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**Title/ Título:** Virtual communities as bridges between parents and school: The case of an Italian Secondary School

Comunidades virtuales como puentes entre padres y centro docente: El caso de un centro docente de secundaria italiano

**Topic:** Cultural, technological and multicultural aspects of school, family and community partnerships

Aspectos culturales, tecnológicos y multiculturales de las relaciones que se establecen entre las familias, los centros docentes y las entidades y servicios sociales comunitarios

**Presentation time/Día de presentación:** Session in English. Friday 16, 12:15-1:45 p.m. Room 2, Third Floor

Sesión en Inglés. Viernes, 16 12:15-1:45 p.m. Sala 2, Tercer Piso

### **Abstract**

After an introduction to the main ideas underlying the concept of “virtual community” (Rheingold, 1993; Fernback, Thompson, 1995; Jones, 1997; Watson, 1997; Wilbur, 1997; Ferri, 1999; Paccagnella, 2000; Pravettoni, 2002) in this paper we present the case of an Italian secondary school which a few years ago started a forum on the Internet intended to foster school-parents relationship. The case has been studied through an analytic grid (Pieri & Ceriani, 2004). The grid, conceived to study all kinds of virtual community in its entirety, has been used here only in part. Using such a grid presents at least two advantages: first of all, it favours a critical reflection on the community and eases the spotting of difficulties. Secondly, a grid makes it possible to compare different virtual communities. In this paper, our attention is focused on evaluating the advantages of applying the grid to forums dedicated to parents-school relationships, leaving to further research the task of developing a comparative study between forums: in fact, when starting a project on the Net to mediate school-parents relationships, a grid which allows for comparisons with other schools’ forums can prove very useful to understand the dynamics of the medium, and to understand strengths and weaknesses of web-based tools.