



MY IDEAL SCHOOL CHILDREN AS POLICYMAKERS

REPILOT ACTION ACTIVITY HANDBOOK

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**Networking the
Educational World:
Across Boundaries for
Community-building**

My ideal school; children as policymakers. Repilot action activity handbook.

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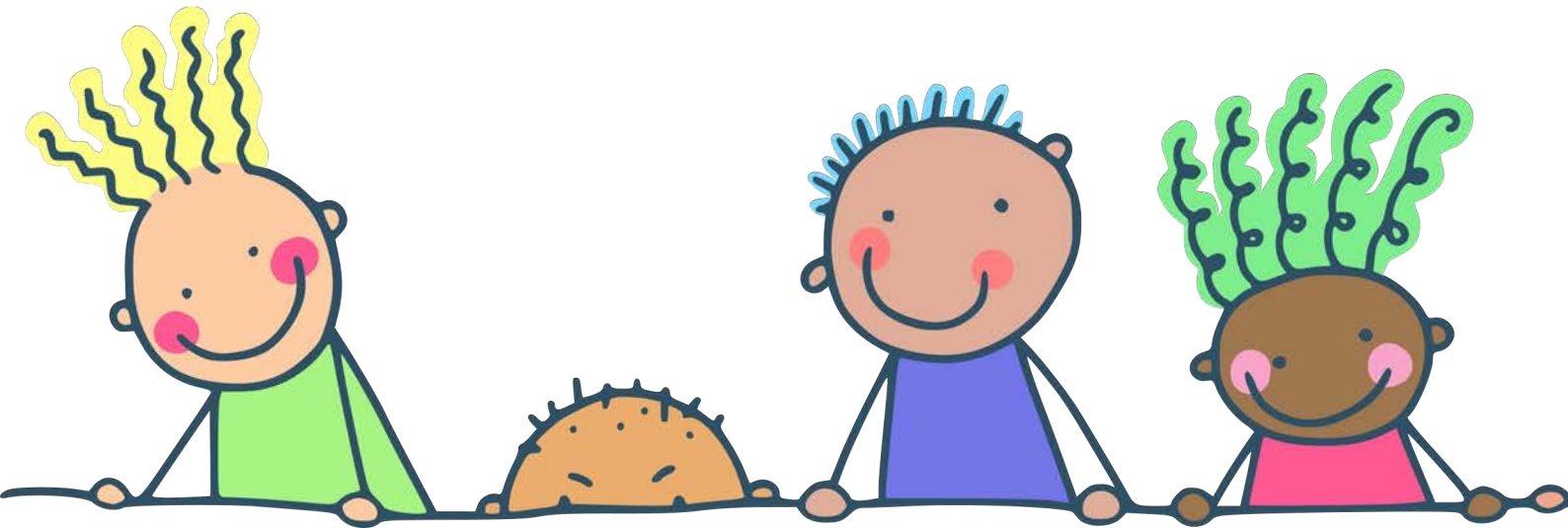
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INTRODUCTION

In this handbook you will find:

-  a brief description of the NEW-ABC project and the main concepts that guide it;
-  some general guidelines and specific tips for adapting this pilot action to different contexts;
-  the aims and objectives of the pilot action;
-  a thorough description of the activities conducted alongside tips for replicating them;
-  some reflections emerging from our experience that you might find useful for your adaptation.

The NEW ABC project in a nutshell

NEW ABC is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. It draws together 13 partners from nine European countries with the aim of developing and implementing nine pilot actions. All NEW ABC pilot actions include children and young people, but also teachers, families, communities and other stakeholders in education, as co-creators of innovation to empower them and make their voices heard.

If you want to learn more about NEW ABC **this is** the link to the project website where you can find information on the other pilot actions too:

newabc.eu



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What is co-creation?

Before we introduce the activities co-created with young people for the *My Ideal School: Children as Policymakers* repilot action, we would like to explain in just a few words the basic features of co-creation.

Co-creation is a method used to develop democratic partnerships between researchers and local/community stakeholders by promoting their involvement in the design of practices that are tailored to a specific context and responsive to the needs of the community and the participants they serve.

Co-creation is particularly apt in increasing engagement and participation on behalf of citizens in policy-making because it:

-  places end-user value at its core
-  gives particular relevance to the implementation of co-created practices
-  includes broader dissemination strategies as part of the design from inception

All the activities presented in this handbook have been planned and implemented together with students, teachers, headteachers, parents, grandparents and volunteers from 13 public schools across Cyprus, and researchers by taking the children's perspective and allowing them to voice their dreams and needs. Both adults and students had been given the opportunity to reflect on their social roles, positions in the community, mutual relations and fundamentals of dialogue to search for the best way for common values and understanding despite the diversity and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Adapting this pilot action to different contexts

A key aim of the NEW ABC project is to ensure that all 9 pilot actions can be adapted and replicated in different contexts (i.e. different countries, educational systems, different communities). Following the completion of their original implementation, all pilot actions were retested in a different partner country and by a different NEW ABC team. Our repilot action was first implemented in Italy and then re-implemented in Cyprus. You can read more about the different piloting versions through the NEW ABC's platform. If you are interested in implementing this action in a different context, you might find these recommendations useful.



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Main suggestions for institutions interested in repiloting this and other actions from the NEW ABC project

o Invest time to consider what is unique to your own context and what you might need to adapt.

You might have to think if there are any required changes or modifications in relation to specific characteristics such as geographical, social, or cultural features. For instance, if you are planning on working with children and young people from different national and ethnic backgrounds, you might want to invest resources to recruit community translators to support the young participants during the project.

o Invite colleagues both inside and outside your school setting to work together.

If you need the support of other colleagues in the school (fellow teachers or teaching assistants), you may want to involve them early and make sure their opinions on what they feel is important to do as part of the project.

o Work *with* the children and young people and collectively agree *how* you will collaborate together.

Involve young people and children from the start and make sure their opinions, skills, and needs, feed into the design of the project. For example, you may decide to involve a small advisory group of young people so they can help you set up the project.

o Design your learning environment.

For example, will you be working in schools or non-school learning environments (e.g. youth groups, after-school clubs, weekend clubs, etc.)? This will also determine how you will structure the activities (i.e. long-term project or individual activities) and how many participants will be engaged each time (i.e. working across a school year or with a smaller group of young people).

o Make a 'wish list' of materials, resources, and services you may need.

As you develop your project ideas it is important to consider what resources you will need. For instance, where will you complete the activities? What types of space will you need? (e.g. rooms, outdoor places). You might also like to consider issues of accessibility (e.g. parking availability, wheelchair access, toilets, close to public transport stops). Your wish list may also include activity ideas (e.g. field trip, museum visits) or working with specialist practitioners (e.g. digital artist, drama teacher). Equally important, what materials will you be needing for the activities? (e.g. paper sheets, paint, notebooks, stationary, whiteboard access, online training courses etc.)

o Invest time and care in co-creating a safe environment.

Make sure you include time for relationship-building activities that encourage participants to become familiar with each other and develop trust across the group. Refreshments and snacks help at creating a more relaxed social environment so make sure you have thought about your hospitality budget!



o Support your project participants.

Provide training and skills-development opportunities to support those involved in project activities (e.g. students, teaching assistants or fellow classroom teachers) as they join the project. Are there any particular social, cultural, linguistic, or learning needs you might need to think of?

o Evaluate your repilot action.

Every project serves as a unique learning opportunity to reflect on what worked, what didn't and what could be done differently. Invest time to plan your project's evaluation and think of activities you might find helpful (e.g. feedback postcards, reflections, creative responses, group reflections).

o Plan ahead.

While developing an 'action plan' and thinking of what your project might look like, it is also important to focus on your plans for engagement and dissemination. Things to consider may include:

- What key issues are you aiming to address?
- How can participants engage in these activities in meaningful ways?
- Who are your primary audiences? (i.e. local community, decision-making audiences)

We hope that these suggestions might support your planning process as you decide what your future project activities might look like.

What adaptations did we make to implement the original pilot in our context?

A significant adaptation from the original pilot was carried out due to the different contexts and participants involved in the activity in both settings. While the original Italian pilot focused primarily on local schools reaching out to a limited number of teachers, the Cypriot repilot involved schools from across the island of Cyprus (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos) reaching thus out to an extensive number of teachers. In our case, a total number of 48 teachers participated in the initial teachers' workshops and approximately 43 retested activities with their students in their schools. This of course came with specific obstacles in having to manage a considerable number of teachers who were actively involved and needed support throughout the second implementation phase of the project.

A second relevant difference involved the age of the participants. While the original Italian pilot mostly focused on Primary Education, the Cypriot repilot involved students from Pre-Primary to Upper Secondary Education. In that sense, some of the activities were adapted with major changes -especially those who were rolled-out in the Upper Secondary schools. However, the methodologies that underpin the project allow for co-creative freedom such that teachers felt that they could be as flexible as they wished.



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Aims and objectives of the repilot action

Note about the original pilot.

The original pilot implemented in Italy focused on giving voice to the real needs of children (and their families) in education and on increasing the visibility of how inclusion can be co-created with the ideas of teachers, children and their relatives. It was highlighted that the ideas of the participants directly involved in education, although often neglected, are central to improving our educational system. We should therefore showcase them through various strategies, which can be roughly divided into two main 'levels':

- First, the voice of children, parents, and teachers should have an impact at the 'micro' level of classroom activities. They should be able to express their perspective and make a difference in how everyday activities in educational institutions unfold.
- Second, stakeholders' perspective should be given visibility by creating synergies and connections with policymakers at the local, regional and national levels. In this case, the aim is to bring children's and parents' ideas to the fore, forcing policymakers to take into account their perspectives.

Given that the differences between the pilot and the repilot contexts (see above) were not clashing in terms of content and spirit, the SYNTHESIS team followed these objectives and tried to amplify the voices of the children and their parents by directly involving a larger number of children and parents throughout the second re-pilot phase. Moreover, the SYNTHESIS team tried to actively engage policymakers in the process of implementing the activities as it is exemplified by the activities in Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 11 (see in the sections below). Consequently, the main aims of this re-pilot action include:


-  Encouraging and facilitating children's active involvement in activities and discussions that affect their lives, ensuring that their voices are heard and valued;
-  Empowering children by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to express their opinions, make choices, and take action on issues that matter to them;
-  Promoting inclusivity by involving children and their parents from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences in decision-making processes;
-  Establishing safe and supportive spaces where children can freely express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without fear of judgment or retribution;
-  Preparing children to become active, informed, and responsible citizens who engage in civic activities and community initiatives;
-  Recording and sharing the viewpoints and experiences of children through various mediums, such as art, writing, audio, and video, to amplify their voices and create a broader impact;



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 Collaborating with parents, educators, government bodies, and NGOs to ensure that children's perspectives are integrated into decision-making processes at various levels.

How this handbook works and who might find it useful

The handbook has been developed during the repiloting phase of the original pilot action in Italy. The team in Italy produced the [first handbook](#) which details the co-creation process and outlines the development of different activities developed by participating members. In our handbook, you will find a collection of co-created learning activities and resources implemented in Cyprus. The handbook follows a step-by-step overview of all co-created activities which you can use to replicate, adapt, and evaluate with your pupils.

You will find this guidance useful if you:

- o are planning activities that address specific curricula topics, such as identity, collaboration and teamwork, communication for culturally diverse student groups;
- o wish to organize workshops for co-creating artistic projects that raise awareness about the importance of children's voices and self-representation in a culturally diverse community;
- o want to start a school project that focuses on giving space to students to discuss and visualize their ideal schools.

For doing so, this handbook provides a list of activities that have been readapted to the Cyprus socio-cultural context and which were designed to be replicated in your classrooms. The activities are multifaceted and can be adapted to the needs of students regardless of their age.

Firstly, a general introduction to the activities is available to understand better how they were structured.

Secondly, for each action, called 'chapter', the activities will be presented in detail. It is important to consider that, following the principles of co-creation, each activity could be adapted not only to the general socio-linguistic, cultural and socio-political context but also to individual students, individual schools and their needs, interests and desires. For this reason, the activities can be replicated and adapted in their entirety in other contexts, or each individual activity can be used within other pathways with similar objectives.

Thirdly, it is essential to consider that all the co-creations of the products were conceived jointly by all the participants and that therefore any replication may vary depending on the contexts and interests of the teachers and students involved. On the same note, we emphasise that each activity can also be conducted in a different order, depending on the needs of the new group and context.



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Lastly, don't forget that embracing the power of co-creation can be a fantastic catalyst for nurturing the boundless imagination of you as a teacher. This collaborative approach is like a vibrant playground for your creative spirit! By engaging in discussions, brainstorming sessions, and collaborative endeavours with fellow educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders, you'll unlock new dimensions of inspiration. Co-creation isn't just about sharing ideas; it's about planting the seeds of innovation. As you explore new teaching methods and educational content together, your imagination will soar to incredible heights. So, let your creativity flow, experiment with fresh teaching approaches, and watch as your classroom transforms into a dynamic hub of learning and excitement. Remember, you're not just a recipient of ideas; you're a creator, shaping the future of education with your unique vision and energy!



Important information to share

Consent:

Depending on participants age group and the national legislation, you might need to obtain parental consent for them to be able to participate in the activities. Make sure that your consent form is clear (no technical terms), accurate, and detailed. It needs to explain how the young people will be involved in the pilot action activities and how the data (e.g., audio recordings of conversations, artwork, or podcasts) may be used for dissemination purposes (e.g., reports, presentations, exhibitions, social media posts etc.), and the overall purpose of the project.

Privacy and anonymity:

Processes of co-creation and collaboration are based on relationships of trust. If you plan to display students' products, discuss where and how they will be disseminated. Explain that any mention of their stories/experiences/personal information will remain anonymous - no one will know it was them, and within the smaller classroom/group environment, they will always have the choice whether to put their name on shared writing or not and may write under a pseudonym if they wish. Writing under the anonymity of a pseudonym may in fact be freeing, as children may feel emboldened to share more of their inner world and more willing to deepen their creative process.

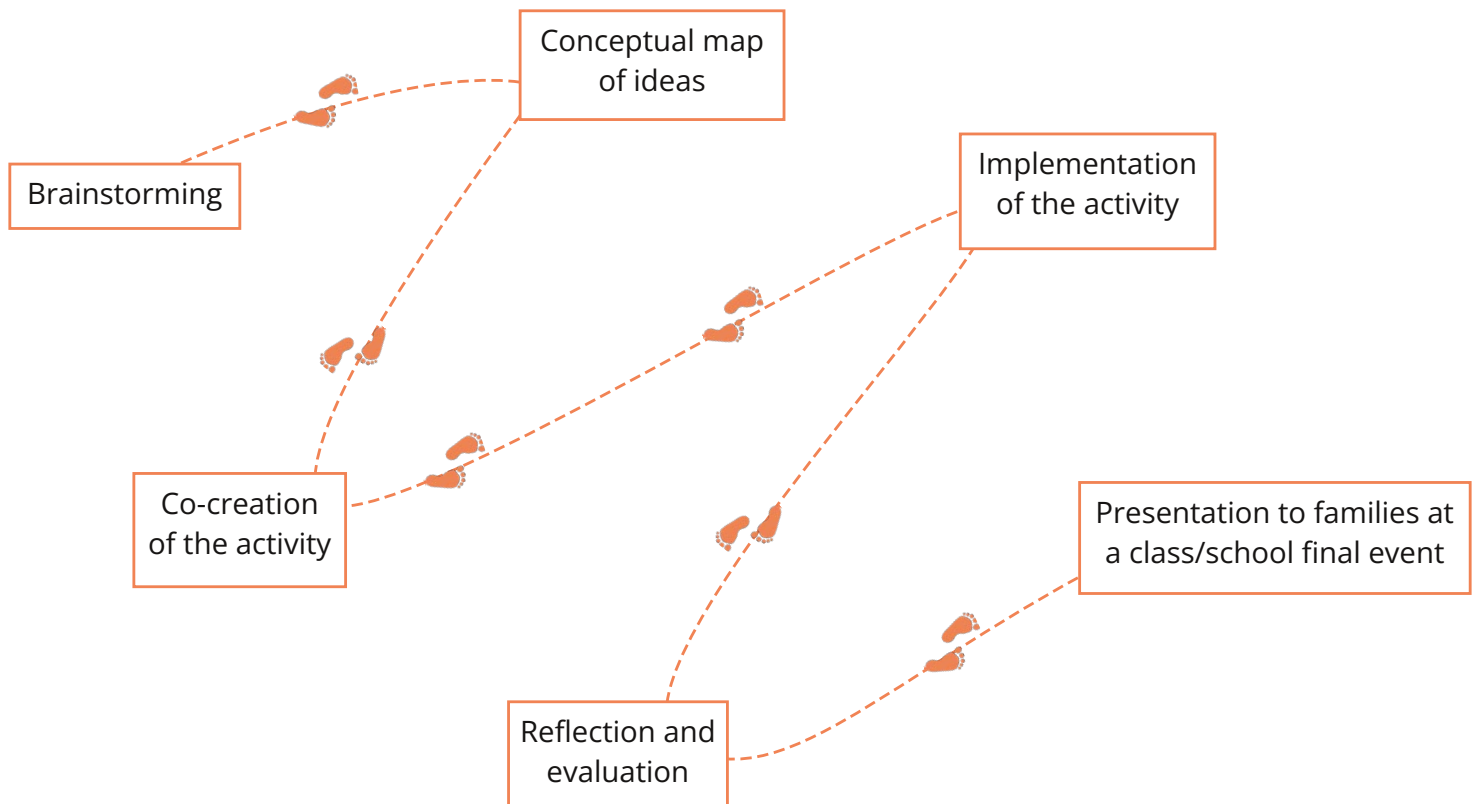


LET'S GET STARTED!

CHAPTERS: Introduction to the activities

The following chapters constitute the heart of this handbook. They bring together the creativity, imagination and educational approaches of their co-creators, namely the teachers, students, young people, parents, community members, and researchers. Key components are the implementation of activities that generate critical thinking around issues of belonging, integration and empowerment and the creation of a safe space in which all participants feel that their opinions, views and feelings are considered for the development of their ideal schools and communities.

In what follows, eleven activities are briefly sketched. Each chapter starts with a brief description of the context, the learning aims, and the materials you will need. As it was mentioned above, most of the activities were adapted from or inspired by the first pilot phase implemented by the UNIBO team. These activities are simply examples of how a co-created activity might unfold. You can get some inspiration, but don't be afraid of changing the activities according to your specific context!



In the classroom, all the activities followed these steps: It is important to note that the brainstorming sessions took place after an extensive series of teachers' workshops during which the original pilot handbook was presented. In that sense, all teachers who participated in the repilot phase, involved their colleagues, the school management, and students in the process of selecting which activity(ies) to replicate/adapt. The activities presented here can be implemented throughout the school year, and you can adjust the activities to your own schedule without feeling limited or pressed by time.

All our activities empower children and youth to talk about themselves, think about their roles in their communities, and design their ideal schools. By giving voice to children and youth and involving them in the design process, we foster a sense of ownership and engagement in their learning environments. This not only validates their perspectives but also recognizes that they are active participants in their educational journey. The activities promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, as children and youth consider what elements would create the most conducive and inspiring learning communities. This journey establishes a culture of inclusivity, where students' diverse needs and preferences are acknowledged, ultimately leading to the development of educational institutions that are more responsive, adaptable, and conducive to meaningful learning experiences. Our activities in this realm not only empower children and youth but also lay the groundwork for more student-centric, innovative, and holistic approaches to education.



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CHAPTER 1. The Wall of Kindness

Title in the original pilot: Activity 1. The Book Club & Activity 3. Renovating a Room (activities were adapted with major changes)

Context: First Primary School of Pallouriotissa, Nicosia; Participants: 36 third graders (8-year-olds), 10 teachers, headteacher, parents, 6 municipal technicians (to install the wall) and officers (to discuss the letter that children send to the Mayor of Nicosia), other neighbouring schools (headteachers and selected students) that contributed to the Wall of Kindness, and more than 100 community members were informed about the wall of kindness through informative brochures created by the students.

Material: Books to initiate discussion, coloured paper, markers, plywood for the creation of the wall, paints, brushes, brochures.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Negotiated and discussed different ideas
-  Worked cooperatively on a common project
-  Improved their creative and communication skills
-  Improved their language skills by writing a letter to local institutions and developing an informative triptych
-  Learned to think in an inclusive manner (information written in various languages and not only in Greek)
-  Felt a sense of belonging and begun to understand their own role and value in the community
-  Felt the joy of contributing to a common goal and the effectiveness of their work





Starting Point

To introduce the activities, you can suggest some books that deal with central topics regarding living in a (school) community, such as kindness, equality, etc. Then you can discuss with the students the kind of actions they would find interesting in doing to promote the central message(s) of the selected books. For example, in our action, the first brainstorming meeting was held with the children of the Central Student Council and the Environmental Committee of the school, after getting inspired by the storybook "Wonder" with the theme of "Kindness." Students and teachers explored what kindness means and possible actions that would diffuse this concept. Having already in mind another activity from the Italian handbook (Renovating a Room), they co-decided to create a Wall of Kindness as a tangible outcome from their session.

You can use coloured paper to collect their ideas and discuss until you reach a consensus for the implementation of as many ideas/actions as you wish.



First meeting with the children of the Central Student Council and the Environmental Committee of the school





Activity 1: Building the Wall of Kindness

In this first activity, you will invite children to contribute to the creation of the Wall of Kindness. The Wall of Kindness is a cooperative, interactive activity which intends to engage the community in a process of taking and giving back. The main mission of the wall is that anyone from the local community can leave things they do not need, or that they have to spare (e.g., clothes, shoes, food, toys, books) and, accordingly, anyone who needs or wants some of the things on the wall can take them.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Firstly, you should thank the students for their ideas during the brainstorming session and invite them for a walk in the schoolyard to identify a suitable space for the creation of the wall.
- 2) Remind them that the selection of space is very important because it should be visible to passersby!
- 3) Go back to the classroom and give each pupil a white sheet of paper and ask them to draw their ideas on how the wall will look like.
- 4) Include as many elements as possible from students' drawings when finalising the drawing of the wall. You can collaborate with art teachers and school technicians for practical arrangements.
- 5) Together with the students, design and decorate the Wall of Kindness.
- 6) Prepare a sign with simple instructions on how to use the Wall of Kindness and place it next to it. Ensure that you include most of the spoken languages of the school.



Students from the First Primary School of Pallouriotissa draw the Wall of Kindness.





An informative sign was placed next to the Wall of Kindness in Greek, English, Russian, and Arabic





Activity 2: Spreading kindness across the (school) community

This activity consists of different actions that render the Wall of Kindness more inclusive; actions that engage the wider community in and out of school.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Ask students to tell you how you can all diffuse the message of the wall in your (school) community. You can give examples taken from the Cypriot experience. For instance, during the second meeting of the central student council and environmental club, our participants decided to prepare an informative triptych (brochure) that would be given to the local community. Two children from Syria and Ukraine undertook to give the text to their parents to be translated into Russian and Arabic. The triptych read as follows: "The Wall of Kindness: The Student Council and the Environmental Committee of our school decided to create next to the entrance of our school [...] the Wall of Kindness. This wall was fixed on the green railings of our school. On this wall there are hangers where you can hang bags, clean clothes, shoes, toys or useful household items that you no longer need. On the bags there must be a label on which its contents will be written. [...] If you need anything hanging on the wall, you can get it. This action was created with a lot of love by the staff and children of the First Primary School of Pallouriotissa (KA)."
- 2) You can also email other schools in the community, the public bodies of the community (i.e., municipality), and civil society at large so you spread the message for the creation of the Wall of Kindness.
- 3) Invite anyone interested in using the Wall of Kindness.
- 4) You can print out your dissemination materials and distribute them in your (school) community.



Students from the First Primary School of Pallouriotissa distribute their informative brochure to the local community



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Parents and local community started using the Wall of Kindness



Some reflections:

To fully grasp the extent of this activity, it is important to mention some of the experiences from the Cyprus re-pilot. We hope that they will inspire you!

>> As soon as the students agreed upon the most suitable space for installing the Wall of Kindness, they wrote together with their teachers a letter to the Mayor of Nicosia asking for the improvement of the green area adjacent to the school at the point where the Wall of Kindness would be placed. Children sent the letter via post. The Mayor of Nicosia replied to the letter sent to him and some officers of the municipality visited the school. In response to the children's letter and having discussed with the headteacher about landscaping the green space in front of a school, it was decided to clean it, install benches and a special type of floor.

>> The neighbouring schools sent an information notice to the students at their school about the Wall of Kindness and its operation. A delegation of the Central Student Council of some of these schools visited the Wall of Kindness and hung bags collected at their school.

>> The Nicosia School Board sent an informative electronic mail to all schools in Nicosia to follow the example of the Primary School of Pallouriotissa A.



>> It is important to mention that many parents showed great willingness to participate in the action and were very helpful, as they started hanging and taking from the wall bags with clothes and useful items. During the Easter holidays, the children and teachers of Pallouriotissa Primary School were delighted to find that the "Wall of Kindness" continued to function which was impressive and gave great satisfaction to the children. Altogether, there was a great deal of mobility, especially from neighbouring schools after the distribution of the brochure.

>> The Wall of Kindness was a collective creative journey, which was equally enjoyed by participants and stakeholders. The children felt satisfaction because their actions brought tangible results and saw a great response from parents and local stakeholders. The work will continue to be there - quietly and in the long term. It will continue to serve the local community by adding a pebble of support and solidarity to our fellow human beings in need. Through this action, community building and unity were achieved, while many learning objectives were also achieved and life values and attitudes, such as cooperation, empathy, love, and kindness were cultivated.

>> You might like to carefully consider the space. Consider how visible it is; whom you need to contact to ensure that everything is in place.



CHAPTER 2. The Classroom of Love








*Title in the original pilot: Activity 4. Creating a Digital Book
(activities were adapted with minor changes)*

Context: Public Kindergarten of Klirou, Nicosia; Participants: 25 preschoolers (5-year-olds), 2 teachers, 1 headteacher, 10 parents and 10 grandparents.

Indirectly, the whole school (students and teachers) and all the parents participated as they attended the final theatre show that was dedicated to the activities developed throughout the repiloting.

Material: Tablets/computers, Book Creator software, different materials for the activities suggested in the digital book.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Shared their thoughts about their dream school and classroom
-  Constructed narratives on their own identity
-  Worked cooperatively on a common project
-  Used their imagination to come up with new ideas
-  Cooperated in groups and respected different opinions
-  Considered what would make their school better for everyone
-  Explored how technology can make learning and participation more fun





Starting Point

To initiate this activity, teachers started by reflecting on their 'ideal' school together with the children. Based on this brainstorming, they co-constructed a digital book where all the proposals and ideas are displayed. The picture below shows how many activities the children suggested.



All the activities that students suggested and were implemented throughout the school year.

In that sense, if you want to include a range of activities that would make students happy to go to school every day, you can initiate a brainstorming session in which students will be asked to think of activities that would make their ideal classroom and school.





Activity 1: Let's introduce ourselves!

This activity will support you to create a digital book for your students to present themselves and their interests in a creative and engaging way.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Select a digital platform or tool that suits your needs and is user-friendly for both you and the students. Some popular options include specialized e-book creation tools like Book Creator or Flipsnack.
- 2) It is important to co-decide with your students what content you want them to include as this will determine the number of pages each student will have for their presentation. Typical sections could include an introduction, hobbies, thoughts around their ideal school, and aspirations.
- 3) Create a template slide or page that students can use to present themselves. Include placeholders for text, images, and possibly audio or video elements.
- 4) Offer clear guidelines on what students should include in their presentations. Explain that they should introduce themselves, share their interests, and provide visuals that represent them, such as photos, drawings, or recorded voices. Encourage students to be creative and express themselves freely. They can use text, images, drawings, audio recordings, or short videos. The more creative freedom they have, the more personalized and engaging their presentations will be.
- 5) It is important to support them in all steps, especially if your students are very young and/or have low digital skills.
- 6) You can then review each student's page to check for content appropriateness and technical issues. Offer feedback and guidance for improvement if necessary. Following that, you can compile the digital book by arranging each page in the desired order.
- 7) Now it's time to share and celebrate your amazing digital book! Share the digital book with the students' parents, the community, friends, and other colleagues. Celebrate your students' unique identities, interests and personalities through this collaborative project.
- 8) Ensure the digital book is accessible to all students and consider privacy concerns. If necessary, share the book within a closed environment that protects the students' personal information.





Activity 2: A calendar full of activities

This activity will support you to collect all relevant ideas for the creation of an ideal school. In our action, students suggested many ideas, such as visits of parents/grandparents in the classroom; more drawing hours; to play musical chairs; to have their parents preparing and delivering a lesson in their classroom; to read storybooks outdoors; to visit other schools; to go to the theatre; to prepare smoothies and fruit salads; to visit a friend's garden; etc. All different activities that took place in Cyprus are presented in the school's digital book (see link in the section below).

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Allow students to suggest ideas for activities that would make their ideal classroom and school.
- 2) Write down all the ideas suggested and then start reorganising those ideas based on the capacity of the school to support the realisation of the ideas.
- 3) Create a calendar together with your students that displays their suggested activities.
- 4) Carefully read the 'reflections' section to get inspiration from the activities rolled-out in Cyprus.



Pictures from the different activities that students suggested and implemented throughout the school year



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Some reflections:

>> In our action, our **digital book** was created with a specific software (Book Creator) and consists of children's drawings, recorded voices, and pictures. The book was presented to children's parents and to members of the local community during the final event at the end of the school year.

>> To fully grasp the extent of this activity, it is important to mention some of the experiences from the Cyprus re-pilot. We hope that they will inspire you!

>> The students explored different ways of learning that were more participatory, reflective, and allowed for their voices to be heard. They learned through the arts; by using Lego bricks; or by collaborating on different tasks. For example, they "visited" and learned about countries that their peers come from, such as Ghana, Greece, Mexico, Romania, etc. They also listened to music and learned fun games from those countries that their peers taught them. In the case of Romania, a parent visited the classroom and talked extensively about their country and the games the children played back in their home country.

>> Students suggested to have more outdoors activities. Some of the outdoors activities were the following: a) they went on a hiking and did observation of the trees and how they change when the spring is coming; they also relaxed in the fields after finishing their observation and had an outdoors lunch; b) they visited the gardens of two different parents and had the opportunity to learn more about fruits and vegetables and discussed with the parents what does it mean to be a farmer; c) the headteacher read a story book in the school yard and discussed with the children concepts, such as those of cooperation, friendship, empathy and teamwork.

>> The children also suggested greater participation of their parents (and grandparents) in school-related activities. They invited a parent who demonstrated the process of cookie-making, leading to a collaborative baking session with the children. They invited some of their grandparents and together they made some traditional Cypriot (and Middle Eastern) fried pastries called 'bourekia'. A parent who is a chef visited the classroom and together with the children prepared a fruit salad and fruit smoothies.

>> Following over three months of engaging activities, the children together with their teacher co-decided to showcase a snippet of those activities during the school's final show. They invited parents and other children and presented selected activities; discussed about the repiloting experience; presented a performance of both Romanian and international dances; and presented their digital book which included a timeline of their activities and their self-portraits.

>> For this activity you'll need tablets or computers so that each child can work on its project (or in small groups).







CHAPTER 3. Kamishibai for friendship

Title in the original pilot: Activity 2. Kamishibai on inclusion (activities were adapted with minor changes)

Context: Public Kindergarten of Kathari – Dimitris Lipertis, Larnaca; Participants: 70 preschoolers (4-6-year-olds), 3 teachers, 1 headteacher, 1 writer of children’s storybooks.

Material: Coloured pencils/markers, flipchart papers, storybooks, cardboard box to create the Kamishibai theatre, white cardboards, scissors, glue, balloons

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Developed tools to understand diversity.
-  Learned to collaborate with peers on a shared project.
-  Become more aware of their own body and voice.
-  Had a good time.



Starting Point

The activity was based on the planning and performance of a theatre play based on the Japanese ‘paper theatre’ (Kamishibai). At first, the teachers wanted to become more familiar with the concept, so they invited a writer of children’s storybooks who had experimented in the past with Kamishibai. This added value to the activity as children could work together with the writer to co-develop their storyline and become inspired by her own work.

In that sense, if you want to explore Kamishibai theatre as a tool for co-creation, empowerment, and inclusion, it would be highly suggested that you invite an expert to introduce you and your students to the basic elements of this interesting theatre genre.



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Activity 1: Our values

This is a preparatory activity that supports students to start thinking about the storyline of their theatre play. It is heavily influenced by the Cypriot children's storybook "The Best Human," but you can use a different, yet relevant, storybook that reflects your local context.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Invite a local writer of children's storybooks who will read in your classroom their story. In our action, the storybook was titled "The Best Human".
- 2) After the reading, continue with a discussion with the author during which you can explore the storybook's main themes/topics. In our action, we had experimented with the meaning of 'values', as this was the main theme of the storybook.
- 3) To explore the meaning of values, you can help each pupil to write on a balloon the values s/he considers most important, such as love, friendship, generosity, kindness, honesty, teamwork, intelligence, etc.
- 4) Following that, ask students to put the value-balloons on a large cloth, so that all the values are mixed together.
- 5) Ask students to pick up a balloon in only 5 seconds. Ask them if they managed to find their own balloon and what balloon they are now holding. Were they disappointed when (and if) they didn't end up with their own balloon? Did they try to stop others from picking their balloons?
- 6) Discuss briefly with them about the fact that it is not that important to insist only on your own personal values, but that all values are very important and help us equally to become better people. The most important thing is to respect everyone's values.



Students write their value on a balloon and then mix all values together on a large cloth





Activity 2: Kamishibai for friendship

This activity allows students and teachers to experiment with the method of Kamishibai theater. Kamishibai theatre is a traditional form of Japanese storytelling that originated in the early 20th century. The word "Kamishibai" translates to "paper drama," which aptly describes the essence of this art form. A Kamishibai performer, known as a "Kamishibaiya," uses a small wooden stage with illustrated panels to narrate a story to an audience, typically young children. Each panel depicts a scene from the story, and as the Kamishibaiya narrates, they remove one panel at a time, revealing the next part of the tale. The visual element of the colourful illustrations, combined with the oral storytelling, creates an engaging and immersive experience for the audience. Kamishibai theatre not only entertains but also preserves the tradition of oral storytelling and offers a unique blend of visual and auditory stimulation.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Together with your students create a DIY Kamishibai theatre. You can use cardboard boxes, paints, paper and markers, or cut-outs from existing figures.
- 2) Select a theme or topic for your Kamishibai story. It could be a traditional folk tale, a historical event, a literary adaptation, or an original story related to a topic or theme you are currently working on.
- 3) Craft a clear and engaging storyline. Consider the beginning, middle, and end of the story. Ensure that the narrative is suitable for the age and comprehension level of your students. You can use the 'storytelling corridor' technique that will help you co-create with your students the story.
- 4) Break the story into segments or scenes. Each segment will correspond to one sheet of the Kamishibai theatre. The number of segments depends on the length of your story.
- 5) Create visual illustrations for each scene. These should be simple and colourful, with clear relevance to the narrative. Depending on your artistic skills and resources, you can draw, paint, or use printed images.
- 6) Include the text of the story on the back of each illustration sheet. Use clear, readable font. If your students are very young, like in our activity, consider involving simple storylines that would be easily narrated by heart.
- 7) Familiarize yourself with the story and practice your storytelling skills. You can use different



Students engaged in storytelling using their makeshift Kamishibai theatre



voices and gestures to make the story more engaging. Encourage your students to do the same, especially since they will be presenting the play in an audience.

8) Organize a storytelling performance day in class. Use your Kamishibai theatre and invite your students to take turns presenting each segment of the story. Encourage them to engage with the audience and express their creativity.

9) Engage in a discussion with the students. Ask them about their experiences, what they learned, and how they feel when using this technique.

10) In our activity, in Cyprus, the children built a makeshift Kamishibai stage and worked in smaller groups where they collaborated with each other to create a story with their favourite hero. In their own little play, different heroes made an appearance and they narrated to the others the lives and exploits of their heroes and what lessons they learned from them. The short play was presented to the rest of the children and teachers.



Some reflections:

>> Going back to the Kamishibai approach, with its captivating blend of storytelling and visual art, it has proven to be a powerful tool for fostering inclusion and promoting important values within diverse communities, such as a multilingual and multicultural classroom. The simplicity and accessibility of Kamishibai made it an ideal medium for bringing children and teachers together, regardless of age, background, or language. In an inclusive setting, Kamishibai broke down barriers and created a shared space where everyone could engage with the narrative, sparking meaningful interactions and connections. In general, the Kamishibai art form encouraged active participation and dialogue, allowing children to express themselves and shared their interpretations of what a hero can do and of the values that make a hero, thereby nurturing a sense of belonging and unity.

>> This activity is very engaging for the role that each student takes within the process. Every student in the classroom has a central role in the play and contributes to the performance. This activity can be used to trigger relationships of solidarity and mutual help among children.








CHAPTER 4. An Intercultural Library at the school

Title in the original pilot: Activity 1. Book Club (activities were adapted with minor changes)

Context: Primary School of Tremithousa, Paphos; Participants: 13 students, fifth graders (10-11 years old), 1 teacher, 1 headteacher, 9 parents. Indirectly involved: All students and teachers who attend the school as they watched the video and presentation created.

Material: Storybooks, whiteboard, markers, post-it notes.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Developed their own unique voices
-  Became acquainted with other cultures, languages and habits through a more personal approach based on storytelling
-  Acquired a better understanding of the reasons that force people to immigrate
-  Acquired a better understanding of the need for peaceful coexistence
-  Acquired a better understanding of the concepts of familiarity, acceptance, inclusion



Starting Point

A simple yet powerful message left by a student in the communication box of this particular class ignited an extraordinary initiative. The message read “Why do we only have storybooks in Greek? Can we have books in other languages too?”. What’s more interesting is the fact that the teacher of that 5th grade participated in one of our teachers’ workshops in early February 2023 and realised that a school in Italy did a very interesting activity called Book Club that involved reading of story books by the teacher, researchers and a parent. When the teacher went back to her class, she introduced the activity to her pupils and together they brainstormed on how to adapt this activity to their needs. Pupils were very excited to contribute to replicating (or rather recreating) the activity and suggested that their book club would be called the Intercultural Library.



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Activity 1: The multiplicity of our languages

In our action, this was a preparatory activity that allowed students to do either individual or group readings of selected books in all languages that co-existed in the classroom so that all children feel that they belong and that they share something in common. The readings took place in the school yard, and students worked in groups reading excerpts from their favourite books to their peers in their mother tongue.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Invite students to bring in the class one of their favourite books that is written in their mother tongue. If some languages are missing, you can use online websites to order those books. The goal is to create a library that includes all languages that your students speak.
- 2) Go with your students in the schoolyard and tell them that they can now start reading their books individually.
- 3) In another session, again in the schoolyard, divide them in groups of 3-4 students and ask them to read their favourite excerpts to their peers. At least two different languages will be heard in each group.
- 4) Return to the classroom and discuss how the students felt when they were reading their favourite books to their peers in their mother language.
- 5) Give them post-it notes to write some of their reflections.



Individual and group readings in the schoolyard





Activity 2: Parents as co-creators of meaning

In our action, the participatory sessions with the parents started after the individual and group readings in the schoolyard. A total number of 9 parents from Syria, Israel, China, Cyprus, Serbia, Georgia, and the UK visited the class. Each time, a parent was reading a storybook in their mother tongue and the children were acting as translators and contributed to the discussion between their parents and peers.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Send invitations to the parents of your students asking them to join your classroom and read (or prepare a participatory reading session) a storybook in their mother tongue.
- 2) Tell them that they need to prepare the reading session together with their children as the latter will be acting as a peer-translator, mediator.
- 3) After the reading session, invite parents to discuss further about their countries of origin and share with the rest of the classroom their migration journey.
- 4) Debrief and wrap-up each session by highlighting the different categories of migration (economic migration, forced migration, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, etc.) in order to discuss the need for peace, co-existence, and inclusive education for all. For example, in the Cyprus activity, parents explained the reasons behind the journey to relocate to Cyprus that showed the unique experience of each family, of each child which created a sense of community as all children felt that their classroom was a safe space, where there was no criticism, judgement, or sheer prejudice.



Parents and children explaining storybooks in their mother tongue



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Some reflections:

>> It is important to highlight that in the Cyprus re-pilot, the parents became active multipliers of the action as they co-created with their children the content presented such that they contributed in various ways to enhance the cultural connection. They assisted with translation, ensuring that the stories and messages within the books were fully understood. They facilitated discussions, encouraging children to explore their thoughts and emotions related to the stories and their own cultural experiences. Furthermore, parents encouraged the expression of the mother language, allowing children to maintain a connection to their linguistic roots.

>> This initiative is a testament to the incredible impact we can make by prioritizing children's voices and experiences. Through their vibrant narratives and the transformative power of literature, the children together with their parents and teachers embarked on a journey that celebrated diversity, nurtured empathy, and promoted inclusive education. Together, they can shape a future that embraces every child's unique identity, fostering a world where equity, compassion, and empowerment thrive.

>> You can watch a short video created for this action, [here](#).








CHAPTER 5. Stories for self-improvement

Title in the original pilot: Activity 1. Book Club (activities were adapted with minor changes)

Context: Prodromos Primary School (KB), Larnaca; Participants: 42 students, fourth graders (9-10 years old), 7 teachers, 1 headteacher.

Material: Storybooks, flipchart paper, markers.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Developed their active listening skills
-  Learned how to cooperate and work harmoniously in groups
-  Acquired a better understanding of the meaning of respecting one's opinions and ideas
-  Actively practised positive thinking and enhanced their sense of self-importance
-  Openly shared their emotions regarding given situations





Starting Point

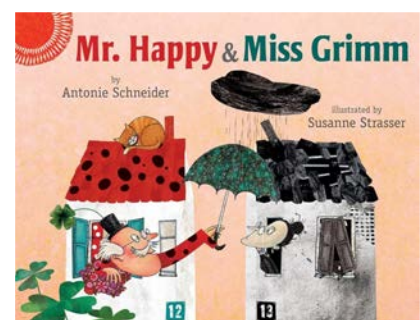
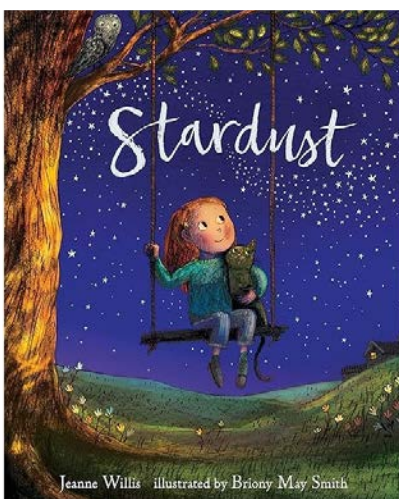
The activity was triggered by teachers' observations that the children in their class needed to develop a positive attitude and respect for themselves. They noticed that often children have negative thoughts which prevent them from overcoming their difficulties and enjoying happy moments at school. Taking inspiration from the book club activity that teachers and students conducted in Italy, Cypriot students and teachers selected together to read three storybooks about self-improvement.

In that sense, it is recommended to conduct a needs assessment before selecting storybooks to read with students because it allows you to tailor your choices to the specific requirements and interests of your students. By understanding the diverse needs, reading levels, and cultural backgrounds of the class, you can select storybooks that resonate with the students, promote engagement, and cater to their individual learning styles. This approach is a key step in creating a personalized and effective reading experience that can have a lasting impact on a child's education.



Activity 1: Active reading sessions

In our action, the books selected were "Stardust" written by Jeanne Willis; "Yeti - the power of (saying) yet" written by Marina Yiotis; and "Mr. Happy and Miss Grimm" written by Antonie Schneider. All three books were focused on topics, such as self-improvement, self-acceptance, believing in yourself, and having a positive attitude toward learning, toward life.



The covers of the three books that were selected for this activity, that is "Stardust" written by Jeanne Willis; "Yeti - the power of (saying) yet" written by Marina Yiotis; and "Mr. Happy and Miss Grimm" written by Antonie Schneider (from left to right).



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How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Firstly, you should choose books that align with your students' age, interests, and comprehension levels.
- 2) Begin by discussing the book's title, author, and cover illustration. Encourage students to make predictions about the story based on these elements.
- 3) Explain the goals of the reading session, such as improving comprehension, exploring themes, or fostering critical thinking.
- 4) Read the book aloud, using expressive and engaging tones.
- 5) Pause at key points to ask open-ended questions that encourage reflection and discussion.
- 6) Encourage active participation by: Asking students to predict what might happen next; having students summarize what has been read so far; allowing them to read aloud certain passages; discussing unfamiliar words and their meanings; encouraging them to share their thoughts and reactions to the story.
- 7) After reading a section or completing the book, initiate open discussions. Encourage students to share their opinions, thoughts, and feelings about the story.
- 8) Pose questions that require critical thinking, such as "Why do you think the character made that choice?"
- 9) Conclude the reading session with a brief reflection where students share what they learned or found most interesting.



An active reading session with two of the teachers





Activity 2: Laboratories

In our action, each of the three reading sessions was followed by a lab in class. Let's explore how you can replicate those.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Organize group activities related to the story, like role-playing, creative writing, or art projects. This fosters collaboration and a deeper understanding of the text. For example, during the Cyprus re-pilot experience, one of the laboratories included theatre-based activities with movement, dance, music, to actively engage students with the storyline and help them discuss more advanced concepts, such as loneliness, belonging, self-importance, etc. Or, in a different laboratory, they used some human figures to describe the characteristics of some characters in the book and pinpoint their own emerging feelings when reading and listening to the story of one of the books. They also improved their language skills as the storybooks selected allowed for new words and new vocabularies to emerge.
- 2) You can also plan follow-up activities, such as writing book reports, creating book-related artwork, or even organizing a permanent book club at school. For example, in Cyprus, after the collective reading of "Yeti - the power of (saying) yet", children and teachers created a large storyboard which included the story's most important messages and then exhibited that on one of the school's main boards.





Images from the Laboratories



Some reflections:

>> It is important to mention that in the Cyprus re-pilot, teachers witnessed a change in students' attitudes mostly developed because of the exploration of the main topics of each story based on interactive, experiential, participatory activities. For example, when reading *Stardust*, students were very excited to find out that everything and everyone is made of stardust, and that we all shine in different ways. It's a lesson they would never forget as they extensively reflected on it because usually when something unexpected happens, their first reaction was self-doubt. Through the discussions on the *Stardust* storybook, students believed that one day their dreams might come true.

>> In that sense, it is crucial that you carefully choose what kind of storybooks and experiential activities you will select as these will help students open up and share thoughts and feelings. For example, in our action, the stories played a vital role in enhancing students' self-confidence by providing them with valuable life lessons, relatable characters, and empowering narratives. When students heard the stories about characters facing challenges, overcoming obstacles, and achieving success, they saw themselves reflected in these experiences -especially those students who were refugees and recently were forced to leave their country/their home. Such relatability fostered a sense of identification, allowing students to believe that if the characters can overcome difficulties, they can equally do so. This identification with strong and resilient characters boosted their self-confidence helping them realize that they too have the potential to conquer challenges in their own lives.







CHAPTER 6. The ideal school, through the eyes of the children

*Title in the original pilot: Activity 4. Creating a digital book
(activities were adapted with minor changes)*

Context: Prodomos Primary School (KB), Larnaca; Participants: 18 students, fifth graders (10-11 years old), 1 teacher, 1 headteacher. The book was presented and sent to all teachers and parents.

Material: Coloured pencils/markers, projector, activity sheets, microphones, computers, etc.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Developed their creative skills promoting self-expression and artistic abilities.
-  Enhanced their writing skills, including grammar, vocabulary, and clarity of expression.
-  Analysed their ideal school settings, considering elements that contribute to effective learning, and apply critical thinking to express their ideas.
-  Improved their digital literacy and proficiency in using software or platforms for creative projects.



Starting Point

To initiate this activity (and make it relevant for older students), you can connect it to the official school curriculum. For instance, in our action, Cypriot students and teachers decided together that the best idea to find their ideal school would be to get to know schools from all around the world. So, as part of their geography class, they "travelled" through photos and videos to schools all over the world.



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Activity 1: Let's improve our school!

This activity consists of several steps that allow students to express their opinions about schools they would ideally attend.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Invite your students to explore schools and school systems from all over the world. You can use online sources, such as videos and images.
- 2) Following that, initiate a discussion and let students free to comment and refer to the similarities and differences between your school and the ones presented.
- 3) Assign them enough time to work in groups and share how they feel about their current involvement in school affairs and how they would improve their involvement in the future.
- 4) Tell them to write down their thoughts about how they envision their ideal school: what is it like? How are the facilities; the classes; their teachers; and their peers? Encourage them to use artistic tools to depict their ideas, instead of an essay-style approach. For example, in Cyprus, teachers divided their students in groups and asked them to visualise their ideal school through drawing and creative writing.



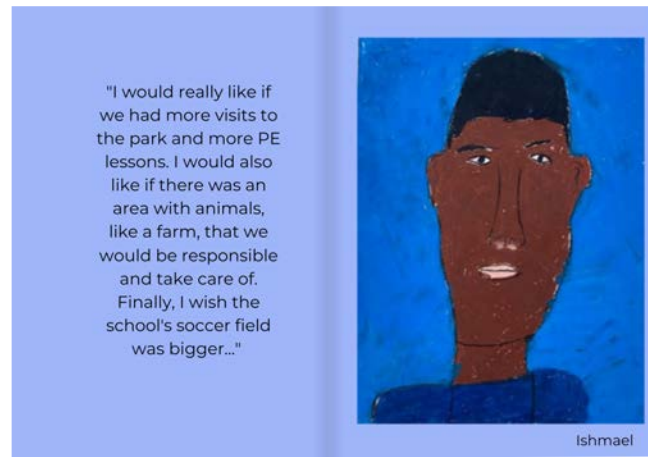
Students visualising their ideal school

- 5) Together with your students create a digital book, in which your students would present their arguments about their ideal school.
- 6) Then record them reading their text aloud. When the recording is finished, tell them to draw themselves. Photograph their self-portraits and help them upload those to your digital book.
- 7) Finalise the activity with your students' reflections on the effectiveness of their book to foster change.



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Screenshots of the digital book that students created



Some reflections:

>> In this action, **the digital book** was created with a specific software (Book Creator) and consists of students' self-portraits, recorded voices, and statements about their ideal school. The book was presented and sent to students' parents.

>> Through this activity, it was evident that children and young people can certainly play a role in influencing education policies and shaping the schools they dream of. While they may not take on the formal title of "policymakers," their voices and input can be essential in advocating for changes in the educational system. Creating something together made children realise that advocating for their dream schools might not lead to immediate changes, but their input and voices can have a powerful impact over time. Ideally, adults, such as parents, teachers, and community stakeholders, should also support and encourage children in their advocacy efforts, helping them navigate the process and providing guidance when needed. In this case, children and teachers aspire to bring about some change by widely disseminating and presenting their digital book to other school stakeholders.

>> It is very important to mention that more students and teachers were inspired to create their own digital books in which they present themselves and their ideal schools. Having said that, another 5 teachers and 38 second graders created 3 additional digital books. To access those books, you have to download the app **Kids Story Builder**. As soon as you install it on your phone or laptop, you can download the books from [here](#).







CHAPTER 7. The school I dream of

*Title in the original pilot: Activity 4. Creating a digital book
(activities were adapted with minor changes)*

Context: Public Kindergarten of Chloraka-Agiou Nikolaou, Paphos; Participants: 25 preschoolers (5-6 years old), 1 teacher, 1 headteacher. The book was presented and sent to all parents, relatives, and friends.

Material: Coloured pencils/markers, microphones, computers, camera.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Expressed ideas and suggestions based on their personal interests.
-  Depicted their ideas and suggestions in a visual manner.
-  Improved their digital literacy and proficiency in using software or platforms for creative projects.
-  Developed self-confidence in relation to their digital and creative abilities.



Starting Point

In our action, the teacher immediately presented the students with the digital book created by children of the Dante Alighieri school in Italy, because she knew that they would get very excited about this opportunity. The students had already had the experience of creating a printed storybook in previous lessons, which they could only share with their family. Hence, they thought a digital book was ideal, since they could send it to friends, family who was living abroad, and anyone they wanted, wherever they were, easily, instantly, and inexpensively. And indeed, the students were thrilled and proposed the creation of their own digital book in which they would present themselves and describe the school they dream of!



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Activity 1: My dream school

This activity follows a slower pace in supporting students to express their ideas about their ideal school. The slower pace is considered necessary given the age of the students.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Start the activity by photographing your school as it originally is. This visual representation is elemental for discussing later the aspirations of your students regarding their ideal school.
- 2) Following that, on a whiteboard draw a cloud and write inside a first question that your students will reflect on: What would you like to mention about yourself?
- 3) Encourage your students to share whatever they think it is important to be mentioned, such as their favourite food, game, activity, animal, etc. and then try to render them visually, e.g., through a drawing or a sketch or a collage. Keep in mind that this will form the first part of the digital book.
- 4) Subsequently, work together with your students around a second question: What is the ideal school for you? What do you dream your school to be like?



A student working on his project and a screenshot of the digital book that students created

- 5) Start a brainstorming session, where all the children will have the opportunity to give their views and discuss with each other. Facilitate the discussion so that all students are heard and feel respected.
- 6) As soon as each student comes up with an idea, tell them to begin drawing it.
- 7) Then tell them that each student will photograph their drawings, and with your help, they will produce their own digital pages, in which they will present themselves and the school they dream of.



- 8) Record your students' voices and incorporate them into the pages of the digital book.
- 9) Support your students to share their digital book with their family, friends and relatives.
- 10) Debrief the activity by asking your students how they feel about their participation. As the re-pilot experience from Cyprus showed, this activity emphasized that every child is exceptional, unique and special. That each child has his or her own voice and that we, as educators, need to give space, time and opportunities for active participation in the learning process so that all children are visible, and their voices and wishes are heard. After all, as many of the children confessed: "I love to hear my voice in our book!"



Some reflections:

>> In this action, [the digital book](#) was created with a specific software (Book Creator) and consists of students' drawings, recorded voices, and statements about their ideal school. The book was presented and sent to students' families in Cyprus and abroad.

>> All children participated in the creation of the digital book even if they did not speak Greek well or even if they had recently joined the class. Some of the ideas the children had to make their school better were to have more play areas like a football field, a basketball court, a castle, and lots of games like cars and Lego bricks. Many children even dream of a school that is clean, free of litter with lots of flowers and trees and a lush vegetable garden. In addition, there were suggestions from the children for a school with lots of books, balloons and a school where all the children go for a walk together, paint with watercolours outside in nature and dance.

>> The children felt a sense of empowerment and agency as they realized that their thoughts and ideas were valued and given a platform. This boosted their self-esteem and confidence and made them realise that they are part of a community in which they all have equal rights.

>> Seeing their contributions in the final product made the children feel validated and acknowledged, which fostered a positive emotional connection to the project.



CHAPTER 8. Beyond national identities, religions, and beliefs, we are all friends!

Title in the original pilot: Activity 7. A school to eat (activities were adapted with major changes)

Context: Upper Secondary School of Agios Antonios, Limassol; Participants: 25 high school students (15-16 years old), 8 teachers, 1 headteacher. Indirectly involved: all students and school community who receive the yearbook of the school in which the activities implemented were presented.

Material: Presentations.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

- 👤 Explored and presented the cultural origins, traditions, and culinary practices of their culture, gaining a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity.
- 👤 Engaged in open discussions and exchanges of ideas, experiences, and stories related to their own cultures and the cultures of their peers, fostering cross-cultural communication and understanding.
- 👤 Reflected on their own cultural identity and how it relates to the broader school community, developing self-awareness, empathy, and a sense of interconnectedness.





Starting Point

The activity presented in this chapter were co-designed with students who attend the "transitional" class of the school. A transitional class addresses the needs of migrant minors who arrive to Cyprus at an older age and face more difficulties integrating into the formal school system due to language and cultural barriers. Most of the students who participated in the activity came to school from September to December 2022, having an honest desire to learn. The students are mostly 15-16 years old and come from Syria, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Vietnam, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Russia.

When the teachers presented the activities to the students, the activity that attracted most interest was "A school to eat" because the students felt that this activity would give them the opportunity to talk about their home through a topic that unites everyone: food. What encouraged the active participation of the students was their willingness to work with the whole school community and to collaborate with more students who don't necessarily attend the transitional class.

In that sense, if you have to work with a group that exists at the margins of the school/community, ensure that you will provide for creating communication channels and building relationships with groups/individuals who can support their inclusion.



Activity 1: Staying connected

Facilitating an activity in which migrant students present their country and share national dishes can be a rich and educational experience. However, it needs careful planning to avoid reinforcing biases and ethnic stereotypes. Based on our experience, the following steps will help you facilitate the activity successfully.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Start by carefully planning and preparing for the activity. Determine the objectives of the activity. Is it to foster cultural understanding, celebrate diversity, or promote inclusion? Identify students who are willing to participate and share their country's culture and cuisine.
- 2) Invite students who are comfortable sharing their experiences and culture. Ensure they feel respected and supported in their presentations.
- 3) Encourage students to research and prepare a short presentation about their home country, covering aspects such as geography, history, traditions, and cultural significance. Ask



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them to choose a national dish to prepare or share. Highlight that they can use personal stories in order to engage their audience.

4) Collaborate with the student-presenters to ensure a diverse representation of countries and cuisines. Coordinate logistics such as cooking facilities, ingredients, and presentation materials.

5) Choose a suitable date and venue for the event. It can take place in the school cafeteria, a classroom, or an open space.

6) Promote the event among the school community and invite students, teachers, parents, and staff to participate.

7) During the event, have each student-presenter give a brief presentation about their country, sharing interesting facts, traditions, and stories.

8) Allow presenters to showcase their national dish. This can be done through cooking demonstrations, food samples, or a potluck-style event where they bring prepared dishes. In Cyprus, a potluck-style event was preferred.

9) Encourage participants to try the various national dishes and engage in open discussions about the flavours, textures, and cultural significance of the foods.

10) Foster an open discussion about the event's impact on cultural understanding, exchange of experiences, and the appreciation of diversity.

11) Gather feedback from participants to assess the success of the event and identify areas for improvement. Encourage students to reflect on their experiences and what they've learned about different cultures.

12) Recognize the efforts of the student-presenters and thank them for sharing their culture and cuisine.

13) Consider follow-up activities, such as creating a multicultural recipe book, organizing cultural fairs, or continuing discussions about diversity and inclusion in the classroom. In Cyprus, the students facilitated a short workshop by preparing banners that conveyed a message against school bullying, against intolerance, against marginalisation by writing slogans, such as "CONNECTING THROUGH FOOD" and "DON'T BE A BULLY... BE A FRIEND".



A collage of photos taken during the activities in Cyprus



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Some reflections:

>> In our action, the event was touching and commendable as the students proudly presented their countries of origin in Greek and managed to communicate their personal stories to individuals who might not be familiar with their backgrounds and tend to make assumptions about them.

>> According to their teachers, apart from the evident academic progress resulting from the activity, there was also noticeable improvement in their social skills and in the level of their inclusion and integration into the school's student community. Relationships based on understanding, generosity, and friendship developed among the students. Most importantly, their self-confidence was boosted and a sense of optimism for the future was cultivated!







CHAPTER 9. Always happy to get together

Title in the original pilot: Activity 7. A school to eat (activities were adapted with major changes)

Context: Upper Secondary School of Pallouriotissa, Nicosia; Participants: 20 high school students (15-16 years old), 8 teachers, 1 headteacher.

Material: Board games, food, volley balls.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Participated in the creation of a stronger school community that brings students together.
-  Socialised with each other and shared personal stories.
-  Discussed issues that affect their lives.
-  Discovered common interests.



Starting Point

The activity presented in this chapter was co-designed with students who attend the “transitional” class of the school. A transitional class addresses the needs of migrant minors who arrive in Cyprus at an older age and encounter heightened challenges in integrating into the education system due to linguistic and cultural obstacles.

The teachers who participated in one of our teachers’ workshops presented the activity to the students, and they were all thrilled and excited to participate, while they suggested changes that scaled the activity up. Teachers and students co-designed activities that brought together students who attend the transitional class with students who attend the regular school classes/curriculum.



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Activity 1: World Café for Inclusion

This activity created a bond between students who were only attending the transitional class with students attending the regular curriculum classes. They played board games together, exercised together, learned about recycling and reusing together. They discussed about their ideal school in Greek and English and learned phrases from diverse languages (Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Ukrainian, Somali, etc.). And, of course, they had lunch together using food as a vehicle for intercultural learning and community building.

Each week's workshop was designed using the world-café approach. Through this approach, participants could engage in meaningful conversations, share ideas, and collectively envision an ideal educational setting. Teachers and researchers were acting as facilitators and translators. The methodology encouraged active listening, open dialogue, and diverse perspectives, fostering a collaborative and inclusive atmosphere. By utilizing the World Café methodology, participants could tap into collective wisdom, generate innovative ideas, and gain a deeper understanding of the elements that contribute to their ideal school.



Images from the implementation of activity

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Start by clearly defining the objectives of the World Café workshop/session. Is it to promote cultural exchange, facilitate discussions on common challenges, or enhance social integration? In our case, it was about the creation of stronger relationships between students and further the discussion around students' ideal school.
- 2) Collaborate with teachers, school administrators, parents, and community organizations to ensure support and participation. In our action, we involve the broader school community, including other students.
- 3) Choose a suitable venue, such as a large classroom or cafeteria, and arrange tables in a café-style setup. Teachers were setting up small group conversations around café-style tables (benches in the school yard), where students could rotate between tables and contribute



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their thoughts and perspectives on specific questions or topics related to the ideal school. Each table should have a theme or discussion topic related to each workshop's objectives.

- 4) Identify relevant themes or topics for discussion that are meaningful to your students, such as the characteristics of their ideal school, cultural identity, challenges in a new country, language acquisition, or opportunities for integration. In our action, not every workshop had a theme for discussion; sometimes teachers would assign tasks to each table, e.g., play this board game together, play volleyball together, learn together at least two new phrases in this or that language.
- 5) Select facilitators or hosts for each discussion table. Ensure they are knowledgeable about the chosen theme and have experience with cross-cultural communication.
- 6) Implement a structured rotation system where students move from one table to another at designated intervals. Provide each table with a facilitator to guide the discussion.
- 7) Prepare a set of guiding questions for each table to stimulate meaningful conversations. These questions should relate to the chosen theme. Alternatively, if it's a task-based table, write clear instructions.
- 8) Conduct at least 3 rounds of discussions, allowing students to share their thoughts, experiences, and insights on the chosen topics. Encourage active listening and open dialogue.
- 9) At the end of each round, ask the students to summarize the key insights and ideas from their discussion. The facilitators can capture this information on flipcharts or whiteboards.
- 10) Conclude the event with a final discussion that brings together the main insights and ideas from all tables. Encourage students to reflect on what they've learned and how they feel after the end of the activity.



Some reflections:

>> Even though the activity was extra-curricular and outside of students' regular classes, it was obvious to teachers, us, and the students that when students actively participate and have a say in their own learning, this whole process empowers them, enhances their engagement, and promotes a sense of ownership over their education.

>> The activity valued students' voices so much so that educators acknowledged that they are active agents in their learning journey, not just passive recipients of information. In that sense, the teachers respected the need of the students to meet and build relationship with students who do not attend the transitional class. It showed that they were experiencing a sense of marginalisation so their feelings should be respected. Care and compassion were fundamental in that process. Students brought unique perspectives, experiences, and ideas that enriched the original activity and contributed to a more holistic and student-centred approach.







CHAPTER 10. Our own vegetable garden

New activity

Context: Public Kindergarten of Agios Antonios, Limassol; Participants: 23 preschoolers (4-5 years old), 2 teachers, 1 headteacher.

Material: Plants, vegetables, pots, soil, shovels.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Worked together to plan, plant, and maintain the school vegetable garden, fostering collaborative skills and a sense of collective responsibility
-  Increased awareness and sense of responsibility
-  Encouraged cultural exchange and understanding among community members
-  Developed a stronger connection to their school, fostering a sense of belonging, pride, and a desire to contribute positively to their local environment



Starting Point

The source of inspiration for the implementation of this activity was the discussion that took place with the children after the presentation of the activities of the Italian team on the ideal school. Through dialogue and listening to all the opinions, the children concluded that they would like to have their own special space, outside the classroom, in the schoolyard, where they could be active every day. After field research they saw that the only available space in the schoolyard was a patch of dirt and some old pots. So, they decided to create their own vegetable garden there.



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Activity 1: My school garden

In our activity, in the Cyprus re-pilot, the children themselves brought the idea to the headmistress of the school, who immediately supported it and helped in the implementation of the action by providing materials and anything the children needed. Every day, at various times, either during teaching or recess, the children visited the vegetable garden for observation and care. In the classroom, there was often a discussion about how the vegetables were growing and the children would make suggestions for its improvement. After about 3 months of tending the plants daily, the children started cutting their first vegetables, such as parsley, cilantro, lettuce, and cherry tomatoes. They made salad together and ate together at break time. The vegetable garden became a place where the children felt that they belonged, that they and they alone were responsible for its preservation, that they could spend time there as they pleased, and that they could observe and experiment.

In that sense, growing your own vegetable garden is a huge responsibility for which you have to prepare adequately and effectively guide your students.



Students are working together to plant their vegetable garden



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How to replicate the activity:

1) Start by forming a garden committee. A garden committee makes decisions about how a school's garden will look, what it will be used for, and how it will operate. The committee should ideally consist of 4-6 members representing the following areas:

- o Your school's administration
- o Teachers
- o Students
- o Parents
- o Community volunteers

2) Determine the goals of your garden. Once you have your committee in place, determining goals for your garden is an important next step. Schools build gardens for different reasons. Here are some common goals and objectives:

- o To provide outdoor, hands-on learning
- o To send fresh fruits and vegetables home with students
- o To enhance collaboration and empathy
- o To provide a therapeutic space for students

Identifying the goals for your garden will help you determine what size and style of garden you need.

3) Once you have a sense of your garden's direction, consider the following questions to further hone your vision:

- o Who will use the garden?
- o How often will students use the garden? Who will be responsible for scheduling?
- o Who else is needed to accomplish your goals?

4) Now that you know the main purposes of your garden, review available sites and determine which one is right for your needs. Remember to take your students for a walk around the school premises to discuss and find your site. Along the way, consider the following questions:

- o How much space do you need to meet your goals?
- o Is there enough sun?
- o Where is your water access?
- o What type of soil is on site?
- o Is the site secure?

5) Now you are ready to support your students to plan and design their garden. Ask them to draw their ideal garden on a white paper so you collect everyone's ideas.



- 6) Consider what materials you will need to make the most of your garden. This includes both the building and operational phases (material for raised garden beds, soil, fertilizers, irrigation, tools, fencing, etc.)
- 7) Now you are ready to start planting. Allow children to actively engage in the gardening process, and the garden's preservation.
- 8) Initiate a discussion about how the vegetables are growing and ask for suggestions from your students for your garden's improvement.
- 9) Discuss and evaluate your students' feelings about the garden and their sense of belonging.
- 10) In Cyprus, from our own experience, students learned to cooperate and work in teams to achieve a common goal. They learned to function more efficiently and thus felt satisfaction and joy in their achievement. Together, this activity gave teachers and children the opportunity to engage in something that provided them with genuine interest and joy. The process enriched the children with knowledge and positive emotions. Contact with nature helped the more shy and introverted children express themselves more and improve their verbal communication. In short, through this activity, the children developed skills of cooperation, teamwork, responsibility and caring.



Some reflections:

>> This action highlighted the importance of experiential learning through which children are motivated and become more active participants in the educational process.



CHAPTER 11. Composting, nature's recycling





New activity

Context: First Primary School of Agios Dometios, Nicosia; Participants: 13 first graders (6-7 years old), 1 teacher, 1 headteacher, 3 parents. Indirectly participated: 123 students of the school, other teachers, parents, the Commissioner for the Environment, officers from the Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education, to whom the activities were presented during a dedicated event.

Material: Compost unit, cardboard, markers, pencils, paper, etc.

For creating your own composter, you will need the following materials: A plastic or wooden bin/bottles with a lid; A drill with a 1/4-inch drill bit; Some shredded newspaper or cardboard; Soil; Kitchen scraps (fruit and vegetable peels, coffee grounds, eggshells, or other compostable material); A spray bottle for water.

By the end of this Chapter your participants will have ...

-  Engaged in hands-on activities related to the environment, such as composting, recycling, or participating in clean-up efforts, to apply their knowledge in practical ways
-  Increased awareness and sense of responsibility
-  Collaborated with their peers, developing essential teamwork skills and an understanding of how working together can make a positive impact
-  Gained a deeper appreciation of the natural world, fostering a sense of wonder and curiosity about the environment and its diverse ecosystems





Starting Point

The source of inspiration for the implementation of this activity was the overall nature of the original pilot's activities, which were experiential, collaborative, inclusive, creative and child centred. All those activities offered knowledge and skills through real-life problem solving, through playful activities that provided students with joy and enthusiasm for the learning process. When teachers initiated a brainstorming session around the original pilot activities, the children expressed their desire to work on an action that would provide solutions to the problem of food waste, as they observed on an on-site investigation that there was a lot of food waste in the school's garbage bins. In this decision, of course, the existing cooperation they had with another primary school from Greece (6th Primary School of Nea Ionia), under the thematic umbrella "We are our values," played an important role in their decision. By brainstorming on what the students and teachers could do to tackle food waste, they came up with ideas on how to use their leftover food and make it available for anyone who needs it. Also, one student in the class shared with everyone their experience with composting and how they are using this practice at home so that food waste is used to produce beneficial food for the land, trees, and plants. Collectively, also inspired by their previous work on environmental issues, they all decided to experiment as a group with the concept of composting. Thus, the action "Composting, nature's recycling. We compost, not dispose!" was born.



Activity 1: Preparing our own composter

This activity aims at introducing the concept of composting to your students. In our action, the students first learned what composting means and then they built together with their teacher a classroom composter with plastic bottles and composted what they found in the school's trash bins (green materials) and other materials from the yard such as dry leaves, cypress leaves, pine needles, feathers from the pigeons in the yard, etc.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Take your students for a walk around the schoolyard. Discuss with them the practice of composting and what does it mean. Refer to materials that are compostable. Ask them to take some time and pick up materials from the schoolyard that are considered compostable.
- 2) Return to your classroom and tell your students that you will create your own composter. Prepare the materials needed, as indicated in the material section above.



- 3) Choose a plastic or wooden container with a lid. The size depends on the available space in your classroom.
- 4) Use the drill to create several 1/4-inch holes in the lid and around the sides of the container. These holes will provide aeration for the compost.
- 5) Line the bottom of the container with shredded newspaper or cardboard. This serves as the bedding for the compost.
- 6) Add a layer of soil on top of the bedding. This will introduce microorganisms that aid in the decomposition process.
- 7) Start adding small amounts of what you have found in the schoolyard, or alternatively, ask your students to bring kitchen scraps like fruit and vegetable peels, coffee grounds, and eggshells. Avoid adding meat, dairy, or oily foods, as they can attract pests.
- 8) Use a spray bottle to keep the compost moist but not soggy. Maintaining the right level of moisture is crucial for the decomposition process.
- 9) Every few weeks, use a pitchfork or a stick to turn and mix the compost. This allows for even decomposition and prevents it from becoming too compacted.



Students are working together to prepare their DIY composter.

10) Encourage students to observe the composting process, noting how the materials change over time. Discuss the importance of composting for the environment and its role in reducing waste.

11) When the compost is dark, crumbly, and free of recognizable scraps, it's ready to use. You can either use it for classroom plants or send it home with students for their gardens.

12) Create a composting journal or poster to record observations, measurements, and interesting findings throughout the process.





Activity 2: Creating our own board games

This activity intends to suggest some board game ideas co-created by the students and teachers of this action to raise awareness about the importance of composting. Anyone could now play these board games and learn more about composting! It is important to mention that in the Cyprus re-pilot, through the co-creation of those board games, students and teachers were able to enter the Science Fair 2023 competition organised by the Cyprus Institute and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, and a few months later they organised a workshop at their school to show what they had made. In this workshop they invited the Commissioner for the Environment, while the 123 students of the school participated in the activities that took place during the workshop, where they had the opportunity to "visit" various stations to play the games created by their classmates and learn about composting.

How to replicate the activity:

- 1) Follow the instructions for the board games suggested below. You can make your own boards by using cardboard and markers.
- 2) Allow the students enough time to experiment with and play the board games.
- 3) Gather their feedback at the end asking how they felt about collaborating and working together to achieve a common goal.





Earthworm

Board game material: DIY board, dice and 4 pawns.

Objective: The players gain knowledge about composting.

The players learn to work together in teams.

Instructions:

- The board contains numbered squares. Some squares have earthworms.
- If the player reaches a square where the earthworm tail appears, s/he draws a card with a question related to composting.
- If s/he answers correctly then s/he moves up to the square that has the earthworm's head.
- If the player reaches a square that has the earthworm's head, s/he draws a card with a question and if s/he answers incorrectly he goes down to the square where the earthworm tail is. In the case that s/he answers correctly, s/he stays where s/he is.



Winner: The one who reaches the end first.

<p>Τα μαγειρεμένα λαχανικά, τα <u>κομποστοποιούμε</u>.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Η θερμοκρασία βοηθά στην <u>κομποστοποίηση</u>.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Τα όξινα όπως τα λεμόνια και τα πορτοκάλια σκοτώνουν τους μικροοργανισμούς που βοηθούν στην <u>κομποστοποίηση</u>.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Οι μικροοργανισμοί που βρίσκονται στην <u>κομποστοποίηση</u> χρειάζονται οξυγόνο.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>
<p>Το φακελάκι τσαγιού, τα χάρτινα φίλτρα καφέ είναι πράσινα υλικά.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Τα τσόφλια είναι καφέ υλικά.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Για να γίνει σωστά και γρήγορα η <u>κομποστοποίηση</u>, το μέγεθος των υλικών που ρίχνουμε μέσα στον κάδο πρέπει να είναι σχετικά μικρό.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Τα φρούτα, τα λαχανικά, οι φλούδες και τα κοτσάνια είναι καφέ υλικά.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>
<p>Οι μικροοργανισμοί μπορούν να αποσυνθέσουν μόνο υγρά υλικά.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Οι ξηροί καρποί και τα κελύφη τους είναι πράσινα υλικά.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Το χύμα από την <u>κομποστοποίηση</u> έχει άσχημη μυρωδιά.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>	<p>Η <u>κομποστοποίηση</u> ολοκληρώνεται σε 3 βδομάδες και έχουμε τότε οργανικό χύμα.</p> <p>Σωστό ή λάθος;</p>

Right or Wrong question cards that are used when playing the board game



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Brown or Green?

Board game material: DIY board, dice and 2 pawns (one brown and one green).

Objective: The players gain knowledge about the green and brown material for composting.

The players learn to work together in teams.

Instructions:

- The board contains numbered squares (1-70).
- Some squares have pictures with compostable materials. At the back of the image, the material is written.
- The images with the "brown" materials are as many as the images with the "green" ones.
- There is also a square with the word "free". Whichever of the two players stops there, wins the free card only if s/he correctly mentions a material that is composted. The player playing with the green pawn must identify the "green" material, while the one playing with the brown pawn must identify the "brown" material, when they stop in a square that has compostable materials on it.
- The player who starts first rolls the dice and moves as many squares as the number indicated.
- The goal is for each player to gather as many materials with the same colour as her/his pawn as possible.
- If s/he stops in a square and fails to identify whether the image signifies her/his colour (and thus s/he guesses the wrong colour of the material) then s/he loses her turn.



Students are playing the "Brown or Green" board game

Winner: The one who collects the most material.





Some reflections:

>> It is important to highlight that in Cyprus, the students showed great enthusiasm and joy for their participation in this action, and they were looking forward and asked to do more activities and learn more. They felt proud and confident about what they had made and that they had managed to mobilise their school community through their actions. Undoubtedly, the students gained the ability to understand their role in the community and understood that by undertaking actions they can transform their school into what they dream of. Also, the students got to know each other better and bonded strongly with each other, and cultivated many skills such as cooperation, communication, problem-solving, inclusion, empathy and were able to act as leaders and active citizens.



EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the repilot activities, ask students for feedback to gather their opinions and preferences, and to find out how, and to what extent, the particular experience has affected them.

You can use a participatory evaluation activity like the following:

- 1) Introduce the body mapping exercise that enables students, collectively, to explore changes in their lives or in their knowledge, behaviour or attitudes that are an outcome of their participation.
- 2) Ask for a volunteer to lie down on a flip-chart paper so that the shape of his/her body may be drawn around. Draw around his/her body shape with a marker.
- 3) Encourage each child to think about changes arising from their participation. Again, remind them that they can think about and record positive or negative changes.
- 4) Start by focusing on each part of the body, while children give you feedback. For example:
 - The head: Are there any changes in their knowledge? Or what they think about/worry about/feel happy about? Are there any changes in the way teachers and parents think about children?
 - The eyes: Are there any changes in the way they see themselves/their family/their community/their school? Are there any changes in the way adults see children?
 - The ears: Are there any changes in how they are listened to? Are there any changes in how they listen to others? Or what they hear?
 - The mouth: Are there any changes in the way they speak? The way they communicate with their peers, their parents, their teachers or others? Are there any changes in the way adults speak to them?
 - The heart: Are there any changes in the way they feel about themselves? Are there any changes in their attitudes to others?
 - The hands and arms: Are there any changes in what activities they do?
 - The feet and legs: Are there any changes in where they go? What they do with their legs and feet?
- 5) In conclusion, you will see that the children have a lot to say especially about the new things they learned and the new feelings they developed towards their classmates, their teachers and ultimately themselves.



FINAL TIPS AND REFLECTIONS



Reflection area

1. Does your school / out-of-school setting provide visibility for all groups and individuals?
2. Does your school / out-of-school setting value diversity and provide a safe environment for the presentation of every culture, the use of every language, the practice of every religion and the highlighting of important aspects of each pupil's identity?
3. Does your school / out-of-school setting empower and provide opportunities for every pupil to value their own and others' linguistic and cultural repertoires and backgrounds?
4. Do you take into account the perspectives of different groups in your educational routines and daily practices?
5. Do you use whole-child approaches and co-creation in your routines and daily practices?



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DISSEMINATING YOUR ACTIVITY

Developing your own dissemination strategy

You will surely be eager to let people know about the great activities that you managed to co-create with your students. How can you do it?

There are several strategies that you can deploy to enhance the visibility of your activity. We divided them into two macro-areas:

Local level

At the local level, you can start disseminating the activity while you are implementing it. For instance, you can involve other people by illustrating the activity through posters and informal chats with children's parents, colleagues, and the headmaster. You can also organize final events that allow to showcase what you have done. Prioritize to invite local authorities and policymakers to these events!

(Inter)national level

You can use various digital channels to present your activities to a broader audience. For example, a platform at the European level is [eTwinning](#); here, you can upload a description of your activity and share it with other teachers from different Europe countries.

As you know, there are also other multi-purpose platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and so on, but you should be careful with privacy issues!

You can also write original articles based on the activities that you have developed, like the Cyprus teachers and researchers did. You can find those articles in the [project website](#).



Acknowledgements

In the vibrant tapestry of our educational journey, a chorus of voices has come together to amplify the spirit of innovation and empower our young learners. We extend our heartfelt acknowledgments to the extraordinary teachers and headteachers, whose tireless commitment and creative insights breathed life into our repilot activity, enabling children to find their voices and claim their well-deserved place in the spotlight. To the bright young minds, our cherished students, your enthusiasm, and willingness to participate were the heartbeats of this endeavour, and we are truly grateful. The unwavering support of parents, we thank you for your trust and collaboration. To our dedicated stakeholders, your shared vision and invaluable contributions have been the wind beneath our wings, propelling this initiative to new heights. Without you, the repilot of *My Ideal School: Children as Policymakers* would not have been possible. Together, we have built a platform for children to unapologetically express themselves, and their voices will continue to impact us all.



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