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## AFTER 20 YEARS: A COMMUNITY SCHOOL IN THE SOCIAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT

In the second half of 1987 a group of parents and teachers mostly from academic areas decided to establish an official group of independent charter schools. This project aroused the interest of people working within structures of independent education and therefore the Social Educational Society was established.

After two years of legal battles with the Communist Government in 1989 the first schools appeared in our country, which gave rise to private education in Poland. The Social Educational Society became an organization open to all interested in the condition of Polish education and creating a new alternative. The mission of the Association was to reform the education system in Poland in such a way that it would live up to society's expectations.

The principles have been relatively straightforward and unchanging for years. Schools should be small, incorporated into the local society and subject to parents supervision. Their shape should depend on people creating them, on students' opportunities, parents will and the pedagogical conceptions of teachers. It could be a traditional school, conventional, original or one searching for new ways of teaching children and young adults.

The fundamental requirements are:

- Small groups of students in classes;
- Well-qualified teachers;
- Personal contact between a child and a class tutor;
- Development of artistic abilities;
- Encouragement of the students to acquire knowledge for themselves;
- Attention to health and physical development;
- Respect for other students;
- Assurance of safety, acceptance and a positive outlook.

The Social Educational Society has been very active in the last few years particularly in the areas of public schools, especially as the initiator working to give parents wide powers, serving as the basis of their creative influence in the areas of the program and school development. The Social Educational Society is also an active member of the European Parent's Association, which awarded membership in 1993.

### So How do These Slogans and Ideas Relate to the Example of Our School?

Primary Community School no. 3 in Krakow was established in 1989 and in 1999 turned into a Group of Community Schools also consisting of a newly established Gimnazjum or Secondary School. Despite this fact, it remained small and cozy with a friendly atmosphere. There are between 12 and 18 students in each class. There are 153 students in total.

The idea for the school is simple: a high level of education, a wide curriculum, small classes, a friendly atmosphere and close cooperation of parents and teachers. The last point is the key element of the school because they, as a matter of fact, supervise the school. The Members of the Association are made up of parents and teachers who form Independent Local Association no. 37. The Board is the head of this Association and it's chosen at the General Member Meeting of the Social Educational Society. It is the Board who chooses a director, shapes perspective plans of the school, handles documents, for example: the budget, educational plans etc. The Board, an Audit Committee and Staff Meeting are 3 democratic areas, which create favorable conditions for the management and the school development.

A long period of coexistence with one another led to creating factual mechanisms, which make management of the school efficient, parent's motivated and quick reaction to the needs of any particular group. An important "benefit" of the democratic functioning of parents in the school is combining their efforts not "against something" but "in favour of something" i.e. the common good.

These experiences result in great flexibility and development of the school's abilities in community work. These abilities are seen in things such as: charity events and efforts, public events, or social activities like the Student Sports Club "Zerwikaptur," which are open to the public.

The school cooperates with many schools and other organization. It organizes many competitions both locally and internationally. Close contact with parents, which results from the school's positive atmosphere creates favorable conditions for bringing up our students to be open minded citizens.