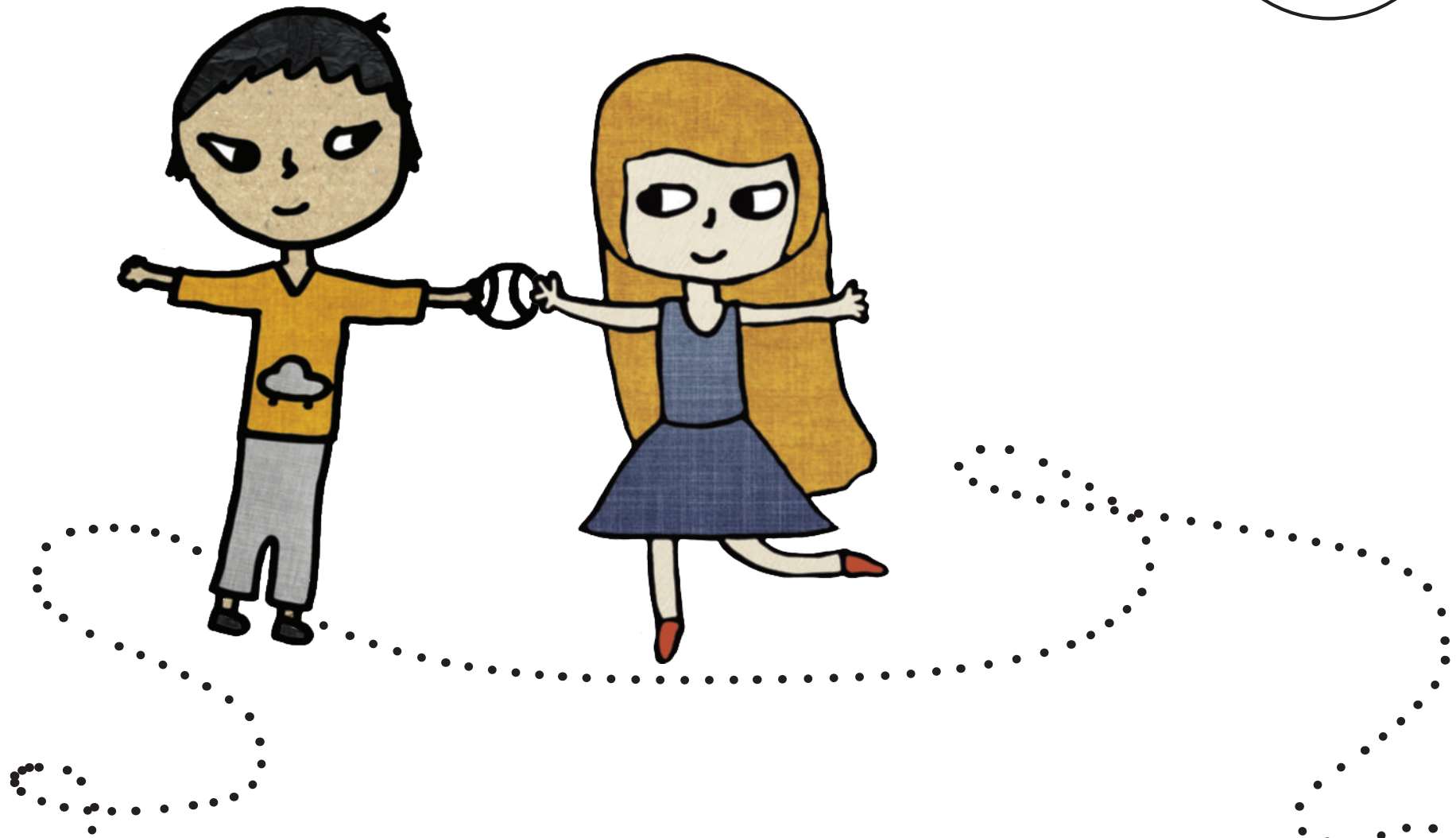
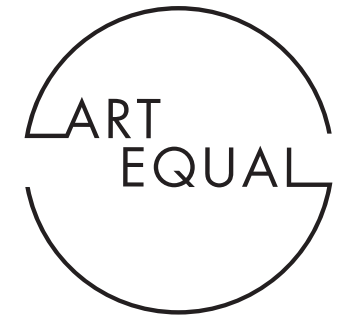


# Art EQUAL

Handbook on collaborations between early years professionals, artists and cultural workers





## Art EQUAL Handbook Published in 2019

The publication is based upon the results from the Art EQUAL project and the experiences of the project partners: Tris Krasas (LV), Örnköldsvik Kulturskole (SE), Bergen Kulturskole (NO), Myndlistaskolinn – Reykjavik School of Visual Arts (IS), Elderberry AB (SE), Kulturprinsen (DK)

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# FOREWORD

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Hanne Kusk, Lecturer and Associated Professor at University College of Northern Denmark

## GREEN LEAVES ARE GREEN - OR?

*Flowers are red, green leaves are green  
There's no need to see flowers any other way  
Than the way they always have been seen*

Harry Chapin, the American singer, songwriter and humanitarian, wrote this chorus to his song "Flowers are red" in the late 1970's. It is a teacher's response to a young boy who sees and paints colours and flowers differently to the way that the teacher expects. Chapin's point is that the boy has the right to experience and express himself in his own way. Today, 40 years later, many children have fantastic opportunities to unfold their own artistic and creative expressions and ideas, and to meet qualified pedagogues, teachers and artists who inspire and challenge them. Children's access to art and culture has in many ways been made easier through for example; digital media and an increased focus on their encounter with culture at museums, in theatres, concert halls and many other places. Furthermore, many pedagogues and teachers have today a greater focus on the application of aesthetic processes in education.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that art and culture does not reach all children. Not everyone is so privileged to meet artists, culture workers, pedagogues, teachers and family members who give them access to unfolding artistic and cultural experiences. Not everyone has the motivation, engagement and the resources to explore and be active participants in aesthetic processes. Therefore, projects like Art EQUAL have a fundamental role to play in creating opportunities for all children's encounter with art and culture in their everyday lives.

Colours, textures, forms, tones, sounds, movements, mimics, gestures, words and other artistic elements can be combined and experienced in infinite ways. A green leaf is not just green, and we still need to explore our own ways of seeing things through new works, studies, experiments and artistic trip ups. Together we can discover new perspectives on ourselves, each other, society and the world's opportunities and challenges.



The increased focus on children's perspectives and a playful, curious and experimenting approach can promote the opportunity for all children to meet art as well as contribute to children's play and experiments in their own ways. In Chapin's song the teacher succeeds in frightening and forcing the boy to comply with the way red flowers and green stalks are lined in a nice row. Today, I hope we all will try to listen to the children, see things from the child's perspective and use art to unfold the children's imagination and creativity. The boy in the song has an important point when he says:

*There are so many colours in the rainbow  
So many colours in the morning sun  
So many colours in the flower and I see everyone*

This handbook offers a great tool to provide a room for continuously asking wondering questions, inviting everyone in, and together sensing, feeling and perceiving art, and connecting through singing, dancing and painting with all palettes. Enjoy this publication and your work with the processes and experiences from Art EQUAL.





We do not learn from experience.  
We learn from reflecting on  
experience.

John Dewey, Educator and Philosopher



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# THE ART OF COLLABORATION

The Art EQUAL project builds on the experiences and partnership of the Nordic-Baltic project, Cultural Children of Europe. Both projects rest on 30 years work with music, movement, visual art and performing art in early childhood education and care based upon collaborations with music and cultural schools. Many art and culture professionals in Denmark and in the Nordic-Baltic countries have since the 80's established and experimented with beautiful artistic experiences and workshops for, with and by the youngest children.

In the Art EQUAL project there are have been many aspects that we have chosen to explore further and include how to:

Improve COLLABORATION between; artists, culture workers, pedagogues, teachers and children. Embed good experiences of artistic and cultural activities in everyday practice so it doesn't disappear when the art/culture professional leaves the room. Ensure that art and culture become a part of the everyday lives of the children rather than just "the icing on the cake" in practice. Collaborate putting the children first. Work with action learning as a joint method to ensure that we speak the same language, to have joint reflections and ownership of the process. Provide a room for inclusive learning environments where we follow the children's play, ideas and actions. Be inspired by the collaboration between many types of artistic approaches and pedagogical skills across the Nordic and Baltic countries. Learn from each other's skills and find new ways to work with the children's perspectives.

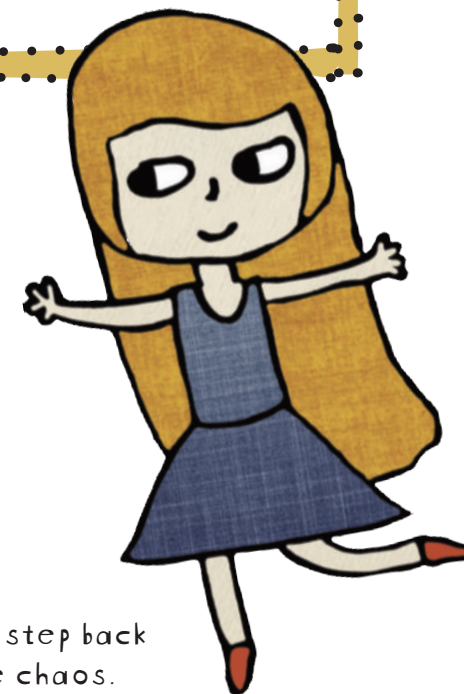
Art EQUAL has further developed the strong partnership that was established in the Cultural Children of Europe project. It has been a very interesting and at times challenged journey that has pointed in many different directions, but at the same it has been adjusted to the partners' local conditions. Children with different challenges have been included, they have developed their insight and self-esteem through their meeting with art and culture in their everyday.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in Art EQUAL and I hope the readers of this handbook will find inspiration for your inclusive everyday with the youngest children, art and culture.

**Ulla Voss Gjesing, General Manger, Kulturprinsen, DK**

*"The children continued to paint on the shared canvas... They didn't overpaint each other's paintings. They respected each other's work. We could even see that the children admired each other's work. A boy told the girl from Syria that her painting was nice. In this exercise, the Syrian girl had the same prerequisites for success as any other child, neither the language, the group, the distribution of roles or anything else affected the outcome. In the end, the paintings had become a shared piece of art and everyone seemed happy and satisfied."*

Artist involved in the Art EQUAL project,  
Örnsköldsvik Sweden 2018



**It is an art to step back  
and appreciate chaos.**

Pedagogue involved in the Cultural Children of Europe  
project, kindergarten in Silkeborg, DK, 2017

# WELCOME TO ART EQUAL

## Let's collaborate and grow – together we can do more!

In most professional areas today, we are encouraged to look beyond our own competency and expertise and explore the interdisciplinary field to build new professional relationships and rethink traditional work procedures. Cross-sectoral collaborations develop our practices, and we learn from each other's ways of working and perspectives on what we do. This has been the fundamental focal point of Art EQUAL.

Art EQUAL takes root in the earliest stages of development. We know that children from nursery to the first years in school are at their most adaptable, but also at their most vulnerable. We know that children's well-being and ability to build a relationship with the world and develop basic personal and social skills are very much depending on their everyday environments. The efforts on high-quality services in early childhood education and care can therefore never be prioritized enough.

The Art EQUAL project is based upon a shared need for qualified methods to help childcare services to provide a learning environment for fostering children's well-being, self-empowerment, participation and sense of community. In practice the project partners all work to ensure children's encounter with art and culture on a daily basis, and they have great experiences with establishing collaborations between early years professionals and art and culture professionals. These collaborations have proved to have a strong impact on the way artistic and cultural activities become present in children's everyday lives, and in general how these activities can have a positive influence on pedagogical practice, especially in connection with the social integration of children with disadvantaged backgrounds or special educational needs.



“There are several benefits from working in the same institution for many years. One of the disadvantages is however, that we tend to work in circles. New ideas, fresh eyes and a different approach is very refreshing and educational to all of us.”

Pedagogue involved in the Art EQUAL project, Viborg, DK

“Until now most of our creative activities were adult-led. We had decided beforehand what we wanted to create, and we had a clear idea of how it should look. Normally we would use templates ... Sometimes we pedagogues are too focused on the results – things should look nice, and we must see what it is. The project has changed this mindset.”

Pedagogue involved in Cultural Children of Europe, Silkeborg, DK, 2018

# THE AIMS OF ART EQUAL

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To support the rights of all children to have access to and participate in art and cultural activities in their everyday lives

To open to a new understanding of artistic and aesthetic processes in pedagogical practice through cross-sectoral collaborations, professional reflections and exchange of good practice

To promote inclusive, open-minded and playful learning environments with a focus on children's participation and self-directed learning through artistic and cultural activities



The Art EQUAL handbook will guide you through the fundamental principles of Art EQUAL and support the processes of learning from collaborations between artists/culture workers and pedagogical staff in early childhood education and care.

## BACKGROUND: A EUROPEAN AGENDA

In a European context the arts and cultural sector became an independent topic with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. Since then the sector has grown significantly in its influence and extend. It has developed from being an area that was difficult to place anywhere to become a strong and independent member of the family – a member that today is listened to and given authority. By promoting intercultural dialogue, reflection and collaboration the sector is today acknowledged to offer an important contribution to education at all levels, social integration and the shaping of individual and community identities.

In 2015 the Council of the European Union announced a set of conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence. One of the conclusions is:

*“Promoting creativity, innovation and digital competence through education during the early years can produce benefits later on, by laying the foundations for further learning, by enabling knowledge to be developed to a much higher level and by generally improving each child’s ability to develop creative and critical thinking skills and to become responsible citizens for the Europe of tomorrow, capable of meeting the challenges of an increasingly interconnected and globalised world.” \**

Furthermore, the Council points out the importance of modernising pedagogical approaches, teaching resources and the learning environment, as well as providing a continuous professional development of pedagogical staff in early childhood services. European member states are encouraged to promote the fundamental role of early years professionals in terms of stimulating and nurturing children’s curiosity, imagination, problem-solving, initiative-taking and willingness to experiment. All this call for a cross-sectoral approach where pedagogues and teachers work side by side with professional artists and culture workers, and they together develop new tools which can foster creativity and cultural understanding from an early age.

This is the starting point of Art EQUAL.



*“I suddenly realised that our participation in Art EQUAL and our experiences from the art workshops means something to others than ourselves – not only here in Denmark but also in Europe. That is a great motivation factor to us, and it helps us to see what we are good at and how we can develop our practice further. We learn very much about ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses, by observing how colleagues in other countries work.”*

**Pedagogue involved in the Art EQUAL project, Kindergarten in Viborg, DK, 2017**

\* Council conclusions on the role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence (2015/C 172/05)



## ART & CULTURE FROM AN EARLY AGE

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Something happens when art and culture become an integrated part of pedagogical practice. Experiences show that activities based on artistic and cultural processes have a positive impact on the learning environment, the individual child, the child group as well as the pedagogical staff. The children experience they have a voice that interacts with other voices in a way they might not find in other learning situations. This is especially relevant when working with inclusive learning environments. Artistic and cultural activities in pedagogical practice have a natural inclusive approach by providing a room for all expressions. There is a lack of competition, and nothing is right or wrong. The children can participate in new ways, and when it works well the children are free to explore, play, follow their own ideas and find their own expressions in a group with others. In this way, the pedagogical staff can see the children from different perspectives and adjust their expectations to the children, and this is particularly important when working with children at risk.

Experiences demonstrate the benefits of collaborating with professional artists or culture workers in childcare services, kindergartens and schools. Such collaborations open to a new understanding of working with art and culture as a part of pedagogical practice. It gives childcare workers, pedagogues and teachers the opportunity to document, examine and reflect on their own practice from new perspectives. They learn how to experiment and become conversant with artistic disciplines and materials, and they find new ways to communicate culture and use cultural experiences in their daily practice.

The Art EQUAL project has provided a range of collaborations in the different partner countries. In Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Denmark visual artists, musicians, performing artists, dancers and animators have been invited into nurseries, kindergartens, school and after school services over a period of several weeks, where they together with the pedagogues, teachers and children experimented with artistic forms and expressions. In Latvia the art school, Tris Krasas, collaborated with the National Art Gallery on museum education for children with special needs. All these collaborations have contributed to the development of the Art EQUAL methodology and educational resources which will be presented on the following pages.

*“Very quickly it was clear that the distributions of roles were changing. Some of the children with challenges participated with engagement, concentration and empathy, whereas some of the more resourceful children became observant and didn’t want to play the drum, dance or sing... Throughout the project it has been clear how important it is to develop new learning environments, especially when it comes to children with different challenges. Working with an aesthetic learning environment where nothing is right or wrong has without a doubt contributed positively to our daily practice. Creating a room for all qualifications and competences has had a very good influence on the children, and I strongly believe the children with special challenges have grown from being in a new environment where they can step out of their usual roles and develop from being ‘challenged’ to ‘resourceful’.”*

**Kindergarten teacher involved in the Art EQUAL project,  
Skive, DK, 2018**



# REFLECTING ON PRACTICE: ACTION LEARNING AS A JOINT METHOD

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Art EQUAL's criteria for success are to ensure children's encounter with art and culture in their everyday lives. The aim of the project has thus been to help early years professionals to develop a new perspective on art and culture in their daily practice, and the other way around to help art and culture professionals to get an insight into and learn from pedagogical approaches and ways of working.

The key question is: How can artistic and cultural processes promote qualified pedagogical work with children's general well-being, participation and sense of community? In the Art EQUAL project's practical workshops, it has therefore been important to provide a room for equal collaboration and involvement of each other's experiences and perspectives on working with children in art and culture-based activities. If you wish to move beyond 'here and now' experiences and integrate art and culture in the everyday pedagogical practice, it requires that both professions get involved in qualifying joint processes and reflections.



The collaborations in Art EQUAL are based upon the principles of action learning as a joint method. The method ensures equal collaboration and involvement of different professionals' experiences together with the children. Action learning creates a room for wondering and a joint focus on the challenges of the learning environment. This is different from, for example the traditional artist in residence programmes, where the artist visits a kindergarten with a suitcase full of concrete ideas and creative methods.

The artist provides an inspiring workshop with the children and the pedagogues step back and become observants. When the workshop is finished the artist puts everything back in the suitcase and leave the kindergarten, and although the pedagogues have new inspiration and ideas to creative activities, it might not have an influence on their pedagogical practice as such. The aim of working with action learning is to make sure the suitcase stays in the kindergarten, and the pedagogues have had joint reflections with the artist/culture worker about how the activity had an impact on the children and the learning environment.



*"A non-formal attitude is very important in art education. It is one of the key components when involving children in creative processes and preserving a free and playful way of making art... It is important that the children experience and understand that art is free from strict rules, and they can play with different ideas and follow spontaneous motives in the process. Adults can promote this process by their supportive silence."*

Artist involved in the Art EQUAL project, Latvia 2018

In the end it becomes a joint examination of how we get better at following the children's motives and actions, and in this way supporting their earliest stages of development.

# EXAMPLE OF AN ACTION LEARNING PROCESS IN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

## ASK QUESTIONS

The underlying principle of action learning is to allow paradigms shift and create an atmosphere where “because that’s the way we have always done it” becomes an unacceptable answer.

The action learning method begins with arousing curiosity, asking questions and addressing specific challenges, problems or issues that are relevant for your daily practice. Depending on the issue you wish to explore, you might want to change a concrete situation completely, or simply find out how to deal with it in new ways.

**A specific question could be:**

“How can we get better at supporting the children with language difficulties at our morning assemblies?”

## PLAN AND IMPLEMENT ACTIONS

Based upon the defined question, you plan a set of actions where you together with your colleagues and/or other relevant professionals agree on how to address and experiment with a specific situation, what you should be looking for, how you can support the children, etc. You plan concrete actions which can promote new perspectives on a given situation.

## DOCUMENT AND RECORD OBSERVATIONS

During the actions you find specific focus points that are relevant to observe. This could be the children’s level of participation, motivation, distributions of roles or how the staff support or do not support the children. These observations can be assisted by documentation such as photos, videos, logbook or interviews.

## AGREE ON NEXT STEPS AND ASK NEW QUESTIONS

After the reflections it is relevant to ask yourself if your new experiences can be developed further. Maybe you want to try out different experiments in the same situation or look at how a specific situation can be used in other situations in your pedagogical practice.

In this way, working with action learning as a method becomes an ongoing developing process, where we learn from concrete experiences in practice and become aware of how we can change specific situations by continuously asking questions and reflecting on what we do.

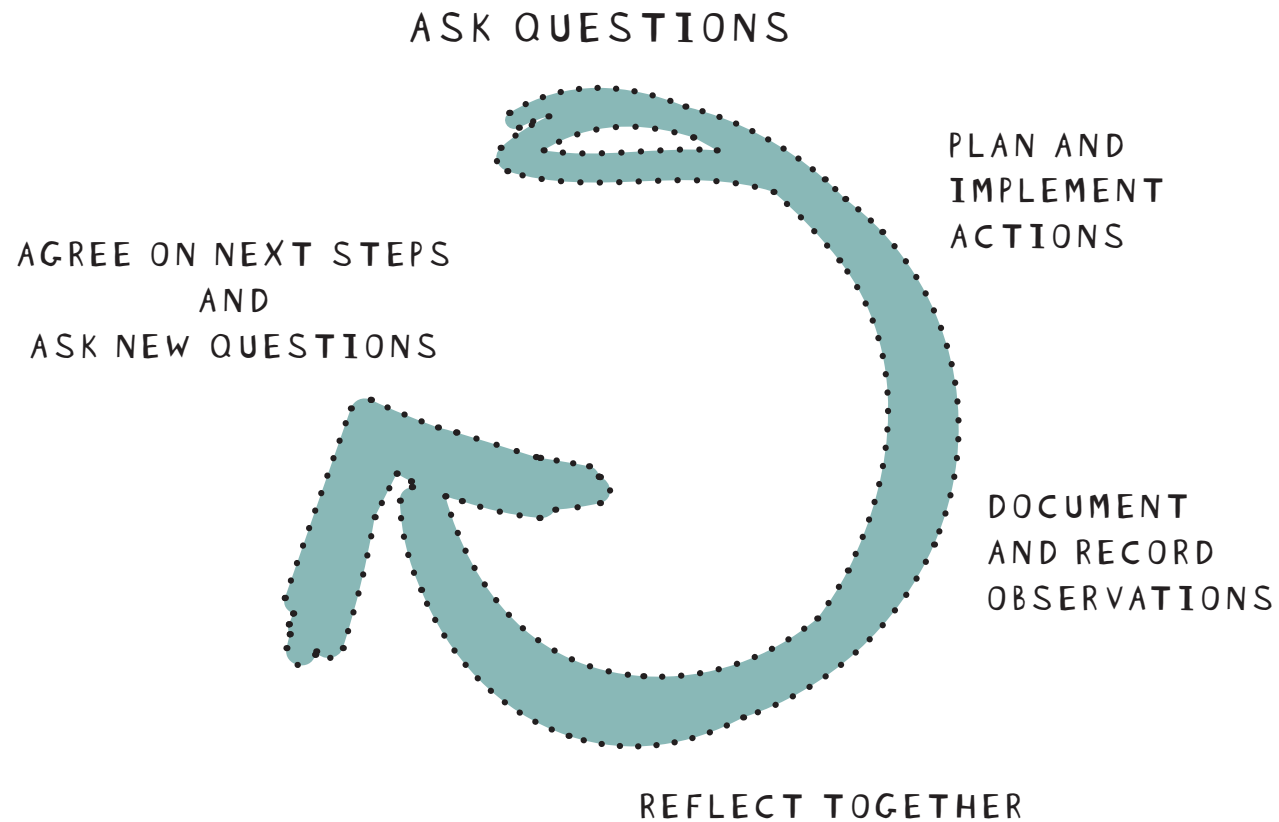
## REFLECT TOGETHER

The fundamental aim of action learning processes is to reflect on your own practice together with the other professionals involved in the process. In the reflections you share your observations and experiences from the action in relation to your initial defined problem.

You reflect on how or if the action has provided a new understanding of the problem. The aim is to become aware of and learn from your own knowledge and experiences, as well as develop possibilities for new actions in your daily practice.

**An example of a reflection could be:** “When we start the morning assembly with singing the ‘thula baba’ song with the children’s own sounds and movements, we experience a new sense of community in the room. The children with language difficulties seem to be more secure and willing to participate than normal.”

# ACTION LEARNING PROCESS IN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE



# ART EQUAL PROCESS GUIDE

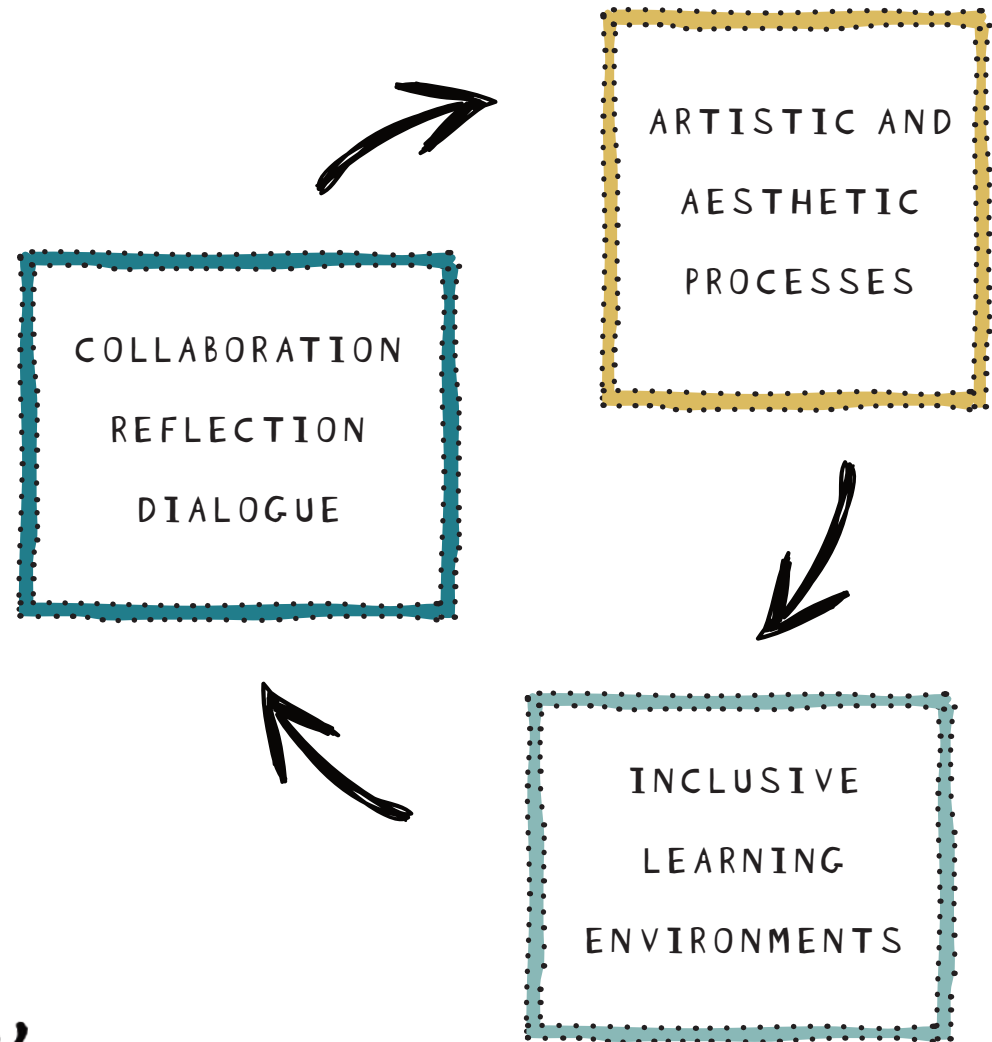
## HOW DO WE ENSURE THE BEST OUTCOME OF OUR COLLABORATION?

The Art EQUAL process guide is a supporting tool for early childhood services (e.g. kindergartens and primary schools) on how to set up, organise, reflect on, learn from and document collaborative processes with art and culture professionals. It is built upon practical experiences from collaborations with professional artists/culture workers in the everyday pedagogical work with children.

Use the Art EQUAL online platform as a supporting tool throughout your collaboration:

On the Art EQUAL platform, you can upload new collaborations, manage work plans and content, documenting your reflections, photos, videos and recordings and writing narratives – a helpful tool to keep track of your experiences and the collaboration’s impact on your pedagogical practice.

[www.artequal.eu](http://www.artequal.eu)



# CORE VALUES

Before the collaborative activities start, it is a good idea to agree on a common set of values, so everyone involved has a shared mindset. These are the main elements of Art EQUAL.

## INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Look at the inclusive learning environment as a whole - rather than focusing on challenges and perceived problems of individual children.

## COLLABORATION, REFLECTION AND DIALOGUE

The art and culture professionals are equal partners with the pedagogical staff in the activities. All should be involved in planning and implementing the process.

The core of collaboration is children meeting art and culture in their everyday life

## EQUAL PARTICIPATION

See everyone involved as equal participants in the processes - children and adults. Provide a playful environment that supports the participants' interaction with each other and their motivation to experiment with artistic forms, materials and explore their own presence.

## FOCUS ON PROCESS

Identify and specify processes that will develop long-term aesthetic experiences for children and adults rather than concrete products or momentary experiences.



## GETTING STARTED

You are now ready to start planning the structure and content of the collaborative activities. On the following pages you will find a set of guidelines that can help you to ensure everyone involved keeps an eye on the ball and stay focused on the aims of the project.

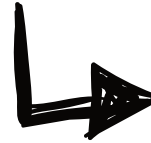
# STEP 1 ASK QUESTIONS

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Art EQUAL is about looking at how collaborations with art and culture professionals can challenge and develop the mindset and practice of pedagogical staff in childcare services. We want to examine how artistic and cultural activities can influence the learning environment and have a positive impact on the children's participation in the process, ways of expression and sense of community. All organisations work in different ways, so it is important that you define the specific problem or challenge that is relevant for your pedagogical practice.



- Look at your own everyday practice and define concrete challenges or situations you wish to develop:
- What would you like to explore in your pedagogical practice?
- Do you have any specific challenges you wish to work or experiment with?
- Is there anything in your daily practice you would like to change or develop further?



Within context of your own practice, define the problem or challenge you wish to explore.



# QUESTIONS





## STEP 2 PLANNING

First step is to make sure both staff and artist/culture worker are involved from the beginning. A good idea is to have a kick-off reflection where you agree on the core values of the collaboration, aims and objectives and working methods.

In the planning phase and throughout the process it is important to inform the whole organisation of the coming activities, so all staff members feel engaged and supportive throughout the project.

(Be aware that your plans can change throughout the collaborative processes depending on the specific challenges or issues you want to explore)



## Break down the tasks and clarify roles

### Who is responsible for?

- Implementation
- Documentation
- Logistics
- Staff resources

### Who should be involved and when?

- Staff members
- Child groups
- Artist
- Parents

### Agree on content:

- Materials
- Methods
- Pedagogical approaches
- Physical environment

### Agree on ethical values

- Mutual respect
- Forms of dialogue
- Personal borders
- Motivation
- Confidentiality

### Agree on time frame:

- How many workshops?
- How long will they last for?
- Include time for short reflections after each action

### Set dates for mid-term and final reflections

## STEP 3 IMPLEMENT ACTIONS AND RECORD YOUR OBSERVATIONS

---

When the collaboration has started, it is important that the different professions are brought into play: the art/culture professional and the early years professional. From the artist/culture worker's perspective, it is essential that the activity invites the pedagogical staff to participate in and contribute to the artistic/cultural processes. The other way around, the staff must understand that they have an important role to play when the action is on. They need to be active participants in the action and contribute with their pedagogical approaches and special knowledge of the selected group of children. By doing so, both professionals can observe and learn from each other's approaches and perspectives on the children's participation, interaction, motives and actions.

The observations of what happens in the room and how the different professions are interacting and influencing the learning environment play a fundamental role for your joint reflections.



## RELEVANT FOCUS POINTS

Focus on the aesthetic participation of everyone in the room:  
artist /culture worker, staff, children

Observe, support and guide the children's well-being, level of participation and interaction with each other

Explore your own motivation to participate in the action with an experimental and playful approach

Observe if the action supports the inclusive learning environment and how it influences children in vulnerable positions

## STEP 4 TIME FOR REFLECTIONS

Reflecting on your observations and experiences is fundamental for what you learn from the actions and what you can bring further into your pedagogical practice.

It is recommendable to have joint short reflections after each action, as well as longer reflections such as mid-term and final reflections where you have more time to evaluate on the collaborative processes and make decision on next steps.

Together you will have the opportunity to reflect on your observations and exchange views on how you experience the children in a given situation.

Ask yourself questions that relate to the problem, challenge or issue you wished to explore, and if it has aroused new problems or issues that is relevant to address.



### Art EQUAL Platform

On the Art EQUAL online platform, you can use the reflection tool "Let's Collaborate" to document and collect your joint reflections. Here you will be able to keep track of your observations, experiences and reflections in relation to your initial defined problems, challenges or issues.



### Questions for reflection



- How did it go today?
- Did it go as expected or did something unexpected happen?
- Are we doing what we think we are doing?
- Is what we want to happen happening?
- What do we want to focus on next, and is there anything we can do differently?
- What can we bring further into our pedagogical practice?



GO TO THE TOOL HERE

<http://artequal.eu/en/lets-collaborate>

## REFLECTION MODELS

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On the following pages, you will find a set of models that can be used as inspiration for your reflections and as a help to stay focused on your aims with the collaboration.

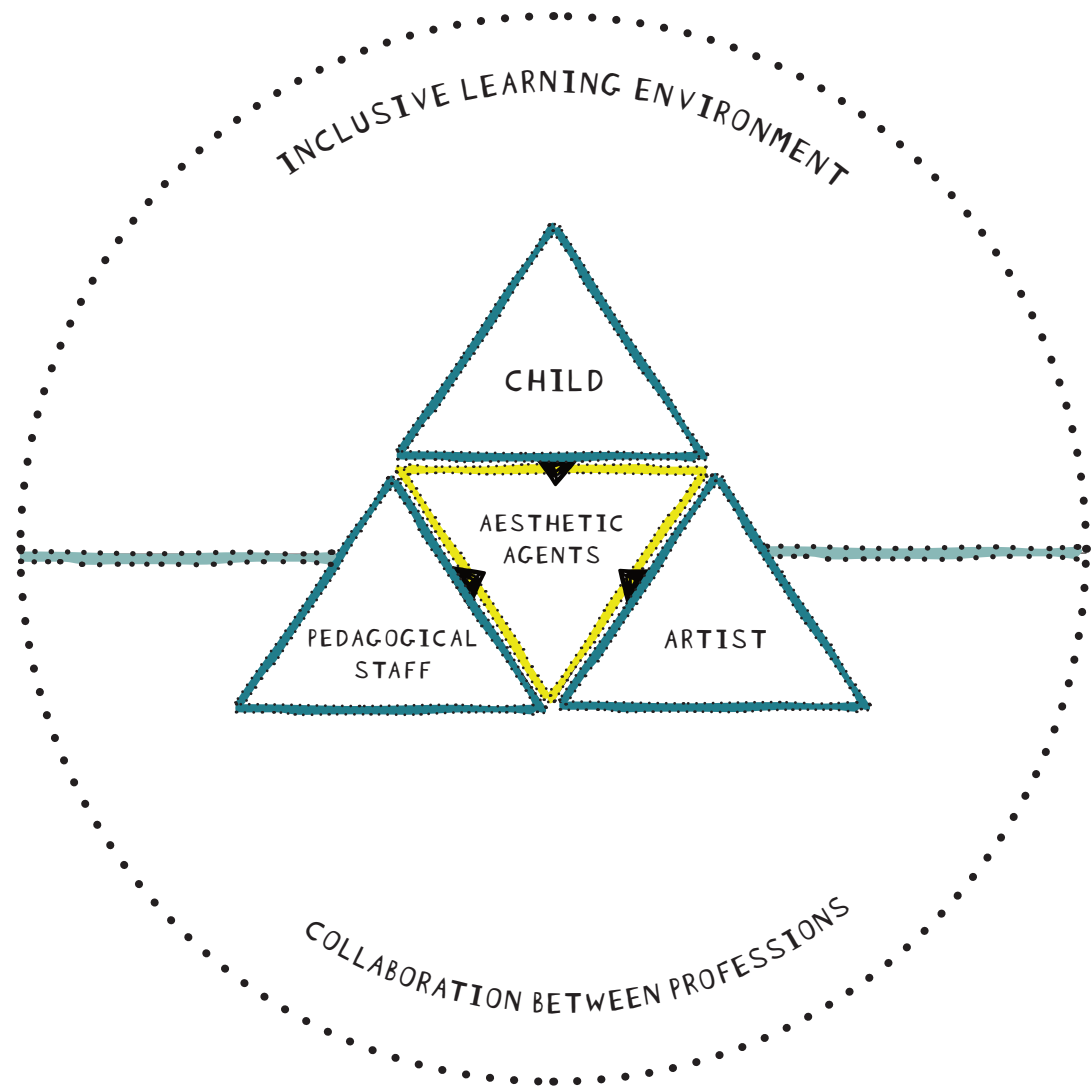


# REFLECTION CIRCLE

The model demonstrates the different positions in the artistic/cultural processes: child, pedagogical staff and artist/culture worker. Everyone in the room is regarded as a part of the action and thus in this model as aesthetic agents.\*

The focal point of Art EQUAL is to examine how the inclusive learning environment can be influenced and supported by the collaboration. These are the model's two main perspectives.

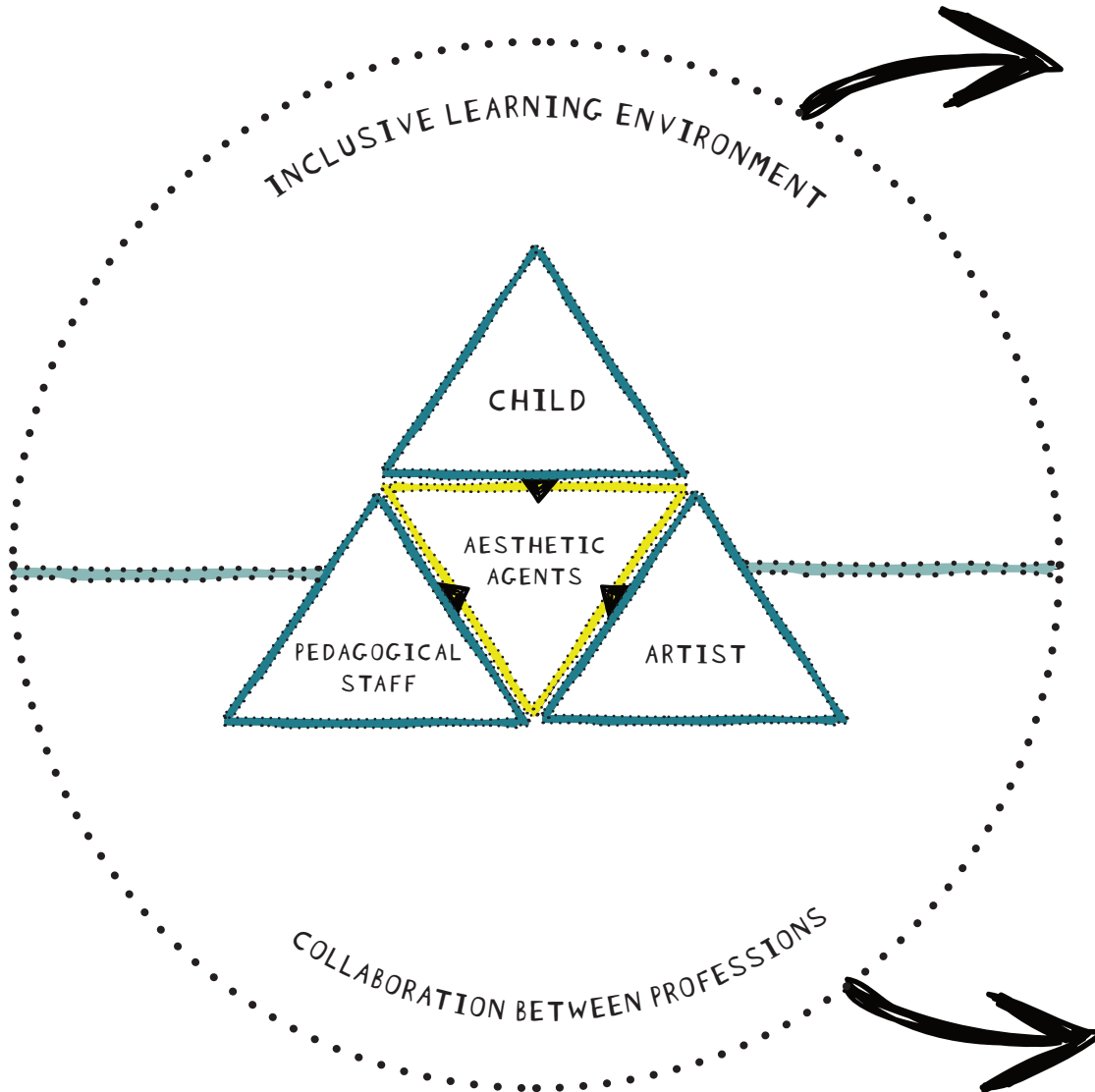
See examples of other relevant perspectives and themes for reflections on the following page.



\* "Aesthetic participants" is a concept formulated by Henriette Blomgren, ph.d. and lecturer at VIA University College and University of Southern Denmark, DK. Her ph.d. examines artist's, pedagogue's (pre-school teachers), and children's co-creative activities concerning aesthetic processes in Danish kindergartens.

# REFLECTION THEMES

Here is a set of themes as inspiration for your joint reflections.



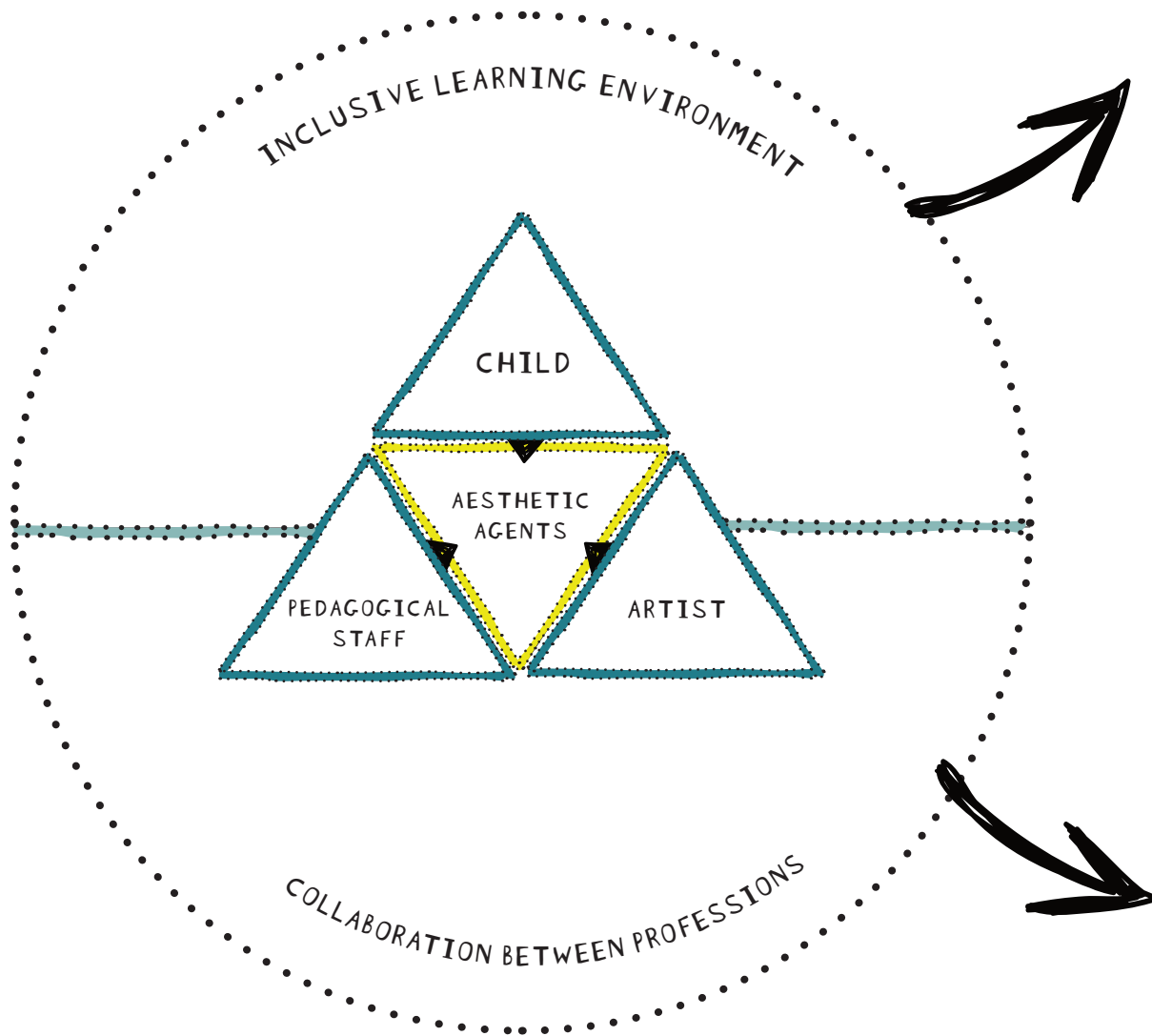
## THE INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- The children's motivation, participation and co-ownership
- The role of play
- Democratic processes
- Interaction and distribution of roles between the children
- Interaction between children and adults
- New competences

## COLLABORATION BETWEEN PROFESSIONS

- The collaboration's impact on pedagogical work with inclusion
- Exchange of competences:  
What can we learn from each other?
- Different experiences of the learning environment and the children's level of participation
- Courage to participate and take initiatives  
(from the pedagogical staff's perspective)
- Distribution of roles between the adults
- The adults as role models for the children

# MAKE YOUR OWN CIRCLE



Define the themes that are relevant for you to focus on in your reflections

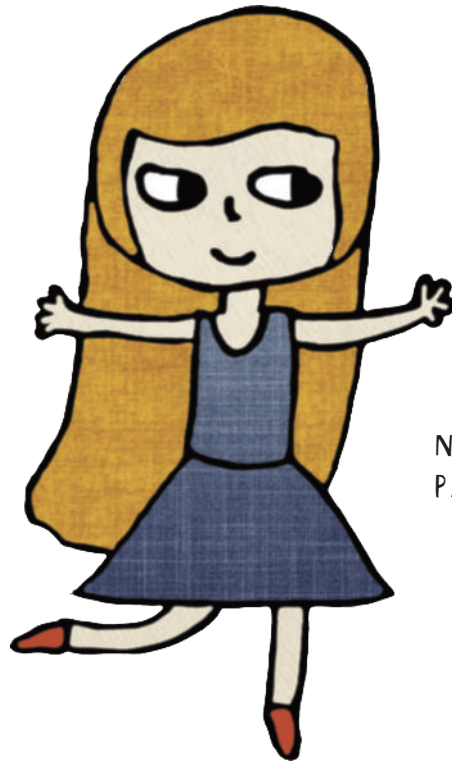
Define the themes that are relevant for you to focus on in your reflections

# LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

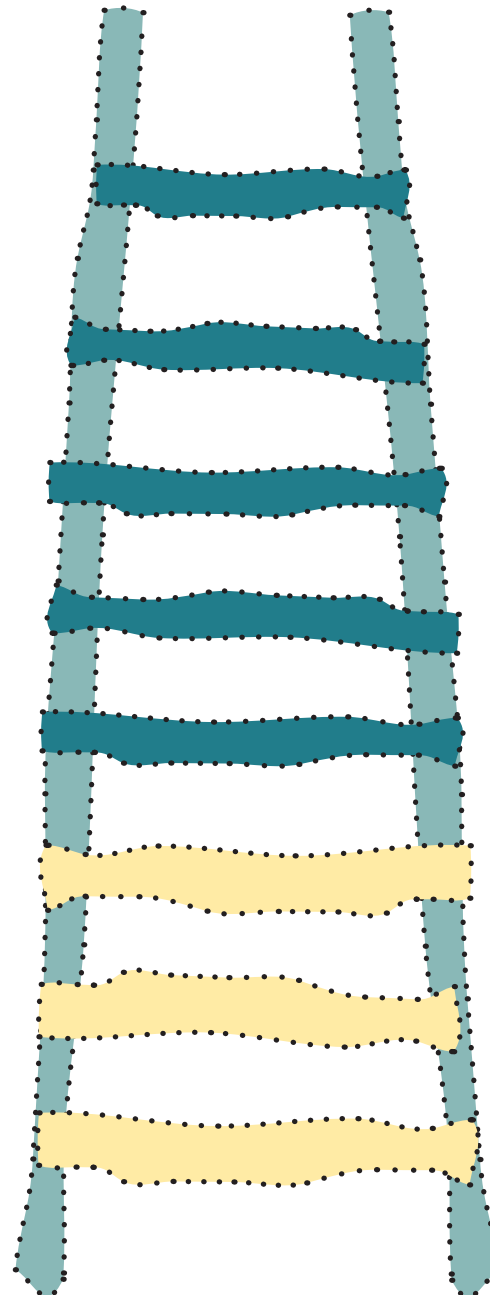
Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation is a useful tool to reflect on how you will involve the children in the activities. It is relevant to ask yourself throughout the activities where on the ladder you are working.

- Are we on the steps we thought we would be, or have we changed steps during the activity?
- Do we wish to move further down our up next time?

DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION



NON-PARTICIPATION



Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults

Child-initiated and directed

Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children

Consulted and informed

Assigned but informed

Tokenism

Decoration

Manipulation

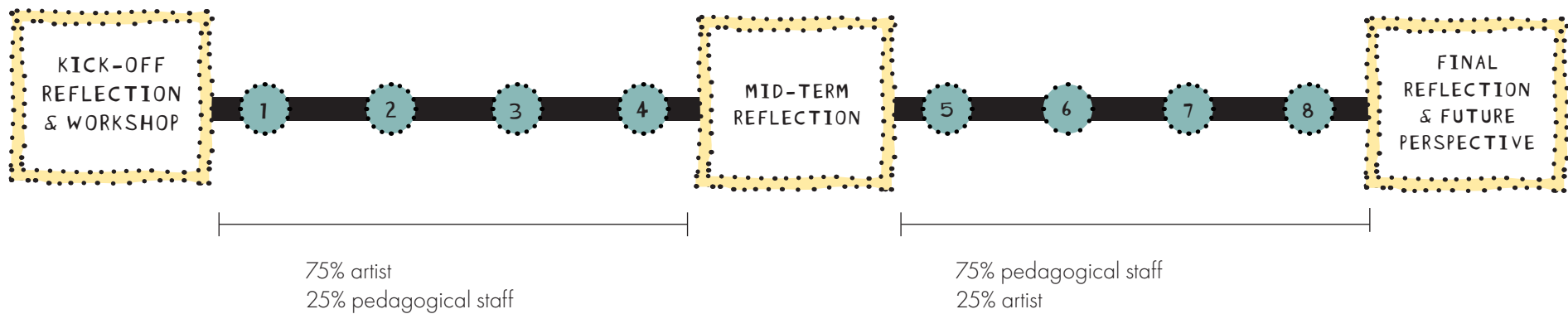


## EXCHANGING ROLES

This model can be used as a mnemonic rule that supports the collaboration's influence on the pedagogical practice after the collaboration has ended. To ensure that the pedagogical staff get new competences to work with artistic/cultural processes in their practice, the artist is encouraged to step back and let the staff be "in charge" of the concrete activity. The artist then becomes more of a supporting guide, while the pedagogical staff can experiment with different techniques and methods, that promote the children's participation in the activity.



An example of an eight week programme. The time of confrontation with the children is distributed between the artist/culture worker and the pedagogical staff.



# WRITING NARRATIVES

## FRAMEWORK TO WORKING WITH NARRATIVES

Working with narratives as documentation for pedagogical evaluation can be an effective way to reflect on your own practice. Here is a suggested framework for narratives with a focus on how artistic and cultural activities influence the learning environment.

## FRAME

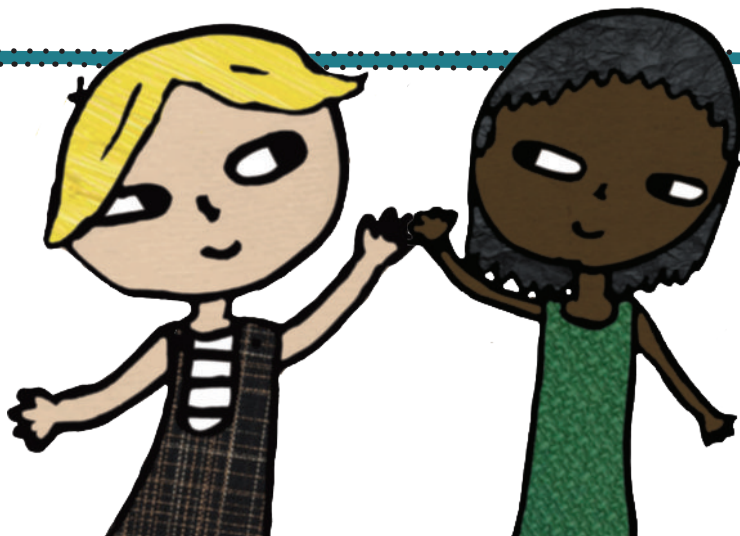
- The narrative is 0,5-2 pages
- The narrative is initiated with reflections on why this particular story is chosen.
- The narrative should be written as soon as possible after the action.

## CONNECTED TO ART EQUAL

- The narrative has a focus on inclusive learning environments through collaborations between professionals and action learning as a common reflection tool.
- The narrative is experienced as an important example of working with the inclusion of children at risk of exclusion
- The narrative can be an example of something successful, interesting or challenging.

## DEVELOPMENT OF EVERY DAY PRACTICE

- The narrative is based on an everyday practice working with children
- The narrative takes its starting point in the children and their experience of the activity
- The narrative features an element of development related to a child, a group of children, a practice, a way of working or a pedagogical view. That means that the narrative can jump in time and place and describe the storyteller's subjective experience of a situation. This could for example be how a concrete situation in the everyday has been affected by the collaboration of a professional artist's way of approaching the children.



# A NARRATIVE CULTURE OF EVALUATION

Stine Del Pin Hamilton, lecturer at VIA University College, DK

## Values in Art EQUAL

Pedagogical work with evaluation always relates to certain values. Values in Art EQUAL relates to the purpose of the project: *Creating inclusive environments in early childhood education and care (ECEC) for young children through artistic and cultural activities.*

*How do we find out if Art EQUAL contributes to this purpose?*

*How do we ensure that the good practice developed in the project will inspire others in the future?*

Through dialogues with experienced pedagogical staff about quality and through interpreting strong pedagogical narratives about values in good professional work with inclusion, art and culture a number of values have appeared in the project that can help us answering these questions.

## Evaluation and narratives

The parameters of quality and values found in the Art EQUAL project build upon a systematical evaluation work with pedagogical narratives. The process includes qualitative evaluation methods involving narratives and group interviews. Small stories created as narratives by the staff is central in this method and it builds on a hermeneutic tradition.\* Project members from Art EQUAL in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Estonia, and Denmark were involved in the evaluation process in spring and summer 2018 and the process was facilitated by VIA University College, Denmark.

A narrative culture of evaluation is relevant in Art EQUAL because it frames a complex practice in everyday life in institutions with professionals working with inclusion, art and children. The method is relevant because it is sensitive to local differences across countries. The project-members created local narratives based on concrete stories that had a local importance. At the same time, it is possible for an extern evaluator to interpret common and cross-cultural values based on systematical work with narratives.

Working with narratives invites furthermore to ongoing dialogues and investigation of pedagogical processes in the future. Especially if the narratives can become an active part of the ArtEQUAL platform. It can be possible to share and discuss narratives as a part of an active culture of evaluation. The staff is collecting stories from everyday life and write them down as narratives. The narratives are reflected in the frame of the values of the project and is used as inspiration for others.

## Values found in Art EQUAL are:

- Children get the opportunity to express themselves in many different ways.
- Children experience central social positions during the activities.
- The activities are democratic in form.
- The artist and staff understand and are sensitive towards the children's perspectives.
- The artist contributes with knowledge about different materials, expressions, crafts, and aesthetical processes in experimental processes with staff and children, which is motivating for the children.
- The collaboration between artist and staff is based on the ongoing development and mutual reflections.
- The leaders and colleagues support and prioritise space for the process.
- Documentation and materials from the children's work are used as an opportunity to create ongoing dialogues between children and adults in the institution and at home.
- There is a focus on how to continue the work in everyday life during the artist's withdrawal.



\* Togsverd, Rothuizen, Jørgensen, Weise (2017): Viden I spil I daginstitutioner, Danske Professionshøjskoler. [https://www.ucviden.dk/portal/files/42373935/Rapport\\_Viden\\_i\\_spil\\_i\\_daginstitutioner.pdf](https://www.ucviden.dk/portal/files/42373935/Rapport_Viden_i_spil_i_daginstitutioner.pdf)

# DOCUMENTATION AND DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION

## as a base for reflection in the Art EQUAL process

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By David Powell, Elderberry AB

“What colour jacket was the bank robber wearing?” the police officer asks the eyewitness. “He was wearing a blue jacket” the eyewitness replies. In reality the thief turned out to be a woman, who wasn’t wearing a jacket at all. Two processes had come into play. A process of gender stereotyping and a process of suggestion. Scientist can show that prompting an eyewitness to remember more can generate details that are outright false, but that feel just as correct to the witness as actual memories. This shows how unreliable, even short-term human memory is and how open it is for preconceptions, suggestion and change.

During the Art EQUAL project, the team have attempted to expand on the Action Learning process by facilitating methods for pedagogues, artists and cultural workers to document through digital means their observations, either during or directly after an action with children. We also gave access to the collected photo, video, collected narrative and short written reflections on the action to the managers so that they could gain an overview. The aim was to promote a collective “group reflection” on the process which could lead to improvements in pedagogical practice for children.

What methods did we use?

Art EQUAL developed an online educational resource [www.artequal.eu](http://artequal.eu) which provides tools, publications and training material to support professionals wanting to follow the methodology. We provided and tested a documentation tool named “Let’s Collaborate”:

<http://artequal.eu/en/lets-collaborate>

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‘Let’s collaborate’ is an online tool where early years professionals and art and cultural professionals can document their reflections and experiences from action learning projects with children. Pedagogues or managers can register and gain access to the tool, where they can upload pictures, videos and write short narratives and comments on the action. This is of course a private group for each action, controlled by the manager and no information is available to others outside the group.

It is probably true to say that this tool was the least successful product of the project, however the one that shows the most potential. Without a sound and consequent documentation upon which reflection can be carried out collectively we cannot truly follow the process with any certainty.

We found that although all our pedagogues, managers and artists/cultural workers understood the absolute importance and need of informed documentation as the basis of reflection, they did not have the training or the time to carry it out. This would point to a failure in pedagogical training and a real need to improve these skills. Nowadays access to a smart phone or tablet is almost universal. Almost everyone can take a digital photo and or video. Hundreds of simple effective storytelling and documentation tools and apps are available. Adobe Spark Video is one of my favourites:

<https://spark.adobe.com/about> - being intuitive, simple and fun!

Although digital documentation has taken over our lives as we collect selfies of every aspect of our lives to show on social media, it has not yet been accepted or adapted into a methodology for pedagogical documentation. Here Art EQUAL is leading the way with a well thought out digital documentation tool. We are aware that the documentation tool needs introducing to teacher training and managers need training in the importance of digital documentation and reflection for the development of their organisations.

*“Where one adult was part of the situation with the children, the other could look at it from outside and document what happened. We have filmed parts of the sessions as well as taking photos. We have benefited from watching recorded material to see individual children’s behaviour and responses. In this way we have been able to reflect jointly while observing.”*

SFO teacher involved in the Art EQUAL project, Bergen, Norway

PRACTICAL  
EXAMPLES



FROM THE  
ART EQUAL  
PROJECT



## THE CULTURAL CAROUSEL

Ongoing collaboration between SFO (after school services in Bergen) and Bergen Cultural School

Through the Cultural Carousel with Bergen Cultural School our SFO (after-school) has collaborated with artists within the fields of music, theatre, visual arts and dance for several project periods, each of seven to nine weeks. The following is a brief summary of our collective experiences. During every project period there have been two artists involved, representing two different art forms. The leader of the SFO and one other staff member have participated through each project period.

Time for daily reflections is fundamental to the success of the collaboration. A typical day with the artists contains of two sessions with the children (one hour each) and a thirty minutes reflection between the SFO employees and the artists. In addition, we have a midway evaluation and a final evaluation (two to three hours each). We write an evaluation report which is shared with other after school services and artists participating in the Cultural Carousel.

One of the pedagogues says that "the reflections were important because we put into words what had gone well and what we could continue with, what we had to do differently next time and which way the artistic work would lead us after input from the children. This we would continue to build on in the next session."

The Cultural Carousel and action learning is a good tool for working with SFO's own framework plan in many areas. Our local framework plan describes that the children should be able to develop their social and creative skills, that their participation should be strengthened and that they should be able to use a variation of materials and equipment. We have focused on the inclusion of children who tend to be excluded in different settings and on encouraging everyone to actively take part in the process. We searched for methods and artistic processes that would stimulate a positive social development for the group and the **individual**.

Example of workshop: 9 weeks  
1 day a week – 30 children involved

Where one adult was part of the situation with the children, the other could look at it from outside and document what happened. We have filmed parts of the sessions as well as taken photos. We have benefited from watching recorded material to see individual children's behaviour and responses. In this way we have been able to reflect jointly while observing.

Participating SFO staff have seen that music, drawing and art can be used for motivation. They have seen that students gained a new experience of themselves as a person: "Here I am, and I can do this". The staff report that they have experienced that one can merge several disciplines together and that they dare to improvise within the artistic areas to a much greater extent than before. It is not as frightening to let the students go into «chaotic» creative processes if the frames are clear and the students themselves have ownership of the process. The staff thus go more into "flow" with the students' activities. One of the staff members says that the collaboration "has increased my expertise and pleasure with art and music".

The work with the Cultural Carousel has resulted in positive ripple effects within SFO. Staff have become a lot more confident after several collaboration periods with artists in various art subjects, and they have shared their experiences with their colleagues in the SFO. Children who for different reasons are excluded in many contexts, take part and express themselves more clearly. The Cultural Carousel is a great arena for introvert children to make themselves visible and the activities have lifted these children. The active and more distracted pupils have been offered an arena that makes them calm down, engage and concentrate. Pupils who struggle in school flourish and one child managed to put into words emotions he had never before been able to express.

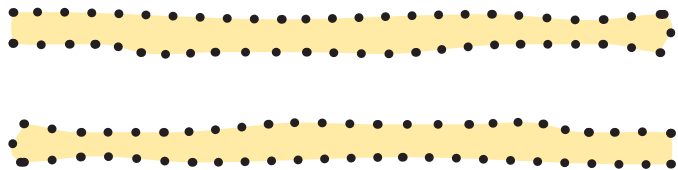
## IMAGINARY SEA CREATURES

A collaboration project between Klettaskóli Primary School and Reykjavik School of Visual Arts. Klettaskóli is a school for children with different abilities

The class started with an introduction game, every person wrapped a string of yarn around a finger while they told about themselves, the string could be short or long and rolled around fast or slow depending on how much a person wants to talk. Followed by some yoga and mindfulness practices. Everyone sat in a circle on yoga mats and sang a mantra using a singing bowl, which the students called the magic bowl. The same routine was used every day.

The art teachers then explained the project and the process. The task was making three-dimensional "sea creatures", they looked at books and pictures on sea creatures and explained the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects.

They started working with wet sand in large plastic boxes. Some students were in a group two and two together with one large box and some, that needed more support, were alone with a smaller box. Then they started to shape their sea creature into the sand with their hands, decorate them with stones, marbles, shells and feathers. The art teachers then mixed the plaster. The children could choose if they watches and participated in mixing the cast or took a little break and did some drawings, depending on their patience.



### ICELAND

Example of workshop: 9 weeks  
1 day a week – 30 children involved

All of the students did a good job. A big part of it was that they had so many teachers for support. One student had trouble touching the sand with bare hands so he got a tool to mix it with instead. It would have been a good idea to have gloves for those who don't like to touch the sand. When they started to mix the plaster, everyone got excited and watched but some didn't have the patience and went to the drawing table. Two students watched with excitement all the time and helped to mix the plaster.

The plaster was then poured into the molds and the students watched and felt with their hands as the plaster got warm.. While it was hardening, there was a talk about how the sea creatures would come "alive" the next day with the magic wands they were going to create.

# IMAGINARY SEA CREATURES

(continued from previous page)

The day ended with relaxation and breathing exercises and everyone was happy with their work.

The next day began the same way as the day before, with a yoga session. There was a talk about fantasy and imagination. The students made magic wands out of branches and yarn to activate their imagination. After that they checked the sea creatures to see if they had come alive.

That was an incredibly exciting and magical moment. All the students had tools such as archaeologists, a large brush and paper to lay the sea creature on. Then they started cleaning the sand with brushes. There was still some moisture in the plaster and therefore the students had to be careful, so again it was good to have so many teachers in support. Some of the decoration had loosened so it was glued back with a glue gun when the plaster was fully dried. The sea creatures were then collected on one large table for everyone to explore and take pictures. That was fun!

In the reflection after the last day the teachers confirmed that the project was exciting and suited the group well.

Both artists and teachers found regular reflection extremely important in the process, and being open to make changes and adjustment suitable for the students.

It was a pleasure to see them all take part in the relaxation and yoga exercises and the singing bowl worked extremely well to get a cozy, calm atmosphere.

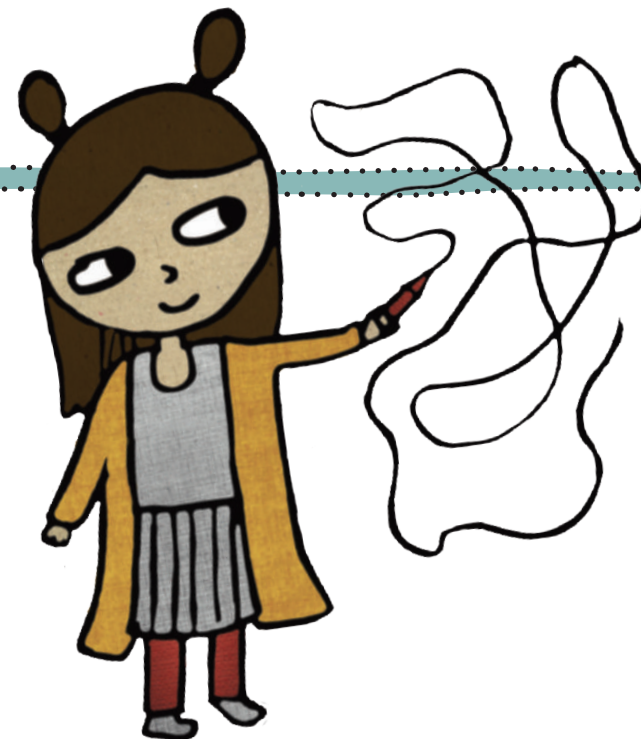
## MATERIALS

**FOR SEA CREATURES:** Black sand, plaster, water, containers and mixing utensils, seashells, feathers, stones, marbles, soft glass, brushes and tree branches,

**FOR INTRODUCTION GAME:** Yarn

**EXTRA PROJECT IF NEEDED:** Paper and colors  
For magic wands: Branches, yarn, pipe cleaners, scissors.

**OTHER:** Books about monsters and sea creatures, candle, yoga singing bowl, yoga mats, camera.





# DUBULTI ART STATION

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## Cooperation between Art School Tris Krasas and the Art gallery Dubulti Art Station

The example shows model of successful partnership between curator, artist, art educators and children. The special value of the concept is including children as co-creators in every stage of preparing an event.

The place the of art exhibition is Dubulti Art Station. This is the only modern art space in Europe that is located in a functioning railway station. The Dubulti Art Station is an excellent example of how to combine transport, cultural and public administration resources to make a unique art platform accessible to everyone. In 2015 the station was fully renovated, which also made it possible to create a professionally-managed art gallery here.

The Curator has no experience of pedagogical work, but educational events for public nova-days is an essentially important tool for inviting people, especially families. People are waiting for different types of events — creative workshops for kids and adults, guided tours, discussions with artists.

One man show “Blamescapes and Superflattening” by artist Mikelis Fisers took place in art space Dubulti in the end of 2018. Curator of the exhibition art historian Inga Steimane invited Art Education Centre TRIS KRASAS to develop an idea and organise workshops for children in exhibition, which does not look “childish” at all.

Starting point was visiting the exhibition and listening to artist’s explanations. The image systems and stories of artworks are based on complicated fiction about extraterrestrial intelligence, created by Fisers. The observer from a distance can quite easily spot the extravaganza in Mikelis Fisers newest work. There are large paintings, new esoteric characters, and storylines, immersive and psychologically absorbing environments behind the figurative title “Blamescapes and Superflattening”.

The next step was using reproductions of Fiser’s artworks in art classes for TRIS KRASAS students. Children became familiar with the characters and their roles in whole concept. Children were asked to draw chosen images in different perspectives like in animation. We got a huge collection of images in various performances. Later art educators selected the drawings and chose the most inspiring of them. Approximately 12 different creatures made by children were chosen as patterns for colouring, continuing, interpreting etc by participants of exhibition workshop. After that we planned and calculated resources for public event. The Curator got the information about concept and expenses of the workshop. Until that stage of preparation broad communication between all four groups — artist, curator, art educators and group of children — was the most important tool for getting a good result.

Then the open workshop in the Dubulti Art Station took place. There were two groups of children — with previous knowledge and experience while preparing images and those, and those who met Fisher’s art for first time. Every participant chose copy with some images (drawn by other child) and created his or her own interpretation. Some of kids as starting point preferred just white sheet of paper.

As the additional task for everybody was to find meaningful questions to the artist. When drawing session was completed, curator introduced attendants with the author of exhibition Mikelis Fisers. He told some stories about his artworks and answered to children’s questions. He also gave comments to children interpretations and discussed with young authors. Especially during those conversations we saw, that children with previous experiences had extra tools for meaningful discussion, based on their own knowledge and experience.

The role of art educator is to communicate between curator, artist and children groups with different backgrounds and levels of interest. After the workshop was time for oral reflection between the curator and the art pedagogues. The Curator received the evidence, that the art educator’s work is important part of successful educational event in the exhibition. The participation of the students from Art Educational Centre TRIS KRASAS into all preparation stages and also in the workshop helped to prepare an inclusive environment for everybody, who came to the workshop. Collaboration is very important toll who helps to every child to meet art and culture.

# MY BODY - ART AND MUSIC

## Skärpeskolan, Örnsköldsvik

Örnsköldsvik Cultural School from Sweden chose to collaborate with Skärpeskolan's primary school which caters for children aged 6 -11 with different functional disabilities and special educational needs. The goal was to meet the individual special needs based on the conditions and to provide opportunities for developing creativity and musicality

One group consists of 13 children. They were divided into two smaller groups due to small size of the premises and the large variation in terms of conditions and degree of functional disability. There are children who speak and sing and children who use other ways of communicating, children who run and dance, children who sit in wheelchairs, children who cut and paste, children who cannot grasp objects, children who are interested in colour and form, children interested in exploring through words and speaking. In this example group with children have relatively good possibilities to be creative and explore music. Another group consists of 8 children.

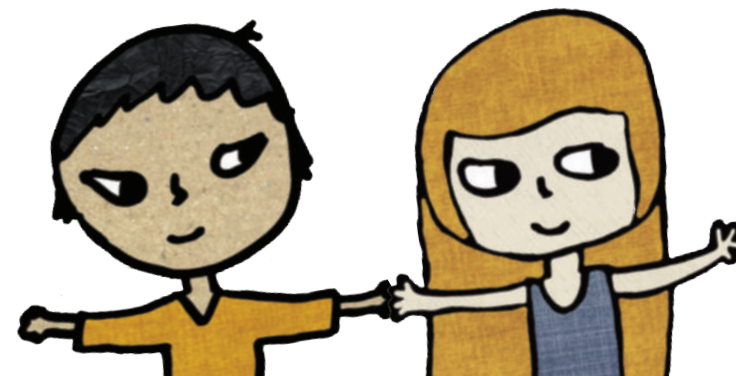
**Together with the school's educators, we have chosen the theme: "The Body", a theme that they work with in everyday life. Question: if and in what way we can help the children to participate and gain knowledge within the theme through song and images?**

The workshop starts with the song collection and then moves to another room for collecting pictures. Why did we move the group? One of the rooms is best for music-making, the other for creating images. In addition, the possibilities increased for preparation and finishing work in the various premises. The team including the educators discussed the transfer before the project started. When we decided on the two smaller premises and the relocation, the concern was that it would be too great a change for some children to manage. The school's educators knew from previous experience that one of the children did not want to be in one of these rooms.

6 weeks – 1 day a week  
6 children involved

At the beginning of the project the boy in the example had a great need to feel safe in the room and preferred to be in his home classroom instead. When playing music with the song teacher, he pulled away and sat with the assistant at the back of the gym instead of with the other children. We have however seen a great change in his behavior in this regard. From the start of the project, the boy has developed and gained more confidence in the different environments and has not had any difficulties with the transfer or not being in his usual classroom. He has shown a great involvement in music making and image creation. At the song collection he is with the other children and participates in conversation, singing and movement. During the photo exercises he creates for a short while, unaffected by the new room.

One of the boys in the group who did not actively participate in music shows, now has a completely new behavior in the project. In the large sports hall, the children ended up far from the song teacher. In addition, the large piano became an obstacle to the contact between the song teacher and the children. In the small room it was easier to create contact. The boy made contact with the song teacher in a new way by sitting close to her. He liked the sound of the piano and sometimes he played it. Participation increased enormously. He was very active in the song collections and the picture exercises and showed great creativity. Both boys seem to have been positively affected by the size of the room. The educators and the artists ended up close to the children and the opportunity to create a personal contact through the creative activities was a reason for increased participation.



# THE LITTLE PRINCE

## Performing art and storytelling in Dalens Børnehuse (kindergarten), Viborg, DK, Spring 2018

One of the collaborations in connection with the Art EQUAL project found place in a kindergarten in Viborg, DK. The kindergarten is multicultural with more than 70% children with immigrant or migrant backgrounds. Before the collaboration started, the kindergarten staff expressed a wish to collaborate with a performing artist and specifically look at: "how performing art and storytelling tools can support the inclusive learning environment and help the children to feel they are heard and seen for who they are".

The collaboration was then set up between a performing artist from a local theatre and three pedagogues from the kindergarten. The artist came to the kindergarten for a period of 8 weeks (1 day a week) and worked together with the pedagogues and 24 children divided in two groups. At the kick-off meeting the artist and the pedagogues agreed on the overall focus of the collaboration and shared their expectations to work procedures and outcomes. They agreed to work with the story of The Little Prince as an overall theme and to explore how they through the artistic tools can "open the story" together with the children by following the children's impressions, motives, voices and interpretations. Emphasis was on the children's visual and sensuous impressions. For the pedagogical staff this was also an examination of how to bring new perspectives into their everyday storytelling situations, and how these can support the pedagogical work with inclusion.

### DENMARK

8 weeks – 1 day a week  
25 children involved

During the actions the pedagogues and the artist made observations with a focus on the two overall perspectives: How do we ensure the exchange of professional skills, knowledge and experiences? And how does our collaboration support the children's well-being, participation and motivation? After each action the adults met for short reflections where they shared each other's experiences and views on the action and made plans for the coming actions. The artist was especially aware of the importance of involving the pedagogues in the artistic activity and gave them specific tasks for the following actions based on their own reflections and ideas. This was a good way for the pedagogues to feel they had an ownership in the activity and to challenge their own motivation and courage to work with artistic tools in concrete pedagogical situations.

Overall, this collaboration had a positive and sustainable impact on the everyday practice in the kindergarten. The pedagogues' involvement in the actions had given them the opportunity to experiment with artistic tools in specific situations, and they saw a positive development in the child groups both at an emotional, social and linguistic level:

- The children became better at regulating themselves
- Some of the children's behavior developed from being reserved and withdrawing to being participating and open
- The children started to express themselves in new spontaneous and emotional ways



## Insight into the PhD Dissertation:

# AESTHETIC PROCESSES IN DAY CARE FACILITIES - A PROJECT INSPIRED BY ACTION RESEARCH WITH ARTISTS AND PEDAGOGUES IN COLLABORATION

Henriette Blomgren, PhD and lecturer, VIA University College, DK

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The PhD-dissertation connects to the development project *Cultural Children of Europe* (2015-2018). The project involved a range of municipalities, kindergartens, private daycare and schools in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Latvia. For one and a half year I researched and participated in some of the Danish kindergarten's collaborations with professional artists and in aesthetic processes facilitated by the adults. This formed the basis of an article-based PhD-dissertation, which I defended in April 2019 at the University of Southern Denmark, Institute of Cultural Sciences. The results of the dissertation are presented in four articles. The articles explore and analyze how action research and collaborations between pedagogues and artists contribute to children's aesthetic experiences, to the aesthetic reflective approach of the pedagogues and to theoretical conceptualisations based on the research presented.

The first article *Plastic Huts, Music, and Butterflies – Aesthetic Processes in Kindergarten* implies an analysis of children's and adult's positions, relations and interplay in aesthetic processes. Through field notes, interviews with children and adults and their drawings I created knowledge about how the pedagogues position themselves primarily between the artists and children. The children describe the pedagogues as good supporters and active participants whereas the artist is exiting and full of ideas. The pedagogues agree, and they also see the artist as initiator and motivator for the children and the adults. The artist sees his or her role primarily as the creative co-player or -opponent opening for new opportunities. In the aesthetic processes both children and adults contribute – they are aesthetic agents. In the article I analyze how the collaboration between the artist and the pedagogues is equal. Both the pedagogues and the artist appear professionals with their different competency and expertise, but at the same time they develop new competences in their interdisciplinarity. Furthermore, the article focuses on the children's aesthetical experiences which is developed in the sensitive interplay between children and adults, as well as between participants and materials.

In the second article *Play Pockets in the Kindergarten – Aesthetic Processes involving Children's and Adults' Agency* the focus is on an experimental aesthetic process with paper in one of the kindergartens involved. The pedagogues collaborated with a textile designer. The article presents and examines the concept of play pockets and how it can be understood and defined as aesthetic processes involving children and adults and possibilities to get aesthetic experiences in an institutional context. The strategy for the analysis is to focus on aesthetic processes in the collaboration between the kindergarten staff and the artists as cultural processes with and by the children as well as framed play pockets. By doing so, the article demonstrates how children's aesthetic experiences are developed through play and entering other worlds together with the adults. In the framed play pockets, it is not about the children's free play as for example on the playground, but rather as framed play facilitated by the adults. The frame is primarily defined by the artist (through brought along paper materials) but also in collaboration with the pedagogues. This collaboration is described and illustrated as a flat structure in a dynamic interplay. The article concludes that the collaboration, the tools and the intentions support the children's initiatives and what they find interesting and important. The aesthetic process as a play pocket thus initiates the children's culture of play and in general a child-led culture.



Furthermore, the article concludes that the play pocket release the children and the adults from usual conceptions and roles, and in this way they have the opportunity to examine themselves and each other in new ways and create new social- and aesthetic experiences. The open frame and the artist's tools and questioning approach are essential for creating a space for the children's play. At the same time the pedagogues interact actively as well as reflect on how to let go of their usual practice and conceptions of themselves and aesthetic processes. Overall, the article highlights the value of the collaboration, what the two professions learn from each other's competency and specifically how the pedagogues' aesthetic reflecting approach are challenged.

The third article *Beauty Bubbles, Subtle Meetings, and Frames for Play: Aesthetic Processes in Danish Kindergartens* investigates how pedagogues and artists understand, facilitate and frame aesthetic processes in the kindergarten through their collaboration, and how this can create new perspectives on aesthetic processes and children's aesthetic experiences. The article analyses the framework and the understanding of aesthetic experience and aesthetic processes as hands-on experiences with intensified meaning, subtle meetings and as beauty bubbles.

Beauty bubble is a constructed metaphor for profound aesthetic experiences created through processes with beauty, meaning, more experience and through creating intermediate worlds. The article concludes that aesthetic processes are complex and transcending and should not be understood or facilitated as processes with impression, expression and learning processes.

Likewise, I conclude that the pedagogue/the adult have to be supportive and not instructing and controlling as long as the aesthetic processes are aesthetic as the sensitive experience and awareness. Finally, the article points out the quality of the artist not being the pedagogue and the other way around, that the adults should not be the central focal points of the aesthetic processes. The focal point is the materials, the playful atmosphere and the experiences attained in between the participants.

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References:

Blomgren, H. 2019. *Aesthetic Processes in Day Care Facilities – A Project Inspired by Action Research with Artists and Pedagogues in Collaboration*. PhD-Dissertation, University of Southern Denmark and VIA University College

The title of the fourth article is *Aesthetically Sensitive Pathways to Knowledge in and Through Action Research in Danish Kindergartens*. It investigates aesthetics as the sensitive knowledge in profession perspective and as content, approach and phenomenon in action research. The article analyzes the aesthetic-sensitive voices understood as intuitive, bodily and transcending approaches in selected parts of action research that is workshops and a joint analysis of video recordings (pedagogues and researcher took part). The article demonstrates how workshops with artists challenge the pedagogues' aesthetic reflecting approach. Through the artist's preparations and brought along materials and through sensitive connections with hands-on experiments and following reflections, the pedagogues' got an insight into personal and professional approaches to aesthetic processes. In the video analysis the pedagogues see their own approaches in aesthetic processes as well as they discover the artist's approach to and interplay with the children and the adults. The article focuses on pedagogues, artists and researcher in developing processes and concludes that an aesthetic-sensitive approach to knowledge is relevant in the pedagogical practice as well as a meaningful knowledge form in action research. The article also concludes that the aesthetic-sensitive knowledge form is central because of its open and creative room for possibilities. However, I conclude that the processes of change in institutions are slow because it can be difficult to change routines and practices.

#### ABOUT CULTURAL CHILDREN OF EUROPE

*In 2015 Kulturprinsen in Denmark laid the foundation stone for a new international network "Cultural Children of Europe" for organisations all working with art and cultural projects in early childhood education and care. The network was based upon a 3 year-long project supported by the Aarhus 2017, Cultural Capital of Europe, and Central Denmark Region. The project participants included cultural schools, visual and performing art schools as well as regular kindergartens and primary schools with an interest in integrating aesthetic and creative learning tools in their daily practice.*

*Most of the organisations involved have been in contact for several years through exchange visits and different events for international cooperation. The results of the project formed the partnership and ideas behind the Art EQUAL project.*

## TIPS & IDEAS

On how to collaborate and learn from each other's professional approaches, skills and experiences  
The Art EQUAL partners share their experiences and advice

1

### USE ACTION LEARNING TO "ZOOM IN"

Most professionals reflect on their practice every day. Action learning helps you to structure your reflections and zoom in on specific situations in your practice which you would like to develop or change. By having a clear focus on concrete situations, you might see and realize things you have not noticed before. This could help you to solve specific problems or develop new ways of working. In collaborative action learning processes, you should find time for joint reflections after each action and use the zoomed in reflections as an ongoing development of your everyday practice.

2

### FOLLOW THE CHILDREN'S INITIATIVES, MOTIVES & ACTIONS

Our first job is to support children at their earliest stages of development. In collaborations between early years professionals and artists/culture workers the aim is to follow the children's motives and actions in terms of supporting their interests, commitment and well-being. Therefore, it is important to have a thorough observation on the children's behaviour, interaction and level of participation. The focus of the adults should thus be to guide and support the children's aesthetic processes rather than controlling and leading them in a certain direction.

3

### ESTABLISH A SECURE ENVIRONMENT BUT BE OPEN TO UNEXPECTED REACTIONS

Security is important for both children and adults, and it takes time to build a relationship of trust. We must provide a secure room for the children by listening to the adults who know them best. At the same time, it is important to be open to each other's experiences of the children's behavior and actions. Sometimes we see that children act in surprising ways when they meet new professionals who might not have the same expectations to them as the adults in their everyday. Again, it is about being open to the process.

### FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN OWN AMBITIONS AND EVERYDAY REALITIES

Ambitions are good, but sometimes everyday realities can get in the way. We have experienced professional artists with great artistic ambitions for the collaboration, but in the process, they have to adjust their ambitions due to everyday realities, such as the children are hungry, tired, or one of the pedagogues have to stay with one child and cannot participate. Be ambitious, but focus on the everyday perspective of the collaboration.

5

### INVOLVE YOUR COLLEAGUES AND SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

It is recommendable to involve the whole house in the collaboration from the beginning to the end, although some of your colleagues might not be directly involved. See the collaboration as a source to development and change, not only for yourself but also for your colleagues.

4



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### SEE THE COLLABORATION AS CONTINUING EDUCATION

Collaborations with professionals from outside require time and resources. It is important that especially the manager see the collaboration as an investment in continuing education of the staff members – like any other education. The staff must feel they have a responsibility for what they learn and can bring further into their pedagogical practice.



### INVOLVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In our local community we find many interesting and useful resources and potential partners. This can be cultural institutions, museums, libraries, music halls, after school services, sport organisations, playgrounds, parks, forests, beaches, shopping centres, etc. Think of how you can involve your community and make use of the children's physical surroundings.

7

8

### OPEN YOUR SENSES

Bring your senses into play and let the children taste, feel, see, hear and smell. When you focus on sensuous experiences you stimulate the children's interests and engagement in new ways. We have experienced that the children's concentration, learning and memory are increased when their senses are activated in aesthetic processes. At the same time the senses can help to make the abstract more tangible, concrete and present.

9

### KEEP IT SIMPLE

Less is more! Make sure you do not overload the actions with many different activities. The children experience a great amount of new sensory perceptions in art and culture-based activities. If there are too many things going on they can get confused and lose their motivation. Simplicity provides a room for the children's own imaginations, actions, ideas and expressions. Use simple tools and do not hesitate to repeat activities again and again.

10

### MAKE A MISTAKE

We learn from our mistakes. In collaborations between early years professionals and artists/culture workers experiments are important. We must step out of our comfort zones and accept when things move in another direction than we expected, also when we think it is the wrong direction. Be open to each other's positive as well as negative feedback.



Kulturprinsen is a project development centre devoted to arts and cultural participation among children and young people. Through partnerships, networks and collaborations at national and international level, Kulturprinsen works to ensure art and culture is an integrated part of all children's everyday lives.



The Art Education Centre TRĪS KRĀSAS is a non-governmental organisation, founded in 2000. The key objective of the centre is promotion of art education processes in Latvia.



Elderberry AB undertakes curriculum development and strategic studies, authoring, testing, editing and publishing within school, youth, adult, teacher Cultural and VET education, often with socio-cultural and urban implications. The company is experienced with traditional methods for educational material as with eLearning and eCulture. Elderberry also has vast experience as a partner and coordinator of EU projects.



The Reykjavík School of Visual Arts is a non-profit organisation, operated by artists and designers. An annual service contract is signed with the Reykjavík City's Department of Education and Youth, providing for extracurricular professional art education for pupils from preschool to lower secondary school age.



Örnsköldsviks Kulturskola is a locally based cultural school with the aim of educating children and youth in different artistic expressions. The school provides training and education in visual arts, dance, film, drama and theatre and develops collaboration projects with local, national and international partners.



Bergen kulturskole offers education and provides activities in the disciplines of music, dance, theatre, film, visual art and design. A special focus of Bergen Kulturskole is to integrate art disciplines in schools (SFO) for 7-9 year old children based on collaborations between artists and pedagogical staff. This project is called Kulturkarusell



Art EQUAL is a 2-year Strategic Partnership project – funded by the EU's Erasmus+ Programme

Project period: 2017-2019

**PROJECT PARTNERS:**

Kulturprinsen, DK (beneficiary)

Elderberry AB, SE

Kulturskolan Örnköldsvik, SE

TRIS KRASAS, LV

Myndlistaskolinn, IS

Bergen Kulturskole, NO

**PROJECT OUTPUTS:**

Online platform with inspirational material and supporting tools

Handbook and process guide

Training course curricula

Implementation strategy

Link to the Art EQUAL platform: [www.artequal.eu](http://www.artequal.eu)

Cultural Children of Europe (CCE) is a 3-year cooperation project – funded by Aarhus 2017 – Cultural Capital of Europe, Central Denmark Region, Nordic Culture Point and Kulturprinsen

Project period: 2015-2018

**Project partners:**

Kulturprinsen, DK (beneficiary)

Kulturskolan Örnköldsvik, SE

Muizniece Riga School of Art

Myndlistaskolinn, IS

Bergen Kulturskole, NO

Link to CCE website:

<http://www.culturalchildrenofeurope.com/>



