APPRENDRE

Learning throughout a teaching career

Professional Learning Communities : Experiences, Resources and Perspectives







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AT A GLANCE



Teachers face challenges that shape their everyday work: overcrowded classrooms, changing curricula, limited access to professional development, and too little support when difficulties arise. The situation varies from country to country, as do the resources available to prepare teachers and help them throughout their careers.

Since 2018, APPRENDRE has been working with education ministries to strengthen teacher education and professional development, taking into account the needs, priorities, and existing structures of each country.

Goal

Improve the quality of initial teacher education and continuing professional development across French-speaking countries.

Budget
€ 30 millions

Implemented by the **Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie** (AUF), with funding from the **French Development Agency** (AFD) and the **French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs** (MEAE), APPRENDRE works with **education ministries** to strengthen teacher education, professional development, and the policies that support the teaching profession.

23 eligible countries

- Algeria
- Benin
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Comoros
- Congo
- Côte d'Ivoire
- DRC
- Djibouti
- Gabon
- Guinea
- Haiti
- Lebanon
- Madagascar
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Morocco
- Rwanda
- Senegal
- Togo
- Tunisia

THREE WAYS
TO SUPPORT STRONGER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Technical Assistance

APPRENDRE helps education ministries strengthen teacher education and professional development by improving training systems, supporting teacher educators and instructional support teams, and developing tools and approaches tailored to their needs.

Research and Knowledge Production

APPRENDRE supports research projects, case studies, comparative analyses, policy briefs, and educational resources that document experiences, examine challenges, and identify lessons for education systems.

The APPRENDRE Academy connects these three areas of work. It provides a space to turn field experiences into knowledge, tools, and educational resources, and to share them with teachers, education professionals, ministry staff, and technical and financial partners.

Partnerships, Dialogue, and Knowledge Sharing

APPRENDRE brings together education professionals, researchers, ministries, and institutional partners through a network of 21 partner organizations, regional and international events, and an online platform for sharing resources and research findings.

Professional Learning Communities : Country Experiences and Requests for Support



In many of APPRENDRE's partner countries, education ministries have requested support to strengthen collaboration among teachers. The situation varies from country to country. In some, professional learning communities are formally established, with official structures, defined responsibilities, and a recognized place within the education system. Elsewhere, they operate more flexibly, sometimes informally, through schools or groups of teachers. Some have existed for decades, while others are only beginning to take shape.

The requests submitted to APPRENDRE reflect this diversity. They include revitalizing existing structures, training the people responsible for facilitating them, developing guides and monitoring tools, and establishing communities focused on particular subjects or teaching challenges.

Several questions have emerged repeatedly through this work. How can teachers meet regularly, make good use of their time together, and turn their discussions into changes in classroom practice? What roles should school leaders, pedagogical supervisors, and education ministries play in sustaining this collaboration over time?

The following pages explore the different approaches developed or considered with partner countries. They also show how these experiences have informed international discussions and the development of resources to support professional learning communities.

Burundi : Strengthening School Networks

In Burundi, basic education schools are organized into networks around a central school. Established under a ministerial order issued in December 2019, this structure is intended to encourage collaboration between schools and provide support for teaching teams.

In 2021, Burundi's Ministry of Education received support from APPRENDRE to assess how these school networks were functioning. The study aimed to identify the challenges they faced and recommend ways to strengthen their role in teachers' continuing professional development.

The assessment examined how responsibilities were shared, what facilities and materials were available, the activities carried out within the networks, how they were coordinated, and the training needs of the teams involved.
The findings were published in June 2021 in a report titled *Assessment of Burundi's School Networks and Opportunities for Strengthening Them*.

Burundi's experience illustrates a form of professional collaboration organized across a geographic area. It also raises questions about the resources and ongoing support school networks need to help schools improve teaching practices on a regular basis.



Comoros : 25 Professional Learning Communities Established in Schools

In the Comoros, teachers still work largely on their own, while a shortage of school inspectors limits the support available to schools. To strengthen continuing professional development and encourage collaboration among colleagues, the Ministry of Education decided to pilot professional learning communities (PLCs), with support from APPRENDRE.

In 2024, an initial training course brought together 44 pedagogical supervisors and school leaders. Participants explored how to facilitate professional learning communities, the role of school leadership, conflict management, and tools for organizing collaborative work. The aim was to prepare these teams to support the establishment of PLCs in their schools.

The training led to a pilot project that ran through 2025 in 25 schools across Anjouan, Ngazidja, and Mohéli, including 20 primary schools and five lower secondary schools. A total of 200 teachers took part in 25 professional learning communities.

Each school was encouraged to identify difficulties experienced by students and use them as the starting point for a shared teaching project. Teams learned how to assess the situation, set priorities, assign responsibilities, and monitor their activities. Projects could focus on student learning, assessment, or responding to students' different needs. The idea was to give meetings between colleagues a shared purpose directly connected to what was happening in their classrooms.

All 25 schools established a professional learning community and developed a shared teaching project. However, the pilot also revealed the challenges of keeping these communities active and effective. In approximately 60% of the schools, the transfer of training content and the support provided to teaching teams were considered insufficient. Reassignments of supervisory staff, a two-month strike, and difficulties finding time for collaborative work also disrupted activities.

These findings led the specialists working with APPRENDRE to recommend more regular support for schools, additional training for the teams involved, and better use of data on student learning. Although the communities had successfully organized themselves around shared projects, they still needed support to monitor implementation, review results, and adjust their activities.

For 2026–2027, the Ministry of Education plans to continue and expand the initiative, including by developing subject-specific PLCs, training school leaders, and evaluating how the existing communities are functioning. A national event dedicated to professional collaboration is also among the activities planned.

The Comoros experience highlights the need to allocate time for collaboration and provide sustained support so that professional learning communities can meet regularly and contribute to improvements in teaching practices.



Congo : Connecting Classroom Observation with Teacher Collaboration

In Congo, pedagogical support teams work with teachers in a context of overcrowded classrooms and changing school curricula. Classroom observations help identify the difficulties teachers face, while discussions among colleagues also have a role to play in continuing professional development.

With support from APPRENDRE, activities have already been carried out to strengthen the skills of pedagogical supervisors in observing and analyzing teaching practices. This work provides a starting point for exploring how challenges identified during classroom visits could be discussed collectively within schools.

In 2026, discussions with the Ministry of Education highlighted an interest in strengthening pedagogical facilitation groups (GAPs) and establishing closer links between their activities and the support provided by school inspectors.

The proposed activities include organizing collaborative work, supporting GAPs, and developing shared tools for observing and analyzing classroom practices. Particular attention would be given to schools in more remote departments, where opportunities for meetings and follow-up support are limited.

The aim is to help teaching teams use classroom observations to identify topics they can work on together, share experiences, and monitor improvements in their teaching practices. The arrangements for this support have yet to be agreed upon with the Ministry.

Côte d'Ivoire : Revitalizing Collaborative Work in Schools

In Côte d'Ivoire, teachers already have established structures for working together, including pedagogical units and subject department meetings. These provide opportunities to exchange ideas about teaching practices, plan activities, and work together on challenges encountered in the classroom. However, their effectiveness varies, and their role in continuing professional development needs to be strengthened.

With support from APPRENDRE, tools have been developed to observe and analyze teaching practices, alongside resources to help identify training needs and support pedagogical teams. This work has laid the groundwork for an approach to teacher support that responds more closely to difficulties observed in classrooms.

For 2026–2027, the Ministry of Education aims to revitalize subject department meetings and pedagogical units, making them more regular and better organized spaces for collaboration. A guide is being considered to help teams facilitate these meetings, address shared teaching challenges, and monitor their activities.

The plans also include developing a community of practice for lower secondary school principals, giving them opportunities to share experiences and explore ways to support their teaching teams.

The goal is to strengthen the connections between classroom observations, identified training needs, and collaborative work within schools. The next step will be to determine how these groups should be facilitated and supported so they can meet and work together regularly.

Guinea : Revitalizing Professional Learning Communities and Strengthening Teacher Support

In Guinea, the Ministry of Education aims to strengthen teachers' continuing professional development and improve coordination among the institutions responsible for supporting them. Communities of practice and learning (CAPs) are among the collaborative structures the Ministry plans to revitalize.

With support from APPRENDRE, work has already been carried out on teacher education and pedagogical support. Training booklets and teaching practicum supervision guides have been developed for teacher training colleges (ENIs) and Guinea's Higher Institute of Education Sciences (ISSEG). Teaching resources have also been developed and tested in classrooms, then refined based on feedback from education teams.

For 2027–2028, the Ministry plans to assess existing pedagogical support arrangements and revive communities of practice and learning. A guide is expected to help teams organize meetings, share experiences, and work together on challenges encountered in the classroom.

This work is also expected to include standardizing the classroom observation tools used in initial teacher education and continuing professional development, so that the different supervisory structures can work from a common set of references.

The aim is to better connect classroom visits, discussions among colleagues, and the training opportunities available to teachers. The arrangements for revitalizing CAPs still need to be defined with national teams, particularly to ensure that the communities receive the facilitation and ongoing support they need.

Mauritius : Research-Informed Learning Communities Across Six Themes

In Mauritius, the Ministry of Education wanted to strengthen the skills of education professionals, particularly in supporting students who struggle with learning and developing more inclusive teaching practices. With support from APPRENDRE and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), nearly 300 education leaders and staff members took part in eleven training activities between 2023 and 2024, covering educational technology, mathematics, science, inclusion, and classroom management.

The Ministry then sought to ensure that what participants had learned was shared more widely across schools. It decided to build on existing communities of practice to encourage collaboration between schools and across different roles in education.

In 2025, six communities were launched across twelve pilot schools, including some serving students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They brought together teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators around six topics: mathematics, science, classroom management, student assessment, educational technology, and inclusive teaching and learning. Each community was facilitated by a trainer from the Mauritius Institute of Education, working alongside an APPRENDRE expert.

The communities used Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), an approach that combines research with classroom experimentation. Starting with challenges observed in their classrooms, teams reviewed research findings, tried new teaching methods, and shared what they learned from the results.

The projects led to a range of classroom experiments. At a primary school in a priority education area, one team developed interactive digital activities to encourage student participation. Others focused on preventing school bullying or improving science teaching. At one secondary school, 36 students chose to continue studying science at upper secondary level, compared with no more than around ten in previous years.

In September 2025, the six communities presented their work at the National Days of Educational Innovation. To share these experiences beyond the pilot schools, two television programs were broadcast in Mauritius, along with a documentary about the Classroom Management community, particularly its work on preventing school bullying.

The use of SoTL in Mauritius was also examined through a dedicated research project led by Emilie Doutreloux, a professor at Université Laval and member of APPRENDRE's Scientific Council, together with Asifa Salehmohamed and Shakeel Atchia from the MIE. The three researchers explored how this approach contributes to the development of inclusive teaching practices and presented their findings at the Tunisian Education Forum in November 2026.



Mauritania : From Early Pilot Projects to Plans for a National Rollout

In Mauritania, efforts to develop communities of practice (CoPs) have been underway for several years to encourage professional collaboration among teachers. The country already has experience with this approach, including in five wilayas (regions) where communities have received support from UNESCO. The Ministry of Education now aims to build on these initiatives and prepare for their expansion across primary and secondary schools.

With support from APPRENDRE, several workshops were held in 2024 and 2025 to help move this work forward. Discussions focused on how communities should be organized and facilitated, the responsibilities of their members, and the conditions needed for them to function effectively. A pilot phase also helped inform the development of national tools.

In 2025, 41 participants gathered for a seven-day workshop to develop a practical guide and a national plan for expanding communities of practice. With guidance from specialists including Ali Houmed Ibrahim, the teams worked on the steps involved in establishing a community, organizing meetings, facilitating discussions, and monitoring activities.

The resulting guide contains ten practical guidance sheets covering how to prepare, launch, manage, and evaluate a community of practice, along with tools for the teams responsible for supporting them. Further work was still needed to finalize the guide following the August 2025 workshop.

A national rollout plan was also prepared to guide the next stages. It proposes a pilot phase in 45 primary and secondary schools in 2026–2027, followed by an evaluation in 2027–2028 and gradual expansion nationwide in 2028–2029. These dates reflect the Ministry's proposed timeline.

Senegal : Strengthening Pedagogical Support Groups

In Senegal, cellules d'animation pédagogique (CAPs), or pedagogical support groups, bring together teachers from the same school or local area to exchange ideas about their teaching practices, plan activities, and address challenges encountered in the classroom. These groups are already part of the country's continuing professional development system, although their level of activity varies across schools and regions. The Ministry of Education aims to strengthen how they are facilitated, improve the monitoring of their activities, and better integrate them into regional education authorities' training plans.

APPRENDRE has already supported efforts to strengthen the skills of school inspectors and regional teacher training structures, particularly through the development of training plans. This work provides a foundation for future support focused on CAPs.

For 2026–2027, further support is being considered to assess how CAPs currently operate, develop a practical facilitation guide, and introduce tools to monitor their activities. Integrating CAPs into regional training plans is also intended to better connect collaboration among teachers with other continuing professional development activities.

Senegal's experience raises questions about the place of professional learning communities within teacher professional development systems, particularly where established structures already exist but need additional support to meet and work together regularly.



From Shared Experiences to Training Resources



To support education teams, APPRENDRE works with Thematic Expert Groups (GTEs). These groups bring together education specialists who contribute their expertise in response to needs identified by partner countries. Their work produces studies, practical guides, teaching tools, and training resources.

GTE 3 focuses on professional learning communities and collaboration among teachers. Since 2021, its members have developed resources to help education teams establish, facilitate, and sustain these communities. The group's membership has changed over the years, with each new team building on the work of its predecessors.

These resources grew out of an international seminar organized by APPRENDRE in 2021, where representatives from several countries shared their experiences of teacher collaboration.

2021 : An International Seminar Exploring Experiences of Teacher Collaboration

In 2021, APPRENDRE organized a two-day international online seminar on collaboration among teachers. Experiences from Mali, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal were presented and discussed.

The discussions provided an opportunity to compare different approaches to teacher collaboration, understand how they worked, and identify the challenges teams faced, particularly in organizing meetings, encouraging colleagues to participate, and sustaining activities over time.

The presentations and discussions were subsequently compiled into a seminar proceedings publication.



Watch the Seminar

Read the Proceedings

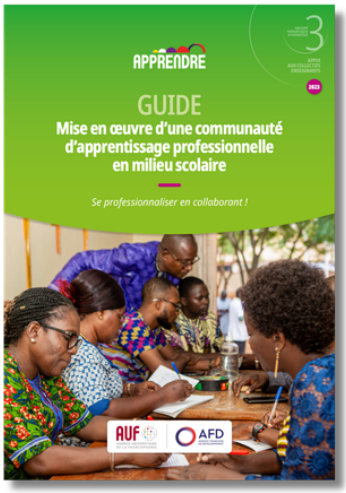
2023 : A Guide to Establishing and Facilitating Professional Learning Communities

Following the seminar, APPRENDRE commissioned its experts to develop a guide for education teams interested in establishing a professional learning community.

The guide combines explanations, examples, and 15 ready-to-use tools. It explains how professional learning communities (PLCs) work and outlines the roles of teachers, school leaders, and pedagogical supervisors.

Much of the guide focuses on organizing collaborative work. It includes tools to help teams assess how their school operates, identify students' learning needs, examine their teaching practices, and track their community's progress. It also provides a sample meeting structure, a roadmap, and templates for documenting activities.

The final chapter explores how digital technology can support collaboration, drawing on experiences from Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Benin.



Download the Guide

2025 : Five Training Modules on Professional Learning Communities

The guide subsequently served as the basis for five modules designed for people who deliver training on professional learning communities (PLCs).

Each module provides a ready-to-use training plan, including a facilitator's handbook with learning objectives, activities, and step-by-step instructions, accompanied by a slide deck.

The five modules cover different topics:

1. Understanding the Foundations of PLCs
2. Establishing and Running a PLC
3. Developing Collaborative Leadership
4. Using Digital Tools
5. Creating a Portfolio

The modules can be used individually or combined into a training program, depending on the topics covered and participants' needs. They provide trainers with materials and activities that can be adapted to different audiences.



Download All Training Materials

Next Step : Adapting the Modules for Online Learning

In 2027, APPRENDRE plans to develop an online training program on professional learning communities (PLCs), building on the resources already produced by GTE 3.

The online program will be offered ahead of in-person workshops, allowing participants to develop a shared understanding of PLCs and prepare for the activities planned in their countries.

The program will be piloted in five countries: the Comoros, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Congo. Participants will first take an initial assessment to determine their level of knowledge, then complete online modules suited to their needs. Once they have met the prerequisites, they will be able to attend workshops on establishing, facilitating, or revitalizing professional learning communities.

Lessons from the pilot will be used to refine the program and prepare for its introduction in other countries.

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