

Simple Steps Endless Possibilities



Project Guidelines



Project Nr: 2019-1-UK01-KA229-061510

Project Partners

Short Wood Primary School - UK

Scuola d'Infanzia Comunale Forghieri - Italy

Jungs Friskola Ekonomisk Förening - Sweden

<https://simplesteps.edublogs.org>

1. Introduction

About the project

'Simple Steps, Endless Possibilities' is a two year Erasmus+ KA2 School Exchange Project.

The project aims to reflect on the place of the school within the community, diversity, relationships, and shared values. It targets pupils aged between 3-6 years and their respective staff.

Educators from across three schools in the UK, Italy and Sweden have aimed at improving teaching and learning through their cooperation and collaboration.

The project considers:

- community
- diversity
- relationships with others
- shared values
- making decisions
- care and respect for the environment

Through a series of in-school project based activities, research, international virtual and in-person meetings and training and joint staff trainings, educators from the 3 countries have:

- share best practice with fellow early childhood educational professionals
- to develop new methods and strategies by exploring approaches and collaborating with schools in the project.



About this booklet

This booklet is a compilation of the processes and activities carried out by each of the school in relation to the 3 main themes addressed by each partner.

It provides staff and educators with an insight into how each partner uses specific activities and techniques to support the learning journey of their pupils and staff.

The booklet is split into 3 sections as follows:

- Understanding and developing resilience in young learners (UK)
- Understanding and developing children's problem solving skills through orienteering tasks (Italy)
- Understanding and developing children's collaboration and relationship with others and outdoors (Sweden)

Understanding and developing resilience (UK)



The Short Wood Project

'The Short Wood project grew out of research led by Dr. Audrey Kittredge, Research Associate at Cambridge University and PEDAL, LEGO Foundation funded research on play in education, development and learning. Dr. Audrey worked with the children at Short Wood Early Years to explore scaffolding that would support children's self-regulated learning. As teachers, we were interested in how the 'autonomy supportive scaffolding', could encourage children to problem solve and be confident, resilient learners. We observed the oral interventions of Dr. Audrey and team during their one to one work with the children and how hints and encouragement at key moments enabled children to feel able to stay on task for longer and be more confident in their ability. From this, the Short Wood Early Years Team looked at how we could enable our children to be more resilient in their learning, prepared to take risks, understand that if an activity that didn't quite go to plan there was a community of peer learners around to give them the encouragement to keep trying.

Staff involved directly included two Nursery teachers, three Reception teachers, the Deputy Head and Head Teacher. Children worked in groups of four to six. They were selected as a mixed group in terms of ability, gender, EAL pupils and those for whom English is their first language. Personality traits were also taken into consideration, less confident children were grouped with those who would feel ready to share their ideas.

The majority of the staff team directly involved had visited schools in Modena, Sweden and Finland. We considered the Reggio Approach and the process of learning, the importance of outdoor experiences enjoyed in Sweden and the positive impact we can have on the mental health of our children. We created a calm setting in the classrooms, influenced by our observations in Italy. We planned a process which continues to evolve. At the heart of the project was the desire for our children to be resilient learners, who wouldn't feel they had failed if they didn't get something right first time. We therefore needed to

ensure that any process we created allowed a child to think about any prior knowledge and experiences, try out ideas, observe peers and collaborate. They were to be given time to explore and try things out, then watch an 'expert' (This could either be a child or adult, who could demonstrate the process), then re visit the learning and use new knowledge to complete the task with the required skills.

Nursery children observing, demonstrating and discussion their ideas about how to peel an apple.



We decided to create a process for resilient learning and that this would initially be around preparing food and we chose apple crumble. The children had observed the passing of time through the apple trees. In the winter months, they took part in wassailing, making music and singing to the trees, to encourage a good harvest. Spring blossom was observed. With summer, the children found that green leaves were appearing and the signs of tiny apples starting to grow. In the autumn, there was a bumper harvest. It was with this that we knew the next part of the journey was to prepare, cook and eat the apples.

This process was created collaboratively with the staff involved directly (See above.) Teachers provided children with an apple crumble. They tasted it and talked about their observations. A variety of kitchen tools were supplied, alongside apples the children had picked from trees at school, a lemon and crumble topping, water and a foil tray. The children were invited to make their own crumble, or if preferred they could collaborate with others and make something together. Teachers stood back.

The children were filmed in order for staff to discuss after and observations and interactions between children were noted.

The process followed by staff was the same across Early Years. (Please see Short Wood Project process on page 9). As with the original Cambridge University research, we agreed where adult encouragement such as 'What could you use to help you?' would take place if a child looked for support.



Figure 1
T: This is hard. I can't get inside my lemon.



Figure 2
L: You have to cut around it. (Demonstrates with a gesture)



Figure 3
L: Can you see the juice coming out? It's called lemon juice.
L: You can watch me how to do it.
T: Remember to keep your finger on the top of the knife.



Figure 4
T observes L. He mirrors her cutting skills, practising on his chopping board.
L asks, 'Do you think you'll be alright now? Can you hear it? That means it's nearly open'



Figure 5
T: 'I can do it now' (Takes over)
L: Encourages, 'That's it, you can do it!'

Photograph extracts from a video recording. L and T have chosen to squeeze lemon on to their apples when making the crumble. They spend just over seven minutes in this interaction, which demonstrates one of many positive, supportive moments during a project. Lily has listened carefully to adults around her and helps her friend in an encouraging and informative way. Tobie observes her actions carefully which enables him to continue independently

Both children show great resilience throughout.

The Short Wood Project

The project requires a commitment to the time given to small groups of children, to allow them to work at their own pace, to reflect and try things out. Opportunities to revisit and apply new skills are essential to the feeling of being a successful and resilient learner. Staff observed children in different classes ensuring a consistent approach. Finally we talked with the children. How did they feel as learners? What had they learnt?

Unfortunately, Covid 19 and the changes which so suddenly affected school life had a major impact on collaborative learning in a classroom context. There is also now a shift to ensure we enable children to catch-up in phonics, Reading, Writing and Maths. We are still delivering a creative curriculum, but we also need to make sure that there are no gaps in key areas. This has inevitably had some impact in the time currently that we are able to give to this project.

Prior to Covid, we saw real changes in the way children approached a challenge over time, following the process of the Short Wood project.

- o Children developed a more positive, 'can do' approach to their learning.
- o Collaborative learning was more evident. Children offered advice to their friends, phrases such as, 'Would you like some help?' were offered. Social interactions over the course of a year were developed and strengthened.
- o Opportunities for educators to develop the language and vocabulary used by the children
- o Children were empowered to make their own choices and decisions.
- o Freedom to explore and be creative and resourceful.

o More children receiving support from friends were able to say, 'I'm ok now' when they were ready to continue independently and are more likely to resume rather than letting someone else complete the task for them.

o For staff it was an opportunity to understand the thought process of the children and how they learn.

o Children come to understand that a certain order of working can be important. (Scientific investigation for example)

o All children at the end of the process felt they were an expert in a new skill. Confidence and resilience to try new skills and concepts were enhanced.

The project has enhanced the learning opportunities for the children and it will be a basis for their resilience and approach to problem solving as they grow.

The children spoke positively about their experiences. The supportive environment in which the children worked, enabled them to feel safe to take a leap of faith and be bolder than they might usually be.

Educators better understand how children think and learn, through close observation listening and noticing to create more effective interactions with the children.

There is a real buzz of excitement in the air when a project is taking place, children and adults are excited about new



possibilities.

Examples of a project process

Process	Role of adult	Activity (Example)	What is the adult/ child learning?
Recalling prior learning Remember recall	Ask questions to elicit understanding Discussion with children	Making an apple crumble Share adult made apple crumble with the children Ask What do you notice? Have we seen this before? Links to home and school experiences What do you know about it? Use of senses to understand it.	Understand the knowledge and experiences of the child
Exploring Interpreting Inferring Executing Attributing generating	<i>Step back.</i> <i>Observe silently.</i> Where child looks for reassurance, <i>encourage</i> with a positive, supportive comment, e.g. 'keep going, you can do it!' If a child becomes frustrated <i>ask a question or make a comment to trigger prior knowledge/ experience.</i> When further support is requested <i>give a verbal explanation of a problem.</i> If a child continues to request support, <i>give a running commentary about what you are doing, and how you are working.</i> <i>Which tools are you using? Break down into very small steps.</i> <i>Ask the child to have a go at finishing the task.</i>	Children to replicate / create own version of an apple crumble using a range of tools and ingredients provided.	Enable child to make own choices and feel empowered. Opportunity to- Observe Talk Collaborate Share Explore, experiment with ideas Be creative Free from feeling of right and wrong way to approach a task.
Reflecting Comparing Explaining	Ask questions to elicit understanding. Discussion with children	Discussion following activity. How did it go? What went well? What was tricky?	Understand the characteristics of the learner What has the child understood? How do they learn best? How can the adult support the child in areas they are less confident?
Expert advice Organizing Planning Producing	Expert to demonstrate, using key vocabulary Running commentary. Talk through process	Adult demonstrates the process to the child	Make concepts explicit Direct teaching of a process Introduce new vocabulary Reasons why we do things a certain way (e.g. the science, why did we use a lemon??) How/ why we use certain tools.

	Explain purpose e.g why do we use a lemon, why do we put it in a hot oven?		How children could collaborate.
upskilling Differentiating organising	Reflect on observations Talk with the children to illicit an understanding of the challenges during the process. Which tools were tricky to use? Why? Which tool/ ingredient is best for...?	Time to allow child to experience use of tools, ingredients that are unfamiliar or tricky to use. Explore tools in a range of contexts. Look at wider opportunities to develop fine and gross motor skills.	Teach a new skill Allow children time to explore in different contexts Enable children to make effective choices
Recalling prior learning	Ask questions/ discuss with child What did we know before? What did we learn from the expert? What will you do differently?	Children talk about their knowledge and understanding of the crumble process. This is an opportunity also for them to ask questions and clarify what they think they need to do.	Time to plan, slow learning down What do the children now understand about the process? Allowing time to orally plan, talking through/ listen to process with each other.
Revisiting Implementing	Provide ingredients and a range of tools. (Same as first time)	Child makes second crumble	Independent opportunity. Opportunity for child to work independently or collaboratively with new found skills and knowledge to produce an apple crumble. Adult to step back and notice skills put in to practice.
Reflecting Critiquing, evaluating	Encourage children to talk about what they did, ask questions	Tasting the crumble What do you think about your crumble this time? I wonder if you did anything differently? How do you feel?	Listen, encourage and suggest new vocabulary learnt as children talk. Make explicit skills child has learnt.
Sharing Explaining	Allow time for child to develop their skills further Adapt, add own ideas, e.g exploring different flavours such as alternative types of fruit, toppings, or spices	As an expert, the child can now Vary the recipe. Show a friend...	The child is now the expert, using their personal, social, emotional and practical skills. Observe changes in the child's approach. How have they grown?
Application of process to other areas of learning Apply Create and generate	Consider opportunities for child to follow this process in other areas of learning	Ask children how they could go about something new...	Consider how this process may be used in different aspects of learning. How does it support the child?

Understanding and developing children's problem solving skills through orienteering tasks (Italy)



Scuola d'Infanzia Comunale Forghieri Project

The Scuola d'Infanzia Comunale Forghieri's project starts from a reflection on the fact that meaningful learning happens in environments where creativity, awareness, inquiry, and critical thinking are part of instruction.

Responsive learning environments adapt to the individual needs of each student and encourage learning by promoting collaboration rather than isolation of learners. Learning environments, whether classrooms, schools, or other systems, should be structured to promote engaged teaching and learning.

A responsive learning environment engages all students by providing a respectful climate where instruction and curriculum are designed to respond to the backgrounds and needs of every student.

The environment around us can help children develop their sense of belonging and their citizenship skills. Therefore, it is necessary for educators to consider the outdoors as a useful, ready-made resource.

Therefore, orienteering activities have some clear objectives for the children:

- Knowing your territory and knowing how to orient yourself first by sight, then through images and, finally, through a map built by them and then real.
- Knowing how to collaborate to achieve a goal (eg: reach a certain park), knowing how to read a map and discuss if you have different opinions.
- Knowing the cultural heritage of their territory (squares, monuments, churches), but also shops and local people;
- Defining spatial markers to learn to orientate oneself and to learn topological references (near, far, behind, in front of...)
- By engaging in activities that allow the children to develop knowledge and understanding of the area they live in allows them to develop skills of respect for the environment first locally then in the wider sense.



Scuola d'Infanzia Comunale Forghieri Project

We divide the children into two groups.

Each group is given a bag containing colours, a sketch book, an ipad/tablet/camera, a map of the area where you wish the groups to go to (it could be the town, the area around the school, a village, a local park etc. providing there are some notable landmarks.)

- Ask each group to follow their map and choose some points of reference along the route which would help others find their way round. They need to take pictures and draw sketches of the landmarks chosen as they go along.
- Tell the groups that ultimately, when they return, they will be making a large map of their route using the photos and sketches of the landmarks chosen.
- On returning to the starting point, using a large sheet of paper, ask each group to create a large map of their route using the sketches they have drawn and the photos they have taken. They can include the names of any streets that they walked along and also other written information.
- Once the collective large maps have been made, the groups swop maps and go outdoors. They are then tasked to follow the new route and find the land marks identified on the map.
- Upon their return, the children are asked to reflect on the activities and provide feedback on the accuracy of the maps and how these could be improved if needed.



Understanding and developing children's collaboration and relationship with others and outdoors (Sweden)



Jungs Friskola Project

Understanding nature is an important element in the curriculum in Sweden. Learning about nature, the different elements and how to look after nature allows children to become responsible citizens and take care of the world around them.

Learning about nature and being outside has many benefits on social skills, relationships, respect, turn taking, caring for oneself and others and wellbeing.

Therefore, many activities we do with the children in school are conducted outside.

Specifically, with the group of four and five years olds we go to the forest once or twice a week.

We use the forest and all its stimuli to develop learning. We use a soft toy, a hedgehog, that the children call Taggis.

We often hide Taggis and when we get to the forest the children immediately start to look for the hedgehog. Once they find Taggis, they also find a letter with some tasks that they are expected to do together.

Sometimes they do the tasks as a whole group but most of the times they are divided into small groups of two or four.

The tasks the children are given are always about something we are working on in the classroom at that moment. This is to ensure we can bring the learning from the classroom to the forest so to reinforce and consolidate the learning.

When it comes to mathematics, Swedish language, natural science and creative activities, there are so many relatively easy and funny but meaningful methods which we use. Below you will find some examples.

Mathematics

We ask the children to work in groups of two and give them with pictures of cones, leaves, acorns, stones, and sticks. With each picture there is a number and a dice illustrating the same number. Their task is to look at the picture of the items and they know they need collect such item.

They start to recognise the number by looking at it and the dice associating and giving a value to it. In doing so, they count and identify the quantity they need to find in the forest of specific items. They explore the forest to find the items but also discuss together about numbers and quantities.

On other occasions we use questions displayed on cards. However, the teacher reads the assignment to the children as they cannot read yet and the children try to find the correct answer. These types of activities really encourage collaboration and communication as well as the importance of working together.



Natural science

To make the children aware of things we can do to help the climate, we always collect rubbish when we find some on our way to the forest or in the forest. When we get back to school, we sort the rubbish into different containers.

We also teach the children about what happens to the recycled rubbish when collected. We explain to how the recycled items are processed and turned into new items.

In our classroom we have a shelf filled with different recycled materials which the children can use for creative making as and when they wish to do so. Example of things they can use are cones, cape, milk cartons, egg cartons, toilet paper rolls, end of rolls of wallpaper, bubble wraps, straws, old plastic flowers etc.

The children talk to each other when they create and it's a joy to see and hear them helping each other, both to provide creative tips and to provide practical help.



Design & technology and natural science

One of the most important learning during the stay in the forest is that all of what they learn is done through playing. They build tree houses made from sticks and rocks and need to think about things like durability, height, weight and much more.

They like to build a theatre and when they do that, we talk about the leverage effect and other technical concepts at the children's level.



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