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The headmistress: “I want a more open and interactive high school.”

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“A school that is not open to initiatives and to stimuli from outside ends up dying of asphyxiation.” This is how the headmistress of the scientific high school “Leonardo da Vinci” in Gallarate, **Luisella Macchi**, began her speech about the initiative by the MIT.

This is already the second year that the school has offered physics and chemistry lessons given by American students attending the university in Boston, who are accommodated by the families of pupils or by teachers at the high school.

It is very important to create exchange opportunities with foreign schools, the headmistress said. The American model, which is more interactive and less “frontal”, might be a stimulus, also for Italian teachers, but without a revolution. “The Italian method of study and cultural system are different,” the headmistress explained. “**We should adopt what could be useful to us.** We have to keep the logical-deductive approach that is typical of our method, but there should also be opportunities to put into practice, in the laboratories, what has been learnt at the desks.

The high school in Gallarate has greatly increased the number of hours in the laboratory; in particular, for the first year classes, the laboratories are used every day and in a systematic manner. On average, the number of hours spent in the laboratory has doubled in the last five years. “A more interactive system might help the students whose performance is average, the ones we are concentrating on more, who account for 50% of our pupils.”

In the meantime, the breath of fresh air brought by the students from the MIT is appreciated, and the headmistress **hopes to repeat the experience**. “We depend on funding,” she said. “We have to guarantee the foreign students board and lodging. In any case, it’s worth it, so I will support projects like this in the future.”

Over the last few years, the high school has decided to undertake other initiatives linked also to the learning of a foreign language. For example, Comenius, which brings teachers and students together on the topic of sport. Another example is the weekly lesson give by native teachers in a number of classes. The headmistress considers these initiatives very important, and useful in preparing pupils for a possible job abroad.

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