determination, group development and change processes. It is necessarily a simplification of complex processes and can be interpreted in different ways depending on the context. Read more on the website: www.famlab.no/pls-learning-culture)

Playful



Relational

Intellectual



Repairing

Social/cognitive aggression/defense



Flight or Fight



Freeze and Disconnecting



Engagement

Biopsychosocial defence mechanisms