BOOKLET FOR PARENTS AND SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

Creative Languages to learn together

The key role of adults as educators
CREDITS
This publication is the result of the ALICE project LLP-GRUNDTVIG
Grant Agreement number: 2011-3375/001-001
Project Number: 518106-LLP-1-2011-1-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP

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Did you know?

People live in a society where citizenship, inclusion and work depend on the ability to “learn to learn” lifelong and lifewide.

**The school cannot fulfil all the requirements for such a learning path!**

In the past, the role of the family was to provide caregiving. The education was a technical matter, outside the family. Adults were in any case authoritarian, a further source of control of young generations’ behaviour.

Nowadays, the role of the family is to provide support to young generations, to explore and discover their own place within the society. The adults in the family ARE a source to generate new skills for new jobs (EU2020)¹. Families and adults are generally sources of learning able to form future lifelong learners.

For education is not the strict matter of the school anymore, but it is the result of life transitions along several experiences, which generate a **personal learning space**.

Did you know?

The problem is that the adults do not recognize their role as educators

Today’s adults grew up in the industrial society and learnt through old-fashioned teaching methods. Many adults do not trust their creative knowledge. They do not recognize their own role as educators.

They rely on the schooling system, which in many cases (i.e. immigrant parents, but also highly educated parents) minimizes the educational values of family identity and culture. They do not spend enough quality time with the toddlers; not even search for quality and professional advice to improve the educational relationship with their children.
What should be done?

Reflecting on one’s own role as educator… and improving adults’ skills to ENJOY being an educator!

An adult becomes an educator according to his/her life experiences as a child/learner.

To become good educators, we need:

**Deep reflection** on our own internalized models.
Exchanging experiences to understand the new social and cultural challenges of childhood (our kids are being raised in a completely different environment!)
Facilitate dialogue among generations: a good educator is able to learn from his/her relation with learners.
This applies to every adult!
This is called “intergenerational learning”

Do you remember how you experienced the relationship with your parents/grandparents/other adults?

…Just take time to think about it!
What should be done?

Our Proposal: Use Creative Languages to generate a bridge between generations!

Creative Languages….
(1) Decrease the stress of encountering diversity. A generation is a cultural field, and different generations face otherness.
(2) Promote a collaborative, joint venture; the joy of creating together is the opportunity to open the heart, mind and the soul to the otherness, as well as to self-criticize.
(3) Stimulate self-expression and joy

We need new bridges between generations. Creative Languages like Art, Music, Games, Storytelling, Cooking, and the creative use of digital technologies (and any other you may invent!) can become a bridge between generations.

They create space for intergenerational dialogue and learning.
Why this booklet?

We want to help you to reflect and rediscover the joy of being an educator…
Using Creative Languages!

It is not difficult: everyone can try. We did it.

We want to tell you about, what we discovered and give you some few ideas to start.

We want to put you in touch with your “educator” as well as “learner” side: we need it. Our children need it!

In this booklet you will find a selection of Creative Languages of which we are expert. They are not the only ones. To expand creative languages depends on your own creativity indeed!
But we show you a way.

A way to enjoy being an educator

A way to learn from the (creative) experience of being an educator
And now?

Just few steps to start

✓ Reflect about your experiences as learner
✓ Think about what was good and bad. Remember the sources of tension and try to think of how you may eliminate them when spending time with a child.
✓ Think about the funny, joyful, and amusing moments spent with adults (probably grandparents!) …

Do you remember if you were doing something like cooking, gardening, reading stories, singing together?

✓ Then select a Creative Language, and take the necessary space and time to start working with children

It is not school! Remember: there is no right or wrong. There is only exploring, trying, enjoying and…

Learning together with your child!
Music Communication

Music is a channel of communication: through music people can share emotions, feelings, intentions and meanings.

Music is at the essence of our first interactions. A newborn baby starts to communicate in ‘musical’ terms. The little cries, the glissando of her voice, her rhythmical repetitive beatings are used to connect to the world. Adults, usually respond freely, not worrying if their music expressions are in tune with a particular scale or if the timbre of their voice is good enough for an aesthetical appreciation. A ‘music communication’ takes place and this is what is really important.

The naturalness of *music communication* should be cultivated also later and throughout life. We should not stop this amazing process.

We should use it to know each other better, to teach and learn, to transfer contents, to create meanings, to inspire creative processes.
Music and cognitive, emotional and aesthetic processes

Music is highly cognitive and counted as one of the eight ways of knowing that Gardner classifies as a distinct human intelligence

Communication is about understanding and expressing ideas and feelings. Music does both, but in unique ways. Music goes beyond words and provokes aesthetic knowing and response. The goal is not limited to sending and receiving information but is expanded to giving a sense of beauty. Within music is wonder, yearning, curiosity and new connections.

We can enhance experiences of music making and music listening with children.

When individuals sing together, an invisible web of community spirit weaves them together. Adults’ and children’s musical experiences build sensitivity, harmony and cooperation as they unite in common emotional responses. Shared music is communication that can bridge generations.
Developing listening skills

Music develops listening skills and listening is a main pillar of learning

Listening goes beyond hearing. Listening can be taught. When it comes to music, there is a great deal for adults and children to understand. Within music, with and without lyrics, there are messages in the form of images, stories and emotions. Purposeful music listening helps move beyond hearing. Deeper listening is developed through discussions that focus on important details.

A music-rich environment creates more complex brain structures. Music has been a particular focus with accumulating evidence to support a tight correlation with academic performance and desirable character traits.

Immersing children in a musically rich environment is an important path to increasing aesthetic knowledge too. Aesthetic thinking takes us into a state of awareness: we experience full sensory perception, concentration, imagination, reflection, consideration and questioning. Children are inundated with music. We need to ensure that music chosen for our activities with children gives exposure to music they would not otherwise hear. Of course, worthy music is a subjective concept, but it is important to develop criteria for quality.
Some ideas for first steps to put into practice

- Use dedicated time to explore music communication with your children and arrange a regular time for it during the week.
- Organize music sessions with the whole family (or at work) with improvising circles where everyone will play a simple music instrument and sing.
- Enjoy building music instruments with your children by using simple materials.
- Sing a particular song every time you call for lunch and/or when you accompany your child to sleep.
- Provide a music background at home with quality music.
- Research on quality music to listen together.
- Engage your children by creating with them new lyrics for the melody of a known song that they like and then sing the new song together. Enjoy it and have fun!
- Organize listening circles with your children to listen to music and share feedback, both if you have little children or teenagers. All participants in the circle will be silent when listening, they will just concentrate on listening to the music and catching any image, word, sentences, memories that come to their mind. They will write these on a paper and share within the circle, after listening.

Both listening to music and making music involve cognitive, emotional and aesthetic processes. You do not need to be a music specialist to involve children in purposeful listening and music making including singing, using simple instruments and song writing. All of these musical experiences are invaluable.

Some tips for music making with children from the web:
Stories are possibly the most ancient form of communication across many cultures and traditions, and storytelling is an art and a set of practices deeply rooted in our innermost cultures and values.

Telling a story means much more than reporting facts in a chronological order. It implies selecting relevant experiences and conveying a meaning that forms a consistent whole out of characters, events and locations.

**Give meaning to reality and share it**

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**Learning to tell stories is a powerful way to:**

✓ learn to understand personal experiences
✓ learn how to communicate them to others
A digital story is a story that exploits digital media (voiceover, music, pictures) for its narration

Digital storytelling is the set of practices that exploit digital media to create a new way of telling stories. In particular, digital technologies make it easier and cheaper to integrate audio, video, text and music to create compelling stories.

Basically, digital media make it possible to create multimedia stories for different purposes, including social projects.

Create a digital story step by step:
1. find a story or writing the story
2. find or produce pictures for the story
3. create the audio (voice and music)
4. publish the story as a short video
Digital Storytelling for Intergenerational Projects

Crafting a digital story together provides a space where generations can meet and learn from each other

Being involved in a digital storytelling project has benefits for the youth, for seniors and for the whole community.

In particular for young people, a digital storytelling project is an opportunity to get creative, to learn to communicate experiences, to learn to master digital media tools and to learn to listen to the other’s stories.

For seniors, a digital storytelling project can be an opportunity to get in touch with new media, to recall memories and to informally teach to the youth.

Such projects also have value for the community, as they offer a chance not only to bridge generations, but also to engage other people in viewing and sharing the digital stories produced.
Digital Storytelling for Intergenerational Projects

Looking at the intergenerational perspective

Three types of intergenerational storytelling projects

✓ Collecting memories: the project consists in collecting the memories of an old person, and helping him or her reshape the story with digital media. The author of the story is the old person, and the young people are her/his production crew.

✓ The old man’s story: the project consists in interviewing the old person and collecting information on his or her life. The story is then authored and produced by the young people.

✓ Let’s tell a fairy tale: the project consists in having a group of senior and young people developing together a fictional story (or completing a traditional fairy tale in a different manner).
Children’s Narratives

Modern or not, literary or traditional, since ancient times they convey beautiful stories as well as ideas about the world and life, values, teachings of any kind.

And the reaction of the youngsters to your narration can teach you a lot too!

We enjoy and share traditional tales or great books from world literature for at least two good reasons: fantasy, surprises and unusual and “impossible” features in characters and places that give us the pleasure to imagine “alternative worlds”; yet, though so different from our everyday life, they always tell something about us – each of us.

Have you ever been scared like the motherless seven kids facing the wolf? Did you ever feel neglected in a corner without a good reason, just as Cinderella? Have you ever struggled to make your desires and duties meet, just like Pinocchio?... Of course you did. So do children.

With children’s narratives, we can “safely” watch life and feelings mirrored in a story.
Finding stories

Feel free to rework stories. Writers, film directors, playwright, storytellers are doing that all the time.

Times change. You may feel the stories you have “in stock” might not suit nowadays reality. Or you want to focus on a specific aspect. Find help in pictures, from books or drawn by yourself. Create a rhyming poem to read or sing. Do it in cooperation with children. Shared re-working will increase communication and establish a trusting feeling.

Go find your stories in the local library, in a bookshop, on the web, in your memory. A tale is a moment of sharing emotions, so you may choose with children the stories that they would like to listen to. Any choice will be good if it suits you and the children around you.

You will also need a relaxing, pleasant environment. It means both a setting and an attitude. Are you there to judge, to give a correct interpretation? Or rather, to introduce a story to children, and let them understand it by reacting to it, guessing and reworking the story itself?
Children’s comments are a sign of attention. Too silent or puzzled? Try ask some simple questions - “Who, what, where, when, why, how” can always help.

Literature is made of words! Listening attentively to adults helps children learn new concepts and use new words. Besides, they can become familiar with their fears and desires. They see that characters fear or aspire to something, as adults do. This may help them to understand each other better.

Sharing a story with children is a great way to exchange ideas, to learn about issues that might bother them otherwise. It is a great opportunity to experience the sensations of literature. We might get emotionally involved, and see that children’s literature carries so much wisdom and knowledge. Not only it reflects life: it criticizes it.

Inputs and views from tales may help us to better understand the world around us and to manage our experiences. We might discover that literary lives are really essential to create meanings. We might enjoy laughing, and see in these stories an opportunity to free ourselves from anxieties and compromises.

Looking for more tips? Surf some sites:

http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0865/Storytelling_tips.pdf
http://bblocks.samhsa.gov/family/talkinglistening/storytelling.aspx
Play starts from infancy and continues throughout life. It is essential for the children's cognitive, social and emotional development and well-being. Parent-child play opens channels for value sharing, promotes communication and offers creative moments of learning. Playing together gives opportunities for parents and children to confront and resolve individual differences and family issues as well.

Children learn to think and to solve problems through play. Games help them to socialize, to mature and connect with their imagination, their environment, their family and the world.

Play offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children. Playing with children creates bonds that will last forever.

Play allows the adult to see the world through the eyes of a child once again.
Digital games and social media are part of the modern youth culture. They are connected with forms of creative expression such as storytelling and cinema.

Children spend significant time in the digital world. In some cases, this triggers tensions in the family.

Take some moments of reflection:

✓ Consider how your child uses social media and digital games. What is your involvement?
✓ Consider your own experience of playing as a child and your parents’ involvement.
✓ Would you like to know what are your child’s favorite digital games? Why not asking to teach you how to play them?
✓ Would you like to search for digital games that may be beneficial to your child? Why not trying to find such games and explore them together with her/him?

Traditional games could be extremely interesting for children and help them achieve a better balance between digital and real world. Try playing with your children the favourite games of your childhood!
Creative Languages: Games
Exploring games of different types

What is your game type?

Games are fun and teach us how to collaborate effectively or how to compete in a fruitful way. You have many alternatives to choose from…

Depending on the children’s age, the physical setting and the available time, you have a variety of possibilities:

- Construction games using plastic bricks or wooden blocks.
- Drawing/modeling using paper with color pencils or playdough.
- Role-playing games like charades and improvisational theatre.
- Location-based and playground games like capture-the-flag, hide-and-seek and other outdoor games.
- Puzzles like Rubik’s cubes, jigsaws and crosswords.
- Quizes and guessing games like question-and-answer, battleship, pictionary, hangman etc.
- Board games and card games like chess, monopoly, scrabble, uno etc.
- Parlour games and party games offering entertainment as social gatherings such as bingo, celebrity, bat-a-rat and many more.

In most cases, there are digital alternatives to explore as well…

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<tr>
<th>Game type</th>
<th>Digital alternatives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drawing / modeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes and guessing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board games</td>
<td><a href="http://www.popsci.com/gadgets/article/2013-06/board-game-redux">http://www.popsci.com/gadgets/article/2013-06/board-game-redux</a></td>
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Beyond playing: creating digital games

“In order for a child to understand something, he must construct it himself, he must re-invent it.”
Jean Piaget

Creation of digital games offers an effective learning environment to develop key skills related to digital fluency, creativity, innovative thinking and problem solving.

Many platforms are available to enable digital game development. They are usually linked to social networks to share games with others, exchange ideas, discuss and learn together.

Scratch is a popular game creation platform for children of age 8-88! Learn more about it at [http://scratch.mit.edu/](http://scratch.mit.edu/)

Watch the video at [http://youtu.be/42_30Rgf6F0](http://youtu.be/42_30Rgf6F0) showing Mitchel Resnick, the creator of Scratch, explaining how Scratch strengthened his relationship with his mother.

If your child is already fluent with digital technologies have a look at AppInventor, a platform that enables programming in Android devices: [http://appinventor.mit.edu/](http://appinventor.mit.edu/)
We have explained in this booklet how important is your engagement as educator. We have also introduced some Creative Languages to support you to generate rich and stimulating environments for your children. Now it is your turn!

Searching the Creative Language suitable for you and your children.

There are no recipes for the “best way of doing things”. Every Creative Language provide different opportunities to learn together.

Just ensure that:

✓ You like the Creative Language, because you tried it in your childhood, or you are good at “doing that”, or you are willing to explore and find out more.
✓ Your child’s age is appropriate to use safely the several resources/instruments required.
✓ You have the necessary space and time to devote to a joint activity

During activities

✓ Do not think of the final product. Explore shapes, sounds, ideas and talk out with your children about.
✓ Listen to your child’s ideas. Children use to talk a lot as if they were “thinking aloud” on what they are doing.
✓ You can accomplish the work afterwards! Let the children understand that time and patience are required to become competent in doing something.

Follow-up activities

✓ Talk with your child about the developed activities. Ask if she liked it, and which was the most enjoyable moment.
✓ Express your thoughts on childhood memories.
✓ Reflect: if possible, try to write down (either with a pen or digitally!) your experiences or take pictures and make an album, and share conversations with other adults.
I’m a lifelong learner too

Why reflection? It is the way to understand what was achieved, both for the children and YOU.

You may enhance reflection on your learning by:

✔ Using a small block-notes to write down a list of interesting thought-provoking things / facts (you, life, opportunities, the past, etc).
✔ Taking pictures and putting them in order, writing down nice titles that show the way things happened.
✔ Connect your thoughts and feelings with poetry, arts and music, to represent your mood.
✔ Talk with other adults: what do they think? What could be improved in the relationship with today’s children and youngsters?
✔ Are you a tech-wired person? Write on your social network (e.g. facebook), add pictures, a map. Write a blog! Share your moments with others.

…what you learn informally can be important for your work and your personal life
If you are not a parent but a Senior Volunteer, you can also contribute to creating rich and stimulating environments for children. Here are some tips.

Probably you work in an institution.

All the considerations made for families apply to the relationship that Senior Volunteers can establish with children, but there is more….

Your institution can cooperate in supporting disadvantaged children by:

- Cooking, gardening, playing games, telling stories from your childhood. These are all ways to start a dialogue with young generations.
- Having the patience to wait and listen to children’s and youngsters’ ideas and expand the dialogue.

Use technologies!

- Youngster particularly enjoy using technologies to interact with the world.
- Seniors may not be familiar with technologies. Sometimes you may feel uncomfortable about using them.
- Let young people explain you how to use technologies to tell about creative experiences:
  - Creating joint albums with pictures
  - Using social networks
  - Using mobile technologies

Small and Great experiences: all count!

- You can shape creative experiences with a single child or a small group.
- You can plan events (e.g. cultural events, seeing movies together, joint music performances, cooking together, etc.)
- Always incite feedback on shared experiences.
There are many institutions that develop intergenerational programs. These can help you find the most suitable methods and tools to enhance activities with your children.

You may want to know how the organizations from the ALICE consortium can help you:

- **SEED Association**, from Switzerland
  [http://seedlearn.org/](http://seedlearn.org/)

- **The Mosaic Art And Sound Ltd**, from the UK

- **The Technical University of Crete**, from Greece

- **National Carlo Collodi Foundation**, from Italy
  [http://www.pinocchio.it/](http://www.pinocchio.it/)

- **Centro Internazionale di Studi sulla Ricerca Educativa e la Formazione Avanzata within the University of Ca’ Foscari**, from Italy
  [http://www.unive.it](http://www.unive.it)

- **Romanian Society for Lifelong Learning**, from Romania
  [http://www.srep.ro](http://www.srep.ro)

Search for organizations in your area which are developing intergenerational programs and ask for their support: materials, experience etc.
European networks gather good practices on intergenerational activities. You can have a look at them and choose which would be of interest to you.

- [http://www.age-platform.eu/good-practices](http://www.age-platform.eu/good-practices)
- [http://www.enll.eu/](http://www.enll.eu/)
- [http://www.healthyageing.eu/resources/resources](http://www.healthyageing.eu/resources/resources)
- [http://www.emil-network.eu/resources/case-studies](http://www.emil-network.eu/resources/case-studies)
- [http://www.eagle-project.eu/welcome-to-eagle/the-eagle-toolkit-for-intergenerational-activities](http://www.eagle-project.eu/welcome-to-eagle/the-eagle-toolkit-for-intergenerational-activities)

More institutions offering support to active ageing:
check the report [How to promote active ageing in Europe. EU support to local and regional actors](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6480&type=2&furtherPubs=no) produced by AGE Platform Europe.
To learn even more...

We recommend you to:

✓ search for games, digital stories and music and adapt them to your needs and your children’s interests;
✓ search for materials such as research studies and documents that offer you food for thought and suggestions of games, exercises and activities for you and your children.

Some examples:

http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/freepubs/pdfs/agrs91.pdf
http://www.grandparents.com/grandkids/you-and-your-grandkids/30-essentials-every-grandparent

✓ check the results of European Union funded projects on intergenerational learning

e.g. EAGLE project (European Approaches to Inter-Generational Lifelong Learning) to connect intergenerational activity and lifelong and lifewide learning across Europe

http://www.eagle-project.eu/welcome-to-eagle

The web is a very good source of information where you can find organizations, tools, exercises, games to support you in developing intergenerational activities.
This publication is produced with the financial support from the European Commission in the frames of LLP, sectorial program Grundtvig, Grant Agreement number: 2011-3375/001-001. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. The authors of this Publication are not responsible for the content of the websites listed as resources. The content of those pages may change over time and is the sole responsibility of their authors.