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# THE PROJECT IN SHORT



## ACRONYM

## NARRATE

## TITLE

Building a narrative approach fostering collaboration between preschools and libraries

**FUNDING PROGRAMME** ERASMUS+

## LENGTH

2020-2023

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of NARRATE is to foster quality in preschool education through increased attention to the narrative approach.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives are:

1. To develop the narrative approach in preschools, adopting the appropriate tools to arrange the context, planning activities and evaluating the outcomes.
2. To improve the collaboration between preschools and libraries for enhancing the narrative curriculum and giving value and visibility to the spontaneous narrative production of the children
3. To increase preschool teachers' professional skills on the narrative approach/curriculum.

## RESULTS

1. Handbook on Narrative Approach implementation in Early education
2. Evaluation Toolbox: Self-Assessment, Monitoring, Impact Assessment
3. Stories from children to children: original childhood literature products

## PARTNERS

Municipality of Piteå (SE)

Municipality of Imola(IT), Sweden Emilia Romagna Network – SERN (IT), Elmer (BE), University of Bologna (IT), Tallinn Meelespea Kindergarden (EE)

## WEBSITE

<https://www.narrate-project.eu/>



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## PREFACE

*"I see great value for Piteå's preschools with this form of project. The educators get to broaden their competencies into their own professional didactics, by focusing on selected topics within the various Erasmus projects. This raises the quality of our education and teaching, we both contribute and learn from each other, between the different partner countries. Sweden and also other countries have experienced a negative trend in terms of children's linguistic development, that our children have a lack of vocabulary, and they have poorer concentration and ability to absorb written information and instructions, than the students a number of years ago. These shortcomings are noticeable and can give students difficulties in coping with their studies and achieving approved study results in primary and secondary school. By stimulating the children to express themselves both linguistically and aesthetically, we give the children a good basis for assimilating teaching and expressing themselves in what they think and how they perceive things and can have constructive conversations. I am very proud and happy that Piteå is a partner in this Narrate project where you emphasize the value of starting from the children's interests and that they can design interesting games, explorations, and creative stories together. The project also highlights the value of good literature and collaboration with libraries. I look forward to this narrative approach that will spread, making a difference to our children's opportunities to achieve their potential."*

*Malin Westling*

Head of Administration Education  
Piteå Municipality (Sweden)



**Piteå kommun**



# Acknowledgements

The topic of this project – implementing the Narrative Approach in Early Education – is fascinating, but very challenging too. Fascinating since the label itself recalls fantasy, suspense, a network of stories, good books and literature, fun and well-being at school; challenging since it does not sound to deal with something concrete, related to specific teaching processes, or formal disciplines and immediately operative inside the daily life of nurseries and preschools, to help teachers with clear suggestions and practical professional tools.

We know that the more a topic is abstract, the more can suffer negatively from being carried out by a European partnership, a melting pot of different cultures, history, education systems and sensitivity. In addition, this difficulty could have been very hard as our partnership is made up of schools from the four corners of Europe.

Instead, won the first perplexities thanks to sharing our thoughts towards a common view of the topic, not only we amazingly could work together, but also we were able to treat this theme from a well-founded methodological and experimental point of view. The final result is our three intellectual outputs (this is the first and the central one) that, we are sure, can help preschool teachers and educators, all over Europe, improve their skills, efficacy and well-being at work, appreciating that the Narrative Approach can greatly support any future-oriented didactic.

This result has been especially possible thanks to our teachers and pedagogues' commitment, their availability to renovate their working approach, the ability to work with colleagues coming from different countries and contexts and, last but not least, despite the pandemic restrictions that impeded us to meet in presence until April 2022, while the project started in September 2020. Our teachers and pedagogues coped with the stress and discomfort of ongoing online meetings among people without previous attendance and working hard in a really uncertain situation. A true proof of resilience, that is rewarded, because we are very proud of the results we could reach together. We just have to wish you a good reading.

The coordination team of NARRATE Project:

- **Góran Dahlen** – Piteå Municipality;
- **Gitte Franzén** – Bergsvikens Förskola, Piteå Municipality
- **Daniele Chitti** – Preschools Department, Imola Municipality;
- **Anne Lambrechts** – Elmer vzw, Brussels;
- **Terje Vandmann** – Tallinn Meelespea kindergarten, Tallinn Municipality;
- **Patrizia Selleri** – Course of School Psychology, University of Bologna;
- **Laura Avanzi** – Sweden Emilia-Romagna Network

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### 1. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS HANDBOOK AND HOW TO USE IT.

This handbook is about the Narrative Approach application in Early education (0 to 6 years old). It is not merely a new didact approach but rather a new philosophy in teaching with the youngest. In other words, if you want to apply it, you must not give up your traditional didactic plan, but provide it differently: we hope this could be clearer later, reading this book.

It is not necessary to read it from the beginning to the end, as a traditional essay. After reading this introduction, you can choose what is your more profitable point to start.

The core module of the handbook is the chapters from 2 to 5. They treat the following topics:

- CHAPTER 2:** it is the “Theory” chapter where we try to provide an overview of the state of the art of the Narrative Approach in Early Education.
- CHAPTER 3:** it is the “Methodology” chapter, where we try to explain a possible model to realize and describe the Narrative Approach application to make it a comprehensive and full immersion system in school life.
- CHAPTER 4:** it is the “Experience” chapter containing the description of 8 good applications of the model in the nurseries and preschools managed by the partner of this Erasmus+ project.
- CHAPTER 5:** it is the “Teachers’ Points of View” chapter, where the teachers involved in the experiences of the previous chapter speak about their emotions, learnings and suggestions.

You can start from one of them, and then follow another, without strict rules. Anyway, we could give some pieces of advice, just to orient the reader:

- If you are a **teacher**, you could read the chapters in this order: 4, 3, 5 and 2.
- If you are a **scholar**, you could read the chapters in this order: 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- If you are a **pedagogue or a manager**, you could read the chapters in this order: 3, 4, 2 and 5.
- And so on.

You can start from wherever you want, actually, and only read a single chapter. What is important is you can feel free to personalise the reading without being fear to ruin its effect and utility.

The chapters after 5 are **complementary chapters** and should be important after reading the core module of the handbook. Only pay attention to **chapter 6**, because it is a chapter where we deal with two important issues of our work:

- We will speak about “**storytelling**”, meant as one of the most important tools supporting the Narrative Approach, but not an activity in itself, in the perspective of the Narrative Approach.
- As a consequence, we will speak about the importance to have a **strong and ongoing collaboration between preschools and Libraries**; we try to do that through some good inspirational practices arranged by the partners of this Erasmus+ project, and some suggestions about how to build a reasonable bibliography on Child Literature.

Finally, this handbook is completed by a set of separated self-evaluation tools to permit the users to assess their starting point and the quality level of the application stage by stage.

### 2. WHAT IS THE NARRATIVE APPROACH IN SHORT?

#### DEFINITION

*The Narrative Approach in Early Education means adopting a teaching style based on children’s interests and activeness, the respect of their learning time and, overall, supporting children’s natural tendency to be “story-makers”, and not only “story-listeners”. Children naturally begin building knowledge starting from stories of their experiences that they store in their memory and share with other children and adults. This is especially observable when the children acquire some basic linguistic skills (starting around 24 months), but we can recognize its precursors in many children’s free activities at the previous age, and in interactions with their caregivers.*

Many researchers show that respecting these children’s native attitudes could improve learning processes, socialization and well-being, especially in schooling.

Despite this evidence, not only a comprehensive methodological tool for Early Education based on it has not been produced yet, but schooling and teaching are still mainly based on the central role and interests of teachers (true planners of the activities), conceptualisation and passive use of storytelling with the children.



This Handbook – and the other two IOs of this project – would like to be the first attempt to give a set of tools to permit teachers, pedagogues and school managers to try to apply a coherent methodology to adopt the Narrative Approach as a new teaching style and philosophy, and not only as some episodic activity. After that, we hope that in the future other contributions could be provided by the readers of our work.

### 3. THE PARTNERS OF THIS ERASMUS+ PROJECT AND SOME TIPS ABOUT THE REFERRING PRESCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE INVOLVED COUNTRIES.

The partnership having carried out this project is made up of:

A. Four preschool administrations (as we will mention even later, they belong to very different European Areas: North, South, East and West, and we think this is an added value):

1. Preschools managed by the Municipality of Piteå (North of Sweden), coordinator.
2. Nurseries and Preschools managed by the Municipality of Imola (North of Italy).
3. Preschools managed by the Municipality of Tallinn (Estonia).
4. Nurseries managed by Elmer School Association in Brussels (Belgium).

B. Two specialized partners:

1. University of Bologna (Italy), Course in Community and School Psychology.
2. SERN – Sweden Emilia-Romagna Network, a subject expert in European projecting and networking.

You can find information about all the partners in the project website: [Narrate – Narrate is an Erasmus+ project \(narrate-project.eu\)](http://narrate-project.eu).

Following, some basic information about the four preschool system involved in this project. Readers can take into account that:

- The part in orange in about children’s attendance;
- The part in green is about didactic issues and children’s integration;
- The part in blue is about parents’ duties/involvement.

<b>PRESCHOOL SYSTEM IN SWEDEN</b>	
<b>1 . What is the general organization of the system (political level)?</b>	The preschool is regulated nationally to some extent through the curriculum, the Education Act and a national supervisory authority. "The Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate." The municipality has the operational responsibility for the preschool. The preschools in Sweden have the municipalities that governs, but there are also private preschools that can be parent cooperatives, staff cooperatives or runs by educational companies.
<b>2. When can a child start attending?</b>	From 1 year old.
<b>3. Is the attendance conditioned by parents' working status? How?</b>	The children are entitled to preschool 15 hours a week, from the time the child is 1 year old, when the child reaches the age of 3, it is free of charge (15 hours/week) parents must work or study to be entitled to be able to attend more than 15 hours. Children who need extra time for their special needs are entitled to preschool that is adapted to the needs of the special child.
<b>4. Usually, how many hours per day your services are open? How many days per week? What is the annual school calendar?</b>	The preschool can be open 13 hours / day if the parents' work requires this. Most children walk 7–9 hours/day. We adapt the preschool's opening hours to the parents' schedule, but we can stay open from 6:00 in the morning to 19:00 in the evening if necessary. The preschool is open Monday-Friday. We also have one preschool that is open in the evenings, nights and weekends for families who need this (parents who work). All preschools are open all year round, but for five weeks in July and during Christmas holidays we have a service preschool where you gather the children who need care.
<b>5. What are the involved professionals/practitioners and what is their education? Is there some form of supervision and/or pedagogical support? Is there any obligation for in-service training? How much?</b>	We have different professional categories working at our preschools; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preschool teachers who are university educated, 3.5 years of study. These are responsible for the education, and they have an overall responsibility for the class;</li> <li>• second teachers who have upper secondary education, 3 years;</li> <li>• special educators who supervise the teachers in the work of providing the children with special needs with the necessary support;</li> <li>• principals who are often trained teachers, with a leadership training;</li> <li>• administrators;</li> <li>• cook;</li> <li>• kitchen assistant;</li> <li>• cleaner;</li> <li>• janitors.</li> </ul>

<p><b>6. What are the main didactic topics of your National/Regional Curriculum? Is it a comprehensive curriculum or it is split between nursery and preschool?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The fundamental values and tasks of the preschool.</li> <li>2. Norms and values</li> <li>3. Care, development, and learning</li> <li>4. Participation and influence of the child</li> <li>5. Preschool – home</li> <li>6. Transfer and collaboration</li> <li>7. Follow- up, evaluation and development</li> <li>8. Responsibilities of preschool teachers in teaching</li> <li>9. The head’s responsibilities</li> </ol> <p>The preschool is part of the education system in Sweden 2010, previously the preschool belonged to the social welfare system. We have a national school law that has clear laws and regulations that apply to preschools. From 2011, we got a clearer curriculum for preschool, which refers to the preschool teachers’ responsibility for education.</p>
<p><b>7. What is the attendance rate of the ECEC system in your Country? And in your town/city?</b></p>	<p>In Sweden, there is a relatively equal use of preschools throughout the country. Children start no earlier than their 1st birthday and go to primary school in the year they turn 6.</p> <p>Utilization rate based on age:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1 year 50%</li> <li>2. 2 years 91%</li> <li>3. 3-5 years 95%</li> </ol>
<p><b>8. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children with special needs?</b></p>	<p>We don’t have a special program to include children in either preschool or school, but we do have guidelines in the Education Act and the curriculum. We have resource schools, and these are becoming more numerous. In schools and preschools, we shall, to the extent possible, offer adaptations and extra support, before we start with action programs. For the school, there is general advice on how schools can work to adapt and include. We don’t have a special program to include children in either preschool or school, but we do have guidelines in the Education Act and the curriculum. We have resource schools, and these are becoming more numerous. In schools and preschools, we shall, to the extent possible, offer adaptations and extra support, before we start with action programs. For the school, there is general advice on how schools can work to adapt and include.</p>
<p><b>9. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children belonging to different cultures or with families showing educational poverty?</b></p>	<p>Since Sweden accepts refugees, we have special language classes where the children can attend a period to gain basic knowledge of the Swedish language. When the student can adapt and understand Swedish in order to cope with the teaching in school, the student is transferred to the usual Swedish compulsory school or upper secondary school.</p>
<p><b>10. What is the rate of attendance of children belonging to non-native families in the ECEC system of your town/city? And in your school administration?</b></p>	<p>There is no data to be obtained on the number of non-native families in the municipality. In most of our preschools, we have children who have foreign-born parents, but the children themselves may have been born in Sweden. In the central municipality, we have more multilingual children and families represented in our classes, but on the outskirts of the municipality, we have very few foreign children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The families come from: Ukraine, Somalia, Eritrea, Congo, Syria...</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Is there a preparatory year between preschool and primary school?</b></p>	<p>We have a one-year class called preschool class, where the 6-year-old children go. The preschool class is compulsory and is always located in the same building as the primary school.</p>
<p><b>12. How much does attendance cost in your nursery and preschools?</b></p>	<p>We have a system that is differentiated depending on the income of the parents. But we have a maximum fee that must not exceed 100-150 euros /month. The fee varies depending on the age of the children and how many children/ families attend preschool. If the parents have more than one child, the fee is reduced.</p>
<p><b>13. Is there a formal regulation to govern the parent’s involvement in preschool life? Could you describe it shortly?</b></p>	<p>We are obliged to have one parent meeting per year where we present the preschool’s teaching and vision. According to the curriculum, we have an obligation to make it easier for parents to be involved and have views on the content of the preschool. We have a parent council that gathers opinions and views and presents these in a special parents–teachers meeting (1-2 times/year). Parents are invited to an individual meeting concerning their child, at least once a year/it can be done more often if necessary.</p>



## PRESCHOOL SYSTEM IN BELGIUM – FLEMISH COMMUNITY

<b>1 . What is the general organization of the system (political level)?</b>	<p>In Belgium, ECEC is organized as a split system under the authority of the 3 language Communities (Flemish, French and German). The Flemish Community is in charge of the ECEC services in Flanders and the Flemish speaking ECEC services in Brussels, the bilingual capital of Belgium.</p> <p>ECEC from 0 till 3 years is organized by the Department of Welfare, while ECEC from 3 till 6 years is part of the school system.</p> <p>The services are provided by the Flemish Community, by local authorities or by social organisations. A small part of ECEC for the youngest is provided by profit-organisations or by independent care takers.</p>
<b>2. When can a child start attending?</b>	<p>Children can attend ECEC from 3 months (or earlier in urgent cases). Kindergarten can start at 2,5 year.</p>
<b>3. Is the attendance conditioned by parents' working status? How?</b>	<p>In ECEC for 0-3 years priority groups are stated: for 20% of the children priority goes to parents who need childcare for economical reasons, such as work, vocational training leading to work, combined with one of the following criteria: single parent families, families with low income, children in foster care. Also siblings have priority. For services with an additional mandate for working with vulnerable families, there is absolute priority for these families. They have the criteria mentioned above, additional criteria are low qualified parents and families with a problematical health or care situation.</p>
<b>4. Usually, how many hours per day your services are open? How many days per week? What is the annual school calendar?</b>	<p>ECEC for 0-3 years is open 11 hours per day, 5 days a week and at least 220 days a year. Kindergartens have school hours between 8.30AM and 3.30 PM. In most schools, pre- and afterschool care is present.</p>
<b>5. What are the involved professionals/practitioners and what is their education? Is there some form of supervision and/or pedagogical support? Is there any obligation for in-service training? How much?</b>	<p>In ECEC for 0-3 years, care takers most are qualified on vocational level, supported by a practitioner on a bachelor level. There is also a starting form of pedagogical support. The larger services provide this support by themselves. Smaller services are pedagogically supported by an external pedagogical service.</p> <p>Since 2023 all employers in Belgium have to provide at least for days of in service training per year. In 2024, this will be 5 days.</p> <p>In kindergartens, teachers have a bachelor degree. There is pedagogical support coming from overarching institutions.</p>
<b>6. What are the main didactic topics of your National/Regional Curriculum? Is it a comprehensive curriculum or it is split between nursery and preschool?</b>	<p>The curriculum is different for the 0-3 years old and the 3-6 years old.</p> <p>For the childcare centres there is a pedagogical framework, with a vision on how childcare should look like, without being very directive.</p> <p>Kindergartens work with development goals concerning different competencies a child should develop during the years in the kindergarten.</p>
<b>7. What is the attendance rate of the ECEC system in your Country? And in your town/city?</b>	<p>For the children from 0-3 years there is an attendance rate between 50 and 60%.</p> <p>In kindergarten the attendance goes to 99%.</p>
<b>8. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children with special needs?</b>	<p>In childcare, Flanders has a network of "Centres for inclusion" in 16 different areas. This centre is always related to 1 or more child care services and gives special attention for children with special needs. They are also responsible for sharing their know how with other childcare services in the same area.</p> <p>In kindergarten, there was an attempt to organise inclusion of children with special needs. Due to lack of (financial) support, the situation went back to square one. Mostly, children with special needs go the special schools.</p> <p>Childcare services can obtain a mandate (and some financial support) to give special attention to children in vulnerable families. Cultural background is not one of the criteria.</p> <p>In kindergarten, there is a priority policy for children who grow up in families who receive financial support, children whose mother do not have a secondary education diploma.</p>
<b>9. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children belonging to different cultures or with families showing educational poverty?</b>	<p>Since Sweden accepts refugees, we have special language classes where the children can attend a period to gain basic knowledge of the Swedish language. When the student can adapt and understand Swedish in order to cope with the teaching in school, the student is transferred to the usual Swedish compulsory school or upper secondary school.</p>
<b>10. What is the rate of attendance of children belonging to non-native families in the ECEC system of your town/city? And in your school administration?</b>	<p>We don't have figures about this, since this is not a criterium in the priority policies.</p>

11. Is there a preparatory year between preschool and primary school?	In Flanders, there is no preparatory year between preschool and primary school. The 3th class of preschool is considered to be a preparatory year.
12. How much does attendance cost in your nursery and preschools?	In nurseries, parents pay depending on their income, between 1,72 and 30.37€ per day. In nurseries with a free price, it's often a fixed price around 35€ per day. Kindergarten is free. There is a maximum yearly cost of 50€.
13. Is there a formal regulation to govern the parent's involvement in preschool life? Could you describe it shortly?	In childcare there is no formal regulation for parents involvement. The services with a mandate concerning vulnerable families have an assignment to work on participation of the parents, without strict goals. In schools, a participation council is organised by decree.

<b>PRESCHOOL SYSTEM IN ITALY</b>	
1. What is the general organization of the system (political level)?	In Italy, nursery schools (0 to 3) and preschools (3 to 6) are generally separated school services, but since 2017, a Law ideally unified the system and started promoting integration between them, and the birth and promotion of comprehensive preschool services (0 to 6). Despite this reform, the governance of the system is yet split between municipalities (0 to 3) and the Ministry of Education (3 to 6). Instead, the provision of the service is mixed: municipality and non-profit private sector can provide both nursery and preschools, State only preschools. At the national level, 64% of preschools are provided by State. In Imola, State provides 40% of preschools, the Municipality 35% and non-profits 25%. Since State preschools are divided into 6 different administrations, the Municipality of Imola is the biggest preschool provider in the town. In Imola, the Municipality provides 94% of nursery schools, 50% directly, and 44% through agreements with non-profit subjects.
2. When can a child start attending?	It depends on the territory and municipality. In Imola, children can attend starting from 5 months. In smaller municipalities from 1 year.
3. Is the attendance conditioned by parents' working status? How?	Partially. If the requests are more than the available places, working parents and parents at social risk conditions are favourite. Anyway, every family can try to enrol their children. Sometimes we have a waiting list, and sometimes no.
4. Usually, how many hours per day your services are open? How many days per week? What is the annual school calendar?	Usually, the curricular time is 9 hours per day, maximum. Anyway, there is the chance to get a part-time place or to benefit from extended time in the afternoon (until 11 hours of attendance). Usually, nurseries and preschools are open from Monday to Friday. The annual calendar could be different, depending on providers: in Imola, municipal nurseries and preschools are open from the 1st of September to the 31st of July, and the activities are paused for 2 weeks for Christmas Holiday and 1 week for Easter Holiday.
5. What are the involved professionals/practitioners and what is their education? Is there some form of supervision and/or pedagogical support? Is there any obligation for in-service training? How much?	For now, the professionals are different in nurseries or preschools. Nursery schools: -Early Childhood educator (specific 3-year Degree); -Special Educator (specific 3-year Degree); -Janitor (no specific education, only specific in-service training); -Cook (specific vocational education) Preschools: -Curricular teacher (specific 5-year Degree); -Special Teacher for disabled children (specialization after the previous); -Special educator (specific 3-year Degree, like for nurseries); -Special trainers (specialized in specific disciplines: music, art, language, motoric, psycho-motoric, digitalisation, and so forth) -Janitor (no specific education, only specific in-service training) In nurseries and preschools managed by municipalities and the non-profit sector, there is a pedagogical (or psycho-pedagogical) team supporting school professionals. Not into the State provision. About in-service training, obligation and amount depend on the Region. In our Emilia Romagna Region, professionals working in the municipal and non-profit system have the obligation of at least 40 hours of in-service training per year. For the State system, there is no obligation.



<p><b>6. What are the main didactic topics of your National/Regional Curriculum? Is it a comprehensive curriculum or it is split between nursery and preschool?</b></p>	<p>Our National Curriculum for preschools goes around five “Experiences Fields”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Self’s knowledge/development and socialization;</li> <li>-The Body’s knowledge/take care and its movements;</li> <li>-Artistic languages: music, figurative arts, visual arts;</li> <li>-Language(s), communication and conversation;</li> <li>-The knowledge of the physical world.</li> </ul> <p>The Pedagogical Project for nursery schools is more focused on school setting quality and team quality. Starting from the already cited Law established in 2017, we are unifying the two perspectives in only one document.</p> <p>Anyway, each nursery and preschool can interpret the National Curriculum in different ways, according to team/community resources, local conditions, children’s needs and so on. The Art. 33 of our Republic Constitution guarantees the freedom of teaching inside the framework of the Law.</p>
<p><b>7. What is the attendance rate of the ECEC system in your Country? And in your town/city?</b></p>	<p>At the national level, the attendance rate is greatly different, Region-by-Region. The biggest difference is between North and South Italy.</p> <p>In Imola:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-&lt; 1 year: 14%;</li> <li>-From 1 to 2: 35%;</li> <li>-From 2 to 3: 65%;</li> <li>-From 3 to 6: 98%-100%</li> </ul> <p>In many Regions of the South, the attendance rate from 0 to 3 is very low. Emilia Romagna Region has the highest rate in the Country, but it is higher in the cities than in the countryside.</p>
<p><b>8. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children with special needs?</b></p>	<p>Yes. There is a formal and prescriptive agreement between the Municipality, Schools, Health Services, Social Services and local NGOs about the rules supporting the best inclusion of children with special needs. In particular, this agreement states the number of hours of special teachers and special educators for each child according to their profile; in addition, the Individual Educational Plan is monitored by a Case Conference, made up of: curricular teachers, special teachers and educators, pedagogue, neuropsychiatric, psychologist, rehabilitation specialists, social worker (if necessary) and parents.</p>
<p><b>9. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children belonging to different cultures or with families showing educational poverty?</b></p>	<p>No, at least at the preschool level. In Imola, we have specific programs in our Curriculum and Pedagogical Plan, but it is not an obligation. Usually, the State or the Region can provide specific funds to carry out specific projects in this field.</p> <p>Anyway, the Enrolment Regulation favour the attendance as soon as possible of children living in difficult conditions.</p>
<p><b>10. What is the rate of attendance of children belonging to non-native families in the ECEC system of your town/city? And in your school administration?</b></p>	<p>In both nurseries and preschools, the average rate of these children is 17%, especially those coming from Romania, Albania, Morocco and Pakistan. Anyway, there are great differences from school to school (from 5% to 66%). In our school administration, the spread is between 5% and 42% at the present.</p>
<p><b>11. Is there a preparatory year between preschool and primary school?</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>12. How much does attendance cost in your nursery and preschools?</b></p>	<p>Municipal and State preschools are for free, except the cost of lunch, € 139/month maximum: this tuition for lunch is strongly reduced for low-income families (even for free, for the poorest).</p> <p>In preschools provided by the non-profit sector parents usually have extra tuition to pay (from € 80 to € 150 per month). Municipal nursery schools could be very cheap or very expensive; it depends on the family’s income level. In Imola, the range is between € 0 and € 550 per month, for very rich people, of course; the average tuition is € 190 per month. Municipal and State preschools are for free, except the cost of lunch, € 139/month maximum: this tuition for lunch is strongly reduced for low-income families (even for free, for the poorest).In preschools provided by the non-profit sector parents usually have extra tuition to pay (from € 80 to € 150 per month).</p> <p>Municipal nursery schools could be very cheap or very expensive; it depends on the family’s income level. In Imola, the range is between € 0 and € 550 per month, for very rich people, of course; the average tuition is € 190 per month.</p> <p>This tuition is all-inclusive.</p>
<p><b>13. Is there a formal regulation to govern the parent’s involvement in preschool life? Could you describe it shortly?</b></p>	<p>Yes. In each nursery and preschool, there is the Participation Council (PC), made up of representatives of parents, staff, and community. In addition to being a consultant board for politicians and a way to involve all the families, the PC can propose activities to improve the educational offer of their nursery or preschool and, if some parent has specific skills, he/she can carry out specific workshops inside the school. The PC can promote fundraising activities and can realize refurbishing interventions, to improve furniture and outdoor play structures. Finally, the PC can promote parties, celebrations, training for parents, and so on.</p>

<b>PRESCHOOL SYSTEM IN ESTONIA</b>	
<b>1 . What is the general organization of the system (political level)?</b>	Estonia follows a comprehensive school system which is aimed to provide all students with the best education, regardless of their background. Parents can choose freely the pre-school institution, they want to send their child, provided there are places available. They can also choose the type of pre-school child care institution – private or municipal. Pre-school child care institutions must hold an education licence, which can be verified at the website of the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS) opens in a new tab. When we are talking about early childhood education then the municipality has the operational responsibility for the preschool. The preschools have the municipalities that governs, but there are also private preschools. Private pre-school child care institutions receive support from the municipalities at the amount determined by the municipality. When enrolling children in pre-school child care institutions, priority is given to children who live permanently in the same municipality, followed by children whose parents work in the catchment area. Children from other areas are accepted if places are available. Registrations should be submitted to the pre-school child care institution as early as possible.
<b>2. When can a child start attending?</b>	Pre-school education in Estonia is delivered to children between the ages of 18 months to 7 years in especially dedicated educational institutions.
<b>3. Is the attendance conditioned by parents' working status? How?</b>	No.
<b>4. Usually, how many hours per day your services are open? How many days per week? What is the annual school calendar?</b>	Our working hours are from 7 am to 7 pm from Monday to Friday. Parent has the possibility to bring their child every day, for 12 h a day. Kindergarten is closed only during the weekends and on national holidays and summer holiday. Length of summer holiday depends of a kindergarten. It can be from 2 weeks to 1 month. But for the holiday, head of the kindergarten must find a substitution kindergarten for the kids who want to participate during this time. Rest of the year is kindergarten open.
<b>5. What are the involved professionals/practitioners and what is their education? Is there some form of supervision and/or pedagogical support? Is there any obligation for in-service training? How much?</b>	We have different professional categories working in our preschool. First of all we have 26 preschool teachers (2 per group) who are university educated, at least 3 years of study (BA.) They are responsible for following the early childhood educations curriculum and on the development of children's general skills and their overall development in seven areas of learning and teaching. Then we have third teachers (teachers help) who have upper secondary education. Also have special educators (music, physical development and movement, art, swimming, speech therapist; special education) who supervise teachers in the work of providing the children. Then of course administrative part, cook, kitchen assistant, cleaner, janitors.
<b>6. What are the main didactic topics of your National/Regional Curriculum? Is it a comprehensive curriculum or it is split between nursery and preschool?</b>	Pre-school child care institutions support the development of children's general skills (personal, social, play and learning skills) and their overall development in seven areas of learning and teaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• me and the environment;</li> <li>• language development;</li> <li>• Estonian as a second language;</li> <li>• mathematics;</li> <li>• arts;</li> <li>• music;</li> <li>• physical development and movement.</li> </ul> As a rule, learning and teaching activities are carried out in Estonian, but local government council can also decide if the activities are carried out in different languages. Children whose home language is other than Estonian start to learn Estonian as a second language from the age of three. The organisation of learning and teaching is based on the national curriculum for pre-school child care institutions. Children who have completed the curriculum are issued a school readiness card which documents the child's individual development. Parents will submit the card to the school where the child is set to begin his/her formal education. Comparative international studies indicate that Estonian pre-school child care institutions have created good conditions for child-centred learning and teaching in co-operation with families. Estonian pre-school child care institutions place emphasis on teaching values, including supporting children's well-being and safety, preventing bullying and developing tolerance, caring, honesty and courage in children.
<b>7. What is the attendance rate of the ECEC system in your Country? And in your town/city?</b>	ECEC attendance rate in Estonia, regarding to the questionnaire done back in the 2019, was 62%. Since ECEC using (preschools, childcare) is not mandatory, we can say that the results are quite good. 2021-2022 attended preschool only in Tallinn more than 21232 children.



<p><b>8. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children with special needs?</b></p>	<p>In our municipality we are doing a very good cooperation with TÕNK (Tallinn Educational Counselling), Rajaleidja (nationwide network offering free educational counselling services for parents, teachers and other educators). After counselling they will be guided to a specialist who will provide help. It includes subsidies and depending of a need, pedagogies will make an IAK (individual development card) and will adjust groups learning environment).</p>
<p><b>9. Do you have any specific program to favour the inclusion of children belonging to different cultures or with families showing educational poverty?</b></p>	<p>Since 2010, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research is supporting a joint venture between the Danish branch of "Save the Children" and the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, entitled "Bully-Free Kindergarten". The majority of Estonian pre-school child care institutions have joined the initiative. Estonian pre-school child care institutions also belong to a network dedicated to improving children's health.</p> <p>Our kindergarten has joined with different international programs, and by that received a certificate „Tolerant kindergarten“. We have participated in any different Erasmus+ projects and through LTTA brought new knowledges and skills into our staff, who have practised these with children. Besides „Free of Bullying“ , we also have participated in Persona Dolls workshops. These are dolls with different special needs/body shapes/ skin color etc.</p>
<p><b>10. What is the rate of attendance of children belonging to non-native families in the ECEC system of your town/city? And in your school administration?</b></p>	<p>There is no data to be obtained on the number of non-native families in the municipality. In most of our preschools, we have children who have foreign-born parents, but the children themselves may have been born in Estonia.</p> <p>The families come from: Ukraine, Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden, China, Finland, Russia</p>
<p><b>11. Is there a preparatory year between preschool and primary school?</b></p>	<p>No, there is not. Children finish kindergarten at the age of 7 (if there is no school extension) and go straight to school.</p>
<p><b>12. How much does attendance cost in your nursery and preschools?</b></p>	<p>A kindergarten with swimming pool- 97,15€ per child/ 87,15€ without swimming pool. But if one of the parents is Tallinn resident, then city compensates % of it (it depends of families income). If there is more than 2 children from the same family attending preschool at the same time, the attendance cost is free. Also when parent has a child with special needs (has to have a specialists decision) ECEC is free.</p> <p>Parents who are Tallinn residents dont have to pay for the food.</p>
<p><b>13. Is there a formal regulation to govern the parent's involvement in preschool life? Could you describe it shortly?</b></p>	<p>We are obliged to have one parent meeting per year where we present the preschool's teaching and vision. We have a parent council that gathers opinions and views and presents these in a special parents-teachers meeting (1-2 times/year). Parents are invited to an individual meeting concerning their child, at least once a year/it can be done more often if necessary.</p>

## CHAPTER II

# Children are not without stories. Relevance of narration activities inside the socialization process during the preschool years

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, and giving birth to evolution. It is, strictly speaking, a real factor in scientific research."<sup>1</sup>  
 (Albert Einstein)<sup>1</sup>

"Fairy tales don't tell children that dragons exist: children already know they exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be defeated."<sup>2</sup>  
 (G.K. Chesterton)<sup>2</sup>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In young children's everyday life, tales and stories – no matter if told, drowned, or heard – are part of activities at home and everywhere are welcome. Adults and teachers can be used to tell a story when they are with children, and the story is often come up with on the spot.

For example, parents can tell stories during car journeys. Their purpose may be to keep the children calm or not to bore them, and often this story starts from something casual or puts just the car trip into a fairy tale

*"Once upon a time there was a child, who did not want to sit in the car seat ..."*



Parents also play an essential role in building memory skills. For example, by answering their children's questions, parents co-construct a shared narrative of family history, where everyone has their space and role, repeating the family ties between great-grandparents, grandparents, uncles and cousins several times.

Something similar happens in nursery schools and preschools when stories told by the teacher combine an educational choice with an organizational function: for example, a story can be told to children in the morning, at the beginning of the school activities, to facilitate this moment of transition from home to school.

Day by day, oral storytelling takes the characteristics of a routine, a moment that children know, anticipate and wait for because this routine underlines the transition from one stage to another in the day.

Children participate in the storytelling routine, contributing with drawings, objects, words and phrases, but within an educational framework organized by the adult. For example, often during the activities described above, children try to introduce minor variations in the story, intervene with questions or joke with the characters' names. Therefore, the teacher accepts and includes in the tale the children's proposals, enriching the characteristics of the interaction. In this way, teachers and children build and share an interaction framework made up of three elements: an adult, one or some children and an oral tale, which can be told with many variations.



### 2. TELL ME A STORY

Storytelling has an old tradition; its roots come from Greek and Latin classics. Before being written down, stories were entrusted to the oral tradition and the collective memory of a community; in this way, people considered these stories as symbolic objects.

Moreover, each country has its folktales, which have been collected in popular traditions. The fairy tales by novelists such as the Grimm brothers are still very popular with children, even thanks to famous movie transpositions (Disney cartoons) and other media.

In recent decades, the large production of books for children and the increasing references about the importance and benefits of shared reading from the first months of life between adults and children has promoted projects based on enhancing early aloud storytelling.

In every country there is a large production of books for children of different ages; the contents of these books cover many aspects of the children's lives, such as time spent with family, domestic animals, emotions, fears, and journeys. Wordless books rely on illustrations to convey meaning and are very functional in representing actions, emotions and thinking, permitting the children to enjoy books even on their own.

Used by a skilled adult, the illustrations can serve as a resource for sharing with the child thoughts and feelings expressed by the characters.



<sup>1</sup> Einstein, A. (1931) On Cosmic Religion and Other Opinions and Aphorisms. New York, Mineola: Dover Publication, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> <https://neil-gaiman.tumblr.com/post/101407141743/every-version-of-that-chesterton-quotation-about>

<sup>3</sup> The early storytelling has its main international reference point in Born to Read project (<https://bornstoread.org/>) whose core aim lies in offering the child opportunities for affective and cognitive development: from the first year onwards, the adult offers the child an invaluable opportunity to hear and participate at sharing stories, to feel a sense of protection, generated by the child feeling a pleasure to be next to an adult who reads or tells stories. Born to read project is inspired by studies and experiences conducted at the Boston Medical Center which led, between the eighties and nineties, to the affirmation, in the United States, of the original initiative Reach Out and Read, born in a more strictly pediatric context, and Born to read followed by other similar ones in different territorial contexts, such as for example, the British Bookstart born in 1992, the Catalan Nascuts for Llegir, born in 2003, the German Zum lesen geboren of 2005 the "Buchstart" - "Né pour lire" - "Born to read" born in Switzerland in 2006, the Rođeni za čitanje project born in Croatia in 2007 and "Nati per leggere" in Italy.

Wordless books improve language, contribute to young children's oral language growth, and are essential for promoting autonomous literacy processes.

A step ahead, children can benefit from books that add balloons to the characters, like the comic bubble; researchers report that even if most children are not familiar with this form of communication, they are quick to learn their function and symbolic nature.

This kind of book can be purposefully selected to show to children the relationship between ideas and actions, suggesting taking the point of view of the characters; in this way, they can understand how a mental mood can shape a story.

Moreover, wordless books or books with balloons can be excellent resources to connect actions and emotional awareness about them.

Time by time, books open the children the doors to the world; "reading", in a broad sense, can become, step by step, not only an activity shared with an adult but also something that the children can carry out by themselves, choosing the books they would like to read, even if they are not yet able to read the words.

These developmental processes can be boosted in nursery schools and preschools, thanks to socialisation and the presence of professional adults.

In these contexts, we can well consider what scholars say, namely, storytelling is an activity that consists of three aspects: story, plot, and language. Usually, we often confuse "story" and "plot" as if they had the same meaning. Instead, if "plot" is the narrative structure (rebuild ex-post or conceived as a theoretical comprehensive map of all possible connections), "story" is the process along which the characters move, bumping into unpredictable forks, where they have to choose what direction to follow. The signal that there is a fork is the presence of an unexpected event (also an object, or another narrative activity crossing the first one) that changes the scenario and brings narration towards new experiences: we name this event "a trigger" (see chapter 3, § 3.2.2). Finally, "language" permit giving many different (emotional, cognitive) nuances to the same stories, multiplying them endlessly.

### 3. STORYTELLING AND SOCIO-COGNITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY (VYGOTSKY AND BRUNER)

According to these general ideas, our **NARRATE project** (implementing the Narrative Approach in Early Education) aims to offer a methodological framework for supporting children's cognitive and emotional development, social skills and the assumption of responsibility in the community (see: the eight citizenship skills<sup>4</sup>), through enhancing children's narrative attitude in every moment of the daily life at school, modifying the school context as well, to reach easily this purpose.

The Narrate Project starts from the general idea that it is essential to encourage children's spontaneous narrations as much as possible in preschool, considered one of the starting points to build cognitive and relational skills and promote stable literacy. The scientific background has some relevant pylons in the socio-cognitive approach to children's development, where the context's features have to be appropriate to make ideas and actions shareable and understandable.

This view is very close to the reflections on how the "reality construction" process goes on: as the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky said, language and symbolic systems – which are social tools – wear our thoughts and individual reality representation (Vygotsky, 1998; Vasileva, Balyasnikova, 2019)

Since mental functions are based on socialization, it inevitably leads to an emphasis on the importance of the social environment and the interactions' development. Social interaction is seen as a crucial part of the processes of development and learning. Vygotsky conceives learning as something which takes place in the virtual space of potential not yet effectively operative child's capacity, known as the "Zone of Proximal Development". If adequately structured, social interactions – between not only adults and children but also among peers – represent the "engine" to make the Zone of Proximal Development operative.

The social context, considered as any aspect of the environment directly or indirectly influenced by culture, is central to the child's cognitive development and it is critical for acquiring mental processes. Before Vygotsky, the Western tradition, following in the footsteps of Piagetian theory, had considered cognitive activity as a set of internal mental processes accessible only to the single individual; with the diffusion of Vygotsky's perspective, we begin to consider cognition as a shared mental process and to consider the role of the social context in the acquisition of cognitive tools.

The perspective formulated by Vygotsky is based on the following statement:

**"Learning and development are interdependent processes from the child's first day of life"**

In fact, according to him, learning begins much earlier than school age. Starting from birth, children meet objects and adults, which are in their environment. Interacting with them means having a source of learning for the child, which Vygotsky defines as spontaneous learning.

According to Vygotsky, this social context includes different types of interaction, among children and adults, but even among children; usually, these interactions are mediated by one or more objects or tools.



The inspiring studies of the various national initiatives document how the earliest listening to read aloud, addressed to children even a few months old, even before the acquisition of speech, is able to improve the understanding of written language, an area of linguistic competence in which deficits accumulate that can negatively affect academic success, especially in families affected by disadvantaged conditions or social hardship. The educational method of reading aloud has shown itself capable of exercising a "protective" effect precisely against children from social areas and families affected by factors of distress, in which protection should not be limited only to the risk factors constituted by illness and violence but, in a broader sense, also to the possible deprivation of "adequate opportunities for affective and cognitive development". The emotional component present in these experiences has proved capable of producing positive effects in later ages, from the earliest preschooling up to developmental age, and even beyond, consolidating over time the aptitude and familiarity of reading, listening, attention and concentration

<sup>4</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/improving-quality/key-competences>

Social activities can promote cognitive development if the group is made up of members who already have and others that do not have the same abilities and skills. A shared activity allows less skilled children to go beyond the skills they already have to gain new competencies that they will be able shortly to use autonomously (Rogoff, 1999).

In this perspective, objects like stories and books can take the function of social tools, when they become shared activities (listening and reading together).

Another relevant academic contribution in this field came from the studies of another scholar, Jerome Bruner.

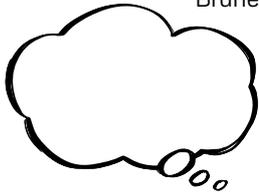
For Bruner, the development and learning process takes place through the mental media used by children to represent their experiences. The child builds a representation of his/her experiences through functional, iconic, or symbolic keys. Each of these three keys of representation "places a powerful impress on the mental life of human beings at different ages, and their interplay persists as one of the major features of adult mental life" (Bruner, 1966, p. 1). The core of Bruner's theory is the notion of culture. In an educational context, culture represents all the content that has to be transmitted to the child; in the same way, each context in which the child is an active participant tries to share specific cultural content.

Bruner emphasises the importance of social interaction as specific support to language learning. This learning is facilitated by sharing on a daily base specific actions and related communication routines (formats). In this way, children develop linguistic competencies through being active with an adult in shared and routine activities. But the content of this linguistic exchange is strictly determined by the culture of that specific context, where specific tales and stories have a central role, as an integrated part of the culture itself.

Bruner wrote that "culture" is the "toolkit" for sense-making to reality and communicating about it; as such, it orients our natural endowment to act, perceive, make sense, and think. (1966, p. 126).

Bruner (1990) proposes his studies on narrative to bring them into the framework of cultural psychology.

He suggests the existence of two basic modes of **THINKING** : 1) paradigmatic or logical-scientific thinking; 2) narrative thinking. The first mode is the classic one, used in studies of human cognition. The narrative mode is based on common knowledge and stories; it is interested in the episodes of human actions. It develops practical and contextualized knowledge; it has a temporal structure and supports the children's agency (ability to act positively on their environment and change it).



Starting from Bruner's point of view, we can assume that culture, narration, and agency represent another set of elements able to help the developmental process.

To better understand this assumption, we can refer to the contribution offered by William Corsaro in the field of the sociology of childhood.

In this approach, children are seen as creative and active social actors capable of autonomously creating their own cultures and socialization.

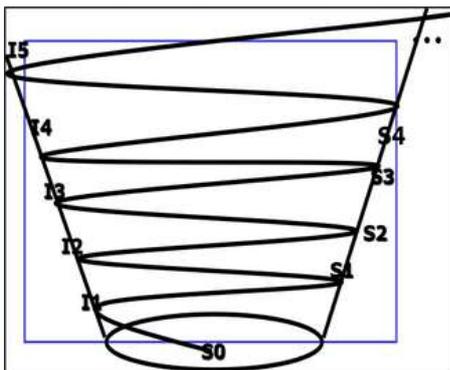
Socialization is not only a process of adaptation and internalization but also of appropriation, interpretation and reproduction of the social reality. To keep together these perspectives, Corsaro (1985;1994) proposes the concept of "interpretative reproduction".

The adjective "Interpretative" emphasizes the creative and innovative aspects of children's social participation; the noun "reproduction" underlines that children do not just internalize society and culture, but actively contribute to their production and transformation.

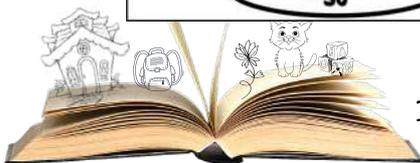
This process does not have an individual character but is shared with family members and peers in educational contexts. The form used by these interactions is the narrative one; that is, from an early age, children reinterpret the events in which they are involved by building stories in which they transfer positive and negative family experiences, the relationship between the different roles assumed by adults, micro and macro cultural elements.

These stories also become a way to exercise agency, i.e. the ability to act within a socio-cultural context that determines the meaning of the different situations and events that occur in the course of daily life.

Vygotsky and Bruner's approaches have an important feature in common: they do not see development and learning as a linear pathway but as a spiral process of recurrence development.



Dynamic of spiral process of development  
 S0: starting point (birth)  
 I: individual phase  
 S: social phase



The “socio-constructivist perspective” argues that development takes place through interactions, which require cooperation and conflicts; they allow us to face new situations, solve problems and find agreements that get more and more complex and adaptive throughout development.

These developmental processes give children ongoing new skills; these allow children to participate in social interactions with adults and children, using ever higher and more elaborated level skills.

This is the meaning of the previous image of the spiral processes of development.

From a Vygotskian perspective, each child often appropriates new learning through ways in which it can be shared as collective narratives of events that require rules. The spontaneous plays of pre-schoolers are examples of how plays and their rules are intertwined.

In Bruner’s perspective, stories are not just the content of a narrative but, passing from the collective to the individual level, they become part of the experiences through which each of us represents ourselves. The stories spontaneously constructed by children, starting from an object, or an event, engage them in constructing a new, different, creative, alternative meaning, for example, to the one of an adult, both parent and teacher.

But this personal processing becomes part of the more comprehensive socialization processes, which offers every child the transition to the adult world, step by step.

#### 4. APPLYING THE NARRATIVE APPROACH: ADULTS, CHILDREN AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Before approaching this topic, it is necessary to clarify that in any educational context, there are two different and asymmetric standpoints between **adults** (parents or teachers) and **children**; this asymmetry is based on both differences in institutional and social roles and emotional and linguistic different developmental stages.



From the point of view of the socio-constructivist approach, this asymmetric interaction, far to be a problem, can become very useful if it is modulated and mediated by the context’s features, where social interactions are embedded.

Around the age of 3 or 4 years, children begin to find a lot of interest in building stories using a specific language format. Adults use narrative skills for different goals i.e.: for the development of oral language and conceptual development; as a bridge to literacy; as a predictor of school success.

Providing opportunities and encouragement for children to use language in multiple ways would seem to be an effective way to scaffold the merging of language and thought.

In this first section, we approach the adult’s standpoints. In the second section, children’s standpoints will be discussed. In the third section, we pay attention to the educational contexts.

##### 4.1 THE ADULTS’ STANDPOINT

The adults’ spontaneous narratives are characterized by the choice of which events to refer to and in what order to connect them – so it is a representation or personal rearrangement of the story rather than the story itself. Here, it is the case to remember the difference between story and narrative, and the easiest way to do that is to reshuffle the order of events: a new events order means you have a new narrative of the same story. In other words, starting from a single story, the teller can come up with several narratives. The narrative turns a story into information about who is telling it, that is, into knowledge for whom is reading or listening to the story. Each story event becomes a unit of knowledge the audience requires.

A narrative is a paradox because it seeks to convey truth by hiding it. A storyteller arranges the items of knowledge in such a way that they are revealed gradually, which initially implies obscuring chunks of reality behind what is told. Such deliberate author’s action creates a sense of mystery or tension and creates a desire in the audience to discover what is happening in the story and why. In this sense, a narrative is effectively the opposite of a report.

For example, a report presents information to be understood by the audience immediately as it is being related. A neutral, matter-of-fact presentation probably maintains a chronology of events. It explains a state of affairs step by step and aims for maximum clarity at every stage. It seeks to convey truth by simply telling it. On the other hand, the point of a narrative is that the beneficiary perceives the story’s specific reality that the teller wants to point out. Therefore, the narrative capacity of who tells is responsible for how the beneficiary perceives the story.

A story consists of **events** that a narrator relates. Events consists of **actions** carried out by **characters**, characters are motivated, they have reasons for what they do; they are involved in conflicts; the same story may be told in different ways, namely, have different narratives.

Note that we are talking about narrative in the dramaturgical sense, not social. Like “storytelling”, the word “narrative” has become a bit of a catchphrase. We are talking about the use of the term primarily for storytellers creating novels, films, and plays. Such works tend to be closed narratives with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

An adult narrative may present the story’s events in linear, chronological order or not. But the story remains the story – even if it is told backwards. And that’s the easy way to remember the difference between story and narrative:



if you reshuffle the order of events, you are changing the narrative – the way you tell the story – and perhaps its premise too, but you are not changing the story itself. Events in a story are effectively pieces of knowledge the author wants to send – in a particular order, the narrative – to the beneficiary, i.e. the reader or audience. The story is told when all the pertinent knowledge has been presented and when all the pieces of information necessary for the story to feel like a coherent unity are conveyed. An author may choose to tell a story with more or less scope and detail; these choices – the way the information is presented – can make different narratives out of essentially the same story. In a story, basically, any event tends to involve characters. If a tree falls in the forest, the question for an author is not so much whether it makes a sound but whether it falls on anybody’s head – or otherwise affects somebody. A natural disaster could be an exciting idea for a story event, but if you are really involved in it, it is not exciting. It only gets exciting when you have the characters experience such an event.

**? Why do we have to consider the adult’s point of view about narrative, stories, and storytelling?**

Adults, parents in the family and teachers in preschools, usually tell some stories to the children, but they refer to their adult, linguistic and narrative competencies built during the development process and inside the schools attended.

Adults use an adult grammar of narration activity; they receive and accept the children’s interventions, their requests to clarify some details, digressions, and inventions, but they remain faithful to the plot of the story.

Let’s suppose adults are not helped to reflect on the potential of sharing stories aloud with children: in that case, this activity remains only an educational and didactic tool while it could also be a cognitive development exercise, as it can allow children to exercise their “agency” skills.

**4.2 THE CHILDREN’S STANDPOINT**

The framework of a narrative is the simple action sequence, dealing with the intentions and goals of the actors, and there is exhaustive evidence of children’s engagement with such sequences in everyday life. Infants and toddlers are experts at learning daily life routines and paying attention to the intentions and goals of themselves and others. The narrative approach also emerges early in primitive forms, as toddlers and adults take on pretend roles (e.g., ‘meow I’m a kitty-cat’) and action plays (‘rrr goes the train down the tracks’).

Over the preschool years, such plays become more elaborate and framed in more complex language.

Young children also become story constructors and tellers with or without specific objects and adults’ suggestions. Research of narrative in action (as in plays) might suggest that narrative is a natural ‘built-in’ mode of human thought (Bruner, 1986). Yet there is much more inside the narrative than an action sequence; as Bruner proposed, the narrative consists of a “landscape of action and a landscape of consciousness”: a story is about “when”, “why”, and “how”. In their storytelling, very young children are pretty unaware of the landscape of consciousness; when children of 3 or 4 years tell real or imaginary stories, they typically report only the action (when



and how), omitting any mention of mental states or emotions (why). Even when the child is engaged in reporting on her own experience in a prior event, the account tends to be focused on activity, lacking the expression of motivations, attitudes, emotions, or evaluations.



Stories that involve fantasy and strange settings, such as **classic fairy tales**, often present puzzling actions that require the listener to reason about motivations, emotions, and even mystery and magic. These more complex stories require holding in mind the mental motivations, thoughts, goals, and desires of more than one character, and they may require third-person reasoning about hidden beliefs and desires that are not made clear in the text of the story.

Aesop’s fables are examples of this kind. Such tales present many opportunities for adults to illustrate mental concepts. However, while there is a lot of research on how children construct stories, there is much less on how the interaction between the teacher and the stories produced by children is structured which, essentially, is the core of the present project.

The inclination of adults to decide more or less arbitrarily what is a good story for children (such as Bible stories) and what is too scary (such as ‘Hansel and Gretel’) further complicates this scenario.

One thing that is eminently clear about children’s stories is that mastery of spoken is essential to the child’s narrative experience, especially when the narrative is carried out in a social context. Language learning and social interaction are strictly linked activities: the more complex the language children are exposed to, the more easily they will understand a story. And the more practice children have to listen to stories, the better their understanding of complex language will be. It is not the form of language that is critical to development but rather language use or function. Language use is vital to social, cognitive, emotional, and personal growth. Research on psychological development indicates that the expansion of mental skills and consciousness through language use is critical.



Sharing memories of experiences with others, and listening to stories, eventually leads the child to a level of narrative consciousness that includes temporality, that is, an awareness of the specificity of past and future, as well as a recognition of the motivations of characters to be engaged in actions. Narrative consciousness, prepared for by reflective skill, is essential for several reasons: the ability to think about what has been said; the preparation for the more mature level of cultural consciousness.

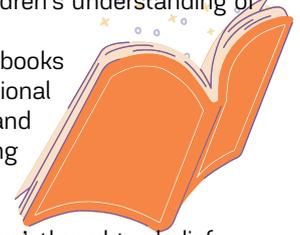


Children's language reflects their growing understanding of their and others' mental states.<sup>5</sup> By the age of three, children begin to talk more frequently about beliefs and knowledge. By the age of four, children begin to distinguish between 'think' and 'know', i.e. to achieve an understanding of mental states, and that shared reading experiences at home can serve to promote children's understanding of the mind. The role of parents telling fairy books at home and the use of words indicating mental states watching a picture-book increase the success of children's understanding of characters' intentions.

Many books for three-to six-year-old children contain mental state references, and often storybooks rely heavily upon illustration to convey meaning. Still, not all children's illustrations make emotional states equally relevant. Adult mediation, therefore, is essential in helping children understand and integrate characters' mental states with the plot. This mediation allows for constructing meaning from the book's reading experience. Mediation is also essential for helping children to comprehend narratives.

Summing up, the adults' mediation helps children make the connection between characters' thoughts, beliefs, desires, and intentions (the landscape of consciousness) and their behaviours (the landscape of action).

In other words, all these results highlight the importance of adult's mediation in introducing, monitoring, and scaffolding children's understanding and usage of metacognitive language<sup>5</sup>, starting from sharing stories, which provides an excellent medium in which this mediation can occur.



#### 4.3 THE CONTEXT

The preschool years require children to become proficient in coping with daily transitions, going from home to school and back again. These are the years in which all the children's abilities that will support the course of development are built in the social world.

Let's consider, for example, the development of executive functions<sup>6</sup>; specifically related to the theme of narration and the construction of stories, an important element is the "working memory"<sup>7</sup> and the ability to stay focused.

Many kinds of research have shown how the contexts in which interactions between adults and children take place can favour the acquisition of fundamental skills for developing knowledge of others using one's own social and cognitive tools. The quantity, quality, and frequency of interactions between parents and children are influenced by the family culture that offers each child a unique growth experience.

The case of educational contexts (like preschools) is different because they are based on a community culture from which largely similar and comparable rules, programmes, and didactic indications derive. This cultural generalization is greatly facilitated by the sharing of narratives, as mentioned above, but also by making available spaces and tools specifically designed to facilitate free play and spontaneous storytelling (see below chapter 3, §§ 4.1.2. and 4.1.3).



The management of times and spaces thus becomes a point from which to start imagining that storytelling, in all its forms, can become routines between adults and children and between children.

We should imagine a context in which, for example, rules are not mere prescriptions of behaviour, but the result of the shared story of collective and individual needs: a story of socialization of the meaning that a rule can assume as a bearer of well-being for the community.

In the next section, we will expand on this reflection on the relationship between storytelling and socialization.



### 5. NARRATIVE IN EVERYDAY LIFE



Children's social understanding always begins in everyday life as concrete activities in particular contexts in which the child is a protagonist, an agent, a victim, or an accomplice. Once children have grasped the basic ideas of language's usage, their main linguistic interest focuses on human action and interaction, and its results. The relationships between agent/action, action/object, agent/object, action/place, and owner/possessed constitute the most important part of the semantic relations that appear in the first stage of language development. These forms appear not only in stories but also in requests, in exchanging objects, and in giving and commenting on the action of others.

Furthermore, the child is precociously and deeply sensitive to "anybody's goals" and their achievement. People and their actions dominate the child's interest and attention. Children are quick to point out the unusual events and neglect the already known – ones to focus attention and get information.

Unsurprisingly, they are much more likely to devote their linguistic efforts to what is unusual in their world as they begin acquiring the language. Not only do they perk up in the presence of novelty, but they also gesture, vocalize, and finally talk about what is unusual. Furthermore, children are sensitive to constructing and preserving the basic grammatical structure, i.e., the recurring subject-verb as the base of linguistic structures: "someone does something", a typical structure of indicative sentences.

Finally, children's perspective is mainly influenced by affective and emotional motivations.

These grammatical/lexical/prosodic features provide the child with a large and early set of narrative tools that prompt children to narratively organize experience, ensuring that these features take priority in language acquisition strategies.



5 It represents the ability of a person to reflect on his own cognitive processes and to be aware of them.

6 Executive functions refer to the cognitive capacities involved in initiating, planning, organizing, and regulating behaviours

7 Working memory can be defined as a temporary storage system, which maintains a limited amount of information in a limited time, to allow for immediate use.

We need to note that children consequently produce and understand stories and are comforted and alarmed by them long before they can handle abstract (Piagetian) logical propositions that can be translated into linguistic form. On the other hand, we also know that logical propositions are more easily understandable by the child when they are incorporated into an ongoing story.

The parts of a story are not simple independent spots of it but hide within themselves the operations that can be performed on them. Therefore, it seems plausible to consider narratives as the first attempts at a logical interpretation of reality, before the child has the mental skills to manage them with those logical calculations that subsequently develop towards adulthood.

These forms of narratives are usually found in infant speech at the age of three. It involves a simple orientation, a linear representation with a trigger event, a resolution and sometimes an aftermath. Most deal with the child's actions in daily life, illustrating how children's social understanding begins as concrete activities in particular contexts in which the child is a protagonist – an agent, a victim, an accomplice. The child learns to play a part in the everyday family "drama" or "scenario" before any telling, justifying, or excusing is required.

What is permissible and what is not, what leads to certain results – all this is first learned in practice.

According to Dunn (1988), children's social understanding always begins in everyday life as concrete activities in particular contexts in which the child is a protagonist, an agent, a victim, or an accomplice. The transformation of this knowledge into language occurs only later, but the child is linguistically sensitive.

In summary, understanding the everyday "family drama" comes first in the form of concrete activities. The child early masters the linguistic forms to refer to actions and their consequences as they occur. He learns sooner or later that what you do is drastically influenced by how you tell what you are doing, will do or have done.



The first interactions between parents and children are regulated by repeating different sequences of actions to which the child responds to allow the activity to continue.

Usually, the first communicative exchanges between mother and new born occur well above the child's linguistic capabilities. However, they assume the connotations of real intentional dialogue (at least on the part of the adult) to the extent that the adult, for example, starts a sequence and waits for a gesture or a vocal response from the child (that is, allowing children to take their own 'turn').

Starting from the child's spontaneous behaviour, the parents take the initiative and produce stable micro-sequences of events, repeatable over time, and progressively appropriated by the child. These spatiotemporal sequences are called "frames": they concern various moments of daily life: when the adult completes the child's actions (instrumental frame), provides direct indications of the child's behaviour (feed-back frame), offers a behavioural model to imitate (frame to model); or when communicative exchanges take place between the partners (speech frame) or previous activities are recalled (memory frame). In other words, the adult intentionally offers what Bruner defines as a scaffolding: an action to support the child's activity, which allows him to share the meanings characterizing the adult world step by step.

The increasing complexity of articulation of these frames introduces the experience of routines, based on physical contact, visible from the first months of life (the mother's playful caresses that make the baby laugh, but also the baby touching the mother's face to get an exclamation). Other routines are related to the exchange of objects, typical of a later age (the mother offering an object to the child, or the child indicating to the mother which objects he/she wants). Since all these frames are supported by the mother's communication, the first experiences of shared narration are constituted. If the child enters kindergarten, educators must be aware of these previous experiences and collect these communication structures shared by the family.

The appropriation and mastery of frames and their transformation into daily rules and routines on the functioning of social relationships (for example, in the family) is already available between the second and third years of life. From then on, children can understand the feelings of others and also the goals and intentions of other people's behaviour. Conflicting and cooperative behaviours, make-believe games, invented stories and questions are the manifestation of interest in other people but also of practical use of the knowledge already possessed to influence the behaviour of others.

There is also an intuitive and practical knowledge, of making excuses for one's failure and justifying rule-breaking. Authority relationships in the family begin to be identified and respected. Mastering this practical knowledge means applying and modifying it according to different situations and expressing it verbally.

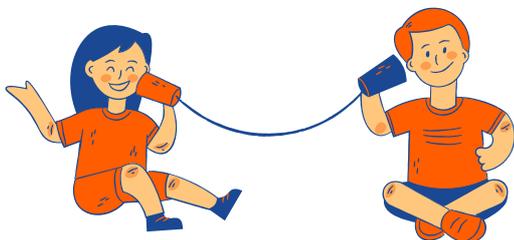
Above all, the observations on the use of rules, justifications and jokes show that children master not only the specific dynamics of a family context but some fundamental principles of the culture outside the family. The principles concerning the possession of objects, the distinction between conventions and moral norms, some forms of distributive justice, and the division of tasks and responsibilities between adults and children. In this way, reality is constructed by sharing the meaning attributed to habitual and predictable actions with the adults.

Routines are also established between peers, which can be defined as cultural (see next paragraph). Usually, in the form of collective playful activities, they are essential for understanding the cultural microsystems that children produce in their living environments (family, preschools, and playgrounds). They constitute a wealth of appropriate experiences shared by all participants, resulting in a specific peer culture.



## 6. NARRATIVE AS THE TEXTURE OF PEER CULTURE

Peer culture is the set of activities, interests, values and norms children produce and share in daily interactions with peers (Corsaro, 1985; 1994). The experience children have of the social world, mediated by interactions with adults, quickly brings them into contact with a series of cultural and social knowledge, not always easy to understand, even from a linguistic and communicative point of view.



First of all, children access adult culture by interpreting what happens in social life from their point of view. Children reproduce and rearrange these meanings in their activities and interests. It happens, for example, in case of fears or situations that generate conflict and anguish, such as fairy tales, painful events, or recommendations from adults, when they warn children of some danger. Children, in turn, incorporate into their play these stories with monsters, witches, fear of fire and being alone and lost.

All these experiences and information coming from the social environment (sometimes conflicting and accompanied by doubts and uncertainties) are re-proposed and reformulated by the children in joint activities, giving rise to the culture of peers. Narratives enter fully at this point in the process of giving collective meanings to collective experiences.

Furthermore, children try to bring disorienting elements such as fears and uncertainties into known and controlled activities, building forms of collective participation in activities with their peers and sharing strategies to resist or challenge the adult's rules.

However, the construction of peer culture does not happen by simple imitation of adult behaviour. Children, through collective activities, creatively appropriate the information collected from the adult world, transform and add elements to select, intensify or amplify the meaning of the events, arriving at producing their own specific, persistent and autonomous culture with different stories and reinterpretations coming from their daily experiences. In other words, children give life and meaning to recurring and increasingly complex stories and routines. Their social life is based on routines and stories that are modified and passed on in their peer groups.

From the second year of life, for example, playful and friendly relationships with siblings or other peers allow children to feel part of a social group, subordinate to the adult one, but distinct from it. For example, in many kindergartens, culture is characterized by the children's constant attempt to maintain control over a part of their daily life, usually well organized by teachers, through the creation of social activities (plays, songs, jokes and various entertainments) which exclude the adult and involve only the peer group. Thus, there are two main objectives of a peer culture: to create a sphere of activities controlled by children; share them, even against the attempts of adults to interfere.

Children's resistance to adult demands is also evident in behaviours that are observable on a daily basis and well known to the peer group and adults. Typical examples are the grimaces made as soon as an adult turns away, or running around a table when the adult calls them to perform activities they want (or pretend to want) to avoid.

Children also organize their own parallel life, in which resistance against the adult, almost a subtle challenge, is structured in routines known only to them, and takes place during playtime or in less controlled situations, above all in free play or play in open spaces. Especially in kindergartens, there are also various ways to bring "forbidden" things to school, avoiding consequences.

Bringing small toys or sweets from home, even without the knowledge of the parents, which children can easily hide in their pockets and then show or offer to classmates, may constitute a violation of the rule which prohibits bringing personal toys to school, to avoid discussions on individual or collective use. Wise teachers, especially if not shown openly, often ignore these small transgressions, as they do not question the essential value of the rule and therefore do not require its reinforcement or punitive intervention. Indeed, the minor violation ends up giving more strength to the general rule, thus allowing the adult to intervene only when truly necessary, that is, when the deviance exceeds a certain limit.

Furthermore, children develop a strong sense of belonging to a group and a group identity also through resistance to rules. Friendship allows children to avoid loneliness but also helps them build a social identity, using social approval and disapproval as elements of social and individual knowledge.

The children collectively build a parallel life, made up of a wide range of behaviours bordering on what is forbidden, tolerated and required by the rules in different contexts. These activities also show how broad and sophisticated children's knowledge of school organization is.

By reconstructing the system of rules and norms, justifications, and values typical of the adult world, and the preschool world, children become aware of how much it is possible to achieve personal goals and advantages by sharing with their peers the strategies for negotiating spaces of autonomy, between the constraints of common rules and values.

Awareness of the rule system that characterizes school (but also the family) contexts allows children to set themselves goals and personal advantages to achieve, sharing strategies with their peers to negotiate more and more margins of autonomy.



In other words, children satisfy their need to explore and discover the dynamics of interpersonal and social relationships through a collective activity of attributing meaning to what happens in relationships, for example during quarrels, which become the place to share basic rules of friendship. Reciprocity, sharing a single vision of the world and having common goals to achieve allows people (not only children but also everyone) to stay in a virtuous circle where the rules are better defined and modified precisely through their transgression, thus also adapting to the rhythms of children's development.



What is observed in the daily life of **kindergarten** is also found in later ages; new behaviours appear but are always related to a specific peer's culture since they should be seen as routines known and predictable to the groups themselves. Childhood's play routines give way to verbal production; discussions, gossip and sharing of "secrets", become narrative tools to state, again and again, the belonging of the singles to the group and underline common values and beliefs.

Among the many features of young children's lives and their socialization with peers, two central themes constantly appear: children make constant attempts to gain control of their own lives and they always try to share that control. Indirectly, we can identify these two themes by how young children worry about their small physical size, compared to the adults' ones. They make this concern the object of social interaction, starting from looking with admiration at those adults with power and authority (see Corsaro, 1985). They come to really appreciate "growing up" and "getting bigger." In fact, for young children, the main difference between them and adults is that adults are bigger, which is also true for adults of short stature. The best evidence to understand that children enjoy 'being older' is their preference to use areas of the school where they are, in the authentic sense, older. When playing on climbing frames or in playhouses, children routinely climb to higher levels, where they can look down on others, especially adults. Another attraction of these climbing structures is that adults do not enter them easily as they are adapted to the size of children.

A frequent play routine in the climbing structures of all the preschools where Corsaro has made observations is for children to chase each other to the top, from where they then look down and shout, "We are bigger than any other!". The scream can turn into a song; it is something even more profound than screaming from the point of view of the peer's culture. Corsaro reports this observation from a school in the USA: "Several children from a nursery school have climbed to the top level of a small house in the outer courtyard. One of the children, Dominic, yelled at an educator: "Willy! Willy! Hi, Willy!" Willy looked up and nodded to Dominic. Then Eva and Allen yelled, "Willy! Willy! Willy!" Soon two others, Beth and Brian, joined the three children and all five children started singing together: "Willy! Willy! Willy! We're bigger than you!" This song continued for several minutes and Willy seemed slightly uncomfortable with it. He showed this discomfort by laughing, shaking his head and moving around the school without apparent reason.



The issue of how to deal with adult control over peer group activities is central to peer group development; it is evidenced by a wide range of behaviours by children about gaining control over adult authority, which children often actively oppose. The conflicts that are generated this way increase the cohesion of the group and better define its identity.

The conflict certainly does not concern only the relationship between children and adults: peer groups are not always the image of peace, joy and the spirit of sharing. Young children argue, fight, push, kick and sometimes even bite. Although physical aggression is rare, conflicts and verbal disputes are common features of children's group functioning and culture.

Studies of friendships among children have documented what at first seems contradictory: conflicts often arise in friendship relationships, rather than in less relevant relationships between children. This finding seems surprising only because developmental psychologists do not always carefully distinguish social conflict as a script of cultural interaction between peers from individual acts of aggression and therefore tend to focus on the characteristics of the individual (rather than interpersonal and cultural) conflict. When we look closely at conflict among children in peer group interaction, particularly debates and verbal arguments, we find that such conflicts often strengthen interpersonal alliances and improve the organization of social groups, rather than harming them.

The previous observations could be largely influenced by the more general culture of the group's belonging, not so much in the principles, as in the expressive modalities: for example, the latter probably differs between the countries of Northern Europe and the Mediterranean ones, but it can be assumed that the principles of conflict functioning in peer groups remain the same.

## **7. NARRATIVE AND ARGUMENTATION**

The cognitive structures used to understand – and use – argumentative reasoning are directly related to those used in understanding goal-directed social actions. The ability to understand argumentative reasoning emerges very early in development. By the age of three, children can understand and generate all components of argumentative reasoning.



To support this statement, we consider situations that are personally meaningful to young children and those that directly impact their goals, beliefs, and well-being. We can demonstrate that even younger children involved in an argument can consider positive and negative reasons for pursuing different actions or holding specific beliefs. The impact of argumentative skills on interpersonal relationships is as important for four-year-olds as it is for adults. The degree of friendship between children is directly proportional to the level of concern about possible negative outcomes of a discussion on the relationship.

Argument patterns are also correlated with the desire to maintain the relationship. In one school study, when 4-year-olds were asked to negotiate with their best friend about the division of three dinosaurs, one of which was huge (so much more attractive) and two of which were very small (not so attractive), many of them would not have willingly entered into a negotiation because they believed that negotiating would damage their friendships. After the seventh round of negotiation ended without a decision, one kid who was eventually forced to start a negotiation attempt said to his friend, "Josh, there's no way to split the dinosaurs. Get them, because if you can't have them, you will no longer be my friend." The little boy added, "Just remember, next time we should fight about something, I'll win."



The spontaneous arguments of these children underline the fundamental role that relationship goals play in all types of negotiations between children, adolescents, and adults. *Dividere lo sviluppo delle capacità di argomentazione dal raggiungimento di obiettivi personalmente significativi significa omettere le parti più importanti della comprensione di come le persone si avvicinano all'argomentazione.*

Argumentative skills develop very early. Even children aged 3-5 have already acquired many skills in this field, especially in oral contexts. Young children use their argumentative skills during all sorts of interactions, and by the age of five, many are really skilled negotiators, especially with their parents and peers.

In terms of function, form, and content, argumentative skills emerge from the desire to ensure the achievement of personally meaningful goals. Getting used to being focused on achieving one's personal goals just from early childhood helps children to develop pragmatic argumentative skills, reducing the danger of relying on illogical, irrational and illusory reasoning, even in adult age.

When two children acknowledge that they have conflicting viewpoints, both willingly engage in an argument and both initially believe that their position is more legitimate and more reasonable than that of the other. They also believe that their position should be strongly kept because more positive benefits will derive from it than that of the opponent. The same goes for adults who willingly enter an argumentative discussion for the same reason. Many studies of children's arguments provide strong evidence that children recognize conflicting viewpoints at an early age. Furthermore, arguers, regardless of age, usually begin a negotiation by trying to convince the other person of the greater legitimacy of their position. Persuasion is carried out by providing justifications for supporting one position and opposing the other. Even pre-schoolers provide reasons to support their positions in the debate.

However, like many adults, even children are able early on, if requested, to provide elements of support for the opponent's positions and to identify weaknesses and problems in their reasoning. This so very important ability is really supported by narrative attitudes.

In summary, children's experiences of narrative and poetic texts or their oral presentations allow them to build and reconstruct subjectivity, and inter-subjectivity, which, in turn, allows them to work around the recognition of moods and emotions of self and others through reflexivity.

To deepen it, it is important to understand the importance of studying the structural features of those texts we should present to children. These characteristics influence the nature of the inferences children can draw from what they read or listen to. As regards the type of support that narration can provide to the development of argumentative skills, it should be considered that narration and argumentation have a similar logical structure. Precisely, the narrative is based on situations that change over time (according to schemes that can always be reviewed and modified, but with their internal logic), experienced by different characters with their points of view and roles, to which new ones can always be added.



From this point of view, a narrative has the same structure as an argument and in both, narration and reasoning, it is necessary to take into account facts or statements that do not exist in the text or in the discourse, either because they are taken for granted or because they are deliberately left hidden.

Just as the child can complete a convoluted or fragmented plot, using the knowledge he already possesses, in order to safeguard the verisimilitude of the story, so in the argument the child can find all the links necessary to arrive at a certain conclusion it's acceptable.

In the construction of the narrative, as in the discussion, we are in the presence of contrasting elements that make a happy conclusion not necessarily within reach.

It must be actively sought after having defined, and possibly shared, the outcome to be obtained: in a narrative, obtaining a positive and happy conclusion; in a discussion, safeguarding some goals deemed important.<sup>8</sup>

In both processes, infants make extensive use of their memories, which, in turn, are oriented by the kinds of meaningful experiences caregivers were able to provide. As Vygotsky (1998) clarifies, higher psychological functions are rooted in social relationships and in the cultural tools and practices that the child is introduced to and begins to appropriate through participation in common activities.

<sup>8</sup> As in the aforementioned case of Josh's friend, the one with the dinosaurs, where there is an interest in bringing the discussion to a conclusion that reaffirms and consolidates the friendship between the two children

## **8. EXTENDING THE NARRATIVE IMPLICATION: NARRATION AND CHILDREN'S PLAYS**

In educational work, it is worthwhile to involve children in shared experiences where they can change the environment around them.

Plays and storytelling have many things in common because they are both based on invention and fantasy. However, since storytelling seems to contain many more emotional elements than pure play, to the extent that storytelling supports play, it brings greater emotional and relational awareness into play.

In research (Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2014, p. 244) carried out with 24 6-year-old children (12 boys and 12 girls), they were previously given a general discourse on the importance of helping others when they are in difficulty. Soon after, they were ushered in pairs into a room where a three-year-old boy was trying to solve a difficult puzzle with the help of an adult. When the older children came in, the adult asked them to be replaced in helping the little boy, but hardly anyone spontaneously accepted the invitation, despite the previous discussion on the importance of helping others.

After a week, the same children saw a film based on the story "The Wonderful Adventures of Nils" by Selma Lagerlof. The children discussed the characters; subsequently, the same situation as a week before was re-proposed (the small child to be helped).

The experimental setting was the same, but the call for help refers to the following narrative: 'The little hamster collects berries and nuts. He or she is still small and tired, but mom is far away.' Of the 24 six-year-olds, 20 actively helped and cared for him [or her]. On a third occasion, the narrative frame was eliminated. Now 17 of the children have ignored the invitation to help and seven have been helping for a while.



Taken together, these results show that when children benefited from a narrative that connects the narrative in real-time with the play situation the children are experiencing, making the story-telling help a part of the play, older children become more inclined to actively help the child in need. From the point of view of the sociocultural approach to learning and human development, this implies that a narrative is a cultural tool that strongly orients children's engagement and actions (Nelson, 1996). As such, narratives serve many functions in both individual development and social relationships, but the latter comes before individual development, as Vygotsky argues.

This evolutionary model implies the importance of involvement in social practices: in the previous example, listening in common to the narration of stories will then become the tools of thought and behaviour of individual children in the helping relationship. Some essential functions that narratives perform for groups - and then for individuals - are: to remember; attribute meaning; communicate with others (across time and space); presenting oneself and others (identity creation).

Like all skills, the ability to narrate also matures at different times in different children, even those of the same age.

Given the importance of storytelling, helping children master the narrative genre is a crucial early childhood education challenge.

In her theoretical report on the 'emergence of the mediated mind', Nelson (1996) writes extensively and in-depth on the development of memory in childhood. Speaking about the past with infants aged between 18 and 24 months, Nelson (1996) noted several factors that have bearing on the development of long-term memory: what types of questions mothers asked their infants, which kinds of memories they talked about and how they did it. Two types of reports on the past were shown: "pragmatic" and "elaborative". The former is a report that focuses on practical issues (for example, where the child's toy might be), while the latter comes from mothers, who tell, "stories of their experiences and have invited their children to participate in them". Nelson says: "In the most successful cases, starting from the age of two, children co-construct the narrative with their mothers. The kinds of narratives from the past that caregivers and other more experienced people engage children with will guide the kinds of narratives children develop in the future. As Vygotsky (1998) clarifies, higher psychological functions are rooted in social relationships and in the cultural tools and practices to which the child is introduced and begins to appropriate through participation in common activities.

Joint engagement in a meaning-making task or process has been increasingly emphasized in educational theory in terms of "an effective pedagogical interaction, in which two or more individuals 'work together' intellectually to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative".

Perhaps the most effective way children interact with each other is through storytelling: telling, listening, speaking and creating narratives. From this point of view, it becomes important that the adults involve children in narrative activities and engage with them as narrative partners. This need is part of a wider reconceptualization of teaching and learning: no longer a transmission of information "from the expert" (teacher) "to the apprentice" (child), who must receive, store and reproduce this information in later occasions when it should matter. On the contrary, teaching and learning are currently seen not as a one-way process, but as a dialogical exchange between the educator and the child, where the educator himself reformulates his interventions based on the responses that the child provided and based on educational negotiation between the teacher and child.

If narration provides the basic means to involve children in processes of mutual construction of meaning about the physical and social world, institutions such as kindergartens and schools in general also have the task of introducing and involving children in other kinds of epistemological approaches, such as the scientific one.



This latter form of knowledge is particularly delicate – if seen from a narrative point of view – since in such a form of knowledge there is a tendency to eliminate any narrative approach. However, it is necessary to be aware that it is precisely through narration that children have had the opportunity to immediately develop what will allow them, in subsequent school levels, to successfully approach the paradigm of the scientific method. As a matter of fact, scientific theories are nothing more than generalizations that try to explain and give order to many "stories" that scientists call, in a different way but with the same meaning, "experiments" and "collection of evidence".

Supporting children with appropriate narrative genres is central to early childhood education and care; the acquisition of this cultural tool makes children participate in cultural worlds and processes of meaning in which they can learn from the experiences of others to make sense of their own. Appropriate storytelling practices also increase children's ability to change the world around them, i.e. they can become authors of their own experiences and the construction of their own identities.

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## CHAPTER III

# Framework: How the Narrative Approach in early education could work

### 1. INTRODUCTION - FROM THEORY TO A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK ON NARRATIVE APPROACH.

From a methodological point of view, the Narrative Approach can consistently be applied in early education, adopting guidelines organized in a conceptual, rational framework. You can see it as a whole in a graphical edition, in the scheme of fig.1.

FRAMEWORK: HOW THE NARRATIVE APPROACH IN EARLY EDUCATION COULD WORK

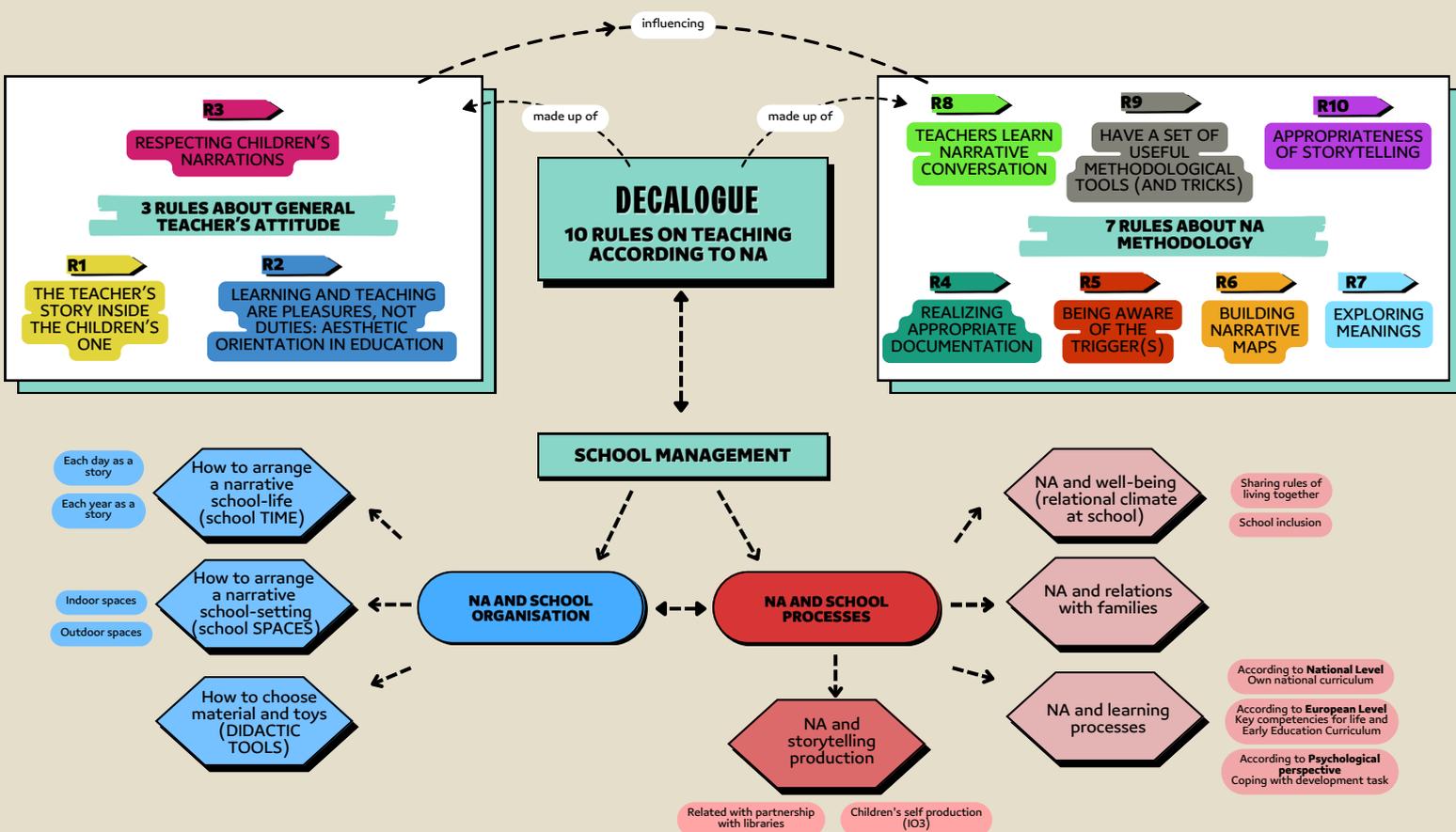


FIG. 1

### 2. THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NARRATIVE APPROACH IN EARLY EDUCATION

The FRAMEWORK considers two main logical levels (Fig. 2):

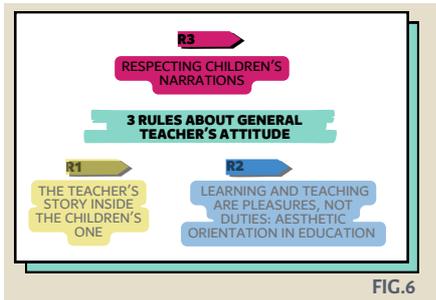
- A. **A different approach to teaching:** the DECALOGUE;
- B. **A different approach to school management:** school-organisation and school processes.





system based on satisfying the primary irresistible passion – naturally present in every living creature – for personal growth and knowledge. Applying this principle also considering the previous one, this should be true for both children and teachers. Teaching and learning have to be fun experiences as art is.<sup>ii</sup>

**3.1.3 R3 → RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS (FIG.6)**

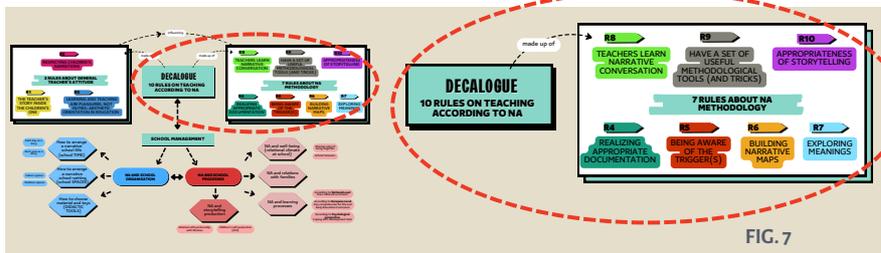


This principle means: children are the leader of their development. In other words, teachers or other adults should not ask the children to follow passively learning processes already planned by the teachers themselves. The teaching and the related school planning have to be based on what children spontaneously do. Consequently, since children arrange their experiences narratively, we have to respect children's narrations, even when we do not consider ourselves (as teachers) inside the Narrative Approach perspective. Of course, this principle is consistent even more in the Narrative Approach perspective.<sup>iii</sup>

**3.2 RULES ABOUT NARRATIVE APPROACH METHODOLOGY AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE ASSESSMENT OF A NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE.**

Before dealing with any single rule of this part of the Decalogue, and describing them, it is essential to point out the structure of the assessment process of a narrative experience, starting from what children spontaneously do. Basically:

- When we started assessing some narrative experiences carried out by the children, we know the latter had been already active for so long;
- Similarly, when we will decide to stop assessing that same experience, we know it will have been keeping working for a long time to come;
- Children can carry out lots of narrative experiences at the same time; some of them can get going from their way from the one we are assessing; we call this point a “fork”. When it happens, we can decide to follow and assess either the old experience or the new one: usually, we cannot follow both. During the same narrative experience, this situation occurs many times.



Even if we cannot follow all the stories that are generated from previous ones, it is important to put a “signal” in our documentation, as it is done at a crossroads we meet driving.

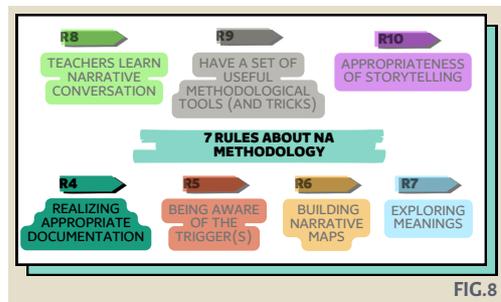
Now, we are ready to deal with the seven methodology rules of the Decalogue. The following description of the methodological rules refers to the fig.7 above:

**3.2.1 R4 → REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION (FIG.8)**

Pay attention to avoid confusing this rule with the previous one (R3). In R3 we spoke about documentation targeted at the utility for the children.

In R4 we are speaking about the documentation to support teachers in assessment narrative approach activities, to enhance training activities for teachers, to involve the parents, and so on: in a few words, a kind of documentation mainly for adults. To realize appropriate documentation to support the aims we have just mentioned, we have to assume the following criteria:

- I. Adopting a narrative style.<sup>iv</sup>
- II. Giving the right importance of the time.<sup>v</sup>
- III. Ensuring understandability and self-evidence.<sup>vi</sup>
- IV. Pointing out all the rules of our Decalogue.<sup>vii</sup>
- V. Pointing out all the contents inside the “ovals” of which our framework is made up (see § 4 later in the text).



**3.2.2 R5 → BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S) (FIG.9).**

We define a trigger as every event – no matter how big it is- that happens without planning by a teacher, and that can change the course of an active narrative experience carried out by the children or, apparently, even to start a new one. It could be:

- An object/book/toy brought to school by a child, or found out in the schoolyard, or somewhere in the neighbourhood;



- A story narrated by a child, for example, about something that happened at home or on holiday;
- A new unpredictable event occurring out of the school, for example, a new building site;
- A sudden and new interest of a group of children for an angle inside the school, or some play material before neglected, no matter knowing why;
- Something a teacher is doing that captures the attention of the children, beyond the teacher's intention and awareness;
- New attending children or a mate who move to another living place and says goodbye;
- Other things/events...

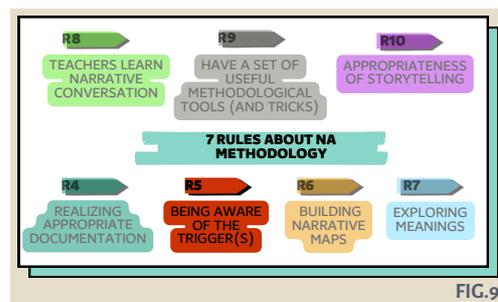


FIG.9

### 3.2.3 R6 BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS (FIG.10).

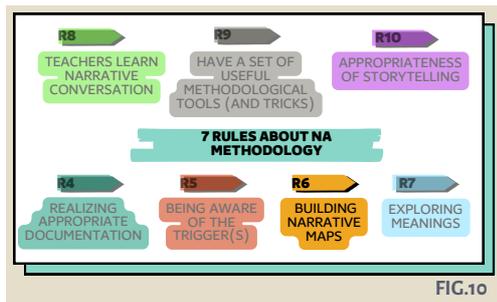


FIG.10

Generally speaking, a trigger indicates to the children that there is a fork or a path crossroad at a single point of the narrative journey the children are taking. Instead, a narrative map is a general (not punctual) representation of a specific narrative experience and, in addition, gives us a more dynamic and comprehensive idea of every single narrative experience that looks like a journey.<sup>iii</sup> This can be useful in many ways:

- It permits teachers to pay more attention to the triggers and to chances to relaunch children's narrative explorations;
- As a consequence, it helps teachers realize appropriate documentation based on a narrative style (see § 3.2.1.);
- Furthermore, it is also necessary to support the realisation of some portfolio documentation for each child (see § 3.1.3.).

### 3.2.4 R7 EXPLORING MEANINGS (FIG.11).

Narrative experiences and activities are full of things, people, animals, places, artistic items and so on. Each of them can have different meanings for each child.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, we can identify another active role for the teachers in the narrative approach perspective: helping children explore the different meanings they have of what there is in their narration. This teaching operation is very important since it can:

- Suggest to children some new triggers and, sometimes, some new narrative journeys;
- Boost the natural children's curiosity for some new kind of learning, especially in the cognitive field;
- Permit to usually shy children catching up more attention from their mates;
- Favour sharing different life/cultural experiences among the children related to different topics and items of their narrations, for example taking advantage of the presence of children belonging to foreign families to promote a multicultural discussion inside the class.

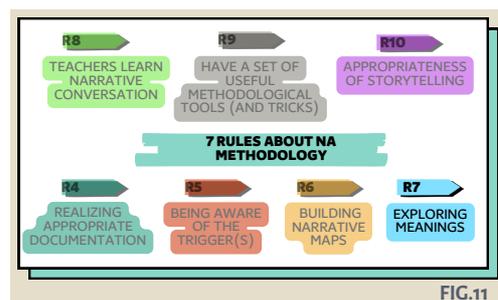


FIG.11

### 3.2.5 R8 TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION (FIG.12).

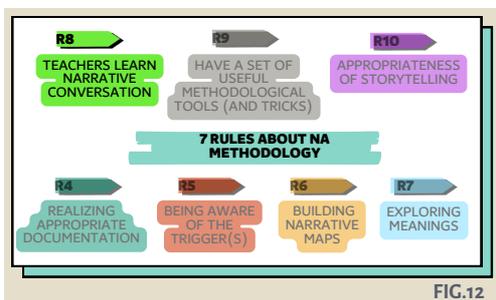


FIG.12

This is one of the most important rules in the Narrative Approach application. Without changing the linguistic interaction between children and teachers, we cannot declare that we are applying the Narrative Approach in early education; you can find many examples of it at note IX at the end of this chapter.

Teachers have to commit themselves to learn a completely new way to communicate with the children; something it could sound a bit unnatural for our habits.<sup>ix</sup>

### 3.2.6 R9 HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS AND TRICKS (FIG.13).

Someone could believe that the Narrative Approach requires only a change in communication and documentation and is simpler, from a technical point of view, than the traditional teaching approach, based on teachers' planning and their practical skills. Well, nothing could be falsier than that. The narrative Approach requires that teachers own lots of technical skills and competencies. They do not have to be

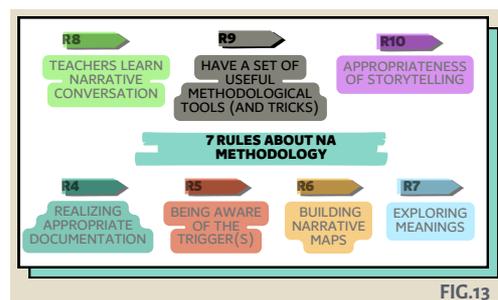


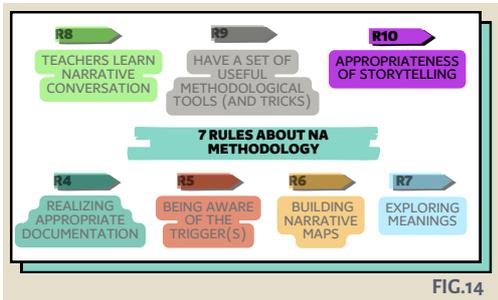
FIG.13

<sup>2</sup> For example, if in a collective narration there is stuff like a dog, a train, a restaurant, a policeman..., it is impossible that all the involved children have had the same experience of them. A child who was bitten by a dog has a completely different experience compared to a child with a vet as a parent. A lorry driver's child should have a very particular experience of lorries compared to his/her mates.

considered useful in themselves, but they can be supportive of the Narrative Approach.<sup>x</sup> Far from making the need for teaching technical skills lower, the Narrative Approach encourages even more teachers to learn new techniques and teaching tools.

**3.2.7 R10 APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING (FIG.14).**

In the Narrative Approach perspective, storytelling is not an activity in itself like it is in traditional schooling, but an essential tool to help children in their spontaneous narrative explorations.



We will devote other parts of this handbook to this topic and even parts inside the other intellectual outputs. For now, we would like to underline the importance to make available to the children mainly books that are coherent with the narrative experience they are carrying out.

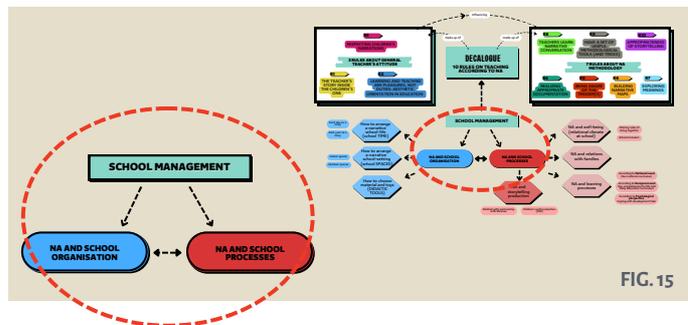
Anyway, this is not enough to speak of the “appropriateness of storytelling”. We need to adopt another criterion: the books related to each narrative experience should be available when and where it is developing and not only put somewhere in the school, in a specific space, far away from the “action” place.<sup>xi</sup>

**4. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN DETAIL**

This part of the framework has been divided into two sub-parts (fig.15):

- School Organisation:** what a school looks like in case of correct Narrative Approach adoption;
- School Processes:** what happens inside the schools in case of the right Narrative Approach adoption.

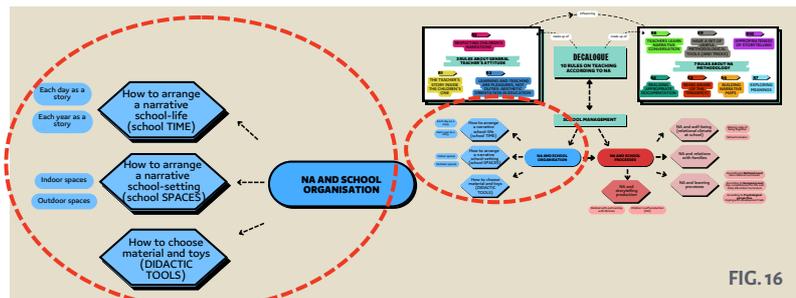
As mentioned before, in our computer metaphor, School Organization is as if were our hardware and School Processes are our software. We try to identify the main content of each subpart.



**4.1 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION.**

Let’s get started with the school organization, where we proposed a classical classification, the one you can see in fig.16:

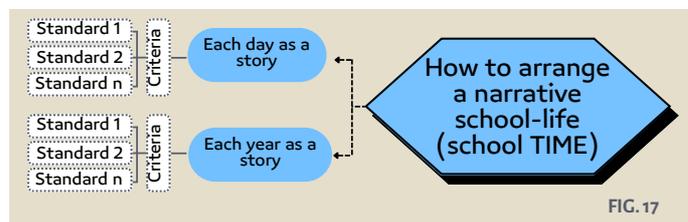
We think that Narrative Approach adoption has a large impact on school organization, especially in time organization, space organization and didactic material provision. More information, suggestions and specific recommendations we will give later, after exposing the best practices related to the operative implementation of the Narrative Approach inside the schools involved in this Erasmus + project.



For now, we can get a glance at each topic, to give some general orientation. Anyway, we have to point out by now that, for this handbook, it is important to identify the referring quality standards related to each organisation feature, based on specific criteria. This is the benchmark that inspires a school that wants to implement the Narrative Approach in Early Education, measuring how the implementation matches with the model and what should be improved. We just provide some suggestive ideas in this chapter, but we will be more analytically clear in the following chapter, where Best Practices of the Narrative Approach will be presented and, of course, in Intellectual Output 2, as an evaluation tool.

**4.1.1 HOW TO ARRANGE A NARRATIVE SCHOOL LIFE (FIG.17).**

We should pay attention to a simple and intuitive rule: we cannot speak of the Narrative Approach if school life is not organized like a story. Be careful not



to confuse the consequences of this statement with the narrative activities the children carry out inside the school. Every day, every child goes to school, does many things inside it and, finally, comes back home. This is a potential story in itself, no matter if the children have been busy with narrative activities. Many teachers are aware of it and arrange many rituals and routines to build some kind of connective pattern that can contribute to giving sense to each school day and avoid it becoming a sum of fragmented activities. It is shareable the idea that we cannot have schooling based on Narrative Approach if we do not narratively arrange the school time.<sup>xii</sup>

#### 4.1.2 HOW TO ARRANGE A NARRATIVE SCHOOL SETTING (FIG.18).

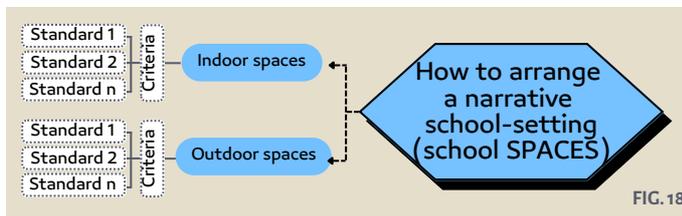


FIG. 18

In addition, we could have spaces where to sleep, eat, do physical activities (the gym) .... It looks rational and child-friendly. This organizational idea regards not only indoor spaces but also outdoor ones.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of the Narrative Approach perspective, this organisation shows many problems. -First, a narrative experience can use activities related to all the spaces, in which the school is organized. This can oblige children to go around without resting, and give them (and us) only a fragmented idea of what they are doing. -In addition, when a school is completely structured in dedicated corners, where are the spaces for unpredictable narrative activities if we had decided they are our main didactic perspective?

In other words, preschools are traditionally organized starting from a structural and functional point of view; it means that the school space structure is segmented into several stable sub-spaces, devoted to only one function, or a rational group of them. They are not thought to host complex processes where many functions have to work at the same time and where the set of the space is always in progress. Maybe this could be a problem for a proper application of the Narrative Approach that maybe requires multifunctional and temporarily organized spaces.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### 4.1.3 HOW TO CHOOSE DIDACTIC TOOLS (FIG.19).

To support children's narrative activities, they can benefit from not-structured material and toys, instead of high-connoted ones. For example: Lego Bricks; other even more flexible building materials; natural items like pieces of wood, slices of trunks, and stones, other natural materials like shells, pinecones, and little branches; pieces of fabric; neutral and common clothes to dress up, limiting the presence of the ones more connoted, like clothes for princesses, superheroes, etc. In addition, we could expect the presence of pieces of some kinds of packaging, many kinds of modelling dough, and so forth.

It does not mean getting rid of other less flexible materials and tools like animal toys, specific play structures - like castles, car garages, kitchen - toy cars, and defined characters, but it is important not to privilege them since their narrative natural power is much less than the material cited in the previous sentence.

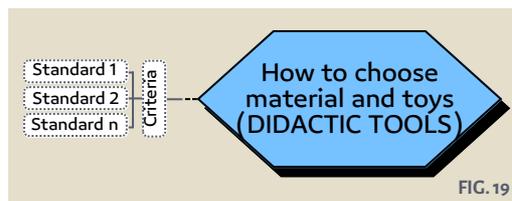
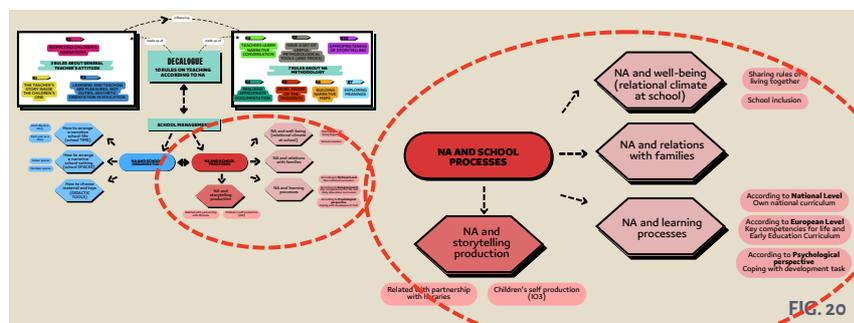


FIG. 19

### 4.2 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION.

The word "processes" refers to something that unfolds over time, potentially indefinitely, with the expectations of specific outcomes, not necessarily predictable. Seeing Fig.20 below, we have considered three traditional school-processes-outcomes (Orange Ovals), and an extra process-outcome (Red Oval) specifically linked to our Erasmus+ project, that foresees to boost a more structured collaboration between preschools and libraries.



Nothing new: the traditional preschool's outcomes go around three main questions:

1. arranging a life place where people – children and adults – could feel safe and enjoy personal well-being, as the first experience of social life and civil responsibility;

2. arranging a school social setting where children can learn what they need and how they prefer, according to their age and cognitive style;

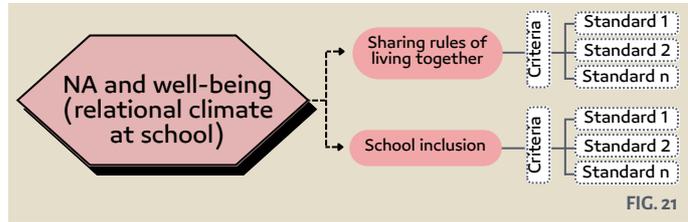
2. establishing a good and collaborative relationship between schools and families, and between schools and their environment.

Let's consider more details about each of the topics above.

**4.2.1 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND WELL-BEING PROMOTION AT SCHOOL.**

All of us, with few exceptions, believe that children and adults should live at school feeling good and safe. This is true whatever approach we think to adopt. Similarly, we believe that the collective well-being inside a place like a school is mainly due to the respect of shared rules that can make living together more enjoyable and helpful. Few teachers still believe that ruling a class is an essential, exclusive and active teacher’s role, and the children only have to passively accept what a teacher thinks is better for them, from the teacher’s point of view. Fortunately, most teachers believe that involving children in establishing rules that drive daily life at school is better than thinking about it only as a role for the teachers.

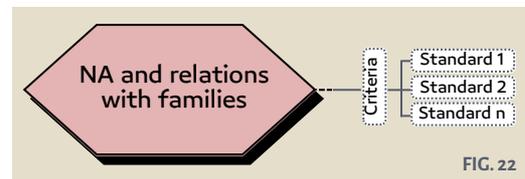
We know that when children participate in defining social rules for school life, they become more responsible and are prone to consider rules as a source of well-being instead of a simple limitation. The Narrative Approach can boost this orientation in many interesting ways since it can support an anthropological idea of classes/stable groups of children.<sup>xiv</sup>



**4.2.2 THE NARRATIVE APPROACH AND THE RELATION WITH FAMILIES.**

In each Country, the relationship with families can be affected by different cultural issues, but we can share the idea that a good partnership and collaboration between schools and families are essential, whatever that means in each Country. We believe that the importance of the Narrative Approach adoption in this field can make all the difference, at least for the following reasons:

- Through narrative documentation, parents can appreciate their children’s learning processes easier, not only what seems to be more spectacular, like some big jumps in development, but also what happens during daily life, every single day.

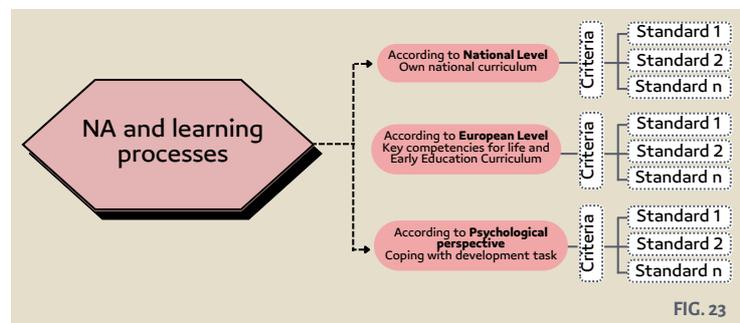


- The Narrative Approach favours matching stories the children live inside their family and stories being developed inside the school together with their mates. It can favour a more comprehensive vision of the children’s lives, and some more concrete shared feelings between teachers and families to be really involved together in children’s education;
- The Narrative Approach can promote more attention to early reading for children, with a more responsible role from the parents;
- Implicitly, the Narrative Approach offers to parents an alternative to the ways they usually use to speak, tell, explain (and so on) to their children. In other words, this approach adds new tools to the interactional repertoire between parents and children.

**4.2.3 THE NARRATIVE APPROACH AND LEARNING PROCESSES**

There are already many pieces of evidence from researchers showing the Narrative Approach in early education can favour not only well-being at school but also more effective learning processes and achievements. The virtuous circle between experimentation and narration favours discoveries, enhances the desire to look into phenomena, fixes experiences in long-term memory and permits to be much more inclusive, since each child, no matter their cognitive style, can always find their proper way to learn, much more than through some traditional, semantic-based learning.

That being said, we must pay much attention to documenting it, anyway. Despite the evidence mentioned above, we are aware that a possible misunderstanding could exist about the Narrative Approach since it could be considered only some kind of fun way to spend time, not one of the most effective ways to learn. This sentiment could be common in teachers working in primary schools, or in some parents. For this reason, documenting how the Narrative Approach is improving children’s learning processes is essential.



To make this purpose even stronger, we propose to refer our observation to a specific “evaluation system”, avoiding any naïve approach in this field. Since we are in a European context, we propose a three-level-evaluation system of the learning processes in early education:

1. **Each country has its National Curriculum for early education**, usually based on “experiences fields”, or “competencies and skills to be acquired”.<sup>xv</sup>
2. **European Union** has already adopted a specific perspective on general education goals: the **eight key competencies for life**. It is still controversial the chance to apply this system to early education as well. Anyway, the EU is a partner of the network among<sup>xvi</sup>



European Schools devoted to the children of EU officers abroad. Many members of this network have adopted the **Early Education Curriculum**<sup>xvii</sup>, and it could be a useful reference point if we want to give some European perspective when we speak about educational goals in the preschool system.

3. Lastly, we must consider the **development tasks** the children have to cope with when they are from 0 to 6 years old. This is a **psychological perspective** that can depend on different “schools of thought” existing in the academic sector, but it is not so much affected by cultural or ethnical-belonging reasons<sup>xviii</sup>. “Development tasks” are abilities and competencies the children have to acquire at any particular age, following, of course, their attitude, personality and cognitive style, but we know that recovering possible gaps related to them could be very difficult during the following ages.

Summing up, when we document narrative activities carried out by children, we have to put much attention to underlining what children are learning through these activities. The main goal is to make adults aware of the importance of this approach even from a cognitive point of view.

#### 4.2.4 THE NARRATIVE APPROACH AND STORYTELLING PRODUCTION.

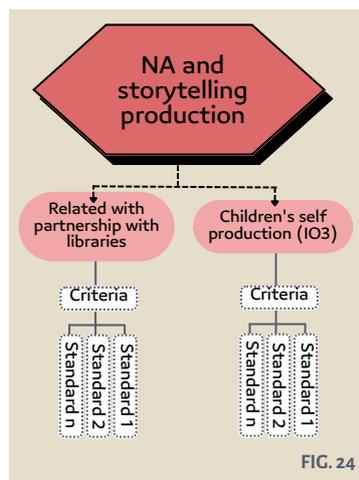


FIG. 24

We call our readers’ attention again not to confuse “storytelling as a tool supporting the Narrative Approach”<sup>3</sup> with storytelling as a production coming from the Narrative Approach implementation. Since this kind of result is directly related to the Narrative Approach implementation, it has a central role in our Erasmus + project, considering that it is connected with both our intellectual output n.3 and the stable collaboration between preschools and libraries<sup>4</sup>; the latter is an essential topic of our project. To avoid overloading this paragraph, we do not add anything else here, but we recommend you read carefully the end-note XIX.<sup>xix</sup>

## 5. GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT PRACTITIONERS FOR AN OPERATIVE USE OF THE FRAMEWORK ON NA

The framework of NA is important as both a system of educational principles and guidelines to arrange good documentation. For this reason, before exposing our best practices related to the Narrative Approach’s real application at school, it could be useful to summarize the concepts, giving a short definition of each of them and some orientation about when and how teachers can refer to each of them inside the documentation of Narrative Approach-related best practice, and when they couldn’t.

### 5.1 ABOUT THE DECALOGUE’S RULES.

Label of the rule	Short definition for teachers	You can point out this rule when...
<b>R1: THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE</b>	Your story about your professional development feeds itself on observing and valuing children’s spontaneous activities	... you are learning something new about your profession while you are observing children in spontaneous activities. You should be clear and aware of what you are learning.
<b>R2: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION</b>	Children learn more and more thoroughly if they enjoy learning processes and show to be very eager. The same, specularly, for the teachers’ teaching role	... you observe children show joy and enthusiasm strictly related to a discovery or a new well-coped challenge in knowledge and development. You should exclude generic happiness or generic well-being demonstration
<b>R3: RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATION</b>	Teachers should respect and give value to what the children are doing spontaneously, which often has the shape of a narration	... you avoid giving the children suggestions about how they can (or have to) carry out their activities, and when you wisely wait for children’s proposals before giving them suggestions you have on the tip of your tongue (teacher’s self-control)
<b>R4: REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION</b>	To be coherent, documentation about a narrative experience carried out by the children should have the shape of a story in turn, never of an essay	... you follow this principle! It is not the case to refer to this principle inside documentation: maybe, only at the beginning, saying something like this: “Dear reader, you can easily note that this document is a story, not an essay”

3 see above, § 3.2.7., the 10th rule of the Decalogue: “appropriateness of storytelling”

4 Everywhere in the text we mention “libraries” we are speaking about the ones specialized in child literature

<b>R5: BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER</b>	It is important to note everything unexpected gives the children new and original perspectives in their narrative activities	... when you feel surprised about the direction a children's narration is taking; even when you decide to make new material and tools available to the children, without any suggestion about their usage, you should be sure of your "intellectual honesty" in that!
<b>R6: BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS</b>	Teachers should note - and maybe make children aware of it - when children choose a different path in their narration, following a new unexpected trigger	... you note it and you can make the children aware of it, using an appropriate conversational approach (R8); you should be able to document the forks occurring during children's narrative experiences and help children to do the same without influencing them
<b>R7: EXPLORING MEANINGS</b>	The teacher should favour the children's exploration of what each concrete element of a story means for each of the involved children	... you promote common research and comparison among children about the different experience-meaning something/someone involved in their narration has for each child; this is one of the few chances you have, in applying the Narrative Approach, to break children's narrative activities for a while
<b>R8: TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION</b>	Teachers should learn a completely new conversational approach when they try to support children's narrative activities	... you use questions, hypothetical suggestions, curiosity, surprise, lack of evaluation sentences – instead of statements, orders, authoritative prescriptions, evaluation sentences – when you speak with the children about their narrative activities
<b>R9: HAVING A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS AND TRICKS</b>	To support children's spontaneous narrative activities, teachers should hold practical productive skills, and even share with the children	... you use and teach new techniques to produce things, to present materials, to join different languages, to involve children in a more active approach, to give the children more meaningful materials, to involve parents more properly, and so on
<b>R10: APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING</b>	Storytelling at school should be always related to children's spontaneous narrative activities, rather than an activity in itself	... you read to the children (or the children read/watch on their own) only books related to the ongoing children's narrative activities and avoid reading generic child storytelling products

### 5.2 ABOUT THE DECALOGUE'S RULES.

<b>Label of the topic</b>	<b>Short definition for teachers</b>	<b>You can point out this topic when...</b>
<b>HOW TO ARRANGE A NARRATIVE SCHOOL LIFE (TIME)</b>	School Daily (Yearly) Time management is (going to be) reconsidered to support NA application at school	... your school-time organization has been changed PERMANENTLY either to favour children's narrative experiences in general or as a consequence of a specific narrative project; you should avoid pointing out this topic when the change is only temporary and related only to a specific narrative experience, working in a specific time
<b>HOW TO ARRANGE A NARRATIVE SCHOOL SETTING (SPACES)</b>	School spaces management is (going to be) reconsidered to support NA application at school	... your school spaces organization has been changed PERMANENTLY either to favour children's narrative experiences in general or as a consequence of a specific narrative project; you should avoid pointing out this topic when the change is only temporary and related only to a specific narrative experience, working in a specific time
<b>HOW TO CHOOSE MATERIAL AND TOYS (DIDACTIC TOOLS)</b>	Didactic tools provision is (going to be) reconsidered to support NA application at school	... your tools provision has been changed PERMANENTLY either to favour children's narrative experiences in general or as a consequence of a specific narrative project; you should avoid pointing out this topic when the change is only temporary and related only to a specific narrative experience, working in a specific time



<p><b>NA AND WELL-BEING PROMOTION AT SCHOOL</b></p>	<p>How NA can help a better and shared definition of RULES OF LIVING TOGETHER at school</p>	<p>... when a specific narrative experience permits you to improve the (common and shared) rules of living together and permit the children to be actively involved in it; children need to show to feel active in rules management</p>
<p><b>NA AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILIES</b></p>	<p>Teachers should explore with the parents which are the bridges between school and home related to the children's narrative activities; NA can make the relationship with the family easier and more productive</p>	<p>... parents are involved to report to them children's narrative experiences or exchanging information about children's narrative experiences at school and home; even when children bring to school something from home, to share with mates and use it in their ongoing narrative activities</p>
<p><b>NA AND LEARNING PROCESSES</b></p>	<p>NA is a powerful perspective to boost the learning and cognitive processes of the children</p>	<p>... a child (children) learn(s) something new – related to the national curriculum and so on – thanks to some narrative activity; the new learning goal should be detailed and well specified, and even the child (children) should be aware of it</p>
<p><b>NA AND STORYTELLING PRODUCTION</b></p>	<p>Teachers should involve local libraries to support children's narrative activities; teachers should give value to the children's spontaneous narrative experiences, rearranging them in some child literature products</p>	<p>... one of the events mentioned on the left occurs; you should avoid considering in this topic storytelling not related to ongoing children's narrative activities, but only an activity in itself: for example, reading a randomized book with the children is not an example of this topic. Partnerships with libraries should be permanent and not one-time</p>

## 6. FRAMEWORK ON NARRATIVE APPROACH AND SPECIAL QUESTIONS.

In paragraphs 1 to 4 of this chapter, we have dealt with the Narrative Approach Application in Early Education from a generic point of view, without considering some important differences existing inside a generic sample made up of children from zero to six years old. Basically, the description of the framework is tacitly based considering children a bit able to move themselves, speak (or understand simple speaking) and socialize. We can say that the more the children own those skills, the more the description of the Framework is properly relevant.

This presentation of the chapter is consistent with the fact these children are – not always but usually – at least 70/90% of the children attending preschools.

However, we know that the children's narrative attitude is present since their birth, even before, and one of the most important caregivers' tasks is to support the development of this natural attitude.

In addition, although the children's narrative attitude is universal, we cannot avoid highlighting that its expression can change a lot, considering cultural differences, different parental styles in the family, different social class belonging, and so on.

Finally, we should consider also children with special educational needs, whose integration into the Narrative Approach application inside preschools could require special measures.

In this paragraph, we will try to answer these questions, starting from the base of the previous paragraphs.

### 6.1 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND INFANTS (1-12 MONTHS)

In this case, we believe it is not useful to follow strictly the framework to explain what changes, but it is important to give some general orientations since we can consider this age as the one when we put the base of the Narrative Approach.

Our benchmarking in this specific field could be the "Loczy Approach"<sup>5</sup>

Some ideas to orient the teaching/caregiving behaviour:

- 1 A caregiver should "narrate" to him/herself every single baby who is looking after, or better their development/growth, like a "TV commentator"; this attitude should be active not only in general but also in a specific situation, taking note when something in the context works as a trigger for the baby;
- 2 The infants can cry in many different ways, usually, following their needs and/or external situation: caregivers should try to narrate them, giving them narrative power and psychological-relational meaning;
- 3 When competent caregivers speak to infants should consider not only the speaking content but also the speaking quality: timing, pauses, speed, non-verbal and para-verbal features, gestures, sight-play, and emphasis...;

<sup>5</sup> Little introduction. Little bibliography: AA.VV., Bringing up and providing care for infants and toddlers in an institution, Pikler-Loczy Association, 2007; David M., Appell G., LOCZY, an unusual approach to mothering, Pikler-Loczy Association, 2001

- 4 Adjust verbal approach to the baby’s needs: avoid exaggerating in speaking, above all when the child is exploring when she/he plays laying on a carpet and is crawling around; generally speaking, the caregiver’s speaking shouldn’t overwhelm the baby’s activity;
- 5 At this age, the infants need to be nursed very often: for this reason, the educator performs many manipulations on their babies. Through body manipulations, the child develops body awareness. Tactile stimuli represent the first interaction between caregiver and child.
- 6 The infant’s first attendance of an educational service is usually the first experience of socialization with peers, at least outside the family. The infant begins to interact with them, and the educator can narrate what is happening, using specific language and para-language “tools” (like register, timbre, prosody, pace, and volume).<sup>6</sup> At this moment, the educator’s narration of these events is crucial for the infants, since it represents the first cognitive contact with a narrative context involving them and, for this reason, constitutes imprinting, which will shape those following.
- 7 In the first months of life, children repeat gestures to create a representation of the world and to learn to use materials. The language of the adult must support/accompany this children’s behaviour, but not overlap with it (this is a form of respect for children’s narration).
- 8 Pikler’s studies have focused heavily on understanding how infant language arises from adult language. The assumption is that children’s language and interest in reading during the following ages find roots in the pleasure children will have had in being fully embedded in a “story”, concerning them when they were very young.
- 9 In addition, a caregiver should pay close attention to the nonverbal language of care during mealtime and changing routines as children often continue the action of the caregiver; there is evidence that the child is active in building his or her own story of what is occurring during nursing.
- 10 Take into account how the child’s movements–response to the nursing modify the caregiver’s action to favour his/her movement matches the child’s, and make the child more involved in a sort of “action dialogue”.

**6.2 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND TODDLERS (12-36 MONTHS)**

In this span of age, there are many changes in development: children get abler and abler to move themselves, to point out, to request, to use verbal language, starting from the first “words phrases” and onomatopoeia. Therefore, what follows is mainly about children in their second life year, and it could be very different for different children at the same age, according to their specific development level in speech, moving, interacting, and emotional control. Let’s try to examine analytically all the framework’s topics from this point of view.

**6.2.1 THE DECALOGUE’S RULES IN THE CASE OF TODDLERS**

Label of the rule	What’s different for toddlers
<b>R1: THE TEACHER’S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN’S ONE</b>	No change
<b>R2: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION</b>	No change
<b>R3: RESPECTING CHILDREN’S NARRATION</b>	Respecting the child’s narrative activities means respecting the child’s time in exploration and movement. Adults must avoid forcing children to change or to break their spontaneous explorations save when there is a danger. As in the case of younger children, educators can comment on children’s exploration, without exaggerating and without suggesting different experiences. Adults could change the context, removing materials and toys, which seem to be an obstacle for the children, rather than opportunities.
<b>R4: REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION</b>	No change
<b>R5: BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER</b>	With pre-linguistic children, certain criteria define the trigger: contagiousness (catalyses the interest of more children), high level of emotional activation, and recursivity, over a longer or shorter period. With younger children, relaunches must be immediate, before children have already “moved on” to another: the more time the adult permit between a child’s behaviour and the adult’s relaunch, the more the adult have to “force” the children to deal with the relaunch itself, against their active wishes.
<b>R6: BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS</b>	Maybe, at this stage teachers and caregivers can concentrate on pointing out wherever a fork occurs during some free playing/exploring activity carried out by the children. Adults should give their speech an appropriate emphasis, using and adjusting the already cited para-linguistic tools (register, timbre, prosody, pace, pitch and volume).

<sup>6</sup> register: sound frequency; timbre: sound quality depending on the instrument producing it; prosody: different punctuations for the same speech; pace: rhythm, cadence; volume: sound height.



<b>R7: EXPLORING MEANINGS</b>	Maybe it is too early to ask the children something about it, but the teachers could ask the parents if a specific child has had some specific experiences about recurrent topics of his/her playing (animals, people, buildings, vehicles, plants, domestic objects and so on). In this way, teachers can consider it and use this information when they verbalize the spontaneous playing of this child.
<b>R8: TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION</b>	No essential change, but you know that with these children you have to reduce the use of the language, and use still para-linguistic "tools" (register, timbre, prosody, pace, pitch and volume).
<b>R9: HAVING A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS AND TRICKS</b>	No change
<b>R10: APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING</b>	No change

### 6.2.2 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT'S TOPICS IN THE CASE OF TODDLERS

Label of the topic	What's different for the toddlers
<b>HOW TO ARRANGE A NARRATIVE SCHOOL LIFE (TIME)</b>	No essential change, but ..... The more the child is young, the more we have to respect his/her time approach. We should never break the children's exploration activity, for example for a routine, without agreeing with them, involving them in the decision to break, considering arranging some kind of transitional ritual
<b>HOW TO ARRANGE A NARRATIVE SCHOOL SETTING (SPACES)</b>	No essential change, but ..... Provide objects that allow him to have an autonomous activity; objects that he can explore on his own, that he can manipulate, and hold in his hand to promote his independence. Provide a space that allows for movement, so that he can turn on his back, and roll over....
<b>HOW TO CHOOSE MATERIAL AND TOYS (DIDACTIC TOOLS)</b>	I would favour heuristic materials that can be used in different ways. Very young children explore a lot through their skin and mouth, so in this case, you have to pay attention to propose materials with different consistencies and with different surfaces (Ex.: an example is the basket of treasures)
<b>NA AND WELL-BEING PROMOTION AT SCHOOL</b>	You should consider favouring that, as much as possible, the school-community rules could transit from the older children to the younger in some natural way: imitation, indication, direct teaching.... When we speak of "older children", we mean both the ones older in age and the ones older in attendance.
<b>NA AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILIES</b>	No change
<b>NA AND LEARNING PROCESSES</b>	No change
<b>NA AND STORYTELLING PRODUCTION</b>	No change. Of course, we have to get books and similar products suitable for this age. And, if you want to edit new early literature products starting from the free children's narration, the role of the adult could be too intrusive, and you should check if it occurs.

All the specifications described above have to take as wisely as possible: as the child grows up and approaches the age of three, teachers can apply the standard and full definition of the Decalogue's rules and School Management's topics.

### 6.3 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND MULTICULTURALISM

A correct application of the Narrative Approach as we have described in this chapter should automatically favour the inclusion of children from or belonging to different cultures. Since this approach is supported by children's curiosity, the latter should in turn be supported by the novelty that the life of children belonging to different cultures should arouse in native ones, even when they are the majority.

Generally speaking, we could consider the ease with which children from other cultures are actively involved in children's spontaneous narrative activities as a sure indicator, albeit holistic and non-analytical, that the application of the approach is taking place appropriately.

Therefore, teachers who have adopted the narrative approach will have to pay close attention to considering the level of real involvement of children from other cultures. They should remove all obstacles that could impoverish it: for example, linguistic obstacles, the prejudices that indigenous children could bring with them from family life, and the presence in the school of materials or events that are too culturally connoted.

#### **6.4 NARRATIVE APPROACH AND EDUCATIONAL POVERTY CONDITION IN THE FAMILY'S SOCIAL CONTEXT**

This condition may or may not be added to the previous one. Considering it in itself, the problem, in this case, is not so much belonging to a different culture, but to a culture that is objectively poorer in opportunities. These children, due to poverty or more centripetal lifestyles in their families, could have far fewer opportunities for social life and access to meaningful free time experiences (holidays, participation in cultural events, attending social meeting places, etc).

In other words, these children do not simply have a different life experience that must be valued, as in the previous case, but an experience that is objectively more limited and less rich.

For this reason, the role of the teacher appears in this case more important and at the same time more difficult. Often these families give up many social opportunities due to a lack of economic resources, but sometimes also due to a long habit of marginalization and because of a fatalistic and resigned attitude.

The Narrative approach could be an opportunity to help these families to modify, as far as possible, their social approach, and also to give their children more family experiences to bring into the school context as their contribution to common learning paths, like, in our case, the free narrative activities of children.

#### **6.5. NARRATIVE APPROACH AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Special educational needs can be very different to each other: for example, let's think of the difference between an autistic child and a child with multiple physical handicaps.

In any case, as in the previous case, we are faced with a limit on the power of these children to act (lack of "agency"): this limit should be reduced. Schools that are organized for classes of children of different ages are more facilitated in encouraging the inclusion of these children too because the learning dynamics that take place there are precisely based on the different abilities to act of children of different developmental ages.

This does not mean that children with special needs can simply be compared to younger children in age. This means that a group of children already used to dealing with the inclusion of children at different levels of development has more relational tools to integrate even children with special needs.

It follows that the class made up of children of different ages has a much higher narrative potential in terms of inclusion. Anyway, the teacher will also have to suggest alternative ways for children to carry out their narrative activities, to involve children with special needs more.

In this case, a greater direct intervention of adults in the children's narrative can be justified, avoiding, as always, being too directive.

### **7. END NOTES**

Here you can find some notes more thoroughly focused on the ten rules of the Decalogue and the seven topics of school management, based on the Narrative Approach adoption (the references for them are in the main text).

Basically, the main text could be enough to have a concise description of the rules and topics, to understand and appreciate the Best Practices reported in the following chapter 6.

Anyway, after reading the latter, we suggest you read the following notes as well. Of course, no one inhibits you to read them in advance.

#### **RULE 1**

i This principle starts from the phenomenological approach to "caring professions", which points out that relationships in education, teaching and nursing are born as asymmetric: there is a person who nurses, educates or teaches, and another who is nursed, educated or trained. But, if these relationships are really "human", after a while they turn to become symmetric: in our case, children learn from the teachers but teach to the teachers as well; teachers teach children but learn from children too. In other words, the teaching relationship changes the teacher's professional story. After each workday, each teacher should be able to recognize it and say to himself or herself: "Today I've learnt this and that from my children, and my professional story has been growing up thanks to them". As we are going to explain later, this awareness can change the way the teachers choose to document activities, since documentation is a reportage of both children's acting and teachers' learning as a consequence.

#### **RULE 2**

ii In the field of education, the words "rights" and "duties" have always chased each other in a somewhat chaotic lexical dance: a duty for parents and the Govern, and a right for students.

Actually, even a duty for the latter, target of evaluation and corrective interventions, as if the study, the search for knowledge, experimentation and discovery were boring and unattractive things in themselves, useful only for the hope of a future, well-paid job or to satisfy the narcissism of the parents. In other words, we traditionally consider schooling something towards which students should be pushed, even forced, because, if it were up to them, they would try to do nothing. We must recover the idea that could even be a duty behind every right there, but above all, there is enjoyment.

#### **RULE 3**

iii This principle implies that teaching is based not merely on a formal curriculum, but an engaged and ongoing observation of the children, as a group, and of each of them. Teachers have to be very curious about what children do or tell, treating these behaviours as stories. We do remind that some national curriculums around the world, for example, New Zealand, Australia, among others, foresee teachers setting up home visits just before the school attendance of each child, to know what are the main interests of the children, their life context and so on. In this way, the teachers can arrange the school planning taking into account these pieces of information.



In addition, this principle implies that the documentation teachers gather on each child's learning processes during the entire school attendance should be arranged as a work in progress and always at the child's disposal. Practically speaking, it means to realize for each child a portfolio documentation shaped as a personal handbook, built systematically when the child reaches a new level of learning and social or cognitive functioning, to permit the children to review their achievements whenever they like.

#### **RULE 4**

- iv It would be incoherent to document a narrative experience using some formal/academic style, the one we could prefer writing an essay. It is much better to take on the style that a novelist could adopt writing her/his novels and stories. All of us maybe know what it means: 1) describing facts and people instead of giving rationalized opinions; 2) giving space to and describing emotions; 3) taking note of details; 4) creating an atmosphere, for example, suspense, expectation, thrilling; 5) using complex and circular story-patterns, instead of linear argumentation. It could be a good idea to take inspiration from our favourite professional novelist.
- v It is quite impossible to think about a story without considering that it develops itself through time. For this reason, we should emphasize the flow of time in our description. There could be many ways to realize that; we can suggest organizing documentation as a drama, made up of some acts, each of them made up of some scenes. The passage between an act and the following points out a big change in the narration; instead, the passage between a scene and the following points out a more limited change.
- vi Even people who do not know anything about the school having produced narrative documentation should be able to understand and enjoy it on their own: we are speaking of self-accessible and user-friendly documentation, without any external help. In other words, we should not edit this documentation as a PPT presentation, supporting a speech during a training session. Maybe we will need it somewhere and sometimes, but it should not be the basic format of our narrative documentation.
- vii Complete and well-formed documentation about a children's narrative experience should have references to all the rules of the Decalogue inside. The more references there are, the better and more useful the documentation is.

#### **RULE 6**

- viii We suppose that having used a map to orienteer while hiking in the mountain or somewhere is a common experience for this handbook's readers. Well, we are talking about a different kind of map, the one a past explorer could have drawn step by step while he/she was going into some unknown region, as Livingstone likely did, exploring the river Nile's source 150 years ago. A suggestive example of this kind of map is in fig. 6.  
In other words, applying the narrative approach means permitting the children to explore new territory of learning, and helping them to draw a map of this exploration. For children to be aware of their narrative journeys and to be attracted by the idea to draw maps of them could be difficult. From the perspective of the Narrative Approach, the role of the teachers is, among others, to help children realize the progressive maps of their ongoing explorations.

#### **RULE 8**

- ix Traditionally, the teaching language in conversation with children is often characterized by:

- Assertive instructions;
- Clear assignments;
- Learning processes getting simpler;
- Obligation on formal rules;
- Using expressions like "have to", "need to be", "it's right/wrong";
- Using many times imperative verbal mode (or indicative with an imperative meaning);
- Using too many praises and disapprovals, etc.;
- The conversation between children and teachers is started and/or dominated by the latter.

On the opposite, using conversational language based on Narrative Approach means:

- Giving many hypothetical suggestions;
- Being careful to give more assignments among which children can choose what they prefer;
- Allowing learning processes to get more complex, instead of simplifying them and trying to reach completion, whatever the cost is;
- Trying to reach always an agreement on sharing social rules, starting from the idea to promote children's responsibility;
- Using expressions like "maybe", "we could verify if", "what do you think if", "sometimes can work and sometimes can't, let's try to come up with when and why";
- Avoiding using the imperative verbal mode, favouring instead the conditional one;
- Avoiding using praises and disapprovals and using instead requests favouring the children's awareness of their cognitive/emotional processes, etc.
- The dialogue between children and teachers is started and dominated by the children.

A comprehensive language change like this needs practice, self-control, mutual aid among teachers, training, and so forth.

#### **RULE 9**

- x Let's see some examples:

- I.T. (Information Technology) could be very important in the development of Narrative Approach strategies. For example, we can use it to enlarge our narrative provisions: maybe paper books are meant to be better, but sometimes it could be urgent to get something useful to support some children's ongoing narrative activity. In addition, we can use it to arrange better documentation for children and parents, and we can use specific software to produce pictures, and so on.
- The narrative Approach requires using many kinds of objects. From the point of view of this approach, these things are better for children to do, rather than to buy them. For example, if a narrative activity is dealing with animals, the children can improve their competencies in realizing them on their own, instead to use some commercial items. To reach these results, teachers should be able to teach the children these techniques, after checking they are motivated.
- The Narrative Approach can enhance the teachers' creativity as well; as the children are encouraged to create on their own the objects they need for their narration, the teachers are encouraged to create by themselves new equipment and didactic tools to support children's narrative activities. In other words, teachers will not limit their paraphernalia to what is made available by specialized producers, but they will attempt to become inventors.

- Generally speaking, we have to underline that the “Narrative Approach” does not mean using only “vocal narration” the simplest of the languages we commonly use. The narrative Approach is a great chance to teach many forms of language: drawing through a multi-technique approach, sculpting, patchworking, taking pictures and movies on a camera, dancing, listening and making music, and so in. The difference between the Narrative Approach and the traditional one is that in the Narrative Approach teachers take advantage of the spontaneous narrative activities, which children are carrying out at that moment to motivate them to learn and practice many artistic and social languages. In other words, similar to “storytelling” (see next paragraph), these techniques are not to be learnt in themselves, but strictly connected to the need to improve an ongoing narrative activity. In this way, not only learning different languages is more inspiring for the children, but also these skills will get more and more stable and interiorized.

**RULE 10**

- x<sup>i</sup> The teacher should promote ongoing bibliography research, asking libraries for help, to gain the right child’s literature products, starting from the main topics and issues the children are dealing with in their narrative spontaneous activities. Finally, to give the right importance to storytelling, teachers should consider limiting its use in neutral contexts, such as a connective or merely recreational activity, a routine or a way to calm down children.

**TOPIC: SCHOOL TIME MANAGEMENT**

- x<sup>ii</sup> Anyway, is it enough from the point of view of the Narrative Approach? Maybe not.
  - First, we have to consider that in the Narrative Approach perspective, the active role of the children is essential. How can they actively contribute to the school time organisation?
  - Secondly, are we sure that arranging rituals and routines is enough for the Narrative Approach purposes? Please, do not forget that a story usually has a plot, which is a structure connecting – logically and emotionally - many different scenes and events. How can we realize this narrative connection in school daily life? How can we give some narrative continuity, for example between the morning didactic activities and the following lunchtime?
  - Furthermore, we should give to school life a more natural rhythm. For this purpose, some wise usage of language could help a lot (see § 3.2.5): a story cannot have holes.
  - Next, we should consider how allowing the absent children not to be excluded from what happens when they are not at school.
  - Finally, we should multiply the chances for the children to get more aware of what they are doing. For example, we usually get more attention to the morning assembly among children and teachers, but do not arrange similar events at the end of an activity or of the day.

Maybe, the list above is not complete. In addition, we should consider the whole experience each child lives inside a school - from the beginning to the passage to a different school - as a story. This rule is very important and could be supported by adopting specific tools. For example, the portfolio we spoke about in the previous § 3.1.1., the one devoted to giving value to the children’s spontaneous storytelling. This kind of tool would be very important: it is the story of each child’s school attendance, from both cognitive and emotional points of view. In addition, at least with older children, we can involve them in some “awareness activities”, around a simple question: what does your school attendance look like? Is there a story you know that is quite similar to your school attendance?

**TOPIC: SCHOOL SPACES MANAGEMENT**

- x<sup>iii</sup> Taking note of this limitation, and considering that it could be quite impossible to set school spaces fully according to Narrative Approach, we have to imagine some pragmatic trade-offs, like the following:
  - It is important that in each school there are some not-connoted spaces, where children can arrange their narrative activities that need a stable place, at least as far as these activities are carried out. Traditionally, we think that a well-organized school must have all the spaces well-defined and fully equipped for a specific reason. Instead, Narrative Approach requires that the children could have at their disposal some neutral space, where they can arrange their unpredictable narrative activities. When one of these neutral spaces is temporarily connoted by children, with the teachers’ support, according to some narrative activity, this space should not sort out every day so that children can find it every morning as they had left it last afternoon.
  - Every school should have spaces where the children’s in-progress documentation on narrative activities could be exhibited permanently. Once the teachers have identified which are the main narrative activities the children are carrying out, they can identify – involving children – where to arrange the related in-progress documentation.
  - Particular consideration deserves how can change the arrangement of the school library, one of the most traditional spaces inside our schools if we have adopted the Narrative Approach perspective. As mentioned before, in this perspective storytelling is not an activity in itself, but great support for the just active narrative activities. In other words, according to the Narrative Approach, the school library is not a physical space any longer, but a meta-space, spread all over the school’s spaces, according to the activities the children are carrying out in each of them. We could figure out many little - and temporary - school libraries, one in each space where some narrative activity is working, containing the books which are important to support that activity. Likely, this does not mean that we should get rid of the traditional school library: actually, we could consider it as a neutral container of books, since the books, which are very important for the children’s narrative activities will be located where it is in progress, as long as it will be active

**TOPIC: SCHOOL WELL-BEING**

- x<sup>iv</sup> How can Narrative Approach help us to achieve this goal? To answer this question, we should consider the following idea:
  - In this context, “rule” does not mean only an ethical statement, to distinguish what people can or cannot do; here, “rule” has a much wider meaning, any idea about how reality works, or should work, related to its multiple aspects. “Rule” is a concept much closer to “how to govern” and “how to make something work” than “regulation” or “some formally expecting behaviour”.
  - A school, meant as a place where people – every day and for a long time – try to fulfil their needs and get as much pleasure as they can, is like a little society or community, not that different from a tribe somewhere in the world. In other words, we should consider a school from an anthropological point of view. Every society or community, no matter how large it is, is characterized by sharing some kind of culture among its members, that is to say, sharing productive preferences, social roles, intimacy interpretation/friendships, rituals, mythology, ethic values, meanings and explanations about world and reality. All of these features are usually based on a strong and complex narration, even in societies ruled by adults. If we spend time observing a



group of children inside a school, we can easily note: 1) specific ways to play, enjoy activities and build something; 2) the existence of typical social roles, for example, many kinds of leading and following children; 3) implicit/informal regulations inside large and small group/s the children set even without any intervention by teachers; 4) recurring rituals; 5) group's mythology, and so on. From this point of view, each class is unique and different from any other, like a fingerprint.

The Narrative Approach can support both a strategy to share the school's rules with the meaning we adopted above, and the construction of a mature culture inside each class and, as a consequence, inside the entire school. Many features of group's-culture are "narrative" by nature, for example, ritualism, mythology, and explanations about reality- that is some kind of group's-philosophy. In addition, we have to admit that children give some narrative format also to other cultural features, for example, the network of social roles inside a group: children rarely use abstract words like "leader" or "follower", but they can tell many stories that match the correspondent behaviour of both their own and their mates.

We definitely could state that the Narrative Approach, supporting both group-culture development, and some more mature meanings of the "school's rules", can give a fundamental contribution to establishing a better relational climate at school and more responsible behaviours from the children.

## TOPIC: LEARNING PROCESSES

- xv The different national curriculums in Europe have some similarities and some differences, depending on national history and culture. Since we hope that our Narrative Approach could be adopted in other schools in other countries, we need to demonstrate that it can support the goals shared at the national level and can work everywhere. In this English version of the Handbook on Narrative Approach, we do not deal with the different National Curricula; they will be treated inside each national version of the Handbook.
- xvi They are the following: 1) communication in the mother tongue; 2) communication in foreign languages; 3) mathematical competencies and basic competencies in science and technology; 4) digital competencies; 5) learning to learn; 6) social and civic competencies; 7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; 8) cultural awareness and expression. See: [Key Competences for Lifelong Learning \(europa.eu\)](#).
- xvii The core of the Early Education curriculum (EEC) consists of 4 areas: 1) Me and my body; 2) Me as a person; 3) Me and the others; 4) Me and the world. Each of these areas has 3 dimensions which show just what is involved in each area. They are: 1) Learning to be; 2) Learning to live with others; 3) Learning to do and to know. In this way, this model identifies 12 different fields of interest in EEC. For more information: [Curriculum \(schola-europaea.eu\)](#).
- xviii Here you are only an example of a list of development tasks in early childhood:
1. gradually distancing themselves from the family context, to permit living a fulfilling educational experience in some collective context;
  2. gradually establishing the socio-emotional balance;
  3. developing bodily EGO, body plan and basic motoric competencies;
  4. developing free exploration activities and the basic-concrete cognitive operations on things;
  5. developing basic communication competencies, through different languages;
  6. learning how to share rules to build an enjoyable and fulfilment living together;
  7. lay the foundation of both social responsibility and progressive ability to well understand their cultural features.

## xix TOPIC: STORYTELLING PRODUCTION/PROVISION

Teachers are experts on children, librarians are authorities on child literature. If we mix them can obtain two important results:

1. Children are natural storytellers, aren't they? Well, why do not use it to edit high-quality child literature products? It is possible on the one hand if the teachers have a method to assist children in their appropriate production, and, on the other hand, if there is the support of specialists in editing, the librarians. In our intellectual output n. 2, we propose a tutorial to guide teachers towards this aim. What we want to highlight here is: 1) the Narrative Approach implementation naturally will bring us to this kind of production; 2) to do this properly, we need to arrange a solid collaboration between preschools and libraries.
2. Anyway, the collaboration between preschools and libraries can have much larger horizons. Usually, preschools and libraries collaborate occasionally or even only for books loan. It is a pity, and we believe we could do much more. Later in this handbook, we will explore some best practices on this topic. In addition, we will show how collaboration between preschools and libraries can produce a very useful "reasonable bibliography on child literature" that can help teachers and parents to orienteer them about how to choose books for their children and how to have a critical sight towards child literature.

## CHAPTER IV

# BEST PRACTICES' COLLECTION: How narrative approach in early education could look in preschools' everyday life

### 1. INTRODUCTION – HOW TO PLAN AND DRAW DOCUMENTATION OF NARRATIVE EXPERIENCES CARRIED OUT BY THE CHILDREN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR METHODOLOGICAL MODEL.

Applying Narrative Approach inside school planning means producing – and documenting – stories. In this chapter, we have collected 8 different of them, two from each school partner involved in the project. This collection has at least three goals:

First, we want to provide good practical examples of the Narrative Approach application. Chapter 3, the methodological one, has to be considered incomplete without reading this chapter. Instead, reading only chapter 4 could be reductive, but also an experience in itself. For this reason, we think that teachers at the first approach with the model could start reading this chapter to understand if the model itself is good for them.

Secondly, we would like to explain a method to document school activities based on story making, to say that documentation could be arranged using only a storytelling register, reducing to the max semantic statements.

Finally, this collection can provide some ideas from which readers of this book could start implementing the first experience fully based on the Narrative Approach in their school.

In the collection, you can find stories involving children of different ages, from 1 (or less) to 6 years old, according to what we explained in the previous chapter.

Each Practice is described as a story, but we put in a specific column many references to our methodological FRAMEWORK (see previous chapter 3). Of course, these references are useful only after reading the chapter and, anyway, we suggest reading the experience once without getting a look at the list of references: first, read the story, and next study it!

You can see that, coherently with Narrative Approach, there is not a well-defined format in describing these practices: of course, the authors tried to respect some editing suggestions and general rules, but we want to emphasise the differences between the involved schools, not only their different organization, target and management, but also the different culture which they belong to. The four involved schools come from different parts of Europe (North, Northeast, Central-West and South) and for this, they can demonstrate that Narrative Approach could be applied everywhere, as a universal approach, able to respect and to get adapted to any peculiarities.

Finally, if the readers will have the patience, after reading, to look into the notes put on the right column, they can appreciate the fact each Practice emphasizes and focuses on different parts of the Framework of the Narrative Approach described in chapter 3. This is normal, and if we ideally hold all eight practices together, we could have a comprehensive landscape of the Narrative Approach, with every detail.



## BEST PRACTICE n.1

### WHERE ARE WE GOING?

A narrative project about **games, vehicles, picnics, and adventures** in **everyday life**

Best practice from Bergsviken Preschool located in the neighbourhood of Bergsviken in Piteå- (Sweden). At the preschool, we are two classes with children 3-5 years in total 43 children. We divide the children by age into different groups. Our project involves a group of three-year-old children, 12 children as a whole.

### 1. SEARCHING FOR AWARENESS

We are tempted to join the narrative project because we want to try to take an approach where we start from the children's interests and issues and we want to establish a conscious way of working to support the children's narratives. In the past, we have worked to strengthen children's language but with a more semantic approach.

The concept of narrative storytelling is new to us, but it feels meaningful and fun to take on this challenge. Our environment inside the preschool certainly does not meet the requirements for a rich aesthetic environment, but we have a studio that is shared by the two classes. In the long term, our goal is that the entire preschool will work with a narrative approach, all parts of the framework for narrative teaching and attitude to development are strongly consistent with our Swedish curriculum for preschool.

The curriculum expresses that preschool works for good care, a learning that is diverse and based on a democratic foundation that all people have equal value. We will also have good cooperation with the children's parents, and they should feel involved in the children's education.

*"Everyone who works in preschool shall promote respect for the inviolability of human life, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all people, equality between men, girls, and boys, as well as solidarity between people." Swedish curriculum*

We are two teachers, Caroline and Mari who are responsible for the group of 18-months-to-three-year-old children. During the month of September, we start observing the children to see what they like to do and see what they play for games. We listen to their conversations and take notes.

When we analyze our observations, we notice that several children play with cars, they talk about their experiences when they have driven a car, bus, boat, and other vehicles.

We ask the children how they get to preschool in the morning: most of them come by car, and someone rides a bike. A child tells us: "we usually go by car to our cabin, then we have to drive along a dirt road!"

All families in the group have one or more cars in the household.

### How should we proceed with children's interest in play and movement together with vehicles?

We think that triggers in children's games and interactions are the desire to imagine being going somewhere, making things up in the moment and that they like to pack things in bags. They also like to build and construct with different materials; therefore, we intend to offer a relaunch in the form of setting up cardboard boxes in the room, we find a large cardboard box where several children can fit to play in.

### 2. LET'S GO RIDING THE BUS

"We're going to watch a movie and at the same time play as if we're going somewhere," says the teacher. The children and a teacher sit in the box; in front of us, a film is shown with a bus driving around a city. "We're going to Finland," says Leah. Vic sits at the front of the box and pretends to drive; Vic makes movements with his arms as if holding a steering wheel and steering.

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
THE CHILDREN'S ONE

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S  
NARRATIONS

According to **National Level**  
Own national curriculum

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S  
NARRATIONS

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE  
CONVERSATION

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE  
TRIGGER(S)

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS



Several children move their arms and sometimes they make engine noises with their voices. The children do not talk much, but they act with the body and by making an engine noise.

"Where are we going?" the teacher asked. "We go swimming," says Alice. We get off the bus and start swimming and splashing on the floor. After a while, someone wants to go back to preschool, so everyone gets back on the bus.

When we were "swimming", a child saw the soft animals lying in a basket. Alice picks up an animal, then the other children also pick up each animal. The animals were allowed to accompany us on the bus. After a while, the children stop playing and are about to walk away from the room. The teacher asks the children:

"Do you want to draw when we took the bus?". Several children draw a square shape (as the bus has). The child draws how the bus goes in round turns; on the other side, he draws a steering wheel.

"You steer with the steering wheel," says Luisa.

"I also draw a bus," says Leah, and on the smaller paper, she draws herself and the teacher.

Another girl looks at Leah's drawing and gets inspiration to draw. She draws a bus, then draws two other small drawings that she glues to the larger paper.



### How my professional story has improved so far (R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one)

It was fun to play with the kids; we were two teachers who participated. We chose to project a film that shows the perspective from inside a bus and what you see outside the bus window.

At first, the children were careful; they sat in the boxes and watched the film quite passively. After a while, the children begin to move the body in the play and tilt the body sideways as the bus turns. Events from the children's experiences from their lives are incorporated into the play; the children suggest that the bus drives to the bathhouse for swimming. The children take an impression of each other, and when someone starts making engine noises, several children start making noises.

*"Ability to create and ability to express and communicate experiences, thoughts and experiences in different forms of expression such as image, form, drama, movement, singing, music and dance" Swedish curriculum.*

We, teachers, want to give children more opportunities to express themselves through different aesthetic expressions, we think that the children drawing, painting, and constructing with different materials can nourish the games of driving vehicles and travelling somewhere. What are the characteristics of a vehicle?

Wheels, steering wheel, dashboard, engine noise, but maybe also bags with packing, maps, family, pets? We think that the children can create mini stories in images and forms that can then contribute to the play and the interaction between the children.

### 3. CHILDREN DRAW AND PAINT WHEELS

We want to continue to investigate whether the functioning of vehicles is interesting and could be a trigger for children. Therefore, we suggest to the children that we paint round contours as a wheel shape and that they can paint the wheel in different colours.



**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL  
METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS  
(AND TRICKS)

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL  
METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS  
(AND TRICKS)

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
THE CHILDREN'S ONE

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING  
ARE PLEASURES, NOT  
DUTIES: AESTHETIC  
ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

According to **National Level**  
Own national curriculum

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE  
CONVERSATION

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS



We ask the kids a question: What kind of wheels/tires are they? If it can be a tire that rolls fast/if it can drive wobbly. On which vehicle is the wheel? Maybe the kids come up with different characters for their wheel (we hope they get ideas when they paint). One child says: My wheel is dangerous and goes to Stockholm. Another child quotes: I made a rainbow wheel. During children's activities such as this painting task, we have learned to stop and respect the children's different strategies. The children use different techniques, it has taught us to look at each child as a unique creator of their knowledge and responsiveness to the children's different ways of expressing themselves.

These ways also vary from time to time, a child is never the same or does the same things, and we change our minds once more on another occasion.

We tried to give relaunches on several occasions to continue beyond the children's thoughts about the wheels, but they were not so interested. Perhaps are the functioning and different parts of vehicles not interesting enough for the children? We have collected different wheels that the children can examine and use in the games. We've looked at pictures of strange wheels, but the kids didn't seem particularly interested. Since we do not want to pressure the children to go the way we have predetermined, we are dropping this crossroads. Here we were reminded of our goal to let the children lead and that we should come along and walk next to the children not before to lead them towards a goal determined by adults. Learning should be pleasurable, not a duty.

Instead, we move on with the children's everyday stories.

The teachers have given a task to the children's families: they will work with the children's own everyday stories, by dramatizing and playing.

#### 4. CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY STORIES: COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS

As an important part of involving families and collecting experiences of everyday travel, we ask each family to briefly describe a regular journey they have made together with their child.

An example of such documentation: a child has accompanied his father to work and been allowed to eat in the staff canteen. He has also been allowed to ride a tractor (his father works as a machine driver).

Another child describes how he rides a car with his father, they buy pastries and coffee and go home to grandma and surprise her. The children are proud of their short stories and the other children listen with interest.

Then, the children and the teacher play the story. The teacher has prepared and perhaps included important objects that are part of the story. Something like, for example, pastries, a steering wheel for driving the car...

The child whose story we play may have a leading role, but the other children fill in and the play often contains more events than was included in the original story.

#### 5. THE TRIP TO ABBI-DABBI!

On this occasion, it was Leah's story that we were going to dramatize. Leah brings pictures and a short story that Leah and her parents have brought to preschool.

We gather on the floor, where the teachers have developed custom materials so that we can recreate Leah's story.

The children gather on the floor and Mari holds up Leah's everyday story.



**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

*Just a moment... the importance to take a rest in order to reflect before acting, when we are teaching*

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

NA and relations with families

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)

"Let's show your story and we'll hear what happened?"

Now the story begins. We have brought in a small wooden boat that several children can fit a ride in. We also project a film showing the sea and waves. A bag is available with life jackets, a candy bag, and an oar as a tool for the game.

The children are eager to put on life jackets; they try to blow the whistles that are stuck in the vests. Then they get on the boat and the adventure starts!

- Now I've fallen into the water! I jumped out of the boat and lay on the floor. J and A help her back on board.

"Where are we going", the teacher asks?

- To Abbi-Dabbi!

- We're swimming!

- We must have swimming puffs. We pretend to blow up swimming puffs on each arm.

The kids keep playing until we must interrupt to go out to the yard and play. The second class of children should come in and work in the room.

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

### How my professional story has improved so far

In this play and the story of the boat, we realize how much power there is in the children's stories. Although most children haven't been boating at sea, they can share Leah's story and contribute ideas from their lives.

They find common reference points, such as their desire to eat sweets, have swimming puffs and their experiences of family life. The children add excitement to the game by pretending to fall on board and that others must help them onboard the boat again.

**R1**  
**THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE**  
*Children can imagine possible worlds, not only the real one.*

*"Interest in stories, images and texts in different media, both digital and others, as well as their ability to use, interpret, question and discuss these" Swedish curriculum.*

According to **National Level**  
Own national curriculum



In the example of the boat game, we can see that the boat game helps us work towards the goal of the curriculum: the children listen to Leah's history and share it, and then they enrich her story with ideas from their own lives and experiences, the children learn from each other.

In the play, children get opportunities to express themselves verbally, through gestures, images, and objects. The children also compare these experiences and learn to respect each other's different opinions.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

Learning to learn: one of UE the Key competences for life.

### 6.WE BUILD ROADS IN DIFFERENT MATERIALS

For several weeks, we have been processing the children's everyday stories by playing their stories. We have noticed during children's free activities that the children like to build roads. They have seen the older children build roads with Kapla and they have started constructing roads out of both larger and smaller wooden blocks.

Therefore, we want to try enriching the construction material with cardboard pieces, paper, and tape. We are curious about what kind of stories children will invent by constructing paths.

Where are the roads and where are the cars going? It will be interesting to observe whether events from children's everyday stories will be recreated in this context.

The material in this place in the classroom is left behind so that the children can continue the play whenever they want. It will also be possible for all children in the group to be inspired and continue the construction of road construction.

The kids started laying out cardboard pieces, quickly. They started putting fences on both sides of the cardboard pieces. Alice and Jamie lay a straight line = a path that they frame.

Jamie starts laying out cardboard pieces and putting standing bricks on each.

- I make my house

Then Alice o Jamie collects many small cars and puts fences around them.

- We made a garage.

- It s where I live, it's my home."

Eric and Noah are mostly not so interested in building roads. Noah drives with the car on shelves and construction podium, and he collects materials.

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)



**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)



**How my professional story has improved so far (R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one)**

When we teachers look back at the documentation, we think that we can enrich the place with literature dealing with vehicles, roads, and traffic.

The books can help children invent more events in the game, producing excitement, problem-solving situations, and new characters. We also think we need to enrich the environment with construction materials, figures for the building game, Duplo bricks or other.



Perhaps a blue piece of cloth that can symbolize water (children's drawings afterwards showed that they think about roads to water).

We continue to suggest to the children that they can draw afterwards and tell us about how they played.

Alice and Jamie draw paths afterwards, there will be roads that go around, around in spiral form. They mark around the roads where there are houses, a swimming pool, and a water slide.

It seems that water is important to draw out, to go to the beach, bathhouses, and pools are often goals when the children play that they drive a car.

**7. HOUSES. FAMILIES. AND DOMESTIC LIFE**

We continue to develop the building corner with materials so that the children can construct roads; we have brought strips of floor mats that the children use to create roads. The homes are a common interest for the children, they tell each other about what their house looks like, and who lives there.

Many conversations between the children are about what their family looks like, and what they do with their parents and siblings.

The trigger seems to be the goal of the trip, sometimes the cars go to the beach, and sometimes you drive to the store or to visit your friend.

The teacher asks:

"Where do you usually go when you go out in a car?"

- We usually drive to the bathhouse.
- We go to grandma and grandpa.
- We usually go home to my house.

The children who are attending this day divide themselves into pairs. Sam and Alice build up a bathhouse of bricks. Leah and Max each make a house and then they drive and visit each other.

The trigger can certainly be different for individual children, but in retrospect, we teachers still think that the very joy of designing and creating is a trigger for some kids and for someone else it's the interaction in playing.

But above all, the thought of being on the road somewhere and thinking about what this destination is unites the group into a common idea.

Children enjoy fantasizing, imagining places they would like to visit, both places they know and have experience of, and some fantasies about exciting places. They are driving the cars to the volcanoes, where there is lava that you must watch out for.



**R4**  
REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION

**R10**  
APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)

NA and storytelling production

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

Tying together school and family

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION

NA and well-being (relational climate at school)

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS



The children pick up figures from the Lego corner as well as several cars with trailers. Now begins a story about how the figures who symbolize the children themselves, are on their way with their cars. They have loaded the cars with food and clothes and are going on a trip. They go far away from the volcanoes.

- Help, I'm driving in the lava!
- It's really hot!

After the children play with the cars and drive on the roads, we ask the children if they want to draw their house. Most children want to do this.

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

Relaunching activity

Tying together school and family

We think it's a good opportunity for us to be able to listen to the children's stories and a good opportunity for the children to listen to each other's stories about their houses and families. The roads are created in a context with the houses and families.

The children have drawn their houses and together they get to talk about their drawings.

We think we should do a relaunch by giving children opportunities to construct houses in a more durable material, like small cardboard boxes that they can paint and decorate.

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

We can also see if the children want to create paths out of strips of paper that they can tape onto the floor. We teachers will look that can symbolize lava, fire and water. We will borrow books which are about communities, and how roads and houses are part of a cityscape. We believe that books and pictures can inspire and help children to invent even more content and enriches the game.



We will continue to observe the children's play to be able to follow their thoughts and interests. We can really see that play is a tool for creating stories at the moment, they are created out of curiosity, and experiences and are spiced up by the children's imprints.

By working on this project with a narrative approach, we have become aware of how stories constantly arise and go on in children's games, images, movements and constructions. We also have learned how important it is to develop a rich variety of materials.

The play takes off and the houses become important attributes as support for storytelling.

- I live in this house
- And I lived here

Then we could visit each other.

The children tell us, teachers, that they want to keep the material because they intend to continue playing after lunch. We have learned to respect children's work in progress and to show sensitivity to the children's creative processes. We teachers must hold back our eagerness to clean up to satisfy our desire for tidy rooms. In the narrative context, we must create transitions between the routines that arise during a school day, so we help the children to be able to start, finish and restart their games, explorations, and creative activities.

**R10**  
APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

How to arrange a narrative school-life (school TIME)

## 8. THE AMAZING OUTCOMES OF THIS PROJECT:

### The written language

In the project, the children have had many opportunities to meet the written language. Partly when reading literature and when the children practice and try to write their own words. We see that their interest in the written word has increased.

According to National Level Own national curriculum



### **The relationship with families**

In conversations with parents, it emerges that their children talked a lot about certain parts of the project at home. The everyday stories that the parents have been involved in contributing have been appreciated. The parents think it has been fun and meaningful to participate and contribute with material that has been used and enriched the children's stories/games.



### **Children as creators and inventors**

We have seen great value in the children being allowed to leave behind the material and bring material between different places, for developing the storytelling and the children's games. We, teachers, have gained a greater respect for the children's spontaneous narrations, and we are more responsive to what the children need to develop further so that we can support the development of play and the children's storytelling.

A development for us teachers through this project has been the realization of how important it is that children get opportunities to express their stories in different forms of expression and different materials. In this project about vehicles and everyday life, playing has been an important form of expression as well as the ability to create, draw, paint, and construct.

We have learned the importance of the environment is accessible for diverse narrative storytelling. We have also become better at looking with interest and wonder at the children's ongoing stories. We want to continue to follow the stories that are created and re-created time by time again.

According to European Level Key competences for life and Early Educational Curriculum



THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE



LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

## BEST PRACTICE n.2

### ALL THE LIGHTS IN OUR HOUSE

Best practice from Elmer in de Stad kindergarten located in the centre of Brussels (Belgium). It is attended by children from 3 months to 2,5 years old. Children having participated in this activity are from 3 months to 2,5 years old.

Focus:

- Teachers and pedagogical coach look deeper into the Decalogue en try to find triggers from the children
- Observing and documenting, how to? Mosaic approach

#### 1.FASCINATION OF LIGHTS: WHERE THE STORY STARTED

Phil, Miro and Nortso are sitting on the floor. Marije has some ghost-shaped lights and puts them on the floor. They are on and have a lot of different colours.

Phil takes a light and brings it to his mouth. Miro is very fascinated to the lights.

He turns it around and around. He looks at the one color that keeps changing. And then he takes another light laying on the floor. Nortso is discovering with his mouth.



*Marije told to mama of Miro that he is always saying "lampa". The mother told her that in the native language of mama, it means lamp or light. He is always very fascinated about lights and is always looking around to see lights.*

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

The day after, Marije puts the lightbox ready with plastic colored forms. Miro is looking very attentive to the lightbox and puts the plastic forms on top of the box. Marije asks him "where is lampa?" and he looks at the top of the room, direction the light.

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)



And then he looks at the lightbox. Het looks at Marije. He understood there is light in two different places.

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS



On another day, Marije brought lights from home. It is a cord with light balls on it. Together with the colleagues she decides to put the lights a tent. Her colleagues goes and look for the tent. Meanwhile she makes the room dark and collects some other lights.

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

Miro was in the garden and Marije takes the light balls from the room, to just check them and put everything ready. But Miro sees it and crawls very fast and super enthusiastic to the room, to see the lights.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

He comes to Marije and is looking full of admiration to the lights. He looks at Marije as if he checks if he can touch it.

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

Marije tells him he can. Het takes the balls in his tiny hands, one by one. And then he takes the full cord and shakes it. He starts to experiment with it and plays for a very long time with the lights.





Phil also came to play but only lasted for some minutes. He just touched it and then left. Sebastian wanted to discover it with his mouth. When the food arrived in the group, Miro left the lights and went to the kitchenette.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

*Experience from Marije: The activities I now do with the children are different than before. I am more concerned with the goal (following the interests of the children). Ex. If we can discover a particular interest (even if it is very small), we can treat it from different perspectives. Ex. through my conversation with Milo's mom, his interest in lamps comes up ("I thought he said papa with the word "lampa" in his language, but the mom told me it was a lamp and that light fascinated him) . We had a nice conversation about this, the mother thought it was special to discover that I knew her son so well and that I did more than just take care of it. Now when I choose a theme for an activity (or rather a "trigger" to start the day) I try to do it based on the interests of the children. From there I will follow what the child is doing.*

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

In one of the weeks after the activities about the lights, Marije was in the group playing on the mat. Suddenly she hears Milo chatting to himself, so she says to Vince, "Do you hear that, Vince is awake". "Shall we go get him out of bed?" She goes to the bedroom with Vince and suddenly thinks that light would be nice for Milo and so she turns on the light (which she normally never does). Milo was really happy and surprised and immediately looked for the light source. Vince and Marije turned the light off and on a few more times. It was so beautiful to see the kids enjoying this experience.



**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

*Marije: I now turn daily tasks and worries into mini-activities. This gives the children the opportunity to observe and discover all day long. Their interests are addressed much more quickly. There is no longer a focus on 1 large and well-prepared/elaborated.*

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

## 2. EXPERIMENTING WITH DIFFERENT TRIGGERS



Ilda starts with free playtime in the baby group. She presents plastic toy animals in a box on the floor. First she rattles the box and asks the children "What is this?", "Come and have a look?".

The children sit around the box. They look at the animals and pick out a few. They observe and taste (put it in their mouth) and pass them on to each other.

Nortso is especially interested in the box, that is decorated with pictures of animals. They turn out to be stickers. Nortso starts fiddling at the photos with her finger. She tears them off. Then she wants to put them back on. She does this over and over again.

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS



The next time Ilda gives pictures again to the children, this time pictures of their own faces (plasticized). Newspaper clippings are also hidden between those photos. Everything is back in a box on the floor.

The children take the pictures and want to paste them somewhere else. They pass the photos on to each other and try to "stick" them on the wall, but they don't succeed, they fall off.

**R9**  
**HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)**

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

NA and learning processes

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

Nortso discovers the difference between the laminated photos and the newspaper clippings. The newspaper clippings feel soft and tear easily, you can also crumple them. They look very closely and observe the pictures of the newspaper.

So the children get full newspapers to feel. The newspapers are laying on the floor. Nortso looks closely and begins to crumple again.

Lars uses all his strength and turns a newspaper into a ball (keep pushing and crumpling until the newspaper is nicely round).

Nortso sees that and now does this too; she puts a small crumpled ball in her mouth, puts it on her head.

*Mama tells us that Nortso's older sister likes to play with balls at home.  
 Nortso easily plays with her sister and then imitates what her sister is doing.  
 They have a basketball and also a basketball ring in the yard.*

In the day-care we only have small balls, so we show Nortso the pool full of balls and she can play with it/in it. Ilda also gives her other smaller balls of different materials and colours.

Relaunching activity



Again there is a basket and newspapers. Nortso tastes the balls and feels the newspapers. She puts everything in the basket. She puts the basket (empty) on her head. She empties and refills the basket.

The next day Ilda offers a basket with balls, but also newspapers and animals and an empty "sensitive" box with pictures of animals on it => this time Ilda is surprised to discover that Nortso no longer fills and empties but again tears pictures of the box and sticks them on it again and again.

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**



### 3. LIGHTBOX IN THE ROOM

Amy plays with the light box during free play. She puts the transparent plastic blocks on it. Then she puts the blocks on top of each other. She really practices stacking. So next time Ilda gives her different types of blocks: plastic, but also wood. Amy really feels the difference between the different materials. There are even some sponges (also rectangular and block-shaped); Amy feels they are "different".... She also tries to put them together. She puts them side by side. She puts them on her head and passes them on to the other children. Then she takes one in each hand and rubs it on the floor. Is she cleaning? Does she want to hear the sound? Does she drives it like a car?



**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

*Ilda asks the mom if Amy knows sponges from home. The mother says that after eating together they also clean up together at home. Amy may then wipe and clean the table with the sponge.*

NA and relations with families



Now Ilda gives to Amy a sheet of paper with poster paint on it, and two sponges. Amy wipes the paint across the paper. The paint also ends up on the floor. Ilda hands wet washcloths and Amy immediately starts cleaning the floor and wiping off the paint.

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

Amy is offered the toddlers' little cleaning cart. She observes and sees what is inside. She takes a washcloth and starts "dusting" the cart herself, sticking it in every nook and cranny and rubbing it. Then she takes a washcloth and puts her hand in it, now she starts rubbing the window with it.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

### 4. SWITCHED UP

At the end of March, there is a switch between teachers and there is also a switch with the children. A lot of the children go upstairs to the toddler group. Nortso is one of them. So at this moment it is a total new group of children and a new composition of teachers that has come together

The teachers sit together and they decided they would like to focus on only one or two children. They notice in the baby group it is very difficult to observe closely a child if it is in the full group. They see the small signals better if they have that closer observation. So each teacher chooses one child to focus on.

Leticia chose to observe Eugenie. She is one of the oldest in the baby group. She starts to be a little more independent. And Leticia is supporting her to eat on her own.

There was a day that Eugenie was eating alone but after eating, she rubbed the food over her body and was intensely playing with it. So Leticia decided to give some plates, some cutlery, a cup and some rice. She wanted to see the reaction when she sees the materials outside of the eating corner.

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)



Eugenie started to crawl straight to the rice. She was attracted by it and started feeling it and putting it in her hands. She fill a cup with the rice and then started to bring it to her mouth. She acted like she was drinking it. Leticia kept observing what she was doing and saw her taking a plate and filling it with rice. With the spoon, she began to eat. When she finished, she put everything down. She took an empty cup and put her hands inside. She begins to play with it.

From there Leticia decided to move from this to a next trigger. She gave some fresh fruits and vegetables, some play fruits and some cooking utilities. She noticed Eugenie was even interested in the fruits and veggies but they have to be in the cups.

She put them together. One in another. And then she played again with her hands in one of the cup. She took another cup again and she was drinking again from the cup. Just like she did the first time with the rice.



**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

NA and learning processes



One of the days before Leticia did an activity with a lightbox. She noticed all of the children were very interested in it and played very intensely. So Leticia decided to take the lightbox and combine it with the cooking utilities. She also put extra some sponges and there were the normal colored blocks from the lightbox.

Eugenie took two cups and put it on the lightbox. She also put the blocks on the lightbox. And then she went to sit in the middle of it. She played with it for a quite long time.

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

**R9**  
**HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)**

When she was done, she emptied everything out of the toybox and put the empty box on her head. The lightbox and toys seemed not so interesting anymore. And Eugenie started playing with that toybox. She drummed on it with her flat hands. She gave a rhythm. She was very happy and smiled.



**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

NA and learning processes

Leticia: It's a way to work much more broadly with the children – I let the children choose how they deal with things (use their own imagination). I offer something and observe what they will do with it. I build on that choice. The more I direct it a certain way, the faster the activity stops and the less their imagination is used.

**R1**  
**THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE**

When Leticia spoke with Eugenie's mom, she heard that Eugenie plays at home with spoon and forks. She likes the real materials. She does like she is eating and she can play for a while with it. She has a sister that also likes to play with the kitchen utilities. Leticia made an overview of the narrative story of Eugenie and hang it at the window of her group. When the father of Eugenie came, he was very interested and amazed. He found it beautiful to see the story of his daughter.

**R4**  
**REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION**

NA and relations with families



## BEST PRACTICE n.3

### BAKING Our recipes

Best practice from Tallinn Meelespea kindergarten located in the neighbourhood of Haabersti in Tallinn (Estonia). It is attended by 270 children from 1,6 to 7 of age. Children who participated in this activity are from 6 to 7 years old.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND FINDING TRIGGER

The trigger was first noticed in the summer when children were making beautifully decorated mud cakes from sand and water. Most of the summertime in the kindergarten we spend outdoors, as much time as we can. From there it was really easy to see what captured the eye of the child. Since it was raining the other day, children were collecting water from every surface they could find and taking the water to the sandbox.

Then started the fun part – mixing water with sand and making mud cakes. One of the children ran towards the teacher and asked "What is your favourite food?".

And from there on the dialogue started about different foods and children tried to mimic the actual food-making with objects that were nearby/in hand.

Also one of the most popular corners in our classroom is the „cooking corner“, where children prepare meals for teachers and themselves. There they like to wear an apron and chef's hat.

In our classroom, every child can be a teacher's „helper“ for a day. This kind of role gives a child a sense of power – a chance to play an important role.

Young children as well tend to be egocentric, which means that young children are not able to take the perspective of others, instead, the child thinks that everyone sees, thinks, and feels just as they do. So, with this kind of assignment, we can help children develop social skills for life



**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
THE CHILDREN'S ONE

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING  
ARE PLEASURES, NOT  
DUTIES: AESTHETIC  
ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

NA and learning  
processes



The assignments are rotated regularly and they can learn every job that is available in the classroom. They can set a table for lunch, serve food for themselves, bring food from the kitchen etc. They like to learn every job, be it big or small, they like to be involved. Besides that, they are learning to wait for their turn. That's another social skill –self-control.

#### 2. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

To pursue children's interest in cooking furthermore, the teacher proposed baking a cake. The first step was to start researching what ingredients do we need to bake a cake from scratch.

NA and learning  
processes

Relaunching activity  
**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL  
METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS  
(AND TRICKS)

For that, a teacher placed some of the „triggers' ' on the table (scale, pizza cutter, bowl with flour, measuring cup, rolling pin, different spices etc).



Some children already knew exactly what the purpose of some of the tools is in food preparation. For example, a child took a pizza cutter in his hand and said that his dad used exactly the same one at home to cut his pizza into slices. From there on every tool on the table had a story on its own.

After making sure what tool does what, we started talking about how to make an apple pie. We watched videos, looked at the recipes, discussed what we should do first and talked through every step that has to be done before the cake is ready to be eaten.

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)

We browsed through some of the cookbooks that we had in hand and After making sure what tool does what, we started talking about how to make an apple pie. We watched videos, looked at the recipes, discussed what we should do first and talked through every step that has to be done before the cake is ready to be eaten. We browsed through some of the cookbooks that we had in hand and immediately children noticed the food that they would like to eat or make and those recipes that didn't look that appetizing.

After sharing their thoughts we started the cooking class. Children followed the recipe, measured sugar and flour with a kitchen scale, cut apples into pieces and used a hand mixer. Afterwards, they could eat their fresh-out-of-the-oven apple pie. Since everyone loved the whole process and the feedback from both the parents and children was really good, the teachers proposed to have a cooking class once a month.

During the process, they often would make comments about familiar subjects (what have they baked before, what do they like/dislike to eat, whose mom works as a baker etc). While looking through cookbooks a child pointed out that there were pastries that her mom had made for her before. As her story went on, everyone learned that her mother actually works in a cafe and she sells baked goodies as a full-time job.



NA and learning processes

**R4**  
**REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION**

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)



Children were thrilled by the idea of having their copy of the cookbook, so we gave them creative freedom and the necessary tools so they could use their creativity to make their book. It was interesting to observe how every child had a different idea of what a book should consist of or how it should look. Some of the children decided to add only the foods that they like, some wanted to draw the pictures and others decided to cut out favourite pieces from the magazine and add their thoughts to the illustrations.

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

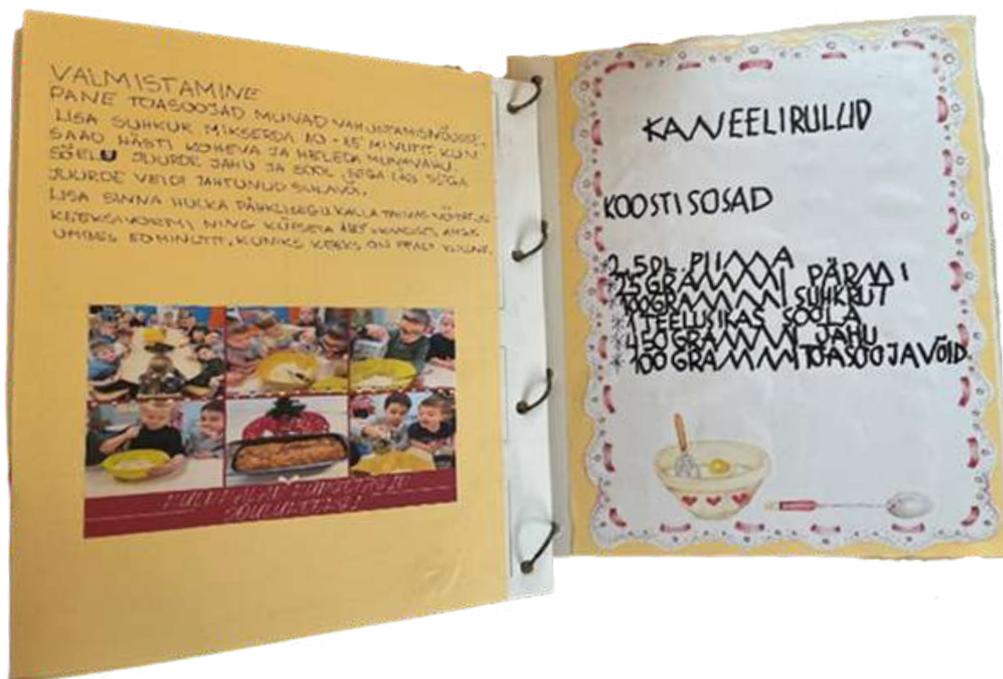
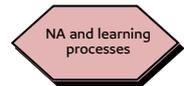




The teacher documented the child's story and added their narrative to the cookbook. Every book had its own story and idea. One book was all about different foods: sweet and savoury, healthy and unhealthy, things that the child liked to eat and on another page, there were foods that the child disliked. One child decided to draw himself on every page and add food that he liked to eat or make.

The original idea was to make a cookbook, but in the end, every child found their trigger in the process. Children used their imagination, and creativity and shared their likes and dislikes with their friends and teachers. When they were done with the books it was a good opportunity for us to be able to listen to their stories.

This was the final product of our cooking classes. Our recipe book.



### 3. PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT AND FEEDBACK

After the first baking lesson, parents were thrilled about this new development and started bringing apples and other cooking materials to the kindergarten. Parents shared their personal stories with the teachers, how a child came back from kindergarten and decided to make pancakes out of every ingredient possible.

As we were baking quite often, the children took their new interest to home also. Parents shared with us some of the photos that they took at home and even brought some of the baked goodies to the kindergarten. They said that children were so inspired after some of the cooking classes that they immediately wanted to try those new skills at home. Some of the parents were really surprised that their child actually ate what we had made in the class because at home the child wouldn't even try those kinds of pastries. One mother pointed out that her son liked the process more than the outcome.

Some parents even asked for the exact recipe for themselves, so they could replicate what we did in the classroom.



## 4. FIELD TRIP TO THE LOCAL SHOP/BAKERY

In October we celebrated Bread Week in kindergarten. During the week we talked about how bread is made. In the first half of the week, children were introduced to 4 different grains – wheat, rye, barley and oats. Children could look at those grains with a magnifying glass and see them close up. Afterwards, they could look at different pictures of the products that we can make from those grains.



On Thursday morning, we decided to visit the local baker shop – Leiburi. It is the oldest bread baker in Estonia. Halfway to the store, we could smell the appetizing bread smell in the air and the children were thrilled to see that the bakery is so close to us.

When entering the shop the first thing you can see is the shelves full of different products. In addition to traditional rye bread, there were countless other delicious products on store shelves: different kinds of bread, fruit-oatmeal cookies etc. We made our selection and we headed back to the kindergarten.

The most anticipated moment was finally here - tasting the products. The children could try out bread made from wheat flour, rye bread, fruit-oatmeal cookies, and palm bread with raisins and oatmeal. Then they could pick out their favourite and fewer favourite products and comment on them.

**R9**  
**HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)**

Relaunching activity

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

**R4**  
**REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION**

NA and relations with families



## 5. CONTINUED INTEREST

Since the cooking class started, we have been decorating a wall in the „cooking corner“ with real pictures of us in the process of making something delicious. Children still share some of their favourite foods that we have made and how they tried to make it at home also. Since the weather is perfect for making mud cakes again, the children are really excited to have the freedom of making their own meals from things that they find in nature.

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)



## BEST PRACTICE n.4

### THE STRANGE CASE OF THE RABBIT AT SCHOOL From nature observation to caregiving attitude

Best practice from Scoiattolo nursery school located in the city centre of Imola (Italy). It is attended by 75 children from 5 to 36 months of age. Children who have fully participated in this activity are from 1.5 to 3 years old, but in some parts, even younger ones were involved.

#### PREFACE: WHERE DOES OUR STORY START FROM?

During the lockdown in 2020, a rabbit arrived spontaneously in the park of the Scoiattolo Nursery School. Educators decided to present it to children by sending a video to families, as part of our initiatives to maintain a relationship with families and children during such a long closure of the schools, even with the purpose to enhance language skills.



**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

At the beginning of the following school year, once we finally reopened the schools, the observation of the children's verbal productions and their spontaneous storytelling showed how the theme of the rabbit was common in.

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

During 2021, health rules against the COVID outbreak did not allow mixing up different classes: the narration about the rabbit was a way to maintain links among children belonging to different groups, and to support the whole school community.

#### 1. THE FIRST MEETING WITH THE RABBIT IN THE SCHOOLYARD: SPONTANEOUS NARRATIONS



Early in the morning, the children first asked educators for going to the window to greet the rabbit. Some of them wondered where he lived, what he ate, where he slept, and where he went when he was out of sight.

Some kids started to name him Tippy, others Bing (characters of two child's stories characters) and searched for him inside the books available in our little library.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

Some months later...

One morning in spring 2021, Lorenzo (3 y.o.), as soon as he arrived at the nursery, began spontaneously telling the educator the story of a rabbit that had been living in the park of the nursery since the previous years. This was the starting point for a conversation between him and educators: these tried to support the child's narration by asking open-ended and hypothetical questions, avoiding being too suggestive. Lorenzo told us about his first meeting with the rabbit.

The stories about the rabbit were getting more and more common, and day by day they were enriched with new details and nuances in the dialogue among kids, and between them and adults, generating new stimuli and ideas. So, we started to reflect together on how to support and facilitate this children's narrative productions, paying attention to the arrangement of the spaces spaces, and the correct use of language, to enhance narrative interactions.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

#### Lorenzo told Educator about his first meeting with the rabbit.

L.: It's a little black and a little yellow.

L.: No...

E: Who's a little bit black and a little bit yellow?

E.: Do you think rabbits should be afraid?

L.: the rabbit, that rabbit there

L.: No.... they were not all the same those butterflies

E.: but did you see the rabbit?

E.: But where did you see the butterflies?

L.: Sure... Do you remember that I was very young and I went to the nursery....and I saw the rabbit there?

L.: Always from the rabbit

E.: OHH...really?

E.: Ah. yes?

L.: Yes

L.: Yes. It is always spring.... Spring came all day...

E.: Did you ever see the rabbit up close?

Nanny, did you understand? Those butterflies had the power to transform other types of spring... Did you understand?

L.: Sure, but it wasn't afraid!

E.: Ah. no?

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION

E.: I understand... But where did you see the butterflies? In our park or another garden?

L.: Always in the nursery's park. But spring had arrived!

E.: When did spring come?

L.: Nanny, do you remember? Last evening... When it was night. Then I saw the rabbit from a distance that was eating lots of carrots and lots of grass... Then I went over to see it better...

E.: And getting closer did you see it better?

L.: Yes, but it didn't run away!

E.: It knows you! The rabbit has been here at the nursery for a long time

L.: Yes, that rabbit there... Who wasn't from the nursery... It was from another garden

E.: Which garden?

L.: Then that rabbit had lost all things!.....

## 2. LOOKING FOR THE RABBIT

It was a nice morning, during spring 2021. In the schoolyard, a group of children was managing to observe the rabbit in the meadow before it ran away. The children began to reflect, exchange ideas and stories, and ask the educators and each other, all that to learn and agree about the rabbit's habits and features. The rabbit became a recurring theme in the children's stories and their daily explorations, and through this process, their experiences got richer and richer.

When the children were in the park, they went in search of the rabbit's hiding place. Some looked for it in the sandbox, others behind the hedge.



**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

NA and learning processes

The garden offered the children many ideas, and the presence of a small rabbit enriched the possibilities for new explorations and storytelling. Observing the children, suggestions and reflections emerged from the educators, causing several discussions. What emerged gave us the possibility to give adequate answers to the children concerning their emerging needs and interests.

**R1**  
**THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE**

## 3. A NICE SURPRISE

Some of the children spontaneously suggested to the educators that they could offer the rabbit first a delicious plate of fresh fruit, then a plate of carrots. This tasty snack was left in the park, and the next day the children asked the educators if they could go and see if the rabbit had enjoyed the surprise. Of course, they could.



The educators observed that the autonomous experiences related to the rabbit had stimulated in the children many new interests, curiosity, desires for new knowledge and enrichment of language.

However, we noted that, especially in the last period, the rabbit hid when it heard children's voices, making meeting it more difficult. We wondered what direction the children's narrations would take, given the rabbit's frequent absence from the garden, and how we could have facilitated this process.

**R1**  
**THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE**

NA and learning processes

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

## 4. LET'S PRETEND...

On a morning in April 2021, Vittoria and Angelo (3 years old) in their classroom were reading the book "Poor Little Rabbit!".



**R10**  
**APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING**



The book told the story of a bunny, struggling with a situation well known to the youngest children: "getting hurt". In the book, children could wipe his tears, give him a band-aid, give him some cuddles, and then the bunny would have been ready to run and play again. It was a fun way to "exorcise" small traumas and experience empathy and kindness.



The educators had set up corners in each class set up with soft mats and psychomotor structures, areas set up with couches, pillows, clothes, and bookcases full of books available to children, along with deconstructed material. The children began to tell and dramatize stories with the rabbit as the main character.



When they were in class, they recalled what they had observed, and after having built cardboard ears together with the educators, they disguised themselves and interpret it in a small group by hopping, and imitating its verse and movements. The educators created a space where they could symbolize the rabbit movement and left the children free to play in this area.

Starting from the observation of the children's autonomous experiments, the educators made available other material.

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)

## 5. GROUP'S CULTURE AND BEYOND

The children who had already attended the nursery the previous year passed on the story of the rabbit to the new arrivals, generating a sort of group culture fluidly modified and enriched day by day by the narrative elements of each child.

Some continued to call him Bing, others Tippy. Some wondered where he lived, what kind of food he ate, where he slept, where he went when he was out of sight, and what shape his poop was. Sometimes, in the morning, children were greeted at the entrance to the nursery by the rabbit and it triggered spontaneous narratives with families.



A child who attended last year, Zelinda (30 months), proposed to prepare a banquet for Bing involving Ludovica (30 months), a newcomer. The game was then enriched by attracting the interest of all the other children present, who in turn added narrative elements. The same experience was spontaneously repeated in the following days and was enriched by becoming a shared heritage of the group

NA and well-being (relational climate at school)

NA and relations with families

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

Educator: what was Tippy doing?

Alexander: it had made a poop...!

E.: that's right... he pooped... Tippy makes little balls...

A.: it has made a big ball... Like the sheep.

E.: like the sheep... It's true. Did you see the sheep's poop?

A.: like a pig!

E.: yes, even pigs make poop!

A.: even the cow makes poop... In the stable.... And then...me too.... Also Alvin!

E.: this morning when you arrived with your mother where Tippy was?

Alexander: it was out there! In the garden!

E.: it was near the entrance. It comes to saying hello

A.: yes.... Because I was scared....

E.: were you afraid of Tippy?

(Child doesn't reply)

E.: and mum ever seen Tippy?

A.: yes

During a morning in the garden Alexander (30 months), after having seen the rabbit with his mother on its arrival, began spontaneously to tell the educator what the shape of the rabbit's poop is like. From here started the description of other animals and the shape of their poops. The dialogue with the educator became an opportunity to talk directly about both the topic of biological functions and sphincter control.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION

NA and learning processes

Starting from this episode, the educators decided to make available to the children in the library present in the class some books that talked about this topic including “Who made this in my head?” written by Werner Holzwarth.

*The book told the story of a pretty and shortsighted mole who had a little accident: someone had pooped on her head! But who will have been the culprit? To find out, it took carefully comparing the shape of the different animal poops.*

Margaret and Nima (age 3), who had been attending the nursery for 3 years, chose to read this new book available at the library. They settled comfortably on a large pillow in the section to enjoy the new reading.



Leafing through the book, they appeared amused and surprised to see drawings of poops of different animals: they liked the story, and the pictures, because children are often attracted by topics considered taboo by adults, as in this case, poop.

**R10**  
**APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING**

NA and learning processes

## 6. A WIDER VIEW



The educators decided to set up some deconstructed materials in a piece of furniture in the class (suitable for children) and observe the spontaneous use of cardboard rolls and textile bobbins.

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)

Some children used cardboard rolls as binoculars and looked for the rabbit in the park: began reflection, exchanges, and narrations, to the educators and to each other to get to know its habits and characteristics.

The educator, as a participant-observer, left space for the children’s experience, inserting herself when she perceived an opening; through a verbal reference, she encouraged the spontaneous production of children.

Some children, intrigued by the occasional sightings of the rabbit proposed to the teachers to go out in the park to look for his tracks to discover where he was hiding in the winter season. To do this, they decided to use the magnifying glasses at their disposal in the classroom.

Well-equipped, the search for the rabbit continued ...

**R8**  
**TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION**

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

NA and learning processes

## 7. A DEN FOR BING/TIPPIE

Following the story of the school staff (who had shown the rabbit coming out of a mobile container in the park of the nursery), the older children asked the educators to prepare a warm burrow for the rabbit... and why not offer him a delicious snack. Thanks to the knowledge of the rabbit friend, they designed a special burrow to face the harsh winter climate. The educators shared with the other classes the experience of caregiving carried out by the children and this story generated in the other children the desire to offer the rabbit fresh food. During outings to the garden, the children often asked teachers to take leftover fruit with them.

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**



In the classroom, Catherin (33 months) proposed to the educators to prepare some food for "him", and then she took an apple from the fruit container that has just been finished. Then they all went out into the garden to take care of the rabbit.

### 8. TAKING CARE

One morning, Edward (age 3) arrived at the nursery with a bag containing fresh food for Bing/Tippie. Mom told the educators that the previous afternoon, after seeing the rabbit and the documentation that had been loaded onto the platform Classroom and displayed on the wall; they had gone to the supermarket together to shop for fresh vegetables for the rabbit. Together with their mates and the educators, she went to the garden to offer it to her friend, the rabbit.



This experience of caring fostered in children the development of empathic ability, self-esteem, self-perception as competent, the ability to care for others, and a sense of responsibility. We observed how caring for the rabbit had constituted an opportunity for psycho-physical-emotional development for the children and had also revived mutual care by enacting greater awareness, sensitivity, and the ability to be empathetic toward other peers.

Daily observation and comparison with colleagues showed that the theme of care was predominant across all classes. We, therefore, found ourselves at a crossroads: on the one hand, the narrative with the rabbit as the protagonist, and on the other, care-giving.

The theme of care in each class was an important feature and came both from the direct experience that each child lived in being cared for by adults, and from the observation of adults who took care of other children. Caring was perceived more generally in every relationship (between grandparents, parents, siblings, with a pet). Care not only physical but also emotional, cognitive, and perceptual.

NA and learning processes

NA and relations with families

NA and well-being (relational climate at school)

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS



Mealtime became a chance for an older child (3 years, already attending since last year) to take care of a newcomer 9-month-old child.

We observed how children really enjoyed caring for someone else, taking care of them and worrying about them, and they did it often. They imitated adults, produced and reproduced behaviours they have experienced with people who take care of them, and at the same time find opportunities to experience feeling able and competent. Tutoring by older children fosters knowledge and learning and reinforces self-esteem.



In the classroom, at a soft corner, Catherin (3 years) approached Joy (1 year) to fix the clips in her hair  
 Educator: All the hairclips have been moved!  
 Catherin: This one is already in place  
 E.: You put that one in place! And is that one in place?  
 Catherin fixed Joy's hairclip and said: I'm sorry!  
 Then she stroked her head.  
 Pointing at a hairclip, she said: There is a butterfly here!  
 Then she went back to joy to put the hair clip on.  
 Joy looked at Catherin and smiled.

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION



During a morning in the classroom, Zelinda (3 years old) and Victor (2 and a half years old) cradled Catherin (1 and a half years old) who was in the stroller trying to fall asleep. Zelinda sang, "Ninna nanna, ninna oh, questa bimba a chi la do" (a classic Italian lullaby). Catherin looked at her friends and appeared relaxed. Starting from the observations and the comparison between educators, we decided to expand the proposal of setting up the section space with sheets/cloths and observing their use.

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**



It was about 9:45 a.m., and the children had just finished eating their fruit. Nima entered the room and immediately went to the "suitcase" containing the sheets. She took first a cloth and then a bear... She started to cradle it moving in space. Bianca observed the scene and said "Me too.... me too ...." trying to grab Nima's cloth without succeeding. She looked around and saw that other clothes and puppets are available. The two little girls started to speak softly. The educator approached to hear better and perceived that they were singing a lullaby.

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**



The space and the materials (cubes, cylinders, armchairs) that were usually devoted to movement activities, became a place where one could also have experiences of care.

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

Nima's game aroused Bianca's interest and from the potential dispute for the cloth, a common game project was born: accompanying the bears to sleep. The children reproduced and imitated actions and gestures that they have probably seen adults (educators and parents) do to them and others, but at the same time, they added something of their own. In the following days, the educators observed how the theme of caring for the bears was abandoned and then resumed cyclically during the school day.

**NA and learning processes**

One morning the educators decided to set up the class by adding a detail: a transparent cloth hanging from the two ends, placed in a space adjacent to two windows, almost to form a sort of hammock. The sheet, which remains stable in the section, is used as a cradle for care experiences but also as a container for the children's "piling up" of material. The children had the opportunity to rethink and re-set up the space consistent with the play project and experimented with different possibilities of building cribs for both them and the bears/babies.



**R9**  
**HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)**



Starting from these observations, the educators decided to include cardboard boxes in the material available to the children. Some used them as cradles, others as containers for transporting soft toys, and others as a car.

The different ways of responding to the individual characteristics of each child were evident: some cuddled their doll/bear, others snuggled next to it singing a lullaby, others read a story to it, others covered it with a puppet, and others stroked her.

### 9. COLLABORATION WITH CASA PIANI LIBRARY AND MOSAICO BOOKSTORE.



One morning, we went with a group of 11 children between the ages of 11 months and 3 years to the children's bookstore in the centre of the city of Imola to look for new books to put in the micro-library set up in one of the sections. The children freely browsed through various books on display and their choice fell on a silent book "The White Book" created by Silvia Borando, Lorenzo Clerici and Elisabetta Pica. The book was purchased and made available to the children



Related with partnership with libraries



Children's self production (IO3)

Since there was an active collaboration with the Casa Piani Library, the librarians were asked to select some books for the 0-3 age group about the theme of care (there are books about children's daily life moments, with animals as the subject of care, animal knowledge, adventures experienced by animals, etc.).



The books were offered inside a suitcase and set up in a corner of the class to be enjoyed independently by the children and to read aloud. The books were also offered in the nursery park to allow them to also be enjoyed in kind. Collaboration with the library allowed us to deepen and broaden our knowledge of children's literature, stay up-to-date on new illustrated books but also to rediscover the value of texts that are no longer published. This collaboration has affected the quality of reading proposals and the hope is that this path can continue in the future.



### 10. DOCUMENTATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Educators produced descriptive, photographic, and video documentation.

They shared them with families both through the Classroom platform and by displaying them in the class.

This sharing process has become a treasure for all and has allowed for maintaining a common thread within the different classes, generating has generated a circularity of a new narrative within the families and the classes. The working group has also chosen to expose the documentation in the fence that runs along the nursery making bulletin boards with recycled material.

#### FEEDBACK FROM PARENTS ON THE CLASSROOM PLATFORM RESPECT THE RABBIT'S DOCUMENTATION

- Altes che è molto gentile, da tutto possiamo imparare.
- È molto dolce e il coniglietto non si mangia niente. Zucche per il coniglietto è il suo.
- Il coniglio che ama il coniglietto: il coniglietto è il suo.
- Il coniglio che ama il coniglietto: il coniglietto è il suo.
- Il coniglio che ama il coniglietto: il coniglietto è il suo.
- Il coniglio che ama il coniglietto: il coniglietto è il suo.



de pabbu'nto scura de gennere - arduo Photo taken by a parent.

R9 HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)



R4 REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION

The realization of "narrative gates" is a way to open up to the city and promote the culture of childhood.



**Involving community**

## 11. THE RABBIT'S EGGS



Spring came and we spent a lot of time in the nest park. The children spotted the rabbit again and observed very deep burrows in the garden placed in different places (in the vegetable garden, near the slide, among the trees, etc.). In some of them, there were, as Margaret said, strange "eggs"....who knows what they were?

**The story keeps on**

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**



## BEST PRACTICE n.5

### MAMMA MIA PIZZERIA

A **project about the joy of food and how a game can be the beginning of a long process with many forms of expression and sensuous experiences**

Best practice from Bergsviken Preschool located in the neighbourhood of Bergsviken in Piteå (Sweden). It is attended by 19 children from 3 to 5 of age. Children who participated in this activity are from 4 to 5 years old.

#### 1. THE OBSERVATION PHASE – HOW OUR STORY STARTS

It is the beginning of autumn and the children come back after the summer holidays; some new children are schooled in preschool. In our group, there are 19 children aged 3-5 years.

What games or forms of expression seem to interest the children this autumn? Of course, there are many different things that they enjoy doing, playing family games, running, chasing each other, drawing, construction, painting and so on.

We observe the children during September to seek triggers, what is it that attracts the children to play and create something together? We notice during this period that children often play restaurant, they take turns cooking and being customers.

We continue to observe and listen to children's games, when we analyze our collected observations we think that the restaurant game will perhaps be the process that we can follow.

At one point, we ask the children if they want to tell and draw what they like to do, to find out the children's interests. Many of the children say they like to go on a picnic. The kids draw what they want to pack in their backpacks. The children contributed several ideas and experiences about picnics they made with their families.

After this activity, we as teachers began to think about which trail, we should follow, would we continue to develop the children's interest in picnics or move forward with the restaurant? Now we realize that we have reached a tipping point (a fork). We can't follow all the tracks, but we must listen to every child's story. Perhaps the picnic trail could become a side story in our longer shared narrative.



**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

Remark: the picnic trail was picked up in the children's own stories (103)

#### 2. WHAT DO YOU USUALLY EAT FOR DINNER?

Since food is an engaging trigger in both the restaurant trail and the picnic trail, we try asking the kids a question:

- "What do you usually eat for dinner?" We have paper and pencils, brushes, and paint on the table.



The children continue to talk about the food that they like to eat, and when someone mentions pizza, a lively conversation starts, about what kind of pizza they like best. Some families order pizza and some children have eaten pizza at a restaurant. The teacher asks, "Should we play and make a pizzeria?" The children respond with enthusiasm and a rather chaotic play occurs, as we lack material for the game, and most of the children want to work in the restaurant, but no one wants to shop. We, teachers, play as customers, and the children cook and serve. Three of the children do not participate so much in play, but they are busy making money and collecting materials that can represent food, they find pieces of paper that they cut and other loose materials.

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

We, teachers, were surprised and overwhelmed by the intensity of the children's desire to play restaurant and create materials. We followed the children in their exploration and thoughts, which meant that we as educators learned that it is most important to follow the children's paths and to let go of what we thought would happen. The most important thing as a teacher is to participate and follow the children's processes and participate in play as a supportive friend where we learn from each other in an equal way. On this occasion and following events/activities, we realized that this is very crucial.

Several of the children continue to play restaurant both inside the preschool and outside during the following days. At the next planned activity, we ask the children what roles may arise in the game, and what material is needed so that they can make pizzas with different toppings that customers order. The kids suggest menus, and various toppings like tomatoes, cheese, lettuce, and ham.



The children suggest how to make pineapple slices by wrapping yellow yarn around round cardboard slices and tomatoes are made from wooden circles. (Pineapple and tomato making. We sharpen our senses and see and explore details...smells, and then we create).

**R1**  
**THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE**

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**R9**  
**HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)**

How my professional story has improved: R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one We think together about what material we can use to make toppings, it is not so easy, but we teachers want the children to be involved in the whole process and we want to avoid using ready-made plastic food as this does not contribute any aesthetic quality. We also believe that it will be a valuable thing for the children that they get to create the material together and that they will feel responsible and take care of this. We have previously experienced those things that children make by themselves have a higher value and those things are attributed to more character. Children create relationships not only with other people but also with materials and the environment.

*"The preschool should provide each child with the conditions to develop: -an ability to create and an ability to express and communicate occurrences, thoughts, and experiences in different forms of expression such as image, form, drama, movement, singing, music, and dance" Swedish curriculum.*

### 3. THE PERFECT NUGGET COLOUR

As a result of the development work on the preparation of restaurants, several side projects were going on with the children. By enriching the environment inside with more opportunities for the children to draw, paint, and study natural materials with microscopes, clay, etc., the children found new stories. When the children worked with clay, a playground and caves for dinosaurs were created. There was great interest in unicorns among the girls, unicorns were drawn and turned into small stories. Several children discovered the joy of writing, they wanted to write the names of the dishes on the restaurant menus, and they wanted to mark up the boxes for tomatoes, pineapple and ham. Even numbers became interesting, they counted and wanted to put a price on the dishes.

We have observed some factors that we believe are important elements when then they are playing (triggers): the children like to set prices, write names of dishes, paint and mix to the right shades for the different vegetables, they like to take different roles in the game, take up orders, cook and serve. The children are eager to move forward with the restaurant and make suggestions. We teachers do not need to "fire up the children", they drive the work forward, our role is to think about proposing suitable material and that the

NA and learning processes

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

**R4**  
**REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION**





environment invites several aesthetic forms of expression. We also try to draw the attention of the children and remind them to listen to each other's suggestions.

One boy was very pleased when he managed to blend a perfect chicken nugget colour. He proudly showed his friends how he had mixed to the right shade.

*"Look, I made a perfect nugget colour!"*

**R2**

LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

**R1**

THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

How my professional story has improved: R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one It is both joyful and reverent to be involved when the children make discoveries and learn new things. To see pride and joy in the children's eyes and expressions when they learn new things - that's a wonderful experience. Collecting the children's documentation on a wall provides many opportunities for the children to meet and discuss their and others' drawings and their stories. Children observe how others solve technical problems In graphic language, for example, children can see how another child draws a person in profile or how they can draw how something moves. The children imitate details that they find beautiful and clearer refinements of other people's drawings and then use this in their image creation. It also is a teaching spot for us educators and visitors to see how children explore and participate at school.

#### 4. OUR OWN FOOD STORIES

In parallel with the production of materials for the restaurant, we wanted to continue by giving children opportunities to tell their own stories about food. We, therefore, asked the children to draw and paint their absolute favourite food and then tell them where they used to eat it and with whom, who cooked the food and if they knew how to cook it.

The children work with great joy and the teacher shows great interest and commitment to the children's creativity. The children tell a lot while they create, and the teacher asks open questions that lead the thoughts further.

The children talk about the questions, and we see that some children know ingredients such as in pancakes. There seem to be issues that are emotionally close to the children, and they get the opportunity to express pride for, for example, "their grandfathers who make the best pancakes in the world."

The children's eyes are shining, and everyone is listening to each other's stories. All the children answered had different favourite dishes and everyone is interested in everyone's food stories.

We as teachers are happy and inspired and touched to see so much emotion and expression there is in the children's food stories. We think in retrospect that we could have shared stories about our favourite dishes and how we cook the food, who we prefer to invite to dinner?

Then the children would also get an insight into our lives and our food culture.



**R8**

TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION

**R3**

RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

#### 5. THE COOKBOOK THAT INSPIRES ART AND STORIES



As an inspiration for their continued stories and to make a restart in the project, the teachers brought cookbooks that they borrowed at the library or brought from home. The children browsed the books and commented on some pictures: Oh, look spaghetti, I love spaghetti!

**R2**

LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

We asked the children if they wanted to make their cookbooks and it was the start of a side project that allowed the children to tell their own stories about food, family, friends, different ingredients and how to cook the food. Since we saw that the children's interest in cookbooks was great, we added more varieties of cookbooks as we go along.

How my professional story has improved: R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one  
 Many of the children were so excited to make cookbooks and write. They continued to take an interest in the written language and began to write words on their drawings. Writing became important for children in a variety of contexts, they wanted to note days, names, and important words in everyday life. We learned that it is important to have faith in children and create an education based on our basic needs and willingness to develop ourselves and use our knowledge in a meaningful context. We also learned the importance of offering relevant literature to be inspired and be able to deepen our knowledge.

*“The preschool should provide each child with the conditions to develop: an interest in the written language and an understanding of symbols and how they are used to convey messages” Swedish curriculum.*

According to **National Level**  
Own national curriculum

### 6. WE MAKE OUR TAGLIATELLE

We look back at the cookbooks and the children are interested in the pictures about how to make their pasta.



We talk to the children about what ingredients are needed to make pasta. The children pick up their cookbooks as they have done before. We also check with a cookbook to make sure it's correct. They list the flour, salt, and eggs. The kids were eager and almost bouncing with joy. It became a pleasurable and educational activity where both teachers and children created a new food story together. The children give a thumbs up and say it tastes magnificent! The children show great joy, and they have a conversation with each other.

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)

What we need to develop to offer a Narrative Preschool Environment/how my professional story has improved. R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one.  
 After working for a few weeks to follow the children's processes, we noticed that our environment inside needed to contain more forms of expression and more accessible and not-structured material. We change the environment continuously according to children's activities and interests. Therefore, we felt it necessary to allow cooking for real, to get an authentic experience, to feel the dough, the messiness, textures, and all aesthetic emotions

### 7. WE VISIT A RESTAURANT

As an injection into our work to prepare the restaurant, we decide that we should go on a study visit to the pizza restaurant located a little distance from our preschool.

It was a short walk to the restaurant, the weather was cold, and we walked quickly and purposefully. The kids didn't talk much during the walk.

But some children commented that they knew about the restaurant. Most of the children live near the preschool and the pizzeria, so several of the children have visited the pizzeria with their families. Someone else tells us that they usually call and order pizza and then go and get it.



**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS



Inside the pizzeria, children can take pictures with iPads of important things they want in their restaurant. Then the children ask the owner questions that they had prepared before the visit. The kids sing on the way home: *Mamma Mia Pizzeria. Mamma Mia pizzeria!* From this moment, our restaurant was named: Mamma Mia Pizzeria! (It wasn't the name of the restaurant we visited; it's called something else).  
 The next day we gather the children and look at the photographs the children have taken at the restaurant. Some children in the group were absent when we visited, therefore we wanted to retell the visit. The children talked about what they have seen, and they recall the conversation with the restaurant owner. After the conversation, we work to set up our restaurant inside the preschool.

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

NA and well-being  
 (relational climate at school)

How my professional story has improved? R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one  
 What made us teachers happy was how the children spontaneously composed a spontaneous song "Mamma Mia- Pizzeria!", we were reminded of how music and singing can also complement our teaching. We need to have different ways and broaden pleasures so that children have greater potential and ways of expressing themselves. Music and singing make us happy!

**8. WHO'S COMING TO DINNER? -THE KIDS SET TABLE TOGETHER FOR A NICE DINNER**

We saw an interest among the children when they looked at the cookbooks: they commented on the nice table settings/creations and the nice pictures of these in the cookbooks. The children also described and show how to set a table so that it will be beautiful and inviting for the guests. We want the children together to think about how they want to set the table and for whom.

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**



THE CHILDREN GO TO THE TABLE WHERE WE COLLECTED MATERIALS TO SET TABLE.



THEY ENJOY THE BEAUTY IN WHAT THEY CREATED. PROUDLY THEY PRESENTED THE SETTINGS.

The children start talking about what they usually do when there is a party. They gave lots of different suggestions about what was needed and what was usually used. (Paper plates, gold plates, gold cloth, garlands, flowers, lights etc).

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**R2**  
**LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION**

We as teachers clearly see how the children communicate and inspire and learn and negotiate with each other in this activity. For example: When the children are missing something, they go to the other table and ask the children there if they can exchange objects with each other. The children were also allowed to practice mathematics by counting, estimating, number perception, problem-solving, etc.

NA and learning processes

*"The preschool should provide each child with the conditions to develop an understanding of space, time and form, and the basic properties of sets, patterns, quantities, order, numbers, measurement and change, and to reason mathematically about this" From Swedish Curriculum*

**9. MAMMA MIA INVITES US INTO THE BEAUTIFUL WORLD OF POETRY**

After several weeks of working to make materials for the pizzeria, it was finally time to inaugurate the new Pizzeria "Mamma Mia Pizzeria". The pizzeria is now in a larger room where all things will get a better setting than in the previous restaurant. The children worked as usual with great joy and enthusiasm. The people who participated were six children, five years old. They were singing and humming as they presented the material.

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)



They were so excited to start to play that they barely had the patience to get ready organizing until one of the children shouts:

“Come and buy! The best pizza...”

We had talked before about opening the Pizzeria by cutting a ribbon and celebrating with drinks and cake.

“Not, yet. We should inaugurate first!”

When the children are ready, a trumpet fanfare is played, and a band is cut where we explain the pizzeria, Mamma Mia, as inaugurated! Yippie!

The children start to play by shopping, baking pizzas and setting tables with great pleasure. The game goes on for a long time and the children try different roles in the game. Some served food at set tables inside the restaurant, while others chose to order takeaway pizza for a picnic.

In the afternoon, these children were tasked with introducing the pizzeria to the other children in the group, which they did with great pride. We planned to invite the parents to the inauguration, but due to the pandemic, it was not possible to implement. We are planning to celebrate with the parents at another time later. Through our blog and conversations with the parents, they still got to take part in this. In conversations with parents, we have received positive feedback in the form of the children gaining interest in writing, and developing many new ways of creating and expressing themselves. They feel that the children have seemed to find it easier to tell stories and express their experiences, maybe as a result of this work, who knows?

**R2**  
**LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION**

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

How my professional story has improved? R1: the teacher’s story inside the children’s one  
 Despite our many years in this profession and the fact that we have worked with long themes where the children have been driving actors, this academic year with the Narrative approach has been the most significant. With this way of working, we have managed to include the children in the work in a way that seems to be very pleasurable. We, teachers, have looked at the children with curious eyes and learned so much together in our meetings. A narrative approach creates joy in children and educators and a pleasant and well-being environment. Looking forward to applying this approach in the coming years as well. It is, as previously stated, an endless story... we look forward with delight to new stories.

**10. THE NEVER-ENDING STORY CONTINUES...**

Now that the restaurant project is coming to an end, we asked the children about how they experienced working with the restaurant: They all agree that it has been great fun. The most fun part was making materials and playing with friends, in their opinions.

Nowadays we can see that play in the restaurant amuses more and more children, the game is filled with new friends and new ideas that become new stories. Some stories lead us into the world of poetry ...where we now create cookbooks in a poetic spirit... but that’s another story... maybe you’ll get to see it later in the Erasmus project... this is an endless story... come along...

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**What we need to develop to offer a Narrative Preschool Environment:**

After working for a few weeks to follow the children’s processes, we noticed that our environment inside needed to contain more forms of expression and more accessible and not-structured material.



We change the environment continuously according to children's activities and interests. Some weeks we may have tools that support the exploration of dinosaurs, another week plants, etc. What is always available in our school setting is paper, pencils, brushes, clay, paint, and artificial and IKT materials.



Collecting the children's documentation on a wall provides many opportunities for the children to meet and discuss their and others' drawings and their stories. Children observe how others solve technical problems in graphic language, for example, children can see how another child draws a person in profile or how they can draw how something moves. The children imitate details that they find beautiful and clever refinements of other people's drawings and then use this in their image creation.

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

Clay is really a material that starts a flow of stories, the children form clay and things start to happen, the clay becomes a dragon that sprays fire, the children continue to squeeze and pull the clay and suddenly another figure appears after the clay changes the shape.

Clay is a material that is easy to make changes to if you are not satisfied with your result. The children often sit for a long time and work with the clay, much longer than if you compare it to drawing and painting (this is a generalization, but usually it is so in our experience).

The children enjoy the clay's possibilities for transformations, the changeability of the clay makes the children look at shapes and get associations with different objects and figures.

As a teacher, you can enjoy and listen to the magical worlds that children create and respect the children's expressions and meet the children in this.



**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)



We changed the biggest room in the school, so it became an atelier with different places for aesthetic forms. It has meant a lot to children's ability to work whenever they want. We, teachers, have got a boost from seeing how children are hungry to express themselves and create stories in many different materials.

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

We have learned a lot about the children by allowing the children to show their thoughts and feelings through clay, image, music, and theatre. We have learned to get better at stopping, listening, and responding to children's stories. We can say that through this project we have gotten to know the children in a deeper but also more varied way. For example, a child who has difficulty verbally explaining can give so much expression and communication by showing with the body or by portraying creative expression.

**An example of a branch in our shared and collective narrative**

We used to have a special painting room where we gathered the children when they wanted to paint. That room is still there, but we have also set up a painting corner in our large classroom. We have brought in a wall easel that hangs on the wall so that several children can paint at the same time and together if they want.

The children are very amused by painting, mixing colours and using different sizes of brushes.

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

We, teachers, stimulate this interest by also making suggestions to the children, we can sometimes study and discuss a famous work of art and the children can then make their interpretation of the artwork. Here we have studied Edward Munch's famous painting: The Scream.



NA and learning processes

Children's self production (103)

**Maybe we will leave the restaurant to become artists...**

Nowadays we play in being at the restaurant but we often choose to create and paint as well. We are artists now and we want to take you on that journey too...



## BEST PRACTICE n.6

### OPEN END MATERIALS

Best practice from Elmer in de Stad kindergarten located in the centre of Brussels (Belgium). It is attended by children from 3 months to 2,5 years old. Children having participated in this activity are from 18 months to 2,5 years old.

Focus:

- teachers and pedagogical coach look deeper into the 10 principles of the Decalogue
- observing and documenting, how to do? Mosaic Approach.

#### 1.ONCE UPON A TIME ...

A handyman filled the playbox on the terrace with tree bark. That day Hanae goes outside with her children, to play on the terrace. Many children first walked around and observed closely what the handyman was doing.

Safia approaches and wants to feel the material with her hands, letting it swirl on her face and on her clothes. Then she puts a lot of tree bark with her hands on a wooden board that lies in the sandbox. Phil sits on the wood board and now also fills bark in his little truck. Tindar is just a little scared and stays aside, and cycles on his bike around a bit.

The next day the children receive extra material to put outside on the terrace. They are very curious. The new material was packs of straw. The educator opens the packs together with the children.

Different emotions come: some of the toddlers are very interested and want to feel the material, others come to take straw and throw it away, others shovel it in the box and some stay at a distance and have doubts ... are they a little scared?

Small groups are formed. Next to the bin are now buckets, shovels and brushes. Safia takes the bucket and shovel and fills her little bucket. Until it is completely full. She then brushes everything that has fallen next to the bucket together, she sings "clean up, clean up".

Phil now also brings a train and an excavator to the bark. He fills the train with bark. He uses a shovel for this. He has to work very precisely because the holes are small and he has to work very accurately. If he succeeds, he proudly shows this to Hanae.



**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

How to choose material and toys (DIDACTIC TOOLS)

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

NA and learning processes

Searching for a trigger for the group is not always easy. The 2 teachers try to sit together regularly to discuss the things they saw from the children. They try to focus on the spontaneous actions the children had in their day.

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

Victor has come to Phil with an excavator. Now they dig together with the excavator. Phil also helps the machine with his hands because otherwise too much bark falls next to it.

Tendar was very fascinated with tidying up; he always brushes everything together. He throws it all back in the bin. He sings/says "iaa" "iaa".

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

In these stories, we recognize the storylines and the narrative map. The teachers try to encourage the activities and the discovery and exploration by the children. It is the start to a new trigger to develop a new storyline.

Mama Safia: at home S takes the big bags from "Lidl" and "Action" and takes the bucket to clean. She puts all the shoes in the bags and takes them to the shoe closet. If mom has cleaned up everything neatly in advance, then Safia takes a bucket with everything she finds (from out of the kitchen or the bathroom). Then she walks around with that bucket as if she's shopping.

NA and relations with families



Mama Safia was very happy to hear the story of her daughter and to see her pictures. “On holidays, Safia loves to play with buckets and shovels and sand.”

## 2. WHEN BUCKETS BECOME A HIDING PLACE

Marije is reading a Peekaboo story to the children after seeing Phil hide in the bucket.

That same day at the box of straw: Phil takes the blue bucket (largest) and takes it to the straw box and fills his bucket. In between you can hear the other children making animal sounds “beeeeh” “meow”, they have hidden toy animals in the straw. Now Phil also puts animals in the bucket. He walks around with that filled bucket. When he’s done with that, he takes a small green bucket with a smiling emoji on it. He puts it on his head – his whole head is in the bucket, he can’t see anything anymore – and then he takes it back off his head and laughs really hard, he’s having a lot of fun... laughing and walking (peekaboo game).



The mom of Phil told us she didn’t understand why Phil always wants to play with the soil and the little balls where her plants grow in on the terrace. After hearing and seeing the pictures of the activities, she starts laughing and says, she now can understand he is triggered by it.

Tendar has chosen a frog as an animal and brings it to the straw. He does “vroom, vroom, vroom” – the frog falls into the straw box. Now he puts straw in the frog’s mouth and says “yum yum eating”. Now he takes the frog back out of the box and jumps together with the frog “hop hop hop”.

NA and learning processes

**R6**  
 BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R2**  
 LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

NA and learning processes



Hanae: “We observe the children and try to focus on the different storylines. There are a lot of pictures, little parts have been filmed, a lot of quotes by teachers, parents, .. but how to make a story about it. A story out of this web of lines?”

We sometimes struggle with the documenting part. How to do, how to take time. Sometimes we want to show it to the parents. But an actual map in one room, can’t be taken downstairs to the place where we meet with parents. The idea of a “book” where you put pictures and words in, will be discovered in the other toddler group. “

*An actual map has been started in the different groups. It is a work in progress. Where teachers can write on, stick post-its, paste pictures, ... But not only teachers of the group can work on it. In addition, other members of the team are allowed to put some words on it.*

**R1**  
 THE TEACHER’S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN’S ONE

**R9**  
 HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)



### 3. THERE ARE NO ARCHITECTURAL RULES TO BUILD CASTLES IN THE AIR

The natural material seems a trigger to the children. Hanae and Leticia try to bring the materials also to the inside of the daycare.

On a rainy day the teachers put different types of natural material in the group. They spread it out over the floor and observe the children. Safia and Tendar are directly attracted to the materials. They start building with them and try to make little towers, small castles of wood start to appear on the floor. 2 other children are feeling and looking at the different types of materials.

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)



Every 2 weeks the teachers sit together with the pedagogical coach, to discuss the things they saw. They try to discover the triggers, to see the actual map in these stories and to look how to proceed with the story.  
The difficulty stays to involve the parents in the narrative story

### 4. THE KITCHEN IS MY KINGDOM

One of the storylines brings us to the corner with the kitchen materials. Being well aware of the materials you bring into the kitchen, makes also that you get a lot of new impulses for the children and a lot of new stories. Real cooking, plastic fruits, sorting fruits, .. a lot of new storylines have been written.

Leticia noticed the children are playing with the natural materials but some of them are playing in the kitchen corner. She decides to take all the kitchen material, sorts them in boxes and installs the kitchen and doll in the "feeding chair".

Safia goes to look at the box with the cooking material. She starts cooking. She puts the pan on the fire and starts stirring into it. Safia puts things in the oven. Afterwards she also starts to feed Victor (puts the spoon in his mouth). Victor also plays with her and "eats".

NA and learning processes

How to arrange a narrative school-setting (school SPACES)



Tendar takes a plate and spoon and puts an apple on his plate. He walks around a bit and goes to stand next to Safia. He puts his plate next to Safia's pan. Thunten stays with the boxes with fruit and vegetables. He takes everything out and puts it next to the box.

Yanis walks also to the boxes with kitchen toys and takes the plates. He starts sorting them. Put them in a row, one in his hand and 3 before him. Other children come and play with him. (Safia, Tendar, Thunten). They want to take the plates from him, so he holds two now.

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

Some days later, Leticia gives some new plates. Again in the boxes on the floor.

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

Phil takes all the plates out of the box and puts 6 plates on the floor around him. Ishraq takes 1 plate and puts it on her head. A second one at the lips as if she is drinking. Then she starts collecting plates and puts fruit on it. At the end she takes a basket to collect the plates.

Yanis puts 2 plates in front of him; he puts a pan on the plate and looks for eggs in the boxes. Now he takes 1 egg in the plate in his hand. He collects the other plates and sits in the slide with it.



When the mom of Yanis hears the story and sees the pictures, she starts telling about their home: “I don’t have a dishwasher. I wash in the sink and then I put the plates on the table to dry them. Yanis takes the plates and puts them on the ground. I always tell him he cannot do it. He takes spoon and knife and puts it in the plates. I don’t like him to do it.”



The mom of Phil talked with Fatiha about how the children play in the kitchen corner. She says he also likes to play with the kitchen utensils at home. Phil can help to prepare the table before dinner. He is allowed to put the plates and glasses. He loves to do it, but mama is afraid he will let it fall and he will hurt himself. But she did notice he can do it quite good. Fatiha explained we use real glasses and plates in porcelain.

### 5. RELAUNCH OF THE TREE BARK

After two weeks of playing in the kitchen, the teachers noticed the children got bored about the activity. They were questioning what they should offer as a new trigger. After going multiple times outside, Hanae thinks the tree bark was still interesting.

Each time however the children ask for bikes, for pots and other utilities. But not for the bark. One day she hears Phil saying “wet”. So Hanae takes some bark and gives it to Victor and says “look”. Victor says “dirty”, and he walks away.

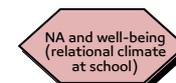


Relaunch



For Hanae the signal was clear. The children don’t want to play with the bark anymore because it was wet and dirty.

After some days a new child starts in the group. Inaya was having a difficult time in the beginning, but each time the children go outside, she was playing a lot. She had a lot of interest in the bark outside. She went to feel it, she took a bucket and started to fill it with her hands. The children started to observe her. Phil and Victor came to stand around Inaya and after some minutes they also started to fill the bucket together with her.



They worked together and started to sing the song about cleaning up. "Hop hop hop we ruimen alles op." They fill the bucket until it is all full.

They used spoons but Inaya kept doing it with the hands. So when the bucket was full, they said they wanted to take it inside. Hanae found it an excellent idea so she lets the children take the bucket inside. She decides to let it dry.



While the bark was drying, they went with the children to the library. They searched for books about nature, plants, straw, animals, ... Phil and Victor kept talking about things that are wet or dirty. So the teachers helps them looking for books about that too. They read the books the children choose in Elmer. And they showed the materials they saw in the books. Some straw, some bark but also other natural materials.

## 6. REDISCOVERING THE BARK

After some time the bark was dry. Hanae wanted to present the bark in an attractive way. She put the bark on a colourful carpet. She also puts extra materials with it. She chooses to put some recycled materials like little yoghurt cups, boxes from eggs, spoons and buckets. There was also a big box with straw inside. She puts the animals and the farm on the floor so they can easily take it.

Hanae opened the curtains after the singing moment. And the children sounded so surprised. They said "owww", "oei", "wauw". Hanae hears a lot of noises but sees also children watching with big eyes. The room was dressed differently, there were new materials in the room.

Phil has been observing the other children for quite some time. He didn't want to play with the bark at all. When Hanae reaches him a piece of bark, he says "no, wet". After a long time, he started to collect boxes and bottles. And then he started to put bark in his bottle. He started shaking the bottle and starts to laugh. He stops. And then started to put in it again. Then he shakes again. He noticed the noise gets more. He continues doing it.

Isis took a spoon and a brushed. And she started to hit the box of straw with it. She laughs more and more. She found it special. And then she saw the other kids were playing with the materials. They were filling the pots with spoons. They were feeling with their hands. So Isis took a small bucket and started to fill it with straw. Then she goes to the bark and she fills the bucket even more. She mixes it all.

After that, she goes to a smaller corner in the group and puts some egg boxes on the floor. She takes the straw and one by one she puts it down in the box. First straw, then the bark. She sorted it and put it in rows. Straw-Bark-Straw-Bark. It was like she had a mission. Very concentrated she kept putting it in rows. Hanae was impressed.

Paz is not very interested in the straw or bark. When she saw the materials she went directly to sit on the ground and started to feel the materials. She feels it is dry, not wet. So the moment she noticed the materials feels better she took spoon and bucket and started to fill and empty it. She did it several times and was into the activity for a very long time. After some time she tried to fill a smaller bottle with the bark and her spoon. She kept trying but it was very difficult. So she tried it with her fingers.





Inaya was very happy with the bark inside the group. Until they were cleaning up the group, she was shouting out her joy “oh wauw, oh wauw”. She loved to play with it. She took a spoon, played with the bark, started directly to move around with the bark in a box. She took the big bucket from outside and then levelled the bark and straw in the bucket. And then she searched for her baby doll and put her in the bucket. Hanae asked what is the baby doing. Inaya told her she was sleeping. Hanae showed a lot of the pictures and little movies to the parents to know what they think.

**R4**  
**REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION**

The mother of Isis says that Isis likes to play with kitchen utilities. She likes the real materials like her mom’s. All what is in the kitchen is also interesting for Isis. She loves it. Papa says she also like to bring things in order, it has to lay in the right way or be on the right position. She doesn’t like too much chaos. The mother of Paz says that she likes to play a lot with sand and natural things. Especially water. Paz also plays with things from her mother, like imitation game. But she didn’t do that in daycare yet. The father of Inaya says she is playing a lot with baby at home. He has also to take care of her baby doll. He has to give the baby food, a bath, put her to sleep, just as he does to his daughter.



NA and relations with families

### 7. ANIMAL FARM IN DAY-CARE

The teachers discovered that some of the children started to play with the animals and the open-end materials together. They used the straw to cover the animals.



The first time they played with the straw they already saw this happening. But this time they started also inside with this play. When the children took the animals out of the toybox, the teachers gave them the space to do it. And they observed what was happening in their play. Victor had a big interest in animals. He knew their names and talked to the teachers about them. This day he was also making houses for them with the straw. He took big buckets of straw and went to make stables for the animals at the play table.

The mom of Victor told that he likes to play with nature elements. He talks about fruit, plants, animals. They also talk a lot about how to get along with animals and how to take care of them. She is very happy that he has this sensitive way of taking care of them.

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

### 8. AN ENDLESS WEB OF STORYLINES

In the weeks after the tree bark play, the children are more and more excited about the materials. They play with the straw. The teachers place some sensory boxes where they can walk in with bare feet.





One day Hanae noticed the children are interested in the sand and dirt that was used to plant some flowers. So she puts sand in a big box and lets the children discover. There are some flower seeds for the children to plant. And the children seem to be very excited. Paz loves to fill the pots with the seeds. Her small fingers pushing the seeds deeper in the sand.

NA and learning processes



A web of more stories comes out of the bark-story. One line leads to visiting the plant shop with the children. Another one leads to visiting the children's farm and one is even leading to helping the people from the city of Brussels to water the plants. We look forward to more stories!

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

## BEST PRACTICE n.7

### OCCUPATIONS

#### Learning from parents' job

Best practice from Tallinn Meelespea kindergarten located in the neighbourhood of Haabersti in Tallinn (Estonia). It is attended by 270 children from 1,6 to 7 of age. Children who participated in this activity are from 5 to 6 years old

### 1. THE OBSERVATION PHASE – HOW OUR STORY STARTS

During each week we have specific topics to talk about - we call them the theme of the week. These themes are created regarding our kindergarten's and Estonian national educational curriculum. Teachers are free to approach each topic as they find suitable for their group of children while keeping in mind the educational objectives and national curriculum. Being part of Narrate project has taught us a lot about being more child-related and free in starting each topic. Teachers are more aware of their role in each children's narration (both collective and individual) and are more open to noticing, and deciding (how) to react or not to react regarding triggers and children's interests.

This is a story about one of those "themes of a week" things, that started on one Monday morning and continued to grow bigger and bigger over the weeks.

### 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Trigger: was "placed" by the teacher. Already in the morning children noticed some new **objects** like screwdrivers, screws, nails, hammers and the base. The teacher had taken different tools and placed them on her desk. Immediately children were triggered by them and started asking questions like "what is this?"; "can I touch it?"; "what does it do?"; "why is it looking like this?". The teacher let the children try the tools and answered the children's first questions - explaining what these tools are, what are their names and what the agency for them is.

There was now a moment for a teacher to decide how to further continue with the story. As each kid had their question in mind, it led to crossroads of opportunity or, as in our Narrate project we prefer to say, towards the Narrative map.

To evolve children's interest, the teacher used a **game "Treasure Hunt"** - children were looking for different tools in the group, which made them visibly excited and interested in things and the topic. The teacher could see that the game was fun for the kids. Children showed their excitement by smiling, jumping up and down when they found something and making comments along the way. Many children also enjoyed being able to name an object immediately and/or associated with their previous experience "This is a cordless drill! My dad has one at home too!".

**R1**  
 THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
 THE CHILDREN'S ONE

**R5**  
 BEING AWARE OF THE  
 TRIGGER(S)

**R6**  
 BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

**R2**  
 LEARNING AND TEACHING  
 ARE PLEASURES, NOT  
 DUTIES: AESTHETIC  
 ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

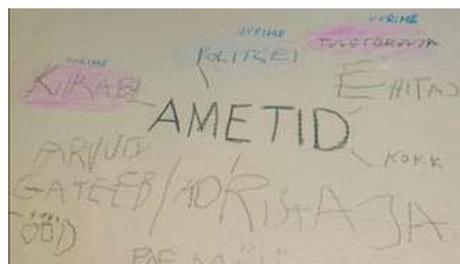


The teacher had also pre-created an "Occupations" game that was placed on the carpet. Children noticed this and asked questions: "What is it? Are we playing this? I know it's the police" etc., and they developed a conversation about the topic of various professions, so a more remarkable interest and motivation started investigating different professions.

**R7**  
 EXPLORING MEANINGS

### 3. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The teacher developed the conversation topic further: We **mapped out and documented** which professions children already know, which professions are of most interest and which professions we could look into more closely. Police, ambulance and rescue services proved to be the most popular occupations. Children wrote down their thoughts on a big piece of paper as a poster. This is where the first narrative documentation started for us.



**R4**  
 REALIZING APPROPRIATE  
 DOCUMENTATION



The next step was to **start researching**: the group had a conversation about different jobs, what they really do and how. This process was about creating and searching for learning materials, and documenting children's thoughts, work and activities. We took a closer look at different professions with the help of videos, books, pictures, puzzles and any other material that we could find inside our group (cupboards, shelves etc.). We gathered the materials and made the learning visible.



Since the learning process in kindergarten takes place through games and active play, our next challenge was **re-creating children's play environment**.

The focus was on using different tools and playing with real-life objects (patch, cotton ball, syringe, screw, etc.).

Games were created by the children themselves: hairdresser, police, doctor, and teacher.

The teacher took a step back; she was observing the children's interests and the focus was on the children's initiative in free play. The teacher was there to support and to be led by the children's imagination: she played the wounded victim who needed bandaging or the client for the hairdresser. In this case, the teacher was the one who asked the children questions: "What do we do next? What should I do? How do I use this?" etc.

During different playtimes, **children resonated their play experiences with their real-life experiences**. Often, they would make comments about familiar objects, and jobs and mostly related them to their family members.

The teacher would let children tell stories about their family members and ask further questions about what they knew about their parents' occupations. Some kids were very clear about this and had long stories about their parents "My mom is a veterinarian. Do you know that sometimes she has to inject animals with medicine? She uses REAL needles. But it's okay because it makes pets better and I prefer them to be happy and well. /.../". At the same time, some kids were not so clear about what their parents really do "My mom and dad sit by a computer all day. I don't know what they do there. Some important computer stuff."

Children were curious about knowing more about their **parents' jobs** so the teacher sent out an email asking them to send pictures of themselves at their workplace with a short description of what their job is all about. Parents responded very positively and fast. They sent a description of their daily work and the photo(s) - we looked at them with the children and had another fun conversation. Kids were very excited to see their parents' faces and hear about them. They wanted to make an exhibition on the wall so that their parents were visible and it felt like they were there for them during the whole day.



**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
THE CHILDREN'S ONE

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING  
ARE PLEASURES, NOT  
DUTIES: AESTHETIC  
ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S  
NARRATIONS



This exhibition was up for a few weeks and after some time kids started asking “how long do we keep them here on the wall? what do we do with them? why are they still here?”. It was only then, that children (with the teacher’s help) blinded the work descriptions into a book which they at first called “**Our parents’ occupations**” which can be found on our group’s bookshelf.

NA and learning processes



**BOOK MADE BY KIDS: “OCCUPATIONS OF MOMMIES AND DADDIES OF THE GROUP SIPSIKUD”**

Children absolutely love their parent’s occupation book and their next idea was to re-create their parents with their drawings. Children choose their materials (paper, felt-tip pens or coloured pencils) to draw their parents as they would imagine them being at their workplace. Children started telling each other imaginative stories about their parents, had a lot of fun and had some good laughs during it. The teacher noticed the children bonding during this activity. To make different occupations even more visible, **teachers included experts and invited them to the kindergarten**: a bomb squad, a rescue service and a nurse who shared their experiences and practicalities. During parent-teacher meetings teacher advised parents to read and tell stories to their children at home. The best way to do that seemed to be bedtime stories but the teacher encouraged parents to find small moments for spontaneous improvisation that would be fun too. Some parents reflected on having spontaneous and creative storytelling times while driving to the countryside - they felt that it made them closer to their children and they were surprised at how imaginative their kids can be!

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN’S NARRATIONS

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)



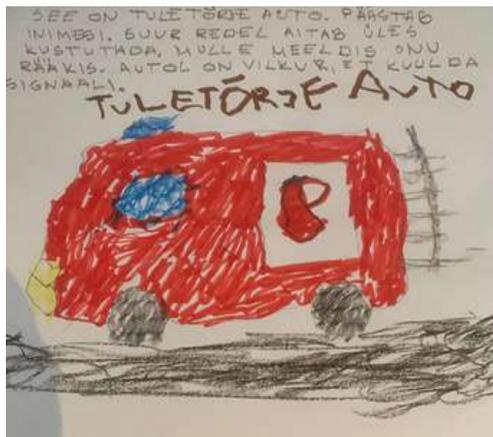
**VISITORS AT THE KINDERGARTEN: RESCUE SERVICE, BOMB SQUAD AND A NURSE**



**Children draw pictures** of the most exciting job for them and the teacher documented the child's story and added **their narrative** to the picture. Every work of art has its own story and the final result is always interesting.

**R10**  
**APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING**

*"This is a bombs squad car. Dog searches for a bomb from the grass. He is brown-coloured and very fast. His name is Dog. Dog can sniff the smell. The robot puts the bomb in the car. Dog is a big helper for a human."*  
*"Pommirühm" - "bomb squad"; "Pomm" - "bomb"; "Koer" - "dog"*



*"This is a fire truck. It saves people. A big ladder helps to get the fire out from up. I liked it when that uncle talked about it. The car has a flasher so that you can hear the signal."*  
*"Tuletõrjeauto" - "Fire truck"*

*"Police car catches banditos. There is a day outside. Police just is following banditos and taking them into a trap. Police see bad guys again and bring them to trap too."*  
*"Politsei" - "Police"*

*"This is a chef who makes food. We have a chef in our kindergarten."*  
*"Kokk" - "Chef"; "Pann" - "Pan"; "Pott" - "Pot"*

During thinking about and drawing pictures of the most exciting jobs, some kids reflected on their ongoing interests after kindergarten hours. Some kids belonging to our group go to sports classes and they are very much into physical activities. While a smaller group of kids were telling about their football and dance classes, one kid shared her experience of seeing a commercial on the TV about figure skating. Others were intrigued and asked, what is figure skating and confused it with skiing.



The teacher noticed their interest and showed kids videos about an Estonian figure skater and proposed an activity idea with robotic devices. Kids were divided into smaller groups and given one big sheet of white paper, a bunch of colourful pens and Blue-Bot robots. Children let their creativity flow and so the Blue Bots became figure skaters who drew beautiful skating rings on the paper.

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**



#### 4. CONTINUED INTEREST

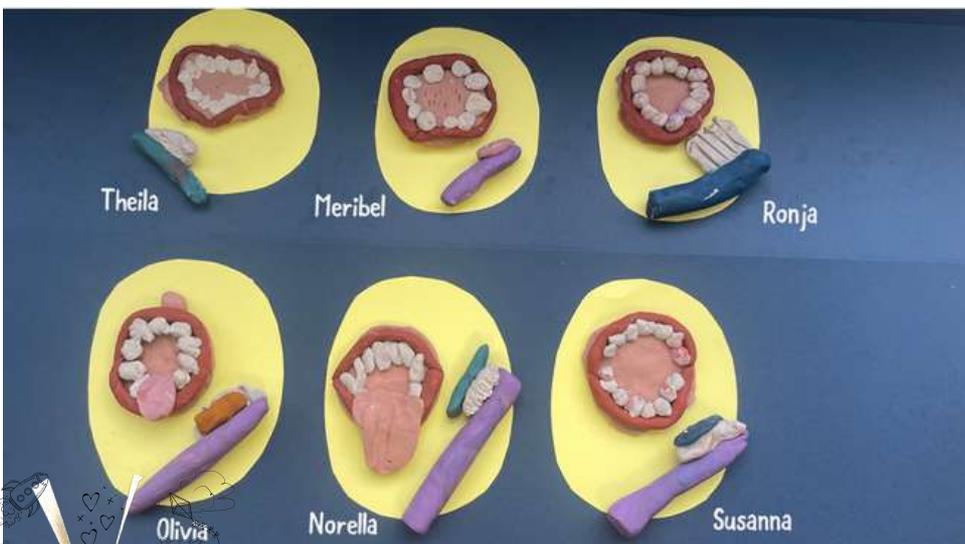


Weeks after starting with the topic of occupations we can see that children's interest is continuing. We will continue noticing triggers from kids and acting according to them. For example, children were intrigued by the sound of a passing police car and its siren. They excitedly shared their ideas about where these police could be on their way. Since there was perfect snow outside to build something, the teacher proposed an idea to create their police car. The children were very excited about it and had a lot of fun!

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

At some point, we had a new weekly topic about health and the human body. During that week children shared a lot about their experiences with teeth changing and falling off. Then we **rounded back to the occupation's theme** and talked about dentists - what they do, why it is important, who has visited the dentist and why etc. Children created artworks and narrations. We are confident that the topic of occupations will come again and again back to us in one way or another. Until the next trigger!

**R8**  
TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION



## BEST PRACTICE n.8

### THEY KILLED SPIDER-MAN

#### Superheroes, Superheroines and naughty people to be defeated

Best practice from Campanella preschool located in the neighbourhood of Campanella in Imola (Italy). It is attended by 104 children from 3 to 6 years of age. Children who participated in this activity are from 4 to 6 years old.

#### INTRODUCTION: "SPIDER-MAN HAS BEEN KILLED"... AND A DANCE SONG.

During the Welcome Party for newly enrolled children that occurred on 22 November 2021, we were observing two children: Gabriele (5 years old) and Federico (4 years old) while they sang an old song that was a big hit in the past: "They Killed Spider-Man" (original title: "Hanno ucciso l'Uomo Ragno"), performed by an Italian artistic duo called '883'. It is not a children's song; on the contrary, it seems to be related to relevant political events that happened in Italy in the 1980s and 1990s, but, of course, for children, it deals with a well-known superhero. Anyway, the song was - and still is - very popular.

At first, we did not pay much attention to this event: the children often sing popular songs. Nevertheless, we were struck by the fact that over the next few days, during school activities, the children's group repeated this song, more and more often. It had become a sort of catchphrase: only the children who had sung it during the party no longer sang it.

What amused us was its power to spread all over the class and involve all the children. Andrea and Rachele had started singing the song during spontaneous dancing and singing activities since they knew it too. They often involved Ada, Irene and Luca in it. Federico and Gabriele, who were the first to sing it, had started a real catchphrase. Observing from the outside, it looked that the interest in the song was only musical and rhythmic: actually, the children used it as a self-produced soundtrack for free motor activities (free dance) in a specific space in the classroom. We as teachers thought that it could be a good idea to relaunch the activity started by the children coherently with the aims of our curriculum, and we are wondering how to do that.

First, we decided to propose additional ways of moving and dancing to the rhythm of the Spider-Man song, relaunching curriculum topics on gross motoric development.



It was very stimulating for us, the teachers, to discuss and reflect on how we could support the exploration of the body and its movement in space from a song and dance that the children themselves had thought up. However, soon it became to look a bit reductive: there should have been something more.

Sometimes, or maybe often, we are not so prone to give importance to events that look too common, no more than little pieces of trivial connective tissue between "serious" didactic activities, that we usually consider the noble part of our work. We did not know how many times children had sung that popular song before, and every time we hadn't paid attention to it. What we learnt on that occasion is that we should be more interested in what happens in the class when we are not the leader of the activities.

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION

Relaunching children's spontaneous narration

NA and learning processes

According to **National Level** Own national curriculum

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

## 1. FROM THE "MOVING BODY" TO THE "PRODUCTIVE MIND"

First, the teachers tried to find out what Spider-Man meant to our boys and girls, but also whether they were aware that in the song this superhero was declared 'killed'. Discussing with them, it became clear that for some of them it was a simple carnival mask with no other information, for others, it was a generic superhero that their older siblings liked, others else had some analytic knowledge of the stories about him, when and why he had become like that, etc.

**R7**  
**EXPLORING MEANINGS**

Regarding the fact that he was killed in the song, between the children and teacher a conversation like the following occurred:

Child1: "Naughty guys killed him";  
 Teacher: "Who were these naughty guys?"  
 Child1: "Actually, I don't know";  
 Child2: "Maybe a rather strange spider bit him";  
 Child3: "Or maybe Spider-Man is barely sleeping on the web";  
 Child2 (changing topic, merging explanations): "I believe Spider-Man was much smaller before the spider bit him, but next he got huger and huger";  
 Child1: "The biting spider had two colours: yellow and blue: and after he bit a person, he became two-coloured too"  
 Child3: "He could be safe because of the spider's web"  
 Child2: "He got the mask too"



**R8**  
**TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION**

Based on this sharing, the teachers asked them if they would like to see some of the character's stories together (books, TV series, etc.).



The children chose to read a book that was not a single story, but about Spider-Man's general description and movie character's "career". It collected posters related to all the movies that the cinema industry had produced over time. As the children leafed through it, they pretended to read it, describing pictures to each other and singing the Spiderman song as a soundtrack.

We then decided to relaunch this children's experience by proposing that they draw a series of episodes as if it were a comic strip, inspired by the posters.

The children independently organized activities involving colouring, drawing, cutting out and collaging the images they produced.

Frida and Ada, who are manually very competent and admired by their classmates, collaborated and cooperated with Simone, Luca and Federico in creating personal representations of their favourite character in the albums.

**R10**  
**APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING**

**R3**  
**RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS**

**R5**  
**BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)**

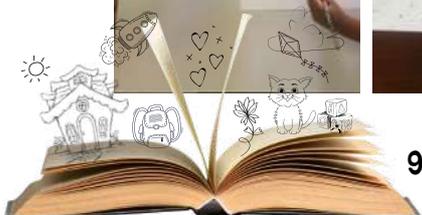
**R9**  
**HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)**

NA and learning processes

According to National Level Own national curriculum

**R4**  
**REALIZING APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION**

The teachers collaborated to realize a poster, and then uploaded the story and documentary material on Google Classroom, to be shared with parents



Discussing with the team the observations carried out by every teacher, allowed us to choose together how to relaunch the children's experience. Working from the children's interests allowed us to increase their enthusiasm and interest in the activities relaunched by the teachers.

**R2**  
LEARNING AND TEACHING ARE PLEASURES, NOT DUTIES: AESTHETIC ORIENTATION IN EDUCATION



The Narrative Approach is like a treasure chase: we don't have to add anything, we only have to favour that what is already hidden in the children's minds (but they've been aware yet about) could go out and become something useful in their learning processes.

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

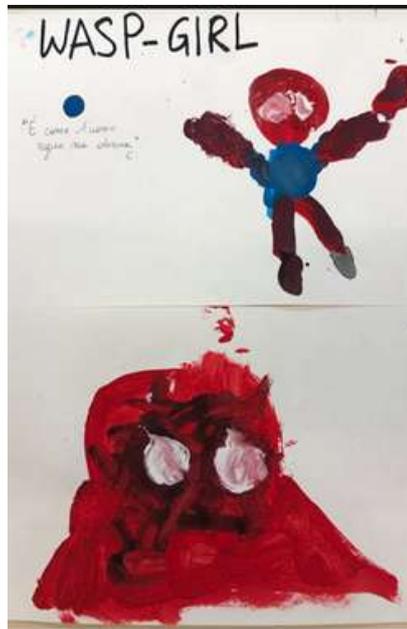
## 2. TRYING TO APPROACH THE TOPIC OF "GENDER" IS IN THIS CASE UNAVOIDABLE... WE THOUGHT!

Although this story-maker group included some girls (not too many, actually), Spider-Man seemed to some of us to be too "gender connoted", and not so inclusive for our little girls.

"Gender" is always a controversial theme: in fact, we teachers were split into two "parties", the one who thought all the children should play with any kind of topics and characters (no matter their gender), and the one who thought "ok, we agree, but we should encourage them to explore new possibilities too!". Anyway, all the teachers agreed they were not supposed to intervene directly, suggesting to the children some corrections or new narrative ideas to balance that problem. Unexpectedly, some little girls took the teachers out of trouble: they started speculating about a Spider-Man's companion, a superheroine, of course. The little girls called her: Wasp-Girl, a name of their invention: "Wasp-Girl is similar to Spider-Man but female", said one of them.

The children collaborated on her description and, with the help of the teachers; they made plastic and pictorial representations.

As usual, teachers uploaded documentation on Google Classroom, for parents.



NA and well-being (relational climate at school)

School inclusion

**R3**  
RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

**R9**  
HAVE A SET OF USEFUL METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS (AND TRICKS)

### Another problem to cope with.

At the time children were working on this theme, Carnival was approaching.

This yearly festival, very appreciated by children, has always been an opportunity to invent, tell, and arrange common stories; then, the children transferred and developed them into narrations, dramatization, and fantastic scenarios.

Unfortunately, the Pandemic restrictions blocked carnival parades on the streets of the neighbourhood, withholding children from the opportunity to show themselves dressed up in public. The little girls who came up with the character of "Wisp-Girl" were sad since they hoped to show costumes inspired by it to all the people around the school.

To comfort them, the teachers planned to realize a carnival parade into the school, playing with the children in their costumes.

Preparing it, the idea to create a female companion of Spiderman became contagious and generalized; other little girls came up with other superheroines and made their costumes, to wear during the parade, but not only.

On those occasions, Wasp-girl and her female companions helped children disguised as police officers, princesses, pirates and generic superheroes to defeat evil and every kind of villain.



Relaunch children's narrative activities

Problem solving attitude

**R6**  
BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS

A whole network of stories unexpectedly arose from our simple doubts about the gender culture inside the adoption of a character by the children. Even a negative event, like pandemic restrictions, was turned into many new narrative chances: the carnival parade inside the school was for sure more productive – at least from a narrative point of view – than the traditional one on the streets. It was what we learnt from our children’s narration.

**R1**  
**THE TEACHER’S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN’S ONE**

### 3. A CONFLUENCE OF STORIES

At the same time, some children were building the police station with Lego. This activity was initially completely independent of the narration that started with the Spider-Man song, but the children, having known from the previously gathered stories about him that he collaborated with the police, combined the two narratives in only one big narrative scenario.

**R6**  
**BUILDING NARRATIVE MAPS**



A bit strange conversation between 2 children having built the police station.

F: "G. Where do I put the computer?"

G: "There ... where the chair is. I found the LAMA OF TIME!"

(Teacher describes: I stop writing and look at him quizzically; he smugly answers me:

F: "It is used to go back in time. .... (Turns to mate) Find a blue block and move this".

G: "but you are destroying the policemen's office !!!!!"

F: "...but I had to finish the wall!"

G: "you removed the blocks!!! That was the roof of the ROOF (meaning the one of the poolside)"

F: "Did you go and see the fireworks on New Year's Eve?"

**R8**  
**TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION**

While they were doing that, the teachers got aware that the engaged children started singing the Spider-Man song, as if they had created an association between their police station and the one in the song. Maybe, almost unconsciously, they were hearing the mates engaged in Spider-Man-related activities, happening in a different corner of the classroom.



NA and well-being (relational climate at school)

The two groups joined and the police station became a setting for the children to build stories about Spider-Man adventures.

The new narration showed to be very inclusive. We also noticed that Diego was very intrigued by the activity of building the police station and came close to observing Gabriele, Federico, Linda and Bryan's activity, but did not actively participate in the construction. We assume that he was inhibited by the fact that the bricks are small and he has difficulty exercising motor skills due to mild neonatal paresis. However, his gaze and smile indicated participation in the game; what attracted him most of all was the music soundtrack that accompanied the children in their construction.

School inclusion

To confirm this hypothesis, the following day an individual/choral singing activity of the Spider-Man song was proposed, and Diego accompanied, like his companions, the performance of the soloists.

The teachers observed Diego much more involved in singing than he normally is in verbal communication and agreed with the special teacher to plan other experiences using this "language" to support Diego's verbal language development.

NA and learning processes

This strategy has been recorded in the child's Individualized Education Plan and the class' curricular plan.

According to National Level Own national curriculum



While adults are prone to follow a single process at a time, children prefer to follow parallel processes at the same time. The younger the children are, the more this rule works. It seems the children had so much to do to bring up, that they are naturally pushed to do many things at once. We should take more account and advantage of that. In addition, we learnt that the more complex and various (but structured) the learning setting is, the more it gets more and more inclusive.

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
THE CHILDREN'S ONE

#### 4. TAKING STOCK TOGETHER TO FIX IT IN THE GROUP'S COLLECTIVE MEMORY



The teacher involved the children in documenting what had been done so far starting from the Spider-Man song. The children took photos/drawings of them dancing to the rhythm of the song, of their Lego creations and representations of Spider-Man and his partner Wasp-Girl. Together they made a poster and the teachers uploaded the documentation on Google Classroom for the parents.

Discussing with the children, the teachers realised that the current classroom organisation was not functional to support the children's free narrative; in general, not only for this specific narrative.

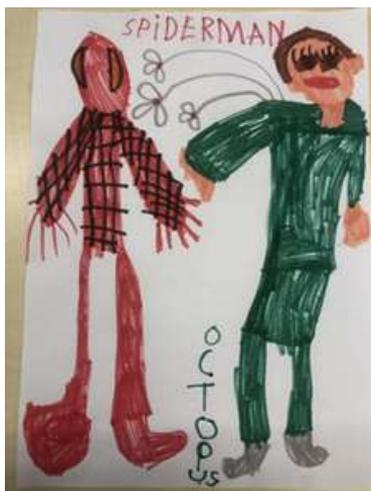
**R4**  
REALIZING APPROPRIATE  
DOCUMENTATION

NA and relations  
with families

How to arrange  
a narrative  
school-setting  
(school SPACES)

NA and well-being  
(relational climate  
at school)

Together with the children, and, to some extent, under their guidance, relevant changes in space organization were made. For example, we decided to change the arrangement of furniture in one area of the classroom to allow for the creation of a corner designated for playing with LEGOs, intimate, but large and cosy enough to allow the children to gather in small groups to play in the area and create new constructions and stories.



The observations we conducted over the next few days confirmed our hypothesis: the change in the location of the LEGOs fed and enriched their storytelling.

Thanks to the new placement, we were also facilitated in listening to and recording their dialogues.

As we mention in the previous blue box, children have many things to do, they are often very busy. Anyway, we sometimes should ask them to rest for a while, be more aware of what is happening, and discuss in depth what we can do to improve our daily life. Of course, children should experiment that this common reflection can produce some changes in their environment... We think this is an example of "agency" and a sense of self-efficacy.

**R1**  
THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE  
THE CHILDREN'S ONE

#### 5. CHILDREN'S STORIES AND THOSE OF THEIR COMMUNITY

The teacher raises new stimuli and asks questions such as: "but have you ever seen a real police station?" Most have not, or only on TV, but two of the children have a parent working in the police. The teacher also asks the children whether, in their opinion, real policemen also have the help of some superheroes.

The children discussed this issue. The teacher suggested going to the source, organising a visit to the local police station, to see what there is and asking the policemen what kind of help they have.

But first, the teacher asks the 'police' parents to come to the school to give a 'lecture' about it.

**R7**  
EXPLORING MEANINGS

**R5**  
BEING AWARE OF THE  
TRIGGER(S)

NA and learning  
processes



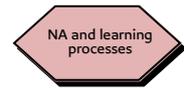
Then the visit to the Police Station took place as planned. The children talked to policemen and policewomen and took photos. Back at school, the children documented everything in the usual way: engaging in discussions, drawing posters, upload them in Google Classroom. During the visit, the children also learnt about what kinds of operations the Police can carry out and the uses and the names of the police station pieces of equipment and how to describe them.

Afterwards, a discussion took place on why the police exist. Of course, we ended up talking about rules and their observance, even at school. Who is the Spider-Man in our school situation, we asked them.

Could we come up with stories in which Spider-Man and his partner Wasp-Girl intervene in our school to make our lives better? Could we set up the role of Spider-Man/Wasp-Girl at school? One boy or girl in turn could have this task every day, a role to be added to the rotating service roles already present in the school (assistant of the teachers, waiter, and so on).

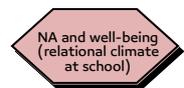
*It was surprising to find out about them. Through their questions, many topics of the curriculum, which we face annually, emerged. In this case, the path developed very naturally and did not require us to think up specific activities, we just followed their interests and curiosity.*

Relationship with the community



**R8**

**TEACHERS LEARN NARRATIVE CONVERSATION**



**R1**

**THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE**

## 6. ENRICHING CHILDREN'S NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Our school has an ongoing collaboration with the local library. After having visited the Police, it was natural to wonder whether books with Spider-Man or Police stories can be found in the library: the only thing to do was to go and see.

To give the children involved in the story other ideas, we asked the children's local library "Casa Piani" for help. They selected some specific books: one about the superhero Spider-Man, some scientific ones about spiders and insects, and a comic book that was a novelty that greatly intrigued the children.

We went to collect them and placed them in the play area built to support this storytelling.

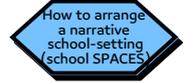
We chose not to present the books to the children but to set them in the narrative play area and let them explore it freely: we know books are not always used by children in their expected and traditional function.

**R10**

**APPROPRIATENESS OF STORYTELLING**



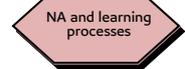
Related with partnership with libraries



We had no other comic books at school; finding Spider-Man in the cartoons, the children used this book as a piece of sheet music to tune this superhero's song.

But the most significant books, against our expectations, were those with real spiders and insects. The interest started with Federico and Simone and spread to all the children and these got the most significant books chosen by the children for a long time.

On 7 June, we went to the Casa Piani municipal library for children to return the rented books, the ones they had selected to enrich our storytelling with new ideas. At Casa Piani, we were welcomed by the librarian who asked the children for some feedback on their readings.



The children responded that they enjoyed the books and accepted the invitation to explore the spaces, discovering the video section and recognising among the available DVDs those of their favourite heroes.



From library to school

This visit to the children's library promoted more subscriptions from the families as well. After a while, some children also brought to school the books they had at home, both the ones they owned and the ones they rented at the library. In addition, we promote "internal renting": children could exchange with each other their books, or bring at home a book from the school, rented for the weekend.

*The teacher learnt at least two things. On the one hand, how it is important to have a stable relationship with our local children's library, "Casa Piani". On the other hand, we should consider the concept of "Library" in a non-traditional way: "library is not only a physical place (as Casa Piani, for example), but a relational and spread place: we should consider "Casa Piani", our library corners inside the school and every personal library the children have at home altogether, like a sort of super-library, interconnected, coherent, able to adapt to children development and evolution, and available for all our school community.*

## 7. GOING BEYOND SPIDERMAN .... WITHOUT KILLING HIM

After several months, teachers realised that the interest in Spider-Man was becoming a bit obsessive. They, therefore, decided to no longer support this narrative (meaning that the children could carry it on if they wanted to, but the teachers would not have observed and supported it as strongly as before). But the teachers would have paid attention to see if other stories could build on this one.

With this goal in mind, the teacher prepared a CD with several cartoon soundtracks about superheroes and one morning plays it in the classroom, without saying anything to the children, a kind of soundtrack during the morning activity.

Contrary to teachers' expectations, children did not pay any attention to it. Instead, they were starting building a new scenario (using several kinds of material: Lego, recycled material, and so on), stimulated by some dinosaurs one of them brought to school in the morning. The teachers looked at each other... and threw the CD away!

*It was a hard "lesson" for the teachers and it showed how it is difficult for them to give up the idea to control children's learning processes. Teachers did not know where the Spider-Man story had ended up. They only could consider that a story is like food: after having digested, it disappears but contributes to our body's development or maintenance. Or, it could be like a seed, taken away by the wind, ready to be born again in an unknown, different place and time.*

NA and relations with families

R1 THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

R5 BEING AWARE OF THE TRIGGER(S)

R3 RESPECTING CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS

R1 THE TEACHER'S STORY INSIDE THE CHILDREN'S ONE

## CHAPTER V

# A virtual focus group among the teachers after they participated in the Narrative Approach Best Practices implementation

### 1. INTRODUCTION – THE MEANING OF THIS CHAPTER

The eight Best Practices on the Narrative Approach implementation of the previous chapter 6 were narrated and made possible by teachers working in preschool or nursery schools belonging to the four schools Administrations involved in this Erasmus+ project. This group of teachers can be considered the first experimental group where the Narrative Approach was realized. The readers of this handbook should pay attention to the following facts:

- 1 Our four school administrations represent a good sample of school culture in Europe nowadays since they are from the North, South, East and West of our continent; they represent different approaches, different national curricula, different national stories and different social cultures. Despite that, it was possible to apply successfully the Narrative Approach everywhere, showing that we can consider it a multicultural approach. It could be thought of as an expected result since the narrative attitude is a basic feature for children all over the world, no matter where they live. In addition, it is important to highlight that the four involved teachers video called each other many times to share doubts and experiences and participated in two in-presence three-day courses to improve their skills in the Narrative Approach application.
- 2 The teachers making up the group did not have any experience in the Narrative Approach application before the project. So, we can consider them as they were a group of different teachers, belonging to a different school administration (no matter where it is located), that decides to apply the narrative Approach after knowing/reading this handbook.

For these reasons, we think it could be useful to add some notes about:

- How they evaluate the appropriateness level of the Narrative Approach implementation;
- How they felt carrying it out;
- What difficulties they met and what they did to cope with them;
- Lastly, what tips they could give colleagues from different schools desiring to cope with the challenge of the Narrative Approach implementation.

### 2. OUR FOCUS GROUP ON THE NARRATIVE APPROACH IMPLEMENTATION.

To gather information about that, we have considered our involved teachers as a virtual focus group and asked them to answer a five-question questionnaire. Each of these questions will be the title of the following five sub-paragraphs of this paragraph 2.

#### 2.1. WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED THE MOST DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NARRATIVE APPROACH IN YOUR SCHOOL THANKS TO THE NARRATE PROJECT?

First, we must say that all the involved teachers are enthusiastic about this experience. Not only their mood has been very positive, but also, they declare their professional work has unexpectedly improved a lot. Let's see some details of that (hereinafter, "NA" means "the Narrative Approach"):

- NA application has encouraged to focus on a small group of children, sometimes on one child at a time, acquiring more information and details, and deepening image; children seem to enjoy this special attention from teachers and this approach has been lived as much innovative;
- At the same time, NA could be a very powerful tool for teachers to observe themselves inside the relations with children, to be more aware of their learning processes and to see the reality and the environment through the children's eyes;
- NA allows us to engage even pre-linguistic children in narrative activities;
- NA help a lot ask open-ended questions about children's creative work, pushing you to reconsider the school environment and change it continuously;
- Didactically, NA emphasize and promote the adoption of new creative languages (music, art) and a strong aesthetic attitude (having fun teaching and learning);
- NA seems to be more inclusive than the traditional one, promotes a better relationship with families and even the teamwork gets more productive and funnier;
- NA can also remotivate in the teaching role, fighting against constraints and troubles at work;
- Na in a powerful way to produce documentation in a new and fascinating perspective;
- Teachers highlight that this experience has been so important even because carried out in a European partnership and perspective.



Starting from these declarations, it sounds like there are no counterindications or side effects in the application of NA. Will it be true?

## **2.2 WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTING THE NARRATIVE APPROACH?**

Actually, on one hand, NA application seems to be very effective, engaging and useful, on the other hand, it is very demanding and challenging too. In details:

- One of the most central concepts in NA is the “trigger”, that is how and why some children’s narrative experience takes place or suddenly changes (see chapter 5); to identify triggers requires strong attention, long observation and the responsibility to choose what among many of them (or supposed they are) we decide to follow (observe) in its consequences and what gets rid of instead;
- Even the concept of “narrative map”, another core topic in this methodology, is not so simple to understand and to find out and describe by observing children’s narrative activities;
- In addition, it could be difficult giving up the traditional approach and get more flexible in your work organisation;
- In the beginning, NA methodology could seem unclear, confusing, and maybe counterintuitive; you have to fight against the temptation to give it up, and of course, being inside a group, maybe inside an international partnership, can help keep on;
- Even at the beginning, it seems really impossible to apply this methodology with very young and not speaking children;
- The need to produce specific documentation requires much time and commitment; observing a child (or a few children) more deeply could seem that you are neglecting the others.

So, even though the involved teachers admit that these difficulties were overcome and, after that, they could fully enjoy the methodology, you have to take into account that the first phase could be very challenging. As a consequence, we could ask the involved teacher to tell us how they were able to cope with that.

## **2.3. WHAT HAS HELPED YOU OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES?**

Speaking in general, further trying to adopt more effective tools (for example, to organize written documentation directly on the field and not to postpone it), we can focus on the fact that teachers did not try to avoid problems, but to take each of them from the correct side, the one containing solutions. For example, most of the teachers underline the sense of surprise coming from the new way to observe children. “Surprise” is a powerful and contagious feeling: the more the teachers felt surprised, the more the children were happy to explore and be adaptable to the context, and the more the families felt something new and important was happening in their nursery or preschool. It seems that the “surprise” feeling was also related to the awareness to have a deeper knowledge of each child: this was especially true in nursery school, with very young and non-speaking children. In other words, constraints and troubles felt during the first phase of the application of NA were rewarded by a closer knowledge of the children, the increasing their well-being and an increasing sense of school community among the staff, children and families. This is the meaning of the sentence: *“to take each problem from the correct side, the one containing solutions”*.

Other strategies were adopted. The main ones are the following:

- NA is a perspective a teacher should not carry out alone: teamwork is necessary. Stressing this concept, we should recommend not so much NA has to be adopted at least by the team of a class as it is adopted by the team of the whole school or nursery. The more the school staff will be involved, the more each teacher will be supported and the more NA application will be effective and fulfilling;
- Most of the involved teachers seem to have coped with NA application as if it was a new sport: in order to go from the first tiring and painful stage to the one you can enjoy so much your muscular commitment, there is only one recipe: working out endlessly... In other words, like in sports activities, NA application needs motivation, the awareness that you can improve more and more through regular work-out until a fulfilling practice. We believe it is this one the reason why in NA application working together with all the staff is so important: like in sports activities improvement;
- Some involved teacher highlights the importance to have a leader for this project, and maybe some mentors. To be a leader of this project means supporting the team, arranging sharing of experiences and information, involving parents and so on. Again, the previous metaphor about a new sport activity engagement is useful: the leader in this case should be like a coach.

After overcoming the initial difficulties, we can concentrate on the positive consequences of NA application for each involved school.

## **2.4. WHAT IS THE MAIN ADDED VALUE INTRODUCED BY THE NARRATIVE APPROACH FOR YOUR COLLEAGUES (AND TEAM), FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES?**

Generally speaking, the involved teachers believe that the main added value of NA application was that the children – each child – are (is) really at the centre of didactic planning and school setting up (even from a concrete point of view).

Through NA application, children take an active role in didactic planning, their “voice” (also the ones’ still without voice) is not only important but crucial; teachers are pushed to rearrange school spaces and time from the children’s point of view, reducing a lot the footprint of adults’ organizational rationality.

This is a very important added value since it is based on:

- *Agency promotion* (the sense for the children to be able to actively change the world around), the highest level of learning processes;
- *Advocacy function provision*: to be sure that the children’s opinions and thoughts were taken into serious account;

As a consequence, *the respect for all the children’s rights* at school becomes more likely to adopt NA. And we believe that this goal is very important, even because NA application allows us to spread and share this goal with families; in this way, the whole children’s quality of life can improve a lot.

Some teachers have reported that despite the troubles suffered during the first stage of NA application, when they perceived increasing commitments and more work to do, in the end, they felt to work better and, why not, less than before. Maybe the work is not objectively reduced: this could be a subjective consequence of a greater aesthetic connotation of their work (we know aesthetic feeling reduces the sense of boredom and fatigue) and of the sense to be more effective in their children’s education and to work in a more supportive staff.

Armed with this positive view of NA application, let’s move to arrange recommendations for other teaching teams operating in the early education system that would like to adopt this new perspective.

## **2.5. WHAT ASPECTS/ELEMENTS DO YOU RECOMMEND TO YOUR COLLEAGUES WHO WANT TO USE THE NARRATIVE APPROACH? WHAT SHOULD THEY START FROM?**

After reading the answers of the involved teachers to this question, we could summarize them in two keys words (that we can name **“2E-Rule”**):

- 1 **E**nthusiasm;
- 2 **E**mpowerment.

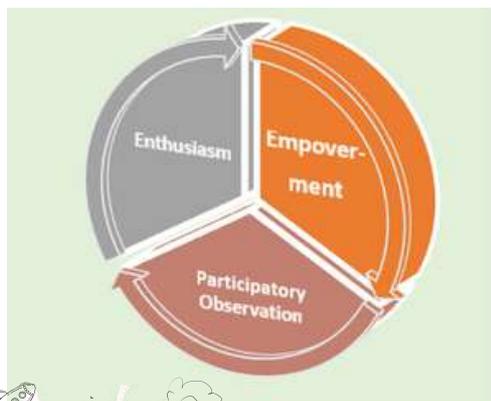
Facing the job of teaching with enthusiasm means emphasizing the aesthetic aspects instead of the ethical ones. In accordance with our teachers, it means to consider learning as a pleasure and not as a duty and, as a consequence, even teaching should be a pleasure and not a duty. More practically, it means, for example, arranging documentation as an artistic product and not a formal report: documentation should have the role to enlighten pleasure, amusement, and surprise for discoveries (both from the children and adults), narrative plot, emotions, and dreams. Good documentation should support the desire to watch/read it many times, like a nice movie/book. Documentation should not be a formal procedure, a bureaucratic duty, or a demanding and boring task. When we can document some children’s amazing activities and discoveries, it is impossible not to feel enthusiastic.

In addition, taking the job of teaching with enthusiasm means considering the participatory observation of the children by a teacher an educational intervention, maybe one of the most important, even though during the observation of the children, it could seem the teacher is not doing anything for the children. Our teachers are aware that the act of observing changes the ways of children’s actions and their desire to freely explore; in other words, observing children with interest pushes them towards learning activities and, in addition, leaves them the freedom to choose what of them to follow.

The last sentence brings us to the second “E”, Empowerment. Empowerment means to delegate or transfer power from authority to its subordinates, in the case of schools from teachers to children. About it, our teachers propose the following tips:

- The use of spaces and materials is free: children have the possibility of modifying, interpreting, and reinventing the given context;
- Think outside of the box and let the mind travel freely. Forget the boundaries of expected results or finishing a task in a certain time frame;
- Having an open mind as a teacher, letting children lead the way and paying attention to details;
- You can let the children discover a lot themselves and let them experience the world in their way;
- Let the children play in their way and only observe this.

So, it seems that for our teachers, implementing NA, the following virtuous circle was working:



We would like to end this chapter with the last tip from one of our teachers:

*“When you are engaged in an activity, I see the children become happy and enthusiastic. And then I become happy too. I go home with a good feeling as if I have received a reward from the children. It makes it even easier to go to work the next day with extra enthusiasm. So, my tip: enthusiasm!”*



3.  
**MORE DETAILS FOR WHOM IS INTERESTED: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF THE FOCUS GROUP.**

	What have you enjoyed the most during the implementation of the narrative approach in your school thanks to the Narrate project?	What were the main challenges and difficulties in implementing the narrative approach?
ITA-1	I found myself <b>very comfortable</b> during the observations of the children, listening and recording the conversations they had between them. To implement the narrative approach, we had to narrow the scope of our intervention, <b>focusing on a small number of children</b> , in a designed and limited space, in a <b>more intimate situation</b> that was also pleasant for us teachers	The greatest difficulty in implementing the narrative approach was that of not being able to predict, organize, and <b>determine how and when the trigger would appear and be found.</b>
ITA-2	Our working method starts from the consideration of careful and participatory observation as a tool to give value to what children do spontaneously, to grasp the said and the unspoken, however through the implementation of the narrative approach in the nursery, it was possible to highlight how, <b>even in the absence of verbal language, children can sustain and carry out spontaneous narratives:</b> through gestures, looks, relationships, proxemics of communication. It has <b>allowed us to make even more visible aspects that sometimes escape the unaware eye:</b> gesture, gaze, relationship, autonomous planning, curiosity, etc. We have also <b>rethought the method of documentation</b> and the spaces and methods of communication. In particular, it emerged that <b>documentation is a process that is built and modified over time</b> and that needs to be shared not only within the working group but also with children and families. We understood that it was not possible to document everything but a <b>selection of the fundamental aspects</b> was necessary.	<b>The main difficulty encountered was the choice of the track to follow</b> once we found ourselves in front of a crossroads. We continued to observe and document all the stories of the children but after a comparison with the pedagogical coordination, we understood how it was not possible to follow them all but that <b>it was necessary to choose one and go in depth.</b>
ITA-3	<b>The possibility to get out of the box</b> , to be guided by boys and girls in their interests, to support spontaneous initiatives and nurture their creativity	Probably <b>the greatest difficulty was colliding with a classic approach</b> that is still very much in vogue in kindergarten, which sees the need for some teachers to follow detailed programs, to have children produce papers as if to "prove" that they have had some experience, thus <b>leaving little space and time for children's curiosity and initiative.</b>
ITA-4	During this journey, what in my opinion was the added value was the work of <b>intertwining the stories, the narrations of the children and our being as educators next to them. We had to observe not only the children but also and above all ourselves</b> , as educators, to analyse first of all our ability to recognize and value narrative cues. Evaluate our ability to support their paths of discovery and knowledge using different methodologies and always putting their stories or the expression of their thoughts in the foreground. Each of us has had the opportunity to think carefully about <b>how children's ideas can and must influence our way of making proposals to children</b> , the choice of materials and the setting up of spaces, and also how the children's stories can involve us and make us take less structured points of view, closer to theirs	Going back to what is written above, the biggest challenge in my opinion <b>was to make our way of working with children even more flexible</b> , and adaptable not only to their times, but above all to their interests, and to <b>build effective documentation</b> to give back to families and in particular to children all the salient components of the path carried out during the school year.
ITA-5	The narrative approach applied in our school, not only provided us with various ideas for the definition of new pedagogical projects but also allowed us to work in groups with greater awareness and with <b>an approach to a broader comparison (thanks above all to that "extra" knowledge deriving from the experiences lived in other European countries).</b>	The main challenges and difficulties can be, in my opinion, attributable to <b>the "novelty" of the approach</b> , especially in a context such as a nursery. Initially, <b>there were several doubts about its application</b> and the possibility of creating experiences suitable for children (0-3 years) as well as pedagogical tools that could be used adequately in the context.

<b>SWE-1</b>	<p>I feel like I've learned a lot along the way. I have become better at asking open-ended questions about the children's creative work, which I am pleased about. The kids have taught me a lot. Their joy around their stories is so much fun to share. We in our group have changed our environment so that more forms of expression have become available to the children. Seeing and hearing their stories/imagination/written language/play take shape and develop in the process.</p>	<p>Finding a trigger at the beginning, knowing what to start by working</p>
<b>SWE-2</b>	<p>The project has contributed to us now opening our minds further to our children in the department. We now have greater insight that the children tell their story by talking without words, and that the small body expressions in the movements (the feeling that the music created) show us the child's state of mind and own stories.</p>	<p>Low age when many of the children lack verbal language</p>
<b>EST-1</b>	<p>I have learned about the narrative approach itself and discovered new ways of teaching my group of children. I enjoyed detecting children's triggers and developing new fun activities regarding children's interests.</p>	<p>In the beginning, it was all very new and confusing. It took me some time to understand the concept of the narrative approach and how it is core varies from my previous ways of teaching. It was confusing to understand how should I consider each child's interest all at once when I have 24 children in my group. Now I know that there is a way and finding triggers is fun!</p>
<b>EST-2</b>	<p>For me, the most interesting part was putting the children in charge and letting them lead the way. Almost like being the invisible support and seeing how far their fantasy can take their story</p>	<p>In the beginning, the main challenge was finding the trigger and how to properly document everything</p>
<b>BEL-1</b>	<p>Through the Narrate project, I have learned to go into more detail when looking at the interests of the children, observing their reactions, giving stronger attention to this and introducing new materials. I involved the parents in the project and I was surprised to hear how the children (re)experienced our activities at home. It was a very useful way of working, especially because we really started from the interests of the children</p>	<p>I sometimes found it difficult to make the "narrative maps" and to put the photos into collages. Rather, this had something to do with lack of time: to sit and reflect on what you have just seen</p>
<b>BEL-2</b>	<p>I felt really comfortable with this approach. I was curious and curious to see and discover the different reactions of the children. I see that you can involve all children with this approach. We choose open-ended materials as a trigger. Each child used the materials in their way. In addition to observing and occasionally offering an extra trigger, we could mainly respond to what the children themselves were interested in. Every child could participate. For the team, it was nice to discover the imagination of the children. To observe and elaborate on the children's stories and games</p>	<p>Sometimes it was difficult to observe each child sufficiently deeply in a full group. It is easier if you focus on some children and then observe some other children in the next activity. The narrative report also takes some time. Sometimes it's hard to find time to make this</p>
<b>BEL-3</b>	<p>Narrating felt to me like a very nice way of observing the children in their play. I learned to look for the little moments of luck in their play. To those moments when they were amazed and when I was amazed myself. It gave me energy and it made me happy</p>	
<b>BEL-4</b>	<p>I've been through many projects, but the Narrate project was even more interesting. In the beginning, as the French word Naratif says, I thought to tell and create a story. And it is true on the one hand, but it is even more, working from the eyes of the children. The children make the story. I love to see the children engaged in their activities. I think it's important to be physically close, but also to be part of their game. But I also learned here that everyone has their symbolic play</p>	
<b>BEL-5</b>	<p>This was definitely a very good experience for me. I was very involved in the project, which allowed me to get to know the child much better. I learned to better discover the child's interest</p>	<p>We were already well involved with activities before, but in a less narrative way. After it became clear to us what the purpose of Narrate was, we also understood how an activity can be even more fun and interesting for a child</p>

	<b>What has helped you overcome these challenges and difficulties?</b>	<b>What is the main added value introduced by the narrative approach for your colleagues (and team), for children and their families?</b>	<b>What aspects/elements do you recommend to your colleagues that want to use the narrative approach to start from?</b>
<b>ITA-1</b>	It helped us to overcome the difficulty of not being able to determine what and when to identify the trigger: listening and observing	The added value for the working group could be that of sharing and practising exchanges between different groups of children belonging to different classes to be able to confront each other, reflect and deepen the interests of the children themselves through reading from different points of view. The children were thrilled to see their thoughts and interests valued and also their families because they recognized continuity and sharing with the school	I believe that it is more productive and facilitating for the teacher to use the narrative approach by observing and listening to children when they move in a context or situation in which they recognize themselves, feel at ease and prefer to others.
<b>ITA-2</b>	Starting from the observation of the children, we shared the experiences lived within the classroom in the working group and this allowed us to highlight the emerging track. Through the comparison, reflections and ideas emerged on possible relaunches to be proposed to allow children to continue on the track of interest. We, therefore, reflected on "what" it was necessary to document and on "how" to do it to make the narrative processes visible and promote reflections both in adults (educators/families) and in children.	Participation in the "Narrate" project was a stimulus to all the educators, generating reflections both within the individual class and in the extended working group, allowing them to restart and rethink despite the isolation experienced following the organization in bubbles provided for by the Covid anti-diffusion legislation. In particular, it allowed us to reflect on how to support and facilitate the spontaneous narrative productions of children: preparation of narrative spaces, attention and care of materials, and rethinking of the language used and of the documentation. Through the documentation (on the wall, narrating gates, digital platform, etc.) the children's stories were shared with the families and this generated a circularity of new narratives and a greater awareness of children's play planning. The rethinking of the documentation has therefore constituted not only a tool to make learning visible, but also a tool to facilitate them.	We believe that the fundamental element from which to start is constant and participatory observation that allows the educator to prepare environments and play materials by creating an adequate space that supports and respects the spontaneous narratives of children. To place oneself in a listening perspective to know and understand the use made by children, of different ages, of spaces and materials and consequently to make changes. The use of spaces and materials is free: children have the possibility of modifying, interpreting, and reinventing the given context while respecting the abilities and times of each. Another aspect to be used in the application of the narrative approach concerns the documentation intended both as a tool to make learning/stories visible, and consequently to reflect on them, and as a tool to create a circularity of new narratives (favoured by the daily exchange and relationship with children and families)
<b>ITA-3</b>	Let's say they are not completely outdated, but certainly, the mediation between the classic and the narrative approach was a useful tool	Making children feel like protagonists of their learning, which is also reflected within families through manifestations of enthusiasm in participating in school life	Starting from the small things, observing children a lot, and being among them even in the moments when it is usually more tempting to look at them from afar, such as during their free games or for example meals. That's where they reveal their world
<b>ITA-4</b>	In both cases, it was essential to implement teamwork among educators. There were a lot of discussions, putting all our skills on the field, sharing the various points of view on the path of the children in the nursery and also bringing, each educator in his way, new perspectives on our being with the children.	Comparing with the colleagues of the nursery school, it turned out that the main added value is the fact that the design starts from the interests expressed by the children and their needs. It is a methodology that is not descended from above but which is co-constructed with children, starting with children. As far as children and their families are concerned, the former certainly feel they are protagonists of the life of the nursery and of the experimentation proposals that are implemented, they feel listened to and valued. In particular, even the little ones perceive real attention to their "voice" within the narration of the class group. Families can feel much more involved in the life of the nursery and can have the feeling that there is continuity and coherence between the life of their children at home and that in the nursery.	My advice is to start from the systematic observation of children, not only during routine moments or those of structured play but above all during free play and to gather as much information about their interests and their life outside the nursery. It is also important to actively listen to what children are able or trying to communicate.
<b>ITA-5</b>	These obstacles were overcome thanks to the "exercise" in applying the approach, which received surprising responses from children. It was precisely the initial challenges that personally aroused great curiosity in me and consequently the desire to deepen this unknown and observe the feedback coming from the children themselves.	The main added value is certainly the new perspective that the project has given us. New lenses to look at the environment we live with children every day, the experiences we offer but above all those that arise spontaneously and how they are transformed on the basis of their choices. Then, the attention to some elements, including the most important of them, the common thread that creates the narrative path between the child (with his story), the others (educators and children with their respective stories) and the environment. In addition, the project also allowed us to create moments of confrontation with parents and therefore to involve families more in the life of the nursery.	I advise my colleagues to start from a careful observation of the experience in the "here and now", in all its aspects, because every little element, even the apparently most insignificant one (whether it is a word spoken by a child, a gesture, an expression) has a great value within the narrative path that is coming to life at that moment.

<b>SWE-1</b>	Thanks to Susanne and Lena having come extra into the children's group and we have been able to think together and do together. Wisdom together. I have received a lot of help and inspiration to move forward through the book Room for Learning, but also education on aesthetic expression and also the framework	Children's joy and participation, their development in the process. That several children have overcome some difficulties and challenges through pleasurable learning	Having several modes of expression available to the children, having an open mind, listening and being curious about the children. Then, you will go a long way!
<b>SWE-2</b>	That we had access to mentors who helped us interpret and show us how to document the expressions. To follow the children and the learning process and reflect on the framework of the narrative approach. Support of colleagues.	That you have an idea of children's narrative abilities/resources and how they can be expressed without verbal words.	Music and aesthetic tools.
<b>EST-1</b>	Mostly cooperate with my colleagues from my kindergarten but also from partner schools. Discussions and sharing of best practices have helped me to understand and discover new ways of teaching. I learned to re-evaluate my behaviour, environment and my way of teaching.	I think the most precious value is that the Narrative Approach is very child-directed and gives each child "a voice". Grownups around children learn through the Narrative Approach the way of listening to their children	Think outside of the box and let the mind travel freely. Forget the boundaries of expected results or finishing a task in a certain time frame. Be present, be open and just be there for your children. This is where the true magic happens.
<b>EST-2</b>	Mostly it was my colleagues and their support that helped me to overcome all of the challenges and difficulties. Sharing my thoughts with them, brainstorming, asking for advice and reflecting together.	It was interesting to see how a small trigger influenced every child differently. Seeing their joy and getting feedback from their parents and how the story progressed from kindergarten to home	Having an open mind as a teacher, letting children lead the way and paying attention to details.
<b>BEL-1</b>		In the narrative approach, you don't have to buy extra materials. You must, above all, remain fascinated by the interests of the children. Reflection is important for this.	I would definitely recommend the narrative approach to others. In terms of reports, documentation, photos and collages, I think it would be nice if someone can support you with this
<b>BEL-2</b>			I would definitely recommend others to work this way. It's an accessible way to work with. You can let the children discover a lot themselves and let them experience the world in their way. I especially want to give a tip that you don't always have to look too far to start. Let the children play in their way and observe this. From that observation, you will discover many starting points.
<b>BEL-3</b>	<b>I also learned to observe better and more deeply.</b> To put things on paper from that observation: a, literally, visual story of the child. <b>Involving the parents</b> in this was very interesting. <b>The parents were happy</b> to experience that attention we paid through a deeper observation of their child, but also that in this way <b>they get an extra glimpse</b> into life in our group.	I found it a bit of a search in the beginning because it is important to get on the same page with your colleagues. Reflecting on what Narrate is now and what it means for yourself was important here. In the first period, we were busy searching and finetuning. But then we went deeper and deeper into it. I felt excited about what I saw happening with the kids and this continues to give me the extra incentive to continue with Narrate activities	
<b>BEL-4</b>	From this project, I assume that <b>we can work even more from the interests of the children.</b> The children, being very young, who come to us often cannot speak yet, but <b>in this way, they indicate their needs and interests</b>	I especially take into account that <b>it is important to sit down and observe from time to time.</b> Take the time and space to work with these observations. I would also like to indicate that <b>you should not give a conclusion or interpretation too quickly</b> , but that you should look for different options. Children can surprise you!	
<b>BEL-5</b>	After several activities, you are so involved and <b>you learn to live in the fantasy of the children.</b> You learn to experiment with them. In turn, it ensures that <b>you get even more interested</b> in further discovering their world. A true circular effect.	<b>You can also plan many activities without having to put in a lot of extra effort</b>	<b>When you are engaged in an activity, I see the children become happy and enthusiastic.</b> And then I become happy too. I go home with a good feeling as if I have received a reward from the children. It makes it even easier to go to work the next day with extra enthusiasm. <b>So my tip: enthusiasm!</b>



## CHAPTER VI

# Storytelling as a support of the Narrative Approach implementation: Towards stable collaboration between Preschools and local Libraries

### 1. INTRODUCTION – ABOUT STORYTELLING

Some readers remember the tenth rule of the Decalogue on the Narrative Approach implementation, described in chapter 3, § 3.2.7. There, we reported the following:

**R10**

*“Appropriateness of storytelling. In the Narrative Approach perspective, storytelling is not an activity in itself like it is in traditional schooling, but an essential tool to help children in their spontaneous narrative explorations. We will devote other parts of this handbook to this topic and even parts inside the other intellectual outputs. For now, we would like to underline the importance of making books available to children that are coherent with the narrative experience they are carrying out”.*

Even considering some experiences reported in our Best Practices described in chapter 4, we can summarize the rules that should lead the use of storytelling in nurseries and preschools that want to apply the Narrative Approach:

1. As we mentioned before, storytelling should not be an independent activity, but one of the most important activities supporting the Narrative approach implementation.
2. This entails many consequences; the first one is that storytelling is an excellent way to provide new triggers for the children’s spontaneous narrations and new scenarios for their narrative maps (see §§ 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. in the previous chapter 3).
3. Then, while traditional storytelling entails that an adult is behaving as a story-teller of a book written by another adult who is its story-maker (the author), and children with the essential (maybe, the only one) role of story-listeners, the Narrative Approach perspective foresees children have to be story-makers and story-tellers too.

4. This does not mean that the Narrative Approach perspective bans children’s literature, not at all; it means that using children’s books should be coherent with the children’s narrative interests, not in general, but related to each specific group of children, following changes and development of this interests.

5. This perspective, as we mentioned in § 4.1.2. of the previous chapter 3, can promote both how to choose what books to provide children and where to store them inside the classroom.

6. About how to choose children’s books and, generally speaking, how to improve storytelling skills both for children and teachers, a stable relationship between nurseries/preschools and local (specialized) libraries is crucial.

For these reasons, this chapter is mainly dedicated to describing some examples of stable collaboration between the pre-school system and the local Libraries, provided by the partners, with an emphasis on how the collaboration can also foster a more conscious use of storytelling within the preschool system. At the end of the paragraph, reference will also be made to Intellectual Output n°3, as a methodology for transforming children’s spontaneous narration into children’s literature products.

### 2. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF STORYTELLING PROJECTS, BASED ON STABLE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE LOCAL PRESCHOOL SYSTEM AND LOCAL LIBRARIES.

Following, are four benchmarking projects, from the experience of the NARRATE project’s partners.

#### 2.1. A PROJECT FROM PITEÅ (SWEDEN): “GOOD LITERATURE GIVES THE CHILD A PLACE IN THE WORLD AND THE WORLD A PLACE IN THE CHILD.” (ASTRID LINDGREN, WORLD-FAMOUS WRITER)

“We know today that reading develops the brain. It takes us to a new level of abstraction. Our children’s future will test their ability to solve problems and conflicts, to think in new ways and understand people and cultures.” (Quote from the Swedish Academy of Children’s Books)

Therefore, we see literature as a necessary, fun and meaningful part of children’s days at preschool. Books help children gain experiences, through books we can visit and experience places with the help of imagination. The whole world is getting closer and helps us to broaden our thoughts and at the same time increase our vocabulary. We will read many different types of books to the children at preschool, fairy tales, poetry, non-fiction books, and rhymes and choose books that address people’s similarities, and different dilemmas.

**Collaboration with library and librarian who is an expert in children's literature:**

We get continuous help to find books on the different topics that we are exploring and learning more about at preschool. For example, if we work with the children's interests in spiders and insects, the library can collect books for us that we can borrow.

The librarian is happy to come out to parent meetings and give lectures on the value of reading books to their children, how language and concepts about the outside world increase. And that it is a way for parents and children to spend valuable time together.

**Book tips from librarian**

Our librarian sometimes comes to show and talk about new Swedish children's literature. She selects books that address current themes in society, books that deal with coming as a refugee, and what different families can look like, with having two mothers or two fathers. Moreover, how girls can be brave and strong, and boys can be sensitive and fearful, namely, norm-critical books. We buy books that the librarian has talked about. Of course, we read these books to the children, but we also offer the families to borrow the books.



WE CREATE BOOK BAGS  
 FAMILIES CAN BORROW BOOKS AND READ TO THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME.

**Children's own book recommendations**



In collaboration with the families, the children are tasked with each selecting and bringing a book from home or from the library that he or she enjoys reading. In this way, the children get to train themselves to show and tell each other about their favorite books. Teachers will help fill in the children's story if necessary. Overseeing this week's book tips is a popular task, children long until it is their turn to present a book.

**Children's own book recommendations**

To make it easier for the preschools in Piteå, the library offers a service, the librarians drive around the preschools with a book bus, a mobile library. The children are looking forward to when the book bus will arrive, and they think it is fun to climb up in the bus and choose books.



**Polyglutt**

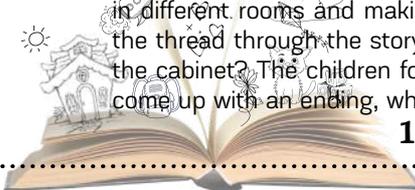


We use the program Polyglutt. Polyglutt is an app with books that we use to read together. The books are projected and displayed on a large movie screen. This makes it possible to make reading visual for many children at the same time.

**An example of how we work with children's books.**

This example comes from Kullerbyttan's preschool in Piteå.

On this occasion, we read the book "The Story of Someone". The story is about Someone being inside a house, being in different rooms and making a mess in the rooms. Someone has pulled a red thread from yarn, and we can follow the thread through the story into different rooms. In the end, the red thread goes into a cabinet and who is hiding in the cabinet? The children followed the story with great excitement and then we stopped the story for the children to come up with an ending, who is hiding in the cabinet?



The children work with clay or draw to tell who is hiding in the cabinet.



The children's different explanations for who Someone is.



"AN ORDINARY THIEF WAS IN THE CUPBOARD. HE LIKES TO STEAL AND TO CREATE A MESS, THIEVES USUALLY DO. HIS NAME IS "THIEFIES", HE CONTINUES TO HIDE IN THE CABINET".

"IT WAS A CAT, BUT NO ORDINARY CAT, IT WAS A UNICORN CAT!"

We place great value on our collaboration with the city's library and our talented children's book librarian. We are also proud of our Swedish children's book authors; every year fantastic new children's books are published that teach us more about the world and each other. Literature has the aim to create a more peaceful world; literature creates consensus between people. We have also had several interesting conversations with the teachers involved in this NA project, where we talked about the impact of literature on children's upbringing and how literature unites us. We have discovered that many books that have influenced and have significance for us are scattered in many countries and shared globally.

## **2.2. A PROJECT FROM ELMER (BELGIUM): "ELMER AND COOPERATION WITH LOCAL LIBRARIES"**

Elmer is a community-based preschool for children between 3 months and 3,5 years, with settings in 4 areas in Brussels: Schaarbeek, Anderlecht, Molenbeek and Brussels Capital.

The population in the Elmer preschools is very diverse, and so is the staff. Many families have a migration background or are recent newcomers. The mother tongue of many children is not the language of the school. Therefore, a priority in the assignments of our work is stimulating language in general and early literacy in particular.

The four branches of Elmer work out a relationship of cooperation with the local library.

Activities are:

- Monthly visits of children (toddlers and eldest babies) to the library.
- Library provides boxes in the Elmer nursery with books adapted to the age of our children.
- Occasional visits to the library for artistic or musical activities for the youngest.
- During neighbourhood walk with the parents, we visit also the library. The librarian gives information to the parents about their way of working. They put emphasis on the youngest children and their speaking of foreign language.
- Yearly visit of parent group with their children to the library. The librarian gives a kamishibai-presentation (Japanese storytelling). Parents can visit the library and they can become member.
- Co-workers of the library come to read out for the toddlers in Elmer.
- Parents receive a parcel of books for the youngest, in order to introduce books in the daily life of the children and their families, as part of the campaign "Boekstart".
- The library provides books for a "cloakroom-library", called Bib Biep; an accessible way of bringing books to parents and their young children in the nursery.

### 2.3. A PROJECT FROM TALLINN MEELESPEA KINDERGARTEN (ESTONIA): “OUR COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL LIBRARIES”

Tallinn Meelespea Kindergarten has 13 groups of children and is located at Haabersti district, Tallinn. The kindergarten has worked for more than forty-five years, teaching and bringing up thousands of children. It is a municipal kindergarten, teaching children aged 1.6 - 7 years. Now, 260 children are attending and pedagogical staff is comprised of 32 people.

The vision and mission of our kindergarten is, by co-operating with parents, to offer best conditions for development by creating safe, creative, healthy and child-friendly environment for developing. Our values are respect, health, caring, tolerance and creativity. All this is taught to children through our daily teaching activities.

Meelespea Kindergarten has co-operation experience with local libraries for years. All groups of children visit libraries several times a year to have different subjects handled.



VISITING LIBRARY FOR THE FIRST TIME



CHILDREN VISITING LOCAL LIBRARY TO FIND OUT ABOUT TRADITIONAL ESTONIANS MARDI GRAS AND ITS CUSTOMS

According to the topic of month week, teachers interact with libraries to find suitable events and find out if libraries have to offer something suitable for the topic. Libraries often share their monthly newsletters, containing different topical events. One example of recent library visit was, when children aged 4-5 visited a local library to find out about traditional Estonians` Mardi Gras and its customs.

**“Bee Miti in Raamatutaru Kindergarten”.** - Since 2018, we have been co-cooperating with Väike-Õismäe library, which lends us different books. In every 2 months, books are brought to the kindergarten on subjects teachers have asked for. Books are delivered in several big boxes and the whole pedagogical staff has great opportunity to take the books to their premises.

This action is great fun, since libraries have a selection of literature many times wider and more exciting than that in a kindergarten. This is a good way to enrich the reading nests of groups with new and fresh creations. This has given a start to two Narrative approach projects as an example of original childhood literature that earned great recognition and positive feedback during the national over-Estonian competition of reading experience in reading nests.



SIOSIKUTE EXAMPLE OF IO3 ORIGINAL CHILDHOOD LITERATURE



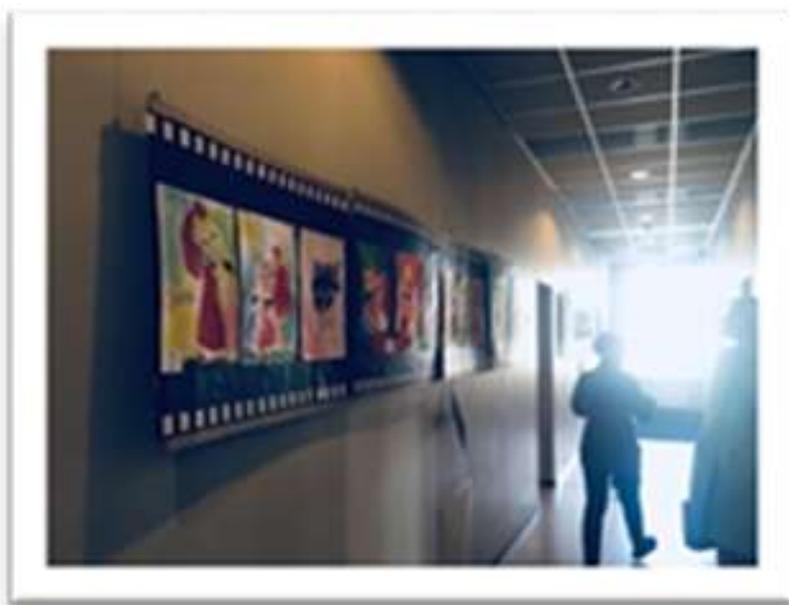


LEPATRIINUDE EXAMPLE OF IO3 ORIGINAL CHILDHOOD LITERATURE

Reading nests in the groups of Sipsikud and Lepatriinud are reading nests that were born in cooperation with children, teachers and parents, helping to stimulate children's interest in reading.

For example, the reading nest of Sipsikud is a special space where to read or look at books and play different board games. The reading nest of Sipsikud has space for both – creative playing and self-expression.

**Creative self-expression- exhibitions of children's work in libraries.** - Books have great importance in a child's development. Even looking at pictures in a book triggers a child's creativity and created narratives are to be born. In addition to that – listening to the story and later, interest in letters and reading, adds enormously to the child's creativity and self-expression. A child is able to express the story created in their head, both in a picture or a written form. In cooperation with libraries, teachers and an art teacher, Tallinn Meelespea Kindergarten has participated in several art exhibitions outside the kindergarten, as well. In addition to organizing exhibitions, every year groups are taking part in drawing competitions organized by different libraries. In our daily teaching activities and free activities, there is a very important place for developing and promoting a child's creativity.



CHILDREN'S ART EXHIBITION IN LOCAL LIBRARY

This is greatly supported by looking at book illustrations, listening to stories, and reading books. In addition to libraries and parents, we have involved colleagues from other institutions in this process, sharing both experiences and good examples with them.

## **2.4. A PROJECT FROM IMOLA (ITALY): HOW MANY STORIES IN OUR SUITCASE!**

**Words build reality (and sometimes make it better).** Being able to build a narration about our life's events can protect us. Children as well have the same need, for example, when, in front of a new event, they ask us for telling it more and more. If we are able enough to get the narration richer and richer in details and nuances, we could find out the pleasure of storytelling and the therapeutic effect could have on them. About coming up with stories, again and again, pay attention that there are “logic truths” as the ones in the news we hope they are, and “psychological truths”, as the ones in fairy tales: both of them are true, but differently and they are different goals.

Not always, we take full advantage of the narration's power; we often imprison it in some ritual moment during daily school life or occasional conversations.

**“Among all the stories I read, the nicest are the ones someone has narrated to me”.** A skilled narrator is essential a person able to keep in mind together both themselves and the listener, while reading. When the latter is a group, those stories maintain an intimate value but also a social one since they became part of the permanent cultural heritage of the group. The children, members of the group, ask for narrating that story because it mirrors the group itself, they use its contents both during group playing and inside their reflections, changing its plot based on their needs. Overall, they put and integrate it inside the already active and free narrative maps characterizing that group. True narration is a democracy exercise too. If teachers respect children, they will resist to temptation to give a story some moral or standard teaching meaning. On the contrary, they will invite children to explore new and unexpected meanings, endlessly.

**An interwoven project.** The previous teachers' ideas were shared with practitioners of the local child Library, named “Casa Piani”. It adheres to the Nation Program “Nati per Leggere” (“Born to Read”), promoted in 1999 by the Paediatricians Culture Association, Child's Health Centre NGO, and Italian Libraries Association. The main aim of this program is to promote children's love for books and reading as soon as possible, involving together Educational, Social and Health Services dealing with children and families. ([www.natiperleggere.it](http://www.natiperleggere.it)). In this way, the first stable collaboration between municipal nurseries and preschools, and Casa Piani Library was born, involving teachers, children and families in a long-term project.

**Objectives of the project.** Promoting reading and narration in nurseries and preschools, following the principles reported above, and involving both teachers and librarians. Involving families towards a better awareness of the importance of narration for the children's development, and its use on daily basis. Improving and spreading the implementation of the Narrative Approach in nurseries and preschools, through several tools: storytelling, description of pictures, and conversation enhancement among children.

**Project into action.** The library sets up some suitcases full of books. They are real “Mobile Libraries”. To choose what books to choose, we adopt the following criteria:

For nurseries: Cardboard books; Illustrated books without text, not based on explicit stories (“silent books”, adapt to promote spontaneous storytelling from the children); Black and White books, to better promote unexpected emotions and dramatization; Bustling images (like Bruegel's paintings), without text; Books with photos

For preschools: Similar to the previous, except for the simplest ones. In addition, books with stories related to possible experiences of these children: emotions, relationships, conflicts, discoveries, and so on.

**Training provision:** We also realized specific and well-appreciated training for teachers and educators held by the most expert librarians.

**Expected results for the Library:** to get new customers, thanks to a large number of the involved families, both to rent books, and to participate in the workshops the library provides. In addition, librarians can know better the life and atmosphere of nurseries and preschools, and the children's development steps.

**Expected results for Nurseries and preschools:** to have a new big provision of books; the idea of “Itinerant libraries” is fascinating for children, creating expectations and desires; teachers and educators can learn new storytelling skills.

**Amazing, unexpected insights: this kind of storytelling can support children's spontaneous narration.**

This story comes from Fontanelle Nursery School (children from 5 months to 3 years: the most involved children are 18 months or more).



**HOW MANY STORIES ARE  
IN MY SUITCASE!**

*"I have nothing to teach. I only want children to have fun. But getting amused through my stories, children learn the most important thing: being eager to read"* (Roald Dahl)



Casa Piani Library brought us a suitcase full of books...  
... so we can start reading immediately.



Then, educators set up our "Bubble-libraries", a small library in a corner of every classroom, to store the new books. Here, children can freely choose books, look through them, share them with mates...



Educators take notes of the spontaneous children's words and conversations about books they are pretending to read. Something new, unexpected and astonishing happens children give titles to the books on their own!



SARA: "ABOUT THE WOLF".  
ORIGINAL TITLE: "THROUGH THE WINDOW"



YOUSSEF: "THE CAKE'S BOOK"  
ORIGINAL TITLE: "IT'S MY BIRTHDAY"



FILIPPO: "THE COOKIE"  
ORIGINAL TITLE: "ALL THE WORLD'S KISSES"  
ARIANNA: "A LITTLE BALL"  
ORIGINAL TITLE: "HOLES"

We educators got at once aware that the children needed to give to the books different meanings of the ones the authors (adults) thought for them... It was clear that the authors, through the title, tried to orient children towards specific meanings and experiences. The title could seem irrelevant thing, but it influences children and lowers their freedom to explore a book. **First rule: an author should avoid giving a title to their book! Let's leave to children this task!**

Here, children can freely choose books, look through them, share them with mates...

With this confidence, we are going to explore deeper, asking children for more interpretations.



AARON: "A BEAR"  
 ORIGINAL TITLE: "ALL THE WORLD'S KISSES"



FILIPPO: "COLOURS"  
 ORIGINAL TITLE: "RED LIKE..."



SOFIA: "THE LITTLE GIRL"  
 ORIGINAL TITLE: "IT'S MY BIRTHDAY"

This book can really do everything!



Arianna: "Mmmh, Rain "putting the book on her head); I love this play"  
 Original title: "This book can do everything"



Moreover, we shared ongoing documentation with parents; they looked very surprised and amazed. Their desire to be involved in reading with their children is getting increasingly more and more.

**Final note:** we arrange the same meaning's exploration in preschools. We ask the older children to provide a personal review of the books they read, collecting many spontaneous and unexpected points of view, which no adult could have given.. Very interesting!

**In attachment n°1**, it is possible to find some annotated bibliographies in children's literature, provided by the project partners in agreement with the local libraries: it is an example of how to organize this literature to make it more usable by teachers , in accordance with the idea of using storytelling to support the spontaneous narrations of children, as the Narrative Approach requires.

### 3. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE DIRECTLY FROM THE CHILDREN: A SHORT REFERENCE TO THE ION.3

We hope our readers have appreciated so far that the Narrative Approach basically means respecting the children's attitude to narrate their experience and their learning processes based on it. A further step in this perspective is to transform this spontaneous narration into narrative products that could be available from now on for all children, attending the same school, but not only.

We already mentioned that, in the Narrative Approach implementation, in addition to respecting the children's interests, we should pay attention to:



- Support children's narration, enhancing the potential triggers that can arise during narrative processes, namely, drawing children's attention to some details present in their narration that can work as many new opportunities to expand and enrich it (chapters 3 and 4);
- Suggest new triggers to children through appropriate storytelling, as mentioned in this chapter.

Consequently, why not consider children's narrative experiences as the base of narrative products? Why shouldn't children be as skilled as adults should in producing books for themselves if we give them the right help with technical issues?

For this reason, our project foresees the arrangement of eight products for children's literacy, starting from children's narration. This is our Intellectual output (IO) n°3.

In IO3, you can find these eight products and, on the website of the project ([www.narrate-project.eu](http://www.narrate-project.eu)) a description of the methodology we have used to get this result. We strongly recommend following this idea; our methodology is only an example, you can come up with other possibilities, but the most important thing to keep in mind is the meaning to give a permanent value to some spontaneous children's experiences.

You should consider the positive impact that these kinds of tools could have on the children having produced them. But you should consider as well the impact that they will have on the new children who will attend your school in the future when you will tell them: "these books are a gift from our mates of the past before leaving towards a different school: now, we could read/watch them and try to do the same if you want!"

**In Annex n°2, readers can find the tutorial to realize similar narrative products.**

## CHAPTER VII

# How to evaluate the Narrative Approach: towards intellectual output n°2

Each innovative project develops along two parallel paths.

The first path starts with an in-depth examination of the initial idea, firstly by documenting how the idea finds support in the literature on the subject, highlighting the themes that represent the idea's scaffolding. After this first phase, the time for the operational phase begins. Making an idea operational is never a simple matter, but it is easier to do so when the first phase of the theoretical investigation has been shared, discussed and revised with the contribution of all those involved in the project.

Putting an idea into practice is the most engaging and creative phase of any innovative project because it is the result of the joint work of all the participants, who by achieving the objectives contribute to enriching the shared knowledge on a particular topic.

The summary of all these multi-voice activities is never able to fully represent the socio-cognitive depth of what has been done but only succeeds in documenting the progress of the common work, through the systematisation of the elements considered crucial to maintaining adherence to the initial idea, elaborated and transformed into concrete activities.

This result is presented in the Intellectual Output 1, (IO1) a working tool representing the framework within which the innovation project is embedded. A systematically pursued objective is to make the entire process comprehensible to all those who did not actively participate in the project. In fact, each operational proposal in IO1 finds its reference in the theoretical framework, references to the idea's scaffolding accompany reading, understanding and reflection in each chapter, in order to continuously highlight the links between the contents and between these and the initial theory

Understandable, operational and replicable are the three adjectives that best describe IO1.

The parallel path to IO1 concerns Intellectual output 2 (IO2), called SAMIA-Toolbox.

This is a set of operational tools, designed and constructed to accompany the implementation of the Narrative Approach in 0/6 services, interested in the topic.

Almost every methodological aspect described in chapters 3 and 4 of this manual has been accompanied by some evaluation tools, specifically implemented within the present NARRATE project. This is to offer effective support and a continuous possibility of verifying the consistency between what has been achieved in practice by those who intend to apply the method, and what has been established in the methodological approach that we have proposed here.

These are indispensable moments of reflection, through which it is possible to monitor in progress the following aspects:

- Coherence between actions indicated in the project and their implementation.
- Coherence between the activities realised/being realised and the best practices illustrated in IO1.
- Highlighting of possible problematic elements, e.g. linked to the functioning of 0/6 services in the different European countries.
- Solutions adopted to maintain coherence with the project objectives.

Functional, practical, and adaptable are the three adjectives that best describe IO2.

The constant cross-reference between the two intellectual outputs is therefore a strength point of the entire project.



## AFTERWORD

### Final suggestions for future projects

The project centred on the Narrative Approach implementation allowed the participants to reflect on the daily organisation of the involved ECEC services, which belong to the municipalities of Imola (Italy), Pitea (Sweden), and Tallinn (Estonian) and the Elmer School (Belgium).

Despite the differences that characterise the various educational systems, a common objective for all participants was the creation of environments capable of fostering the development, learning and socialisation of pupils. Starting from this shared goal, the project succeeded in outlining an educational pathway that places the children's spontaneous narratives at the centre of the work, both as a creative and argumentative activity. To foster this narrative construction, which is often multi-voiced and can be temporarily abandoned only to be resumed later on, reflection touched on the one hand on the relationship between teachers and pupils and on the other on the organisation of the educational setting.

The first requirement of the Narrative Approach is the adult's ability to interact with children in a communicative manner aimed at fostering the pupils' agency, their attitude in "taking the floor", their ability to construct stories from objects, events and thoughts, their interest in constructing new forms of interaction and new stories together.

The second requirement of the narrative approach is the teacher's ability to maintain the necessary flexibility to always provide new stimuli for the children's narrative, as well as to be able to change the organisation of spaces whenever the construction of stories requires it.

In the context of the project, the role of children's books is to provide a bridge between children's spontaneous narratives and the narratives constructed by others, thus pushing children towards decentralising their points of view. Producing stories and understanding stories are, in development and learning paths, the two skills that will lead in later years to the production of written texts and the acquisition of reading.

The potential of the project idea also lies in the proposal for a collective and systematic reflection on what is already happening daily in many pre-schools, to see innovation not only as the adherence to new proposals, but first and foremost as the ability of the school practitioners to identify the strong points, and also the points of excellence, of their work, to share them with other colleagues and to implement actions to improve the elements that are on the contrary considered weaker.

Thinking about what could be the next stage for future development, the first suggestion arising from the project implementation is to arrange a more specific distinction between Method and Methodology. The Methodology takes into account the content of the proposals made to the children that can and must vary concerning the group of pupils and also concerning the ideas that at a particular moment and place are important from an educational and cultural point of view. Instead, the Method is about something concerning how to identify processes, resources and problems, how to implement or provide answers to the problems, how to train professionals and to build specific tools; in this sense, Method has to be considered something stable over time and all over the space.

The second suggestion drawn from the project concerns the attention to be paid to the nature of the interactions that take place in educational environments, which can be schematised in a triadic relationship among adults, children and objects. The shift from a dyadic interpretation of interactions (I and the other) to a triadic interpretation (I, the other and the activity carried out with objects) helps to understand the importance of activities carried out together and how, by working on the quality of these activities, development, learning and socialisation can be constantly fostered.

Last but not least, further projects could explore how the objects made available to children can construct a system of shared rules (the canonical rules of use and alternative usages) on which to build experiences of mutual acceptance and tolerance.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I

### **EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON CHILD’S LITERATURE AVAILABLE IN THE FOUR COUNTRIES REPRESENTED IN THE NARRATE PARTNERSHIP**

Following, readers can find some examples of reasonable bibliography on child’s literature available in Italy, Belgium, Estonia and Sweden. As we mentioned in chapter 6 “Storytelling as a support of the Narrative Approach implementation: Towards stable collaboration between Preschools and local Libraries”, storytelling is one of the most important tools supporting the implementation of the Narrative Approach in Early Education.

But, how can teachers navigate through the huge availability of children books, in order to make aware and effective choices? Thinking about that, we discovered that in each Country some tools for it already exists: bibliographies set up on specific criteria, namely, not only organized for different topics, ages, development stages and so forth, but also considering the quality of the editing products.

These tools can simplify the teachers’ work and, at the same time, enhance a stable collaboration between preschools and local libraries, because they usually know the existence of these kinds of tools and their updating; without forgetting the preschools and local libraries can collaborate to realize some self-produced REASONABLE BIBLIOGRAPHY ON CHILD’S LITERATURE, in accordance with their goals and preferences.





Iedereenleest.

# 2022 jaar overzicht zicht



In dit jaaroverzicht van 2022 blikt Iedereen Leest terug op enkele van haar initiatieven die het jaar vorm gaven. Samen met partners creëerden we opnieuw kansen om iedereen naar verhalen toe te leiden. Opdat iedereen kan ervaren hoe zinvol en verrijkend lezen is. Voor meer leesplezier, en meer lezers!

2022 is de start van een nieuw meerjarenplan. Vijf speerpunten weerspiegelen de ambitie die Iedereen Leest de komende jaren via haar werking wil realiseren:

1. Groeien als lezer
2. Lezen, meer dan een boek
3. Lezen is goed voor je
4. Lezers maak je samen
5. Samen competent

Per speerpunt lichten we een aantal acties uit. Deze selectie stofferen we met enkele cijfers, weetjes en getuigenissen. Via de talrijke linken kan je verdiepend verder lezen.

Iedereen Leest, 2023  
auteurs: Simon Bequoye en Sylvie Dhaene  
© afbeeldingen: Michiel Devijver en Iedereen Leest  
(tenzij anders vermeld)  
© Illustraties: Karolien Vanderstappen

# 1 GROEIEN ALS LEZER

Leesbevordering werkt op drie dimensies: in de breedte (mensen aan het lezen krijgen), in de diepte (van leesmotivatie naar leesverdieping) en in de lengte (levenslang lezen). Met een doorgaande leeslijn proberen we alle lezers te bereiken, van aarzelende tot verwoede lezer, en van de allerjongste tot oudere lezers. Een doorgaande leeslijn is een handvat voor leesbevordersaars om voor verschillende leeftijden een geschikt aanbod te voorzien. Ze refereert naar literaire competenties zodat iedereen kan groeien als lezer.



## GROEIEN ALS LEZER



**273** gemeenten engageren zich in het Boekstart-programma.

**Boekstart** wil ouders met hun jonge kinderen van 0 tot 3 jaar laten genieten van boeken. In samenwerking met consultatiebureaus, bibliotheken en lokale partners worden boekenpakketten binnengebracht in alle gezinnen. Verder wil Boekstart de deskundigheid verhogen rond interactief voorlezen en een taal- en leesklimaat stimuleren in organisaties die met en voor jonge kinderen werken. Elk jaar sluiten nieuwe gemeenten aan. Eind 2022 zijn er 273 Boekstart-gemeenten in Vlaanderen en Brussel.

“Na de Boekstart-dag waren er opvallend meer jonge kindjes in de bibliotheek dan normaal. We zagen precies een Boekstart-dag-effect!”  
 - een bibmedewerker

Op zaterdag 21 mei 2022 organiseerde iedereen **Leest een vierde Boekstart-dag** in Vlaanderen en Brussel. Meer dan 100 bibliotheken openden hun deuren die dag speciaal voor gezinnen met baby's en peuters. Na twee corona-edities, werd deze vierde Boekstart-dag een écht feest!



**4** Boekstart-peuterverhalen in Vlaamse Gebarentaal.

Wat als je niet kan horen en voorlezen moeilijk wordt? Iedereen Leest werkte samen met het Vlaams Gebarentaalcentrum en Doof Vlaanderen om **filmpjes in Vlaamse Gebarentaal te ontwikkelen van vier boeken uit de Boekstart-peutertassen**. Boekstart is er namelijk voor iedereen en wil tegemoet komen aan de noden van alle kinderen en hun ouders.



## GROEIEN ALS LEZER

**11.690** kinderen en jongeren lezen mee met de Leesjury.

Elk jaar bekroont **de Leesjury** haar favoriete boeken. Een leesjaar lang lezen en bespreken kinderen en jongeren tussen 4 en 18 jaar boeken in zeven leeftijdscategorieën. Nadien kiezen ze hun winnaars. Al enkele jaren ziet iedereen Lees het aantal juryleden stijgen. Met de nieuwe naam, website en huisstijl wordt die trend verdergezet. De kinderen en jongeren komen samen in meer dan 250 afdelingen met leesgroepen in scholen en bibliotheken, of stemmen mee als internetjurylid.



“Mijn zontje heeft enorm genoten van het voorlezen en de toneeltjes, hij is fier op de handtekeningen die hij kreeg! Dank aan die lieve auteurs om hier tijd voor te maken!  
- ouder van een jurylid

Op zondag 13 november **vierden we 40 jaar de Leesjury** met meer dan 700 lezers en 30 auteurs en illustratoren. Het werd een spetterend feest vol auteursontmoetingen en workshops. Ook enkele Leesjury-begeleiders werden in de bloemetjes gezet.



**25.600** views voor TikTok-filmpjes met #leesjury.

De Leesjury is hip en overal: naast een **Instagram-kanaal** beheerd door iedereen Lees voeden juryleden, begeleiders en bibliotheken ook de BookTok-hype met **Leesjury-filmpjes**. Iedereen Lees organiseerde een BookTok-workshop en deelde tips met coördinatoren en begeleiders om de Leesjury via deze kanalen nog sneller te laten aansluiten op de leefwereld van kinderen. En ook Boekenzoeker stelde een lijstje samen met **boeken die viraal gingen op TikTok**.

## GROEIEN ALS LEZER



Meer dan **1,2** miljoen gebruikers van Boekenzoeker in 2022.

**Boekenzoeker** helpt kinderen en jongeren in hun zoektocht naar een passend boek. Bij elk boek krijgen ze een fragment en een quote. Verschillende **themaliestjes** zorgen voor inspiratie en spelen in op actuele thema's zoals BoekTok, klimaat of racisme. De website is geheel op maat van kinderen en jongeren. Samen met De Ambassade, die eerder al het WAT WAT-label toekende aan Boekenzoeker, schreef iedereen Lees **toegankelijke artikels**. Boekenzoeker verzorgt ook het **Boek van de Week op Ketnet**. Op **Instagram** geeft Boekenzoeker extra boekentips voor jongeren.

“Deze webinars zijn een meerwaarde voor al wie wil lezen met kinderen van die leeftijd, en al wie zijn horizon wat wil verruimen in het boekenaanbod.  
- een deelnemende leerkracht

Ook volwassenen gebruiken vaak Boekenzoeker. Meer dan 1.400 professionals en geïnteresseerden volgden **de eerste reeks Boekenzoeker-webinars**. Deze reeks versterkte de kennis over het recente boekenaanbod bij leerkrachten, bib-medewerkers, ouders ... In het najaar startte **een tweede reeks** waar al meer dan 600 geïnteresseerden zich voor aanmeldden.



**2.327** reispassen werden ingevuld tijdens 'Bestemming: bib'.

De **derde editie van de zomerleesactie 'Bestemming: bib'** was opnieuw een succes! 148 bibs gooiden tijdens de zomerperiode hun deuren open om kinderen en jongeren te stimuleren om ook tijdens de zomer te blijven lezen. Zo gaan ze, ondersteund door iedereen Lees, de 'zomerleesdip' tegen.

## 2 LEZEN, MEER DAN EEN BOEK

De ingangen die kunnen leiden naar leesplezier en lezen zijn groter dan vaak gedacht. Vandaag worden lezers ook geïnspireerd via audioboeken, podcasts, vlogs, apps, online leescommunities ... Samen met het boek zijn dit cultuurproducten die versterkend inwerken op een leescultuur die zowel offline als online gedijt.

Toegankelijke en inspirerende leesomgevingen blijven erg belangrijk om lezen bij meer mensen op de radar te krijgen. Een kwalitatieve leesomgeving nodigt iedereen uit om te lezen en te blijven lezen.



## LEZEN, MEER DAN EEN BOEK

Meer dan **1.225** (geregistreerde) activiteiten en auteurslezingen.

Maar stond traditiegetrouw in het teken van **Jeugdboekenmaand**, een campagne waarin leesplezier en kinder- en jeugdboeken centraal staan. **Bibliotheken** voerden meer dan 200 activiteiten in op **UitVlaanderen**. De overvloed aan berichten op sociale media tonen dat het aantal niet-geregistreerde activiteiten (zoals op scholen) hier een veelvoud van is. Ook auteurs en illustratoren gingen terug op pad, via Literatuur Vlaanderen werden meer dan 1.000 lezingen gesubsidieerd – en dan zijn er nog vele niet-gesubsidieerde auteursontmoetingen!



“Ook kinderen in ziekenhuizen hebben boeken en verhalen nodig, maar worden vaak over het hoofd gezien.”  
 – Fátima Ramos

Jeugdboekenmaand zette ‘helden en schurken’ centraal, dus gingen meter Fátima Ramos en peter Dempsey Hendrickx **held spelen op de kinderafdeling van het UZ Antwerpen**. Kinderen genoten van verhalen en konden hun eigen superkracht of boekenheld ontdekken.



“Ik hou van mijn naam omdat het woordje ‘bib’ er in voorkomt, een plek waar ik vaak kom.”  
 – Habib Önen

Wie kan het leesplezier beter verwoorden dan kinderen en jongeren? Tijdens Jeugdboekenmaand namen zij dan ook zélf het woord in **een Leeswereld-jeugdspecial**. Dat leverde heel wat fijne quotes op, zoals ook deze van Naama: ‘Lezen is het leukste wat er bestaat. Ik hoef hier de straat maar uit te lopen en sta binnen de minuut aan de bib. Iedere woensdag kom ik thuis met een rugzak vol boeken!’



## LEZEN, MEER DAN EEN BOEK



Meer dan **25.000** volwassenen deelden hun leeservaringen.

De Facebook-groep 'Iedereen Leest – wat lees jij?' verbond dit jaar al **meer dan 25.000 lezers** online. Elke dag wisselden ze leestips uit, vroegen ze elkaar om advies en deelden ze welke plaats boeken in hun leven innemen. Een lid en fervent lezer getuigde: 'Het gaat niet alleen over lezen, maar ook over hoe mensen lezen: duiden ze passages aan als ze lezen? Wanneer lezen ze en hoe slagen ze in hun voornemen om veel te lezen?'

“Lezen leerde me dat ik niet de enige ben met vragen over het leven, dat anderen ook zoeken naar zingeving.

– Sahadi Daria

In 2022 plaatsten we **de 100<sup>ste</sup> leeswereld** online, een reeks interviews waar bekende en minder bekende lezers vertellen wat lezen in hun leven betekent, en hoe lezen hen als persoon vormt. **Leeswereld** bracht ook in 2022 een diverse mix aan getuigenissen en onderstreepte op die manier het belang van lezen. Intussen staan er 120 interviews op de teller.



**50** afleveringen van de reeks 'In het atelier'.

**In het atelier** geeft een inkijk in de werkruimte en het hoofd van illustratoren. Wat zijn hun rituelen? Waaruit putten ze inspiratie en hoe komen ze tot hun beste werk? De reeks interviews toonde ook in 2022 dat lezen meer is dan een boek: illustraties vervoeren ons naar een wereld vol beeldende verwondering.

**36** scholen werkten actief rond een kwalitatieve leesomgeving in een Lezen op School-traject van Iedereen Leest.

Toegankelijke leesplekken, praten over boeken, een leesbeleid over schoolvakken heen ... Het zijn allemaal belangrijke elementen voor effectieve leesbevordering. Iedereen Leest begeleidde 24 basis- en 12 secundaire scholen intensief om verder te bouwen aan een kwalitatieve leesomgeving. Ze actualiseerden het boekenaanbod op school, creëerden een draagvlak rond lezen bij het schoolteam en organiseerden voorleesworkshops of auteurslezingen.



“Lezen is nog meer zichtbaar geworden. Sommige niet-lezers zijn bekeerd tot boekenwormen.

– deelnemende school

Het tweejarig traject rond een kwalitatieve leesomgeving sloot af met inspirerende studiedagen vol ervaringsuitwisseling. Er werd **teruggeblikt via praktijkvoorbeelden**, maar ook vooruitgeblikt naar vervolgstappen.

**1.500** leeskalenders vonden vlot hun weg naar scholen.

Dat je als school het hele jaar kan werken rond verhalen, toonde onze allereerste **leeskalender**. In een mum van tijd was de gedrukte oplage uitverkocht. Scholen én bibliotheken bestelden de leeskalender, zij kunnen zich elke maand laten inspireren door de vele lees- en leesbevorderingstips die we erin opnamen.

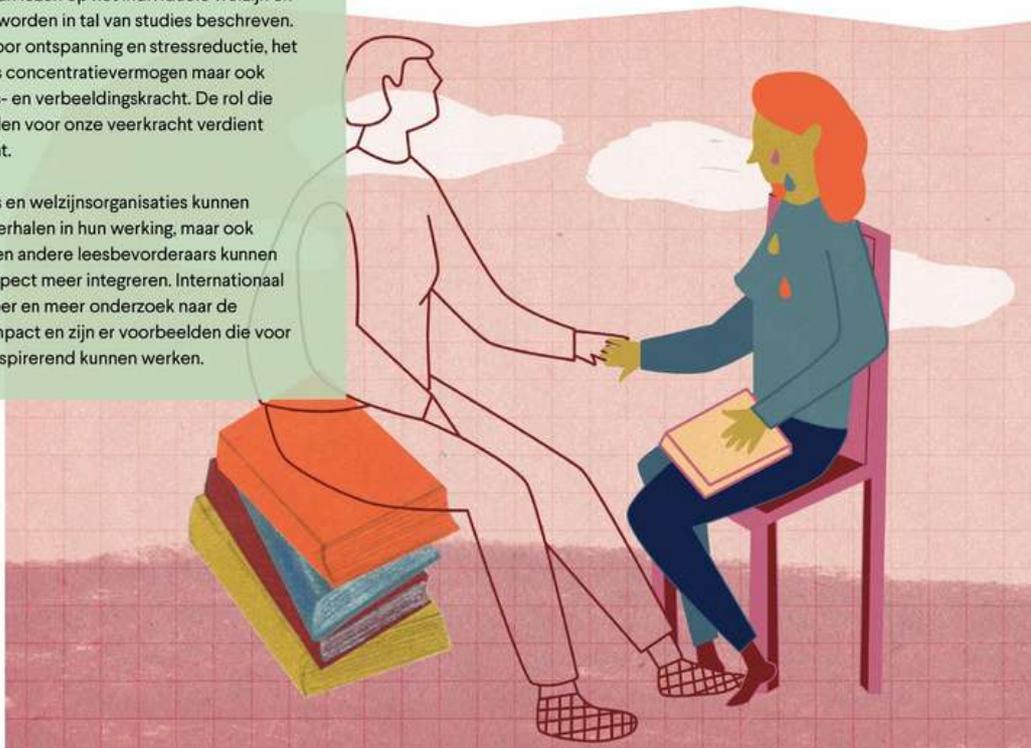
## LEZEN, MEER DAN EEN BOEK



### 3 LEZEN IS GOED VOOR JE

De effecten van lezen op het individuele welzijn en welbevinden worden in tal van studies beschreven. Lezen zorgt voor ontspanning en stressreductie, het stimuleert ons concentratievermogen maar ook onze inlevings- en verbeeldingskracht. De rol die lezen kan spelen voor onze veerkracht verdient meer aandacht.

Zorginstaties en welzijnsorganisaties kunnen werken met verhalen in hun werking, maar ook bibliotheken en andere leesbevorderaars kunnen het welzijnsaspect meer integreren. Internationaal gebeurt er meer en meer onderzoek naar de effecten en impact en zijn er voorbeelden die voor Vlaanderen inspirerend kunnen werken.



### LEZEN IS GOED VOOR JE



**129.121** bezoekers op de nieuwe Voorleesweek-website.

Voorlezen, dat is lezen met je oren. Of luisteren met je ogen. Met dit thema vestigde de Voorleesweek-campagne in november ook de aandacht op kinderen en volwassenen voor wie lezen minder vanzelfsprekend is. Koningin Mathilde ging voorlezen aan een groep blinde en slechtziende kinderen en trapte de campagne op gang. De spiksplinternieuwe website viel duidelijk in de smaak bij het brede publiek en professionals, want het bezoekersaantal steeg met meer dan 160% tegenover 2021!

“ Voorlezen blijft een topper voor jong en oud(er). Het is daarbij ook heel laagdrempelig en makkelijk om er iets rond te organiseren. – een bibmedewerker

Scholen, bibliotheken, kinderdagverblijven, woonzorgcentra ... Op honderden plekken werden er voorleesactiviteiten georganiseerd, zowel tijdens Voorleesweek als daarbuiten.



**18** nieuwe afleveringen van de Voorleesclub.

Voor Voorleesweek werkte iedereen Leest samen met VRT. Naast een voorleeswedstrijd lanceerde VRT een nieuw seizoen van de Voorleesclub! Bekende voorlezers lezen voor aan kinderen, neefjes, nichtjes, buurmeisjes en -jongens ... De afleveringen werden begin november elke avond uitgezonden op Eén en zijn beschikbaar op VRT MAX, waar ze te (her)bekijken zijn, thuis en op school.



## LEZEN IS GOED VOOR JE

### 14 artikels sensibiliseerden over lezen en welzijn.

Iedereen Leest informeerde het brede publiek over het belang van lezen voor onze veerkracht. Sommige artikels berichtten over onderzoek – zoals [de rol van de bibliotheek](#), of [een Europees rapport](#) – andere artikels doken meer in de praktijk en brachten waardevolle getuigenissen naar boven – zoals [de helende werking van samenlezen](#).



“ De meeste gedetineerden komen voor de eerste keer in hun leven naar een bibliotheek. Ik hoop dat het een fijne ervaring oplevert, die hen misschien aanzet later ook naar de bib te gaan.  
- bibconsulente Lies

Als focus binnen 'lezen is goed voor je' zoomde Iedereen Leest in 2022 in op lezen in detentie. Zo waren er praktijkvoorbeelden over [de Gentse gevangenisbib](#) en [een PEN-lezing in de Hasseltse gevangenis](#), maar ook een [Leeswereld met een gevangenis-directeur](#). Gedetineerden deelden ook zelf hun verhaal [in een Leeswereld-special](#), over hoe lezen voor hen van grote waarde is, over boeken die een houvast zijn in een opgesloten leven.

“ Lezen staat voor zingeving. Letterlijk: zin geven aan je leven in de gevangenis, nadenken hoe je je leven later als vrij mens zult inrichten.  
- gedetineerde Michel



## LEZEN IS GOED VOOR JE

### 177 professionals op de conferentie 'Culture & Mental Health'.

In november liep [de internationale conferentie 'Culture & Mental Health'](#), gericht op het vergroten van de kennis en het aanscherpen van het debat rond culturele activiteiten die het welzijn van mensen met een psychische of sociale kwetsbaarheid verbeteren. Meer dan 170 professionals actief in de binnen- en buitenlandse cultuur- en zorgsector kwamen gedurende drie dagen bijeen en volgden verschillende sessies en workshops. Dr. Hans Kluge, directeur WHO Europa, had het in [een videoboodschap](#) over de rol van kunst en cultuur voor ons welzijn. Samen met mede-organisator Museum Dr. Guislain haalde Iedereen Leest buitenlandse praktijken naar Vlaanderen en deelde ze inzichten in een internationale context.



“ *Be a changemaker* – verspreid de boodschap dat cultuur bijdraagt aan onze gezondheid en welzijn.  
- Kornelia Kiss, CultureForHealth

“ Bibliotheekgebruikers hebben meer voldoening, geluk en zin in het leven.  
- Debbie Hicks, The Reading Agency



De conferentie bracht verschillende perspectieven op lezen en welzijn bijeen. Internationale sprekers hadden duidelijke boodschappen voor het aanwezige publiek. Iedereen Leest verankerde enkele getuigenissen in informatieve artikels:

- [Over de openbare bibliotheek als plek van verbinding](#)
- [Over de helende kracht van lezen en samenlezen](#)

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## 4 LEZERS MAAK JE SAMEN

Met gebundelde krachten kunnen we het verschil maken. Samenwerkingen tussen bibliotheken en scholen, kinderopvanginitiatieven, boekhandels, opvoedings- en welzijnsorganisaties en andere actoren kunnen tot veel meer en duurzamere resultaten leiden. Iedereen Leest wil lokale leesbevorderingsnetwerken stimuleren en streeft de nodige afstemming na op bovenlokaal en Vlaams niveau tussen verschillende sectoren.



## LEZERS MAAK JE SAMEN

### 16 leesbevorderingsprojecten werden nauwgezet opgevolgd.

Iedereen Leest vervulde in 2022 een ondersteunende en adviserende rol bij goedgekeurde projecten binnen [de subsidielijne leesbevordering van Literatuur Vlaanderen](#). 16 lopende projecten konden indien gewenst rekenen op de gerichte dienstverlening van Iedereen Leest. Tijdens spreekuren konden *changemakers* hun ideeën aftoetsen en verder uitwerken na advies van Literatuur Vlaanderen en Iedereen Leest. Zo treedt Iedereen Leest als aanspreekpunt en verbinder op.



“Kinderen die minder talig zijn, kan ik misschien wel bereiken via muziek. Anderen vinden net het figuurentheater leuk.”

- Sara Pieters, Kopke-t

“Voor de kinderen van het asielcentrum is zo'n bezoek aan de bibliotheek een echte uitstap. Ze stonden dan ook te springen om mee te mogen.”

- Gitt Smans, De Verhalenweverij

Over zes afgelopen projecten maakte Iedereen Leest een praktijkvoorbeeld [in de reeks 'Praktijk in de kijker'](#). Op die manier kunnen leesbevorderingsprojecten andere organisaties inspireren. De praktijkvoorbeelden documenteren de aanpak, het proces en de resultaten. Ze bieden een blik achter de schermen in verschillende contexten: van projecten in de bib of in een theaterhuis tot projecten in een asielcentrum of huiswerkbegeleiding. Ze leren ons ook wat wel en minder goed werkt.



## LEZERS MAAK JE SAMEN



### Met vereende krachten voor **1** Vlaams Leesoffensief.

Iedereen Leest is partnerorganisatie van [het Leesoffensief](#), een initiatief van de Vlaamse Overheid. Een actieagenda voor 10 jaar werd opgemaakt. In samenwerking met de departementen Onderwijs en Vorming en Cultuur, Jeugd en Media en het Agentschap Opgroeien wordt de uitvoering van acties uit het plan geïnitieerd. Doelstelling is om de dalende leesvaardigheid en leesmotivatie van kinderen en jongeren aan te pakken op een systemische, op onderzoek gebouwde en participatieve manier. In het najaar van 2022 werd de communicatiecampagne 'Vrienden voor het Lezen - Samen voor een Leesoffensief' gelanceerd en een eerste [Vlaanderenleestdag](#) aangekondigd.

“Lezen is geen project. De urgentie is groot en de uitdaging waar we voor staan vraagt een brede, langdurige en goed gecoördineerde inspanning. Willen we versnippering tegengaan, dan kunnen we niet langer in hokjes denken.  
– Liesbet Heyvaert, voorzitter Leesoffensief



### **1**ste editie van de Vlaamse literatuurprijs de Boon.

Op initiatief van minister van Cultuur Jambon werd [de Boon](#) in het leven geroepen, een nieuwe Vlaamse jaarlijkse prijs voor de beste Nederlandstalige boeken: een voor fictie en non-fictie en een voor kinder- en jeugdliteratuur. Iedereen Leest is stichtend lid van de vzw Vlaamse Literatuurprijs. De prijs wil de zichtbaarheid van literatuur vergroten en de erkenning van auteurs en illustratoren stimuleren. Een missie die Iedereen Leest als referentieorganisatie rond leesbevordering volledig onderschrijft, en waar ze zich ook dagelijks voor inzet door het rijke leesaanbod een belangrijke plaats in haar programma's en campagnes te geven.

## LEZERS MAAK JE SAMEN

### **5** nominatiedossiers opgesteld door IBBY-Vlaanderen.

Iedereen Leest is de thuisbasis van de Vlaamse afdeling van het *International Board on Books for Young People* – kortweg IBBY. [IBBY-Vlaanderen](#) ijvert voor de toegang tot boeken voor elk kind en ondersteunde met haar tweedehandsboekenverkoop – die 6.500 euro opbracht – een leesbevorderingsproject voor asielzoekers in Sint-Niklaas. Daarnaast stelde IBBY-Vlaanderen in 2022 de nominatiedossiers op voor [de Hans Christian Andersen-Award 2024 \(Bart Moeyaert\)](#) en [ALMA 2023 \(Gerda Dendooven, Carll Cneut, Marit Törnqvist en het Iraanse project Read with me\)](#).



© Behrooz Khani

“Wie voorleest aan kinderen, brengt ook een andere boodschap over: dat jij als kind telt.  
– Azadeh Sadeghi, Ameneh Nursery

Gastauteur Yasmine Motawi, verbonden aan IBBY-Egypte, beschreef enkele IBBY-projecten van [Iran](#) en [Cyprus](#), internationale praktijken die ook voor Vlaanderen inspirerend zijn.

### **6** internationale meetings over *early literacy*.

Met haar Boekstart-programma is Iedereen Leest al sinds het begin lid van [het Global Network for Early Years Bookgifting](#). In 2022 werden inzichten gedeeld over meerstaligheid, storytelling, welzijn en onderzoek. Daarnaast nam Iedereen Leest ook deel aan de jaarlijkse bijeenkomst van EURead, het Europese netwerk van organisaties die rond leesplezier en leesbevordering werken.



# 5 SAMEN COMPETENT

Leesbevordering met impact, daar streven we naar. Als referentieorganisatie wil Iedereen Leest leesbevorderaars informeren en inspireren. Samen met professionals en vrijwilligers bouwen we praktijkinzichten op. Kennis uit onderzoek is daarbij het fundament om succesvolle interventies te integreren in programma's en leertrajecten. Gerichter inspelen op vormings- en informatienoden bij professionals en vrijwilligers leidt tot vaardige en competente leesbevorderaars die lezers maken en helpen groeien.



## SAMEN COMPETENT



### 170 bibmedewerkers volgden de opleiding jeugdliteratuur.

In functie van haar missie bouwde Iedereen Leest verder expertise op over leesbevordering en jeugdliteratuur. Professionals, vrijwilligers en andere geïnteresseerden werden uitgenodigd om vormingen of webinars te volgen uit [ons breed vormingsaanbod](#). De [opleiding 'Jeugdliteratuur voor bibmedewerkers'](#) werd in 2022 wegens groot succes hernomen. Met 7 reeksen konden 170 bibprofessionals hun kennis over het boekenaanbod voor kinderen en jongeren vergroten. De opleiding verschaft info over genres en het actuele aanbod, maar scherpert ook vaardigheden aan om te kijken naar beeldtaal, diverse representatie en de noden van de doelgroepen.



“ Voor mij was dit een heel duidelijk leertraject, ik heb veel info gekregen en veel bijgeleerd op een korte tijd. – deelnemer

“ Inhoudelijk sterk, veel variatie en onderbouwde feiten, warme toon, inspirerend en stimulerend om aan de slag te gaan. – deelnemer

Met ['Een meertalige bib voor baby's en peuters'](#) plaatste Iedereen Leest in 2022 een eerste leertraject online. Nadien volgden [de Boekenzoeker-webinars](#) en ondersteunende digitale trajecten bij fysieke opleidingen. Inmiddels zijn er al meer dan 1.400 professionals actief op dit platform, dat momenteel enkel toegankelijk is voor wie deelneemt aan (digitale) opleidingen. In 2023 wordt het verder uitgebouwd.



## SAMEN COMPETENT

### 5 intensieve trajecten vergrootten de expertise van leesbevorderaars.

Afgelopen jaar coördineerde Iedereen Leest verschillende begeleidingstrajecten. Het ProM-project werd afgerond met de lancering van [een online leertraject voor bibs](#). 36 scholen gingen aan de slag rond [een kwalitatieve leesomgeving](#) in een 'Lezen op School'-traject en de [selectielezers van de Leesjury](#) begonnen aan het laatste leesjaar van hun driejarig traject. In het kader van het Leesoffensief stapten 20 basisscholen in een traject rond [interactief voorlezen](#), en 10 bibliotheken (en hun 18 omliggende scholen) zetten hun schouders onder het piloottraject ['Boekstart voor kleuters'](#).



### 8 tips om interactief voor te lezen.

Op basis van wetenschappelijke inzichten zijn er verschillende kenmerken te onderscheiden die ervoor zorgen dat interactief voorlezen ook effectief tot winst kan leiden. Iedereen Leest zette [de effectieve kenmerken op een rij](#) via een toegankelijke poster.



## SAMEN COMPETENT



### 152.683 bezoekers op iedereenleest.be in 2022.

Onze website [www.iedereenleest.be](#) groeide aan met 119 artikelen en interviews vol inspiratie en informatie over [leesdrempels](#), [voorlezen](#), [vroeg beginnen](#), [meertaligheid](#), [digitalisering](#), [het belang van lezen](#) ... De website haakt in op verschillende leesbevorderingsthema's en biedt professionals in het veld referenties en inzichten waarmee ze aan de slag kunnen.

“Lezers begrijpen de gevoelens van anderen beter. Wie veel leest, ziet hoe personages zich gedragen in verschillende situaties of hoe ze met anderen omgaan.”

Hoewel gepubliceerd in 2018 en met een update in 2021, bleef ['Waarom lezen goed is voor ons'](#) het meest gelezen artikel van 2022. Misschien ook logisch, aangezien het de verschillende effecten van lezen beschrijft voor ons als individu, maar ook als maatschappij. Benieuwd naar onze andere artikelen? [Duik in ons overzicht](#).



### 913 nieuwe titels in de vakbibliotheek van Iedereen Leest.

De vakbibliotheek van Iedereen Leest omvat een uitgebreide collectie kinder- en jeugdboeken en een collectie vakliteratuur, samen uniek in Vlaanderen. Studenten, onderzoekers en leesbevorderaars werden er in 2022 op weg geholpen door onze medewerkers.

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# 2023 **EEN VOORUITBLIK**

Dit jaaroverzicht biedt een greep uit 2022 met enkele blikvangers uit het afgelopen jaar. Ook in 2023 staan er boeiende plannen op de agenda, niet in het minst een verhuis naar een nieuwe thuis met Literatuur Vlaanderen.

Dat 2023 nog meer leeshonger, leesplezier en leestijd mag brengen – en vooral meer lezers!

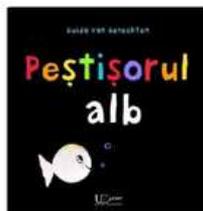
Het team van Iedereen Leest



## Anderstalige baby- en peuterboeken

Voor bijna 1 op 3 van de pasgeborenen kinderen in Vlaanderen is het Nederlands niet de meest gesproken thuistaal. Omdat verhalen in de eigen thuistaal belangrijk zijn voor baby's en peuters die meertalig opgroeien, verzamelden we in deze lijst baby- en peuterboeken in verschillende talen. De Nederlandstalige versie van het boek staat ook op Boekenzoeker.

Op zoek naar nog meer anderstalige baby- en peuterboeken? Neem een kijkje op de digitale catalogus van de openbare bibliotheken, je kan er filteren op verschillende talen: Arabisch, Frans, Turks, Pools, Bulgaars, Engels, Roemeens, Spaans, Duits, Italiaans, Portugees ... Er is ook een aparte categorie 'meertalige boeken'. Duik ook in onze lijst met meertalige boeken voor verschillende leeftijden.



**Pe?ti?orul alb [Roemeens]**

Guido Van Genechten

Univers enciclopedic junior, 2018  
9786067044478



**O pequeno peixe branco [Portugees]**

Guido Van Genechten

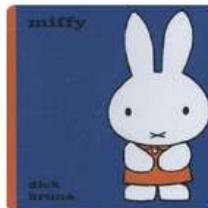
Roda & Cia, 2017  
9788584530250



**Jedzenie [Pools]**

Liesbet Slegers

Adamada, 2017  
9788374208703



**Miffy [Pools]**

Dick Bruna

Mercis, 2008  
9788392148364



**?????? ?????? ?????? [Arabisch]**

Eric Carle

Dar Nahdat Misr, 2017  
9789776171039



**Compter, couleurs, contraires, formes et moi! [Frans]**

Ingela P. Arrhenius

Hélium, 2020  
9782330133207



**Hao e de mao mao chong [Chinees]**

Eric Carle

Shang Yi Publishing, 2020  
9789577620989



**Maisy's first colours [Engels]**

Lucy Cousins

Walker, 2013  
9781406344264



**Un éléphant qui se balançait [Frans]**

Marianne Dubuc

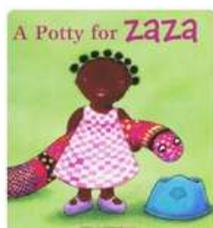
Casterman, 2010  
9782203029842



**So müde und hellwach [Duits]**

Susanne Strasser

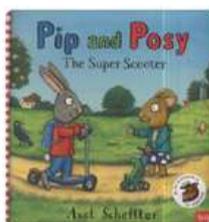
Peter Hammer Verlag, 2019  
9783779505648



**A potty for Zaza [Engels]**

Mylo Freeman

Clavis, 2020  
9781605375670



**The super scooter [Engels]**

Axel Scheffler

Nosy Crow, 2011  
9780857630056



**Concerto di prot [Italiaans]**

Guido Van Genechten

Il Castello, 2018  
9788862584111



**Oh! : un livre qui fait des sons [Frans]**

Hervé Tullet

Bayard jeunesse, 2017  
9782747066075



**Il libro arrabiato [Italiaans]**

Cédric Ramadier

L'ippocampo, 2017  
9788867222834



**Uyuyamiyor musun küçük ayı? [Turks]**

Martin Waddell

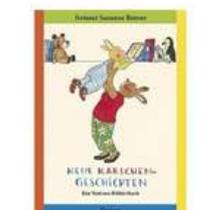
Lâle, 2001  
9071779521



**A bit lost [Engels]**

Chris Haughton

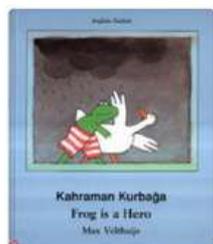
Walker Books, 2013  
9781406344257



**Neue Karlichen-Geschichten: ein Vorlese-Bilder-Buch [Duits]**

Rotraut Susanne Berner

Carl Hanser Verlag, 2015  
9783446236769



**Frog is a hero [Engels-Turkse versie]**

Max Velthuis

Milet, 2000  
1840592052



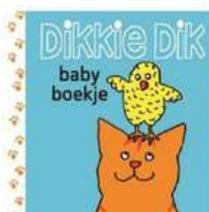
## De leukste Boekstart-boeken

Met boeken kan je niet vroeg genoeg beginnen. Ontdek hier welke boeken geschikt zijn voor baby's en peuters van 0 tot 3 jaar! Een mix van klassiekers en recente parels. Meer weten over [Boekstart?](#)



**Hallo Baby! Lekker spelen**  
Roger Priddy, Holly Jackman (ill.)

Veltman, 2015  
9789048311514



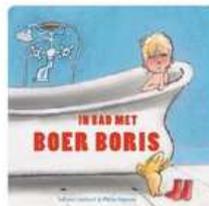
**Dikkie Dik Babyboekje**  
Jet Boeke

Gottmer, 2018  
9789025768829



**Nijntje aankleedboek**  
Dick Bruna

Mercis, 2019  
9789056478155



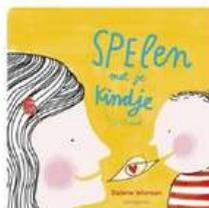
**In bad met boer Boris**  
Ted Van Lieshout, Philip Hopman (ill.)

Gottmer, 2018  
9789025768645



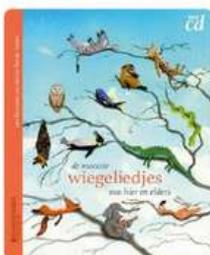
**Friemeldiertjes**  
Guido Van Genechten

Clavis, 2017  
9789044826906



**Spelen met je kindje**  
Sabine Wisman

Ploegsma, 2016  
9789021675664



**De mooiste wiegeliedjes van hier en elders**  
Bart Voet, Esmé Bos, Martijn Van der Linden (ill.)

Davidsfonds/Infodok, 2016  
9789059086951



**Ik zie je wel, ik hoor je wel**

Miep Diekmann, Thé Tjong-Khing (ill.)

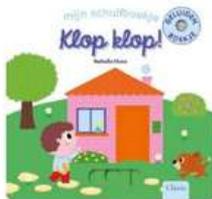
Querido, 2009  
9789045106212



**100 eerste woordjes**  
 Edward Underwood, J.H. Gever (vert.)  
 Gottmer, 2019  
 9789025771218



**Mijn eerste koffertje**  
 Pieter Gaudesaboos  
 Lannoo, 2019  
 9789401458511



**Klop, klop!**  
 Nathalie Choux  
 Clavis, 2018  
 9789044834048



**Waar is Kikker?**  
 Max Velthuis  
 Leopold, 2016  
 9789025868147



**Nog even achter mijn oortjes kriebelen**  
 Jörg Mühle  
 Gottmer, 2015  
 9789025760472



**Het leukste kijkwoordenboek : 1000 woorden met plaatjes**  
 Mairi MacKinnon, Kate Hindley (ill.)  
 Deltas, 2015  
 9789044743319



**Kapitein Winokio presenteert: handjes draaien: 36 kinderliedjes en -versjes voor peuters en kleuters**  
 Winok Seresia, Emily Vercruyse (ill.)  
 Kapitein Winokio, 2010  
 9789490378059



**Kom, we gaan een boek lezen!**  
 Susanne Strasser, Berd Ruttenberg (vert.)  
 Hoogland & Van Klaveren, 2021  
 9789089673695



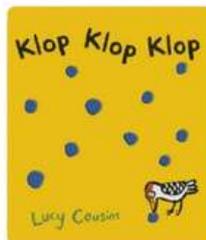
**Feest voor Ilyas**  
 Khadija Timouzar, Mijke Coebergh  
 Studio Sesam, 2017  
 9789492784018



**Spelen tot het donker wordt**  
 Hans Hagen, Monique Hagen, Marit Törnqvist (ill.)  
 Querido, 2018  
 9789021414287



**Waar is mijn potje?**  
 Tony Ross  
 Memphis Belle, 2012  
 9789089418050



**Klop, klop, klop**  
 Lucy Cousins  
 Leopold, 2016  
 9789025870492





**Steek je vinger niet in ...**

Peter Goes

Lannoo, 2019  
9789401460668



**Gonnie zegt... gak!**

Olivier Dunrea

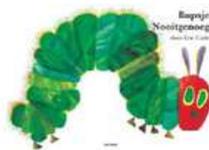
Gottmer, 2017  
9789025767952



**Van wie is die auto?**

Jukje Akveld, Philip Hopman (ill.)

Gottmer, 2017  
9789025766818



**Rupsje Nooitgenoeg**

Eric Carle

Gottmer, 2011  
9789025729608



**Waarom lig jij in mijn bedje?**

Joke Van Leeuwen

Querido, 2011  
9789045112305



**Een boek**

Hervé Tullet

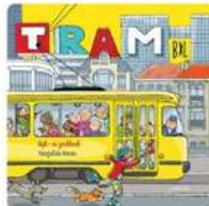
Oogappel, 2015  
9789002259371



**Mama kwijt**

Chris Haughton

Gottmer, 2010  
9789025748456



**Tram BXL**

Marjolein Pottie

Lannoo, 2019  
9789401460934



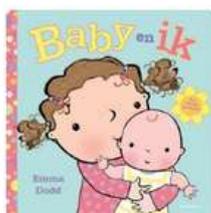
**Wij gaan op berenjacht**

Michael Rosen, Helen Oxenbury (ill.)

Gottmer, 2013  
9789025754983

## Nieuwe baby

Hartverwarmende boeken over een nieuwe baby in de familie.  
 Verschillende soorten baby's en families komen aan bod.



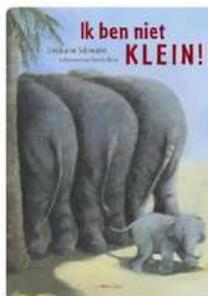
**Baby en ik**  
 Emma Dodd, J. H. Gevers (vert.)  
 Gottmer, 2014  
 9789025756543



**Kareltje krijgt een zusje**  
 Rotraut Susanne Berner  
 Querido, 2008  
 9789045107424



**We hebben er een geitje bij!**  
 Marjet Huiberts, Iris Deppe (ill.)  
 Gottmer, 2014  
 9789025755966



**Ik ben niet klein!**  
 Stephanie Schneider, Henrike Wilson (ill.)  
 Lemniscaat, 2014  
 9789047706212



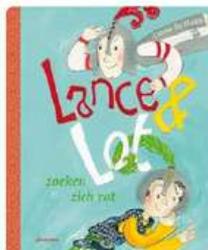
**Wolfe, het konijn**  
 Ame Dyckman, Zachariah OHora (ill.)  
 Leopold, 2015  
 9789025868369



**Ik wil geen broertje!**  
 Lida Dijkstra, Noëlle Smit (ill.)  
 Gottmer, 2008  
 9789025744151



**Een kleintje erbij**  
 Lauren Child, Veerle Moureau (vert.)  
 Davidsfonds/Infodok, 2016  
 9789059087262



**Lance & Lot zoeken zich rot**  
 Linda de Haan  
 Ploegsma, 2016  
 9789021676593





**Naar de wolven**  
Anna Woltz, Ingrid & Dieter  
Schubert (ill.)  
Querido, 2019  
9789045123653



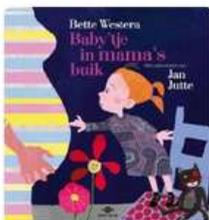
**De buidelbaby**  
Elisabeth Brami, Tom Schamp (ill.)  
De Eenhoorn, 2006  
9789058383660



**Er komt een baby bij**  
John Burningham, Helen  
Oxenbury, J.H. Gevers (vert.)  
Gottmer, 2010  
9789025748470



**Broertje ruilen**  
Jan Ormerod, Andrew Joyner (ill.)  
Leopold, 2013  
9789025864675



**Baby'tje in mama's buik**  
Bette Westera, Jan Jutte (ill.)  
Gottmer, 2016  
9789025761851



**De kleine: een waargebeurd verhaal**  
Isol, Agnes Brunt (vert.)  
De Harmonie, 2016  
9789076174921



**Zondag**  
Kim Fupz Aakeson, Eva  
Eriksson (ill.), Edward Van de  
Vendel (vert.)  
Querido, 2012  
9789045113425



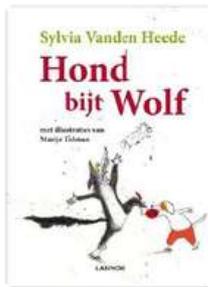
**Hoe maak je een baby? : een inclusieve gids over het begin van elke familie**  
Rachel Greener, Clare Owen (ill.), Pipa  
Billiet (vert.)  
Baeckens, 2021  
9789059247970



**Job en de duif schrikken zich een bult**  
Evelien De Vlieger, Noëlle Smit  
(ill.)  
Lannoo, 2014  
9789401415293



**Takkenkind: een klein verhaal over grote wensen**  
Gerda Dendooven  
Querido, 2012  
9789045114026



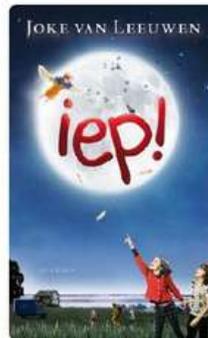
**Hond bijt wolf**  
Sylvia Vanden Heede, Marije Tolman (ill.)  
Lannoo, 2012  
9789401401913



**Ella wil een hond**  
Tanneke Wigersma, Charlotte Dumortier (ill.)  
Lannoo, 2021  
9789401473583



**Ella wil een hond**  
Tanneke Wigersma, Charlotte Dumortier (ill.)  
Lannoo, 2021  
9789401473583



**iep!**  
Joke Van Leeuwen  
Querido, 2004  
9789045110424



## Prentenboeken op rijm

Lezen is leuk, je lacht je soms een deuk. Gelukkig kennen deze boeken wél de geheimen van het rijmen.



**In bad met boer Boris**  
Ted Van Lieshout, Philip Hopman (ill.)

Gottmer, 2018  
9789025768645



**Een groot drama met Kleine Lama**

Anna Taube, Eefje Kuijl (ill.),  
Janke Greving (vert.)

Veltman Uitgevers, 2019  
9789048317370



**Wakker worden, dieren!**

Jonny Lambert

Veltman, 2020  
9789048318377



**Aan de slag!**

Meg Fleming, Jarvis (ill.), Jesse  
Goossens (vert.)

Lemniscaat, 2019  
9789047711889



**Dag meneer, hebt u een hond?**

Marjet Huiberts, Iris Deppe (ill.)

Gottmer, 2015  
9789025759872



**Suzie Ruzie en het schaarkje**

Jaap Robben, Benjamin Leroy  
(ill.)

Gottmer, 2016  
9789025761646



**'s Avonds laat**

Annie M.G. Schmidt, Marije Tolman

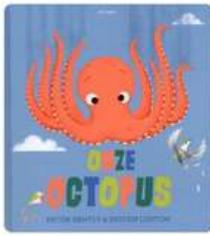
Querido, 2015  
9789045118352



**Onder de wol**

Herman van de Wijdeven,  
Françoise Beck (ill.)

Querido, 2019  
9789045123639



**Onze octopus**

Peter Bently, Steven Lenton (ill.), Bette Westera (vert.)

Gottmer, 2021  
 9789025773670



**Mijn haar!**

Hannah Lee, Allen Fatimaharan (ill.)

Pelckmans, 2020  
 9789463830348



**Het prinsesje zonder stank**

Levina Van Teunenbroek, Charlotte Brijn (ill.)

Van Holkema & Warendorf, 2022  
 9789000381159



**Abel en Ad**

Emily Gravett, Jesse Goossens (vert.)

Lemniscaat, 2021  
 9789047713258



**De moestuin van Heer Hermelijn en Kereltje Konijn**

Elle van Lieshout, Erik Van Os, Marije Tolman (ill.)

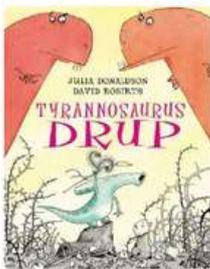
Hoogland & Van Klaveren, 2021  
 9789089673602



**Ukkie**

Lu Fraser, Kate Hindley (ill.), Bette Westera (vert.)

Querido, 2020  
 9789045125053



**Tyrannosaurus Drup**

Julia Donaldson, David Roberts, Bette Westera (vert.)

Gottmer, 2008  
 9789025743598



**Monster in mijn huis**

The Umbilical Brothers, Johan Potma (ill.)

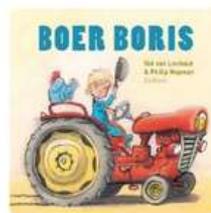
Volt, 2022  
 9789021461687



**Suzie gaat tekenen**

Jaap Robben

Gottmer, 2018  
 9789025769543



**Boer Boris**

Ted van Lieshout

Gottmer, 2015  
 9789025761707



**Wie durft? zegt Sinterklaas**

Bette Westera, Barbara De Wolf (ill.)

Levendig, 2018  
 9789491740565



**Robot maakt vrienden**

Tijn Snoodijk

De Eenhoorn, 2017  
 9789462912083





**Tien bolle biggetjes keken naar de maan**

Lindsay Lee Johnson, Carll Cneut

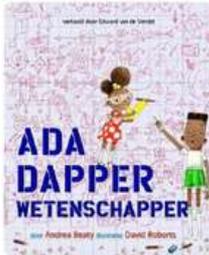
De Eenhoorn, 2011  
9789058387479



**Boer Boris gaat naar oma**

Ted Van Lieshout, Philip Hopman (ill.)

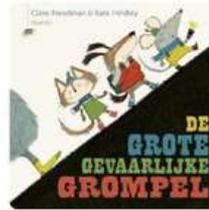
Gottmer, 2016  
9789025765828



**Ada Dapper, wetenschapper**

Andrea Beaty, David Roberts (ill.), Edward Van de Vendel (vert.)

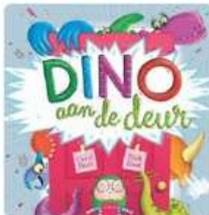
Nieuwezijds, 2018  
9789057125119



**De grote gevaarlijke grompel**

Claire Freedman, Kate Hindley (ill.), Bette Westera (vert.)

Querido, 2015  
9789045118192



**Dino aan de deur**

Caryl Hart, Nick East (ill.)

Clavis, 2018  
9789044831924



**Mannetje Tak**

Julia Donaldson, Axel Scheffler (ill.)

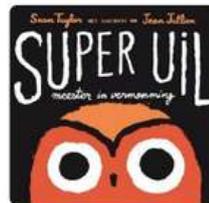
Gottmer, 2016  
9789025766436



**Mijn mama heeft geen slurf**

Julia Donaldson, Axel Scheffler (ill.)

Gottmer, 2014  
9789025758851



**Super Uil: meester in vermomming**

Sean Taylor, Jean Jullien (ill.)

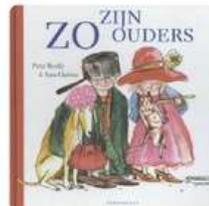
Lemniscaat, 2014  
9789047700296



**Waar is de draak?**

Leo Timmers

Querido, 2019  
9789045124049



**Zo zijn ouders**

Peter Bently, Sara Ogilvie (ill.), Jesse Goossens (vert.)

Lemniscaat, 2015  
9789047705369



**De ridder zonder billen : in het heetst van de strijd raakte hij zijn billen kwijt**

Levina Van Teunenbroek, Charlotte Bruijn (ill.)

Van Holkema & Warendorf, 2020  
9789000370368



**De prins zonder billen**

Levina Van Teunenbroek, Charlotte Bruijn (ill.)

Van Holkema & Warendorf, 2021  
9789000376391



**Mijn huis staat in de dierentuin**  
 Sylvia Vanden Heede, Pieter Gaudesaboos (ill.)  
 Lannoo, 2018  
 9789401453172



**Feodoor heeft zeven zussen**  
 Marjet Huiberts, Sieb Posthuma (ill.)  
 Gottmer, 2008  
 9789025740856



**Het verhaal van Slimme Krol en hoe hij aan de dood ontsnapte**  
 Gerda Dendooven  
 Querido, 2006  
 9045103001



**De verhuisdieren**  
 Pieter Van Den Heuvel  
 Gottmer, 2020  
 9789025772055



**Alfie & Zed: een ABC zoekboek**  
 Liesbeth Elseviers, Astrid Yskout (ill.)  
 Van Halewyck, 2019  
 9789461319623



**Een toren van koe**  
 Pieter Van Den Heuvel  
 Gottmer, 2021  
 9789025773502



**Gele kajak**  
 Nina Laden, Melissa Castrillon (ill.), Edward Van de Vendel (vert.)  
 Boycott, 2022  
 9789492986382



**Waarom? Daarom!**  
 Rudyard Kipling, Marta Altés (ill.)  
 Lemniscaat, 2018  
 9789047710042



**SuperSint**  
 Maranke Rinck, Martijn Van der Linden (ill.)  
 Leopold, 2019  
 9789025878160



**Voor papa**  
 Daan Remmerts De Vries, Marije Tolman  
 Hoogland & Van Klaveren, 2017  
 9789089672490

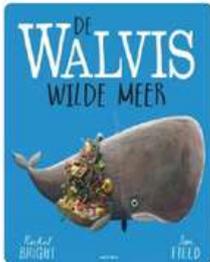




**Piraten in de straat**  
Jonny Duddle, Bette Westera (vert.)  
De Fontein, 2013  
9789026134203



**Het piratenmaal**  
Jonny Duddle  
De Fontein, 2012  
9789026132704



**De walvis wilde meer**  
Rachel Bright, Jim Field (ill.), Bette Westera (vert.)  
Gottmer, 2021  
9789025774257



**Held op sokken**  
Bette Westera, Th  Tjong-Khing (ill.)  
Gottmer, 2013  
9789025749996



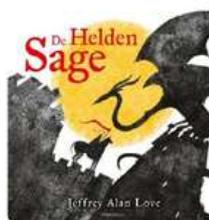
**Piet en Sint en het slimme kind**  
Gerda Dendooven  
Querido, 2018  
9789021414911



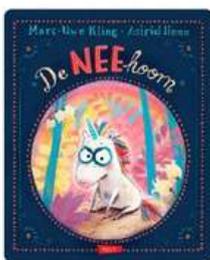
**Mootje**  
Hakima Elouarti, Rosa Vitalie (ill.)  
Rose stories, 2016  
9789082470109



**Soctopus**  
Jowi Schmitz, Nastia Cistakova (ill.)  
Volt, 2022  
9789021461823



**De heldensage**  
Jeffrey Alan Love, Jesse Goossens (vert.)  
Lemniscaat, 2019  
9789047711704



**De NEEhoorn**  
Marc-Uwe Kling, Astrid Henn (ill.), Jaap Robben (vert.)  
Volt, 2020  
9789021422954



**Er was eens...**  
Geert De Kockere, Benjamin Lacombe (ill.)  
Abimo, 2011  
9789059327771

## IMOLA



**To be born to become a story**

# Nati per essere una storia

**To be born to become a story**

# 0/5

Books for young children:  
What to choose and how to propose



# Operating instructions

Telling stories and reading children's books to girls and boys helps them grow. In this regard, we recall the profound, vast and indispensable awareness-raising work of the "Nati per Leggere program" [www.natiperleggere.it](http://www.natiperleggere.it), aimed at spreading storytelling and reading in families with preschool children, launched in Italy in 1999.

This is what the exhibition is about. However, there is a novelty of a scientific nature, not yet sufficiently disclosed, that we tell you about. For several decades, neuroscientists have been using non-invasive techniques, capable of providing images of the brain (functional neuroimaging), which make it possible to understand what happens to the brains of children, even of preschool age, while listening to a voice that tells or reads a story, while observing images or having other experiences. The results are very interesting.

This bibliographic exhibition is aimed at parents and grandparents of girls and boys of the age group 0/5 years, educators and educators of the Services 0/6 and all interested persons. It is structured in 10 sections, which offer three levels of reading.

## Si nasce per leggere?

Dire che i bambini nascono per leggere è uno slogan che ci piace, ma sappiamo che non è così. Mentre la visione e la parola hanno una base ereditaria e si trasmettono geneticamente, il nostro cervello non è programmato per leggere. Per questa ragione ogni essere umano deve imparare a leggere da capo: all'età giusta, con un certo impegno e con il tempo che serve. Affinché ciò avvenga, sono necessari un ambiente educativo accogliente e rispettoso dell'infanzia.



**Quando sono nato**  
Basilio Nobile Marini, Illustrazione: Nobile, Quando sono nato, Topoglyph, 2009  
«Con mamma e papà in attesa e per bambini da 4 anni»

**Finalmente qui**  
Silvia Vecchi, Finalmente qui (Storia per bambini, mamma e papà) per bambini appena nati (Pubblicato di Scabini), Barchiese, 2005  
(per i genitori e per i bambini dalla nascita)

**Le mani di papà**  
Ennio Jabbu, Le mani di papà, Babelini, 2013  
(per genitori e per i bambini da un anno)

**Per saperne di più**  
La lettura è un'invenzione

Intervista immaginaria a Maryanne Wolf, neuroscienziata statunitense studiosa della lettura e della dislessia, che insegna alla Tufts University (Massachusetts, USA) e dirige il Center for Reading and Language Research.

- Siamo nati per leggere?  
- No, non siamo nati per leggere!

- Perché?  
- Perché la capacità di leggere non si trasmette geneticamente, è un'invenzione umana che ha solo poche migliaia di anni. Un'invenzione straordinaria che ha portato e porta con sé una parziale riorganizzazione del cervello e ha allargato i confini del nostro modo di pensare, mutando l'evoluzione intellettuale della nostra specie.

1. The main theme of the exhibition is developed in the opening texts of each section.

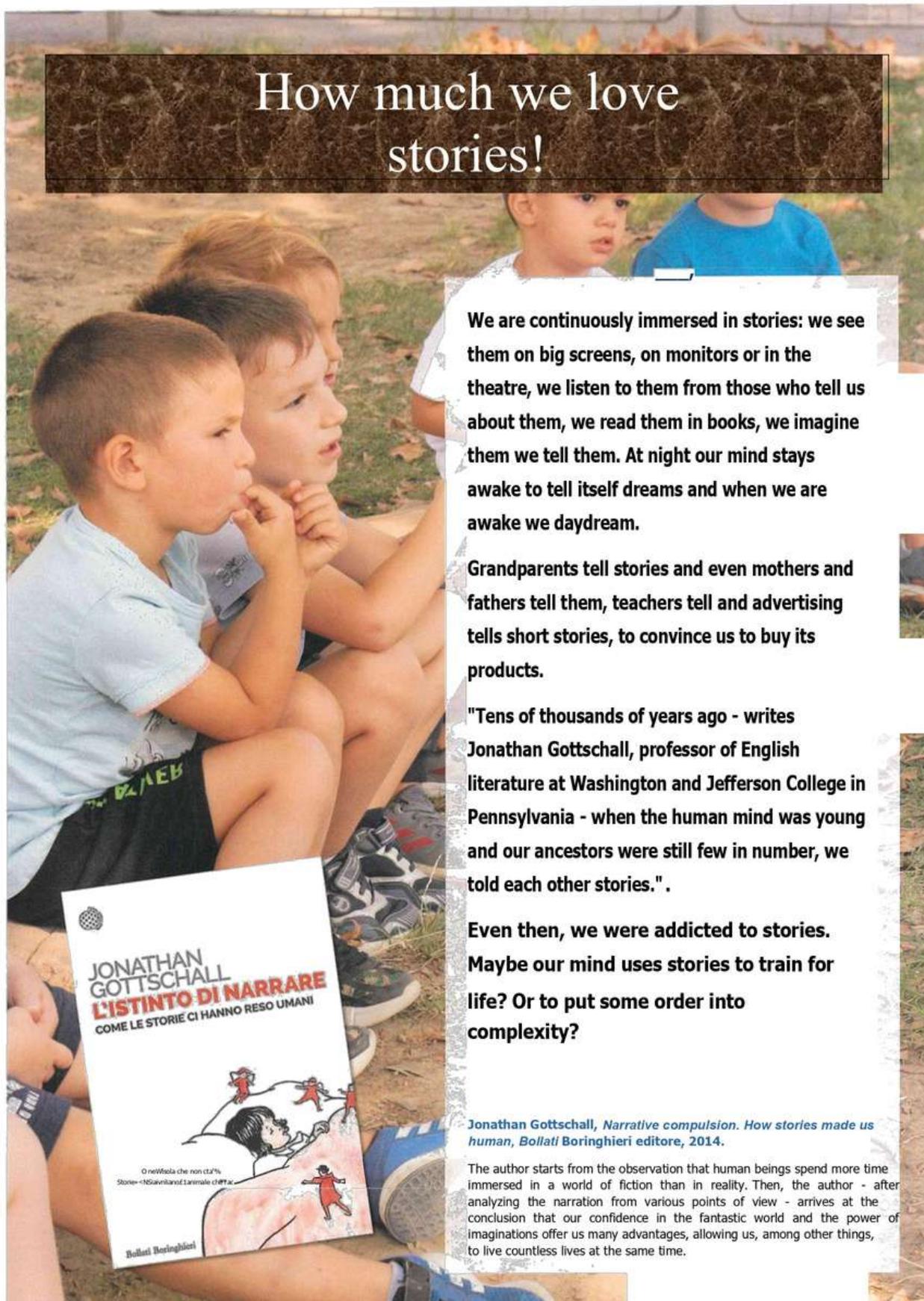
2. Images of quality children's book covers are accompanied by captions.

N.B. References to the ages of boys and girls are purely indicative. A child who from the earliest months experiences listening to stories and observing images and books, acquires the ability to understand books recommended for ages above her. The same thing happens to children who, as happens with toys, like books they see used by older brothers and sisters.

Some books are for adults only, all others are suitable for adults and children. In fact, quality books for children are liked and have something to say to adults too.

3. Insights for those who want to know more.

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# How much we love stories!

We are continuously immersed in stories: we see them on big screens, on monitors or in the theatre, we listen to them from those who tell us about them, we read them in books, we imagine them we tell them. At night our mind stays awake to tell itself dreams and when we are awake we daydream.

Grandparents tell stories and even mothers and fathers tell them, teachers tell and advertising tells short stories, to convince us to buy its products.

"Tens of thousands of years ago - writes Jonathan Gottschall, professor of English literature at Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania - when the human mind was young and our ancestors were still few in number, we told each other stories."

Even then, we were addicted to stories. Maybe our mind uses stories to train for life? Or to put some order into complexity?

*Jonathan Gottschall, Narrative compulsion. How stories made us human, Bollati Boringhieri editore, 2014.*

The author starts from the observation that human beings spend more time immersed in a world of fiction than in reality. Then, the author - after analyzing the narration from various points of view - arrives at the conclusion that our confidence in the fantastic world and the power of imaginations offer us many advantages, allowing us, among other things, to live countless lives at the same time.



If we observe how children play, starting from the age of two, we see them continually inventing stories in which their experience and their imagination are reflected, which are thus reworked and enriched. Their game of invention is irrepensible and there is an age when it seems inexhaustible. Children seem to have been born to listen and watch stories, to invent them, tell them and also to play them.

Does it means they are born to read them?



disegno di Saul Steinberg

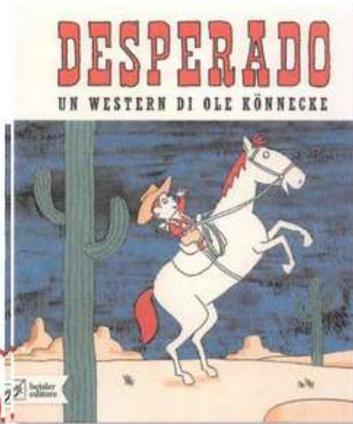


Picture from: Peter Bently, Helen Oxenbury, *Three little pirates*, Mondadori, 2016 (from 3 years)

Leo, Teo and Tommi build a galleon out of sand. They set sail like real sea wolves, but in open waters they meet a pirate ship .. A book that tells a little big story with protagonists in which children can easily identify and an adventurous imagery full of twists..

Ole Kéinneke, *Desperado*, Beisler Editore, 2019 (for parents and children from 3 years)

How did it go today, in kindergarten? They ask mom and dad. It is good that they know that they may be told a wonderful, adventurous, dangerous western story where their little one defeated the bandits and saved the teacher, with the help of his trusty steed.



Antoinette Portis, *It isn't a box!*, Kalandraka, 2011 (for parents and children from 2-3 years)

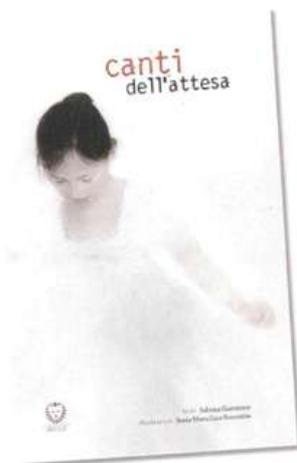
A book about imagination, which reminds adults how many things a box can become and how many games can be played with it. Children already know this.

# Children is born to read?

Saying that babies are born to read is a slogan we like, but we know it isn't. While vision and speech have a hereditary basis and are passed on genetically, our brains are not programmed to read. For this reason, every human being must learn to read from scratch: at the right age, with a certain commitment and with the time it takes. For this to happen, a welcoming and child-friendly educational environment is needed.

"All boys and girls have skills and competences that deserve to be recognized and valued. The children are able to express them on them own if the adults around them know how to create conditions in which they feel recognized and valued, [...] Knowing yourself and accepting who you really are favours the development of those skills and competences much more than being solicited and stimulated. "

Parents expecting a baby today have the opportunity to prepare for the birth by reading books dedicated to them and to those about to be born.

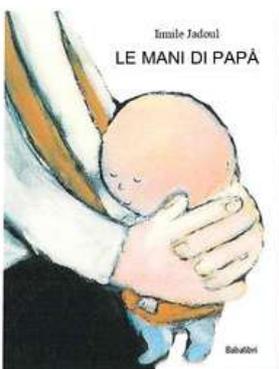


Sabrina Giarratana, Sofia Maria Luce Possentini, *Pregnancy songs, Il Leone Verde, 2020* (for parents)

For expectant mothers, a poetic story to accompany the journey of those who are about to be born. To embrace and caress the baby inside her with her voice.

Émile Jadoul, *Dad's hands, Babalibri, 2013*, (for parents and children from 1 year)

A hardcover for dad, to help him imagine when his big hands will gently accompany his baby from birth to first steps.



Beatrice Alemagna, *What is a child? Topipittori, 2008* (from 3 years)

A child has small hands, small feet and small ears, but that doesn't mean he has small ideas. A child is a small person.

He is small for just a little while, then he gets big. It grows without even noticing.



Silvia Vecchini, Sualzo, *Here you are! (poems for childrens, moms and dads), Bacchilega Junior, 2016* (for parents and children since their birth)

A little book for mothers, to imagine what it will be like to have a baby in your arms and prepare to welcome them from the earliest days with nourishing words such as milk, kisses and caresses.

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## To know more

### Reading is a human invention

Imaginary interview with Maryanne Wolf, an American neuroscientist who studies reading and dyslexia, who teaches at Tufts University (Massachusetts, USA) and directs the Center for Reading and Language Research.

### Are we born to be able to read?

No, not at all!

### Why?

Because the ability to read is not transmitted genetically, it is a human invention that is only a few years old. An extraordinary invention that has brought and carries with it a partial reorganization of the brain and has broadened the boundaries of our way of thinking, changing the intellectual revolution of our species

### How was it possible?

Visual cells have the ability to create new circuits between existing structures and this allows children to come into the world with their eyes almost ready to function. Reading was made possible precisely by recycling the properties of visual circuits: it was invented and can only be learned thanks to the plasticity of our brain, capable of creating new neuronal connections and nerve pathways, if appropriately stimulated.

### How are new neural connections created?

To form efficient circuits or new nerve pathways, neurons need instructions from genes: this is what normally happens for activities such as vision and speech, but there are no specific genes for reading.

### I see ... then, how can we do that?

When someone learns to read, they do it because their brain creates from scratch the indispensable brain connections I mentioned earlier and so their brain changes forever, both physiologically and intellectually.



Isabel Minh s Martins, Maddalena Matoso, *When I was born*, Topipittori, 2009  
(for expecting parents and children from 4 years)

*«When I was born I had not yet seen the sun or a flower or a face "so says the protagonist, starting an exciting list of what he discovered coming into the world, step by step, until the day he discovers that things can be called with their name. Almost a poetic catalog of the discoveries and surprises that parents will experience with their children. A reading that will help expectant mothers and fathers to imagine how exciting it will be to accompany their and their little one in their growth from birth.*

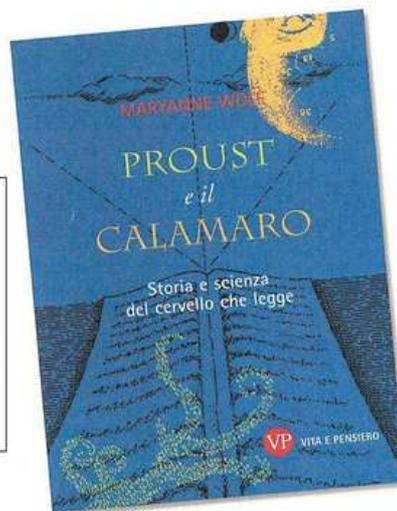
 l onore Thuillier, Clotilde Goubely, *An unsuspected guest*, la Margherita edizioni, 2017  
(parents and children at the right moment)

*A tiger cub arrived at the farm this morning. Everyone is afraid. Even the tiger cub is frightened by the reaction of the other animals, so he asks his mother for help, who comes running. Surprise! Not a tiger arrives, but a mouse: the mother of life who consoles her cub. An adoption story that helps parents talk to their families without secrets.*



Maryanne Wolf's answers are loosely taken from the First Chapter of her book *Proust and the Squid. History and science of the reading brain*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2009

*The book begins by paying homage to the beauty, variety and inventiveness of the earliest forms of writing; it continues with the spectacular, new scenarios of the development of the reading brain and ends with the difficult questions relating to the merits and dangers of what we face. The author hopes that "cognitive patience and the slow learning process of reading from birth to maturity, up to fluid and silent understanding (and related inference, analysis and critical evaluation skills), coexist with the immersion of children. and kids in the digital world and with the speed of its processes.*



# It's time to discover

The first weeks, the first months and the first years of life are an extraordinary time of discovery and growth on the emotional, affective, motor, cognitive level .

The little ones soon learn to recognize familiar looks, sounds and voices, to recognize shapes and objects, to attribute meaning and meaning to environments and situations, they learn to sit, crawl, stand up, balance and finally to walk. They learn many other things and they do it slowly, together with the adults who take care of them with respect and love and with the little ones of all ages that they meet every day.

## What about reading?



Michel Van Zeveren, **Who are you?** Lapis edizioni, 2020. (from 6 months – cardboard pages)

*A baby and a kitten meet for the first time. They want to play and be pampered. How many discoveries!*



Elisa Mazzoli, Tatiana Gambetta, **Little one**, Il Leone Verde edizioni, 2017. (from 6 months – cardboard pages)

*A boy and a girl, as soon as they come into the world, begin the journey of life in small steps. They try their hand at the first companies, they encounter obstacles, but they don't give up. They know that the hands of mum, dad and grandparents are ready to support them.*



Kamako Sakai - Hatsume Nakawaki, **Wait for me!** Babalibri, 2002. (from 1 year – cardboard pages)

*A baby in the park begins his exploration. "Wait for me butterfly! "And she flies away." Wait for me lizard!" and she darted among the rocks. The discoveries continue until the father arrives who gently lifts him up, puts him on his shoulder and they set off.*

## HELEN OXENBURY Batti le manine



Helen Oxenbury, **Clap your little hands**, Mondadori, 2020 (traduzione di Chiara Carminati) (form 1 year)

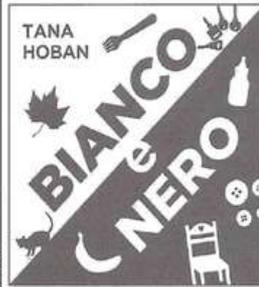
**The first of four booklets that transform daily gestures into poetry, to train the mind and eyes of the little ones**





Agnese Baruzzi, *Animals*, White Star, 2019. (from 2 months – cardboard pages)

The little ones already in the first months of life distinguish white, black and red. The well-defined figures help to distinguish the shapes that emerge from the background, also developing the sensitivity to color.



Tana Hoban, *Black and white*, Editoriale Scienza, 2021 (from 3 months – cardboard pages)

A book that opens like an accordion and stands up on its own, so that the child can look at it from lying down. Fourteen images that belong to his everyday world, represented with strong contrast and sharp outlines to aid visual development.



Autori vari, *Let's make face expressions*, Gribaudo, 2010. (from 10 years – cardboard pages)

Designed for the very young, so that they appreciate books from the first months of life. Each face shows an expression that suggests an emotion: joy, anger, sadness, amazement ... Moms and dads can read short nursery rhymes of which the little ones will appreciate the rhythm and musicality.

## To know more

### Newborns competences

Imaginary interview with neurobiologist Alberto Oliverio, emeritus professor of Psychobiology at the Sapienza University of Rome, who collaborates with numerous international research institutes and, from 1976 to 2002, directed the Institute of Psychobiology and Psychopharmacology of the National Research Council.

**There are those who think that newborn babies are competent. What do you say?**

I agree. Children are more competent than we imagine.

### Since just after birth?

Of course, there is no doubt. From an early age they demonstrate that they have a series of complex skills through which they learn to orient themselves in the environment in which they live.

### Could you give us an example?

Just a few days of life, newborns can visually follow a sound, such as that of a little bell moving in space.

### What does it mean?

It means that their brain is capable of integrating the sensory perceptions of sight and hearing, linking them to movements. At around 4 - 6 months, infants are also able to represent relationships between objects in three-dimensional space and realize if there is a hidden object.

### In other words?

During the first months of life, babies acquire the ability to understand that something does not cease to exist just because it disappears from sight. A fundamental aspect of the development of the infant mind, defined by psychologists with the term object permanence.

Alberto Oliverio's answers are freely taken from the article Children are more competent than we imagine, published on 12/11/2020 (and updated on 09/07/2021) on the magazine's website Uppa: <https://www.uppa.it/medicina/fisiologia/bambini-sviluppo-capacita-per-cettive/>

## Reading before reading

We use the word “read” to refer usually to the deciphering and understanding of a written text, but this word can also be used in reference to a landscape, a painting or a photo, a human face. To say that a face or an image can be read means to think of reading as an activity of interpretation and attribution of meaning, not referring to words. We can therefore say that you can read before reading and that children do it, in their own way, from birth.

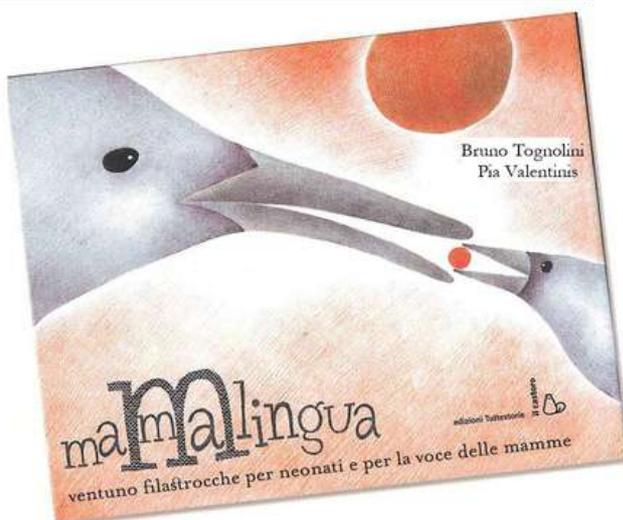
As for the words, we know that children, even before they are born, perceive those of their mother that resonate in them. And when they are born, from the earliest days they listen to her and her father's voice talking, singing, sometimes screaming or whispering. If so, then we can say that children are born to look and touch and, of course, also to listen.

### To know more

#### What the pediatricians say

Pediatricians suggest talking to children, describing what is happening around them, repeating nursery rhymes, singing songs and lullabies. And if they don't understand the meaning of the words?

Bruno Tognolini, referring to his book *Mother tongue, twenty one nursery rhymes for newborns and for the moms' voice*, (Tuttestorie, Il Castoro, 2008) he states that the rhythm and sound of nursery rhymes are for children, meanings for mothers. Here are some examples.



#### water

Anima, alito,  
 esci di bocca /  
 Grida pescetto,  
 che l'aria ti sciacqua /  
 Mano di mamma,  
 balena ti tocca /  
 Vieni nel sole,  
 esci dall'acqua

#### mouth

Bocca che beve,  
 becco che batte /  
 Bava di luna, bevi  
 il mio latte /  
 Burro di stelle,  
 quanto mi piaci /  
 Bocca di bimbo di  
 babbo di baci

#### Poop

È un fiume  
 nutriente /  
 Questo tempo  
 incantato /  
 Dove il latte è  
 il presente / E  
 la cacca il  
 passato

#### tongue

Mamma lingua batte  
 e bacia parolina /  
 Fa li-là e fa li-là  
 tutta mattina /  
 Ora sembra solo  
 un tonto girotondo /  
 Ma parolina dopo  
 fa girare il mondo

O



## Dance, dance leg!

Tango salsa twist e samba  
balla in aria la mia gamba  
Mambo rumba e cha cha  
cha piega stende sta a metà  
Tip tap polca valzer lento  
sono sempre in movimento

## An un buttoned button

C'è una rosa in mezzo al prato  
Un bottone sbottonato  
Una tana di leprotto  
Il picciolo di un'arancia  
L'ombelico sulla pancia

Chiara Carminati, Massimiliano Tappari. *Close to the skin*, Lapis, 2018  
(from birth – cardboard pages)

Small rhymes to play with children, to move and massage the parts of the body. The skin is the border, but also the point of contact between us and the world. On the skin you can feel, touch, play. And with cuddles and caresses the world is named with the music of words.

## Lullaby

Ninna nanna dei fringuelli  
vola il sonno sui capelli  
Ninna nanna del bisonte  
corre il sonno sulla fronte  
Ninna nanna dei ranocchi  
salta il sonno in mezzo agli occhi  
Ninna nanna della triglia  
nuota il sonno tra le ciglia

## Fingers' ant

La formica delle dita  
sul tuo braccio va in salita  
sale sale fa fatica  
è una piccola formica  
Sulla spalla si riposa  
poi comincia la discesa  
corre corre sulla schiena  
e tu ridi a pancia piena!



## To know more

### Emotions and learning come together

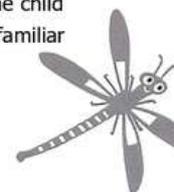
Marianne Wolf says that the child's brain begins to prepare to read much earlier than is usually believed, using all the experiences of early childhood: sensations, concepts and words. You affirm, in this regard, that a child begins his learning path of reading the first time he is picked up and listens to a story with a book in front of him.

At first, the child associates the act of reading with the feeling of being loved: this is an important step, because emotions and learning travel together.

He then learns to recognize the images in the books.

This happens because he has a visual system that works perfectly from six months. The attention system, on the other hand, matures more slowly, while the system of concepts is enriched day by day.

As the months pass, the attention span of the child grows and, with this, also his knowledge of familiar images and his curiosity for new ones.



See: Marianne Wolf, Proust and the Squid. History and science of a reading brainpag. 91 e 92

## Books to read, to touch, to listen

At first, in the face-to-face relationship, words will be perceived above all as reassuring sounds, intonations and rhythms, but very soon (around 4 months and maybe even earlier) these words can also be said in the presence of soft and funny objects, colorful and of different materials, interesting to touch and look at, which will become familiar and will be much loved by the little ones over time: we are talking about books.

For such young children, books are first and foremost objects to be explored. Therefore the first books are made in such a way as to stimulate the senses. Then, thanks to the dialogue that adults and children exchange around the book, little by little a meaning is built and the words acquire meaning.

Italian publishing today offers a wide selection of cloth, plastic, hardcover books with rounded tips, with or without holes and more. They usually reproduce everyday objects, children, baby animals, family life situations, with clear images and bright colors. They are small books designed to be handled by the small hands of children, who will surely also try to taste them. Sometimes they are accompanied by simple texts: adults can read them or improvise the words that best suit the situation.



Mojca Dolinar, *Everybody travelling*, Gallucci, 2019 (from 9 months – cardboard pages with moving parts)

"Brum! Pè pè! Biiip! Vrum!" The onomatopoeias of the rhombus of cars, trains and other vehicles accompany the images colored in red, black and white.



Autori vari, *Who are you?*, Gallucci, 2020 (from 6 months – cloth book)

In the hands of children this book will be the subject of continuous discoveries of visual, tactile and auditory sensations. Leafing through the pages of fabric produces very interesting rustles, without the risk of the book tearing.



Autori vari, *I play*, La Coccinella, 2019 (from 6 months – cardboard pages with rubber cornes)

As children begin to use both hands to grab objects, this book will become a source of experience. You can browse, bite into the rubber corner, look at the images and listen to the rhythms of the words read by an adult.



Teresa Porcella, Santo Pappalardo, *Those ones*, Bacchilega Junior, 2019 (from 10 months – cardboard pages with QR-code to listen to stories)

"Those ones" are that many, actually! And they are black and white, all of them!. "Those ones" is also a song.





Raffaella Castagna, Gabriele Clima, *Dad, Peek-a-boo, La Coccinella*, 2018  
(from 9 months – cardboard pages with flowers)

Pages with holes to play with the little ones. Leafing through the book, the father's face changes: first the sun, then the gorilla, then the dormouse ... a continuous disappearance and appearing reassuring: it is always about dad.

la Mazzoli, Marianna Balducci, *The Little Foot's Journey*, Bacchilega Junior, 2018  
(from 6 months – cardboard pages)

Little Foot has just started walking and with great curiosity embarks on a journey. He goes to the garden and to the beach. He sees the sea, then a crab: better go home, where his dad Big Foot is.



Linne Bie, *Rosalie goes walking*, Erikson, 2018  
(from one year – cardboard pages)

Rosalie goes to the park with her mom. On the lawn, there are many fun games. Here is Rosalie on the slide with Pecorella following her everywhere. Even everyday life has its pleasant surprises.



## To know more

### Things' names: books, computer, smartphones and TVs

Let's resume the imaginary dialogue with **Maryanne Wolf**

#### When does language development start??

It begins with the increase in perceptive and attention skills, when children begin to sense that things have names. A fundamental intuition, which normally consolidates around 18 months.

#### Why this intuition is fundamental?

Because this intuition is based on the brain's ability to connect and integrate some of its systems: sight, cognitive processes and languages.

#### The brain then realizes something new.

Yes, he realizes something new and thus begins a new phase: the more you talk to the child, the more he understands the spoken language, the more you read him, the more he understands written language, more complex than spoken one, and his lexicon is enriched..

Maryanne Wolf's answers are loosely drawn from her book *Proust and the Squid. History and science of the reading brain*, Op. cit. pag. 93 e 94

**John Hutton compares the time spent listening to reading and the time spent in front of a screen.**

In a study, John Hutton, professor at the Center for Reading and Literacy at the Children's Hospital of Cincinnati (Ohio, USA) compared listening time to reading and time spent in front of a video, with children aged 3 to 5. He thus highlighted that brain connectivity in children increases with the time they spend listening to reading books and decreases with the time spent in front of screen-based media.

These results are published in the Magazine *Acta pediatrica* aprile 2018, n. 107)

[https://scholar.google.com/citations?view\\_op=view\\_citation&hl=en&user=YKW-QzWMAAAAJ&citation\\_for\\_view=YKWQzWMAAAAJzYLM7Y9cAGgC](https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=YKW-QzWMAAAAJ&citation_for_view=YKWQzWMAAAAJzYLM7Y9cAGgC)



## One book for two; one book together mates

Let's imagine a parent leafing through one of the first books with his one-year-old baby on his lap: both of them turn their gaze to the same pages. Mum or dad reads, tells, plays nursery rhymes, while his little one says the first words; his hand points to the book, he tries to touch a page, until he manages to leaf through it, aided by his adult hand. The books stimulate a dialogue made up of words, smiles and tenderness, curiosity and mutual understanding.

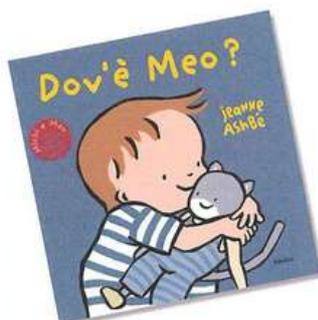
One step after another, the little ones get ready to browse, listen and tell the first stories with girls, boys and other puppies as protagonists.

Even at the nursery and kindergarten, you leaf through books and tell stories. The narrations are shared: they are listened to together and little by little they become everyone's, they belong to the children who bring them into their games, they elaborate variations and dramatizations. They do it spontaneously, adults do not need to teach them: they need curious people, willing to be fascinated by their resourcefulness, able to support their ideas by offering opportunities, time and objects so that the stories can continue.



Beatrice Alemagna, *Have a nice trip, my little baby!* Topipittori, 2017 (from 2 years – thick pages)

A child says that every evening he goes on a long journey: you don't need to forget anything, the rattle, the diaper, the bottle, the games ... finally everything is ready. Mom turns the engine on and drives away.



Jeanne Ashbé, *Where is Meo?* Babalibri, 2018 (from 18 months – thick pages with mobile parts)

Michi is looking for Meo and is crawling around the house in search of his puppet. He is not under the bed and not even in the kennel. Where will he be? The illustrations show the child's point of view, the text proposes sounds and rhymes, assonances and alliterations.

Elisa Mazzoli, Tatiana Gambetta, *I play (with) the world*, Il Leone Verde edizioni, 2017 (from 2 years – thick pages)

"I put my mouth in it, I put my face in it, I put my eyes, my skin and my arms in it." "I'll put my hands on it, I'll put my effort into it, follow me mom I'll take you." A journey begins that can be told with the boys and girls who leaf through the book with us.



Tonka Uzu, *Olga e Olaf, Bacchilega Junior*, 2020 (from 2 years – cardboard pages)

Olga and Olaf play on the beach and have fun together. Olga decides to take a bath and the little dog is left alone, because she doesn't like water. When Olga goes out, Olaf is gone. Where will he be? The lifeguard makes his fast boat available and begins the search.





Beatrice Alemagna, *Little Big Bubo*, Topi-pittori, 2014 (from 2 years)

*Bubo is no longer small: he already knows how to ride a bicycle and walk backwards without falling, he is not afraid to climb high, at the restaurant he only asks for a cushion to sit on and he knows how to choose for himself what to eat ... But little Bubo is really as big as it says it is?*



Jeanne Ashbé, *See you later, Babalibri*, 2019 (from 2 years – cardboard pages)

*Milo and Anna go to kindergarten in the morning and spend the day away from their parents. In the evening it is very nice to get together and, reading this book, to rethink the day and reinforce the idea that after each separation there is the happiness of getting back together again.*

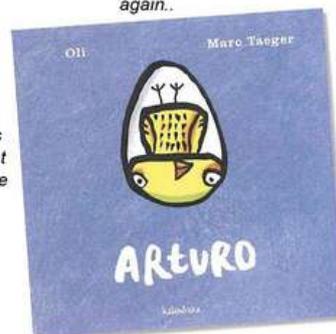
Barbro Lindgren, Eva Eriksson, *Max's Bath*, Bohem press Italia, 2018 (from 18 months)

*It's bath time. Max gets ready by putting his toys and a cookie in the tub. It's the dog? Bau Bau! The dog is afraid of water but in the end, they will all have fun together in the tub.*



Oli, Marc Taeger, *Arturo*, Kalandraka, 2011 (from 2 years)

*The chick Arturo is born and sets out for the world, but at some point something scares him. Is that shadow really that spooky? Yes, but after a while Arturo begins to find her interesting.*



## TO LEAN MORE

**As they leaf through books, listen and converse, children improve their language skills.**

In the family and at school, listening to stories, dialogue, games and the autonomous use of books evolve slowly, are enriched and continue with more complex books, up to picture books and, after three years, even with books that tell stories only with images (silent book).

The interview with neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf continues

**What happens in these early years when children listen to words spoken, narrated, read and in dialogue with people and stories?**

Any experience concerning the spoken language makes an essential contribution to the development of children's understanding of words and their multiple uses in speech and writing.

**Can you explain what happens, more specifically?**

In this period, without adults setting it as a goal, but only by proposing the experiences that are usually made in families attentive to the well-being of children and in preschools with competent educators and educators, the development of children proceeds in different areas.

Their ability to hear, distinguish and manipulate words, whose meaning they increasingly understand, grows.

They become more and more able to use the "rules" of the language.

They are able to understand the differences between masculine and feminine, singular and plural, past and present ... This improves the understanding of the sentences heard.

They recognize the ways in which the language is used in various social contexts and in books.

**What promotes these language skills?**

First and foremost are the changes in the developing brain. At the same time, knowledge of reality and therefore of concepts increases.

Finally, the emotional development, which manifests itself in the intuition of the moods of the characters and opens the way to understanding others: to empathy.

Three aspects of development that can be hindered or favored by the environment in which a child grows up!

Maryanne Wolf answer are freely got from her essay, *Proust and the Squid. History and science about the reading brain*, Op. cit. pag. 94 e 95

## Books' characters make me excited

Each book in its own way tells a story and is a great opportunity to experience emotions and to think. If a parent, reader or narrator, is not in a hurry to get to the end of the story but takes time, creates expectation and curiosity, talks and listens, children actively participate, entering and exiting the story, creating a bridge between narration and life. .

At the nursery and kindergarten, the sharing of emotions together with the companions favors an exchange of ideas. The children comment and ask questions: they listen to each other, the question of one meets the answer of the other, each enriches their point of view and questions arise that do not necessarily find an answer immediately and thus nourish a climate of curiosity and research.

The stories heard at home and at school, that are two protected environments, are like gyms that allow you to train yourself to experience strong emotions, without suffering them passively, and help children to give voice to their feelings and to discover those of their classmates.



Émile Jadoul, *Through the window*, Pulce Edizioni, 2018 (from 2 years)

Big Deer looks calmly out of his window. Suddenly, one after the other, Bunny, Pig and Bear rush into his house anxiously. They seem to be running away from the wolf. That's it? The final twist will reveal the mystery.



Lemony Snicket, Jon Klassen, *Darkness*, Salani Editore, 2016 (from 3-4 years) Lucio is afraid of the dark, but the dark is not afraid of him. Lucio lives in his apartment and the darkness is in the cellar. At night, however, darkness rises and hides behind doors and in other corners of the house. Lucio is worried, but one night he decides to solve this problem and overcome his fear.



Guilherme Karsten, *Run away!* Terre di mezzo Editore, 2020 (from 3 years)

In the forest everyone runs away and looks for a place to hide so as not to be found. They make no noise, they leave no traces. Only one does not run away. Will he be the bravest?

Mireille d'Allancé, *That anger!* Babalibri, 2016 (from 4 years)

Roberto had a very bad day. He enters the house with dirty shoes, refuses the spinach that dad cooked for dinner. He is very rude. "Go up to your room!" says the dad "and come down only when you have calmed down!" Calm down? When he is in the room Roberto's anger suddenly explodes like a raging beast...



## To learn more

### The others' feelings and points of view

According to neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf, three and a half year old boys and girls have already understood that stories, depending on the case, can give joy, fear, sadness. By means of books, children become so familiar with a repertoire of emotions, which are experienced, named, imagined. Here emotional development and reading influence each other.

By listening to read aloud, young children may recognize feelings they have already experienced and experience new emotions, which prepare them to understand more complex feelings and to see things from the point of view of others as well.

Without the insight that others also think and have feelings like him, a child cannot take into account what others are feeling.

Maryanne Wolf, *Proust and the Squid. History and Science of a reading brain*, op. cit. pag. 95 - 96

### Reading aloud trains social skills

Federico Batini and Marco Bertolucci, researchers at the University of Perugia, cite international studies and research carried out by pediatricians and neuroscientists with children aged 4-8 years. They claim that there is documented evidence of emotional activation at the neuronal level when reading and listening to stories, so much so that they can talk about reading aloud to children as a real training of social skills. Understanding the intentions of the characters and their emotions and sympathizing with them are experiences that promote the development of empathy and affectivity.

Empathizing with a character doesn't just mean understanding her emotions, but also experiencing them with him.

Federico Batini, Marco Bertolucci, *Emotional development and narration, from cognitive empowerment to the maturation of the processes of recognition of emotions*, in Carlo Andrea Bollino e altri (a cura di), *Emotions in individual and social contexts*, Morlacchi Editore, Perugia, 2019.



Anne Wilsdorf, *Jujube flower*, Babalibri, 2017 (from 3 years)

*Jujube flower finds a child in the jungle and saves him from the jaws of a terrible snake. When she takes him home, Mom says, "You were very brave and I am proud of you. But I can't welcome this baby." How will it end? What will become of this helpless puppy?*

Anais Lambert, *Giant's steps*, Pulce Edizioni, 2019 (from 2 years)

*The protagonist tells of his adventure in the garden, where he discovers fierce fights, stinging monsters, a marching caravan, helicopters flying over rivers and forests, until ... at a certain point he feels observed, someone chases him. Could it be a hungry beast? Two heavy footsteps are heard approaching. Could it be the bear? Reality is sometimes simpler and happier than the imagination suggests.*



Jon Agee, *The wall in the middle of the book*, Il Castoro, 2019 (from 3 years)

*Right in the center fold of an open book is a high wall. On the one hand the protagonist stays safe, on the other there is the danger: a terrible ogre. But the story develops in a different way from how the protagonist expects. A story with a happy ending, where images contradict words.*



# A book to tell about yourself

You understand a story, to be listen to, browsed or read, putting your experience into play. The more varied and richer the experience, the more chances are that a child will relate his life with the characters, identifying with them, broadening his gaze and, at the same time, focusing on narrative clues that allow him to understand the story.

The book thus becomes a powerful opportunity for dialogue and listening to children, who show interesting aspects of themselves, which do not always emerge in everyday life situations in the family or at school. A book, in fact, can help children ask questions and say things about themselves that otherwise they would not be able to express. With a book in hand, you can talk about everything.



Angelo Mozzillo, Marianna Baldacci, *I am leaf*, Bacchilega Junior, 2020 (for adults and children from 5 years)

One day I'm joy, one day I'm bored. One day the adventure, one day I'm a little afraid ... This is life. Better to know: a book that helps to talk about it, to find the words together.



Cori Doerrfeld, *Listen*, Il Castoro, 2020 (from 2-3 years)

A bad day for Timmy, until he meets a friend who can listen to him. And everything is reminiscent with enthusiasm.

Letizia Iannaccone, Sonia Maria Luce Possentini, *My dog is like me*, Terre di Mezzo Editore, 2020 (from 3-4 years)

How do you live without a dog who thinks he's like you? You understand each other very well even if you don't speak the same language. Those who do not have it cannot understand: with this book, you can explain it



Jorg Muhle, *Two to me, one to you*, Terre di Mezzo Editore, 2019 (2-3 years)  
 Fighting happens to everybody. What's the matter? It happens to bear and weasel as well, that, thanks to fox's strong intervention, can make up their problem



Emma Adbåge, *The hole*, Camelo-zampa, 2020

(da 4-5 anni)  
 In the school yard there is a hole where you can play anything. All the girls and the children love it, but the adults hate the hole. And so, a bad day ...



Fran Manushkin, Lauren Tobia, *Happy in our skin*, Pulce Edizioni, 2020 (from 3 years)

A wonderful day that each of the characters lives happy and content in his own skin. The text travels parallel to the images, while we discover, page after page, where the protagonists are and what they do.





**Valeri Gorbachev, *Thomas and one hundred naughty wolves*, edizioni Arka, 2020 (from 3 years)**  
*It's one of those stormy nights when naughty wolves go hunting for babies. Thomas shouts that there are at least a hundred, or perhaps fifty, and they want to eat him. Don't worry, mom will take care of myself! Now everyone can sleep peacefully.*



**Komako Sakai, Yukiko Kato, *in the grass*, Babalibri, 2011 (from 3 years)**  
*Yuchan is at the river with mum, dad and older brother. One step after another she walks among the stones, in the meadow, as far as the grass is as tall as she is. "Where am I?" she asks herself. She looks up and sees Mom without which his brother Gaspere cannot sleep.*



**Stephanie Blake, *No, no sleepy-bye! Babalibri*, 2010 (from 2 years)**

*Simone has a lot of courage to go out at night to retrieve the cover himself. She looks up and sees Mom without which his brother Gaspere cannot sleep.*

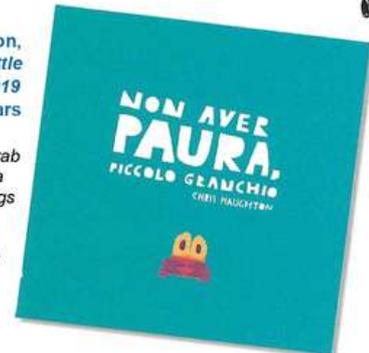
**Komako Sakai, *Snow day*, Babalibri, 2007 (from 3-4 years)**

*On a cold winter day, all you can hear is the silence of the falling snow. As soon as it stops snowing, you can finally go out to play with snowballs and make puppets. Waiting for dad to come back.*



**Chris Haughton, *Don't worry little crab*, Lapis, 2019 (From 2 years)**

*Little Crab and Big Crab come close to the sea water. Little Crab clings to the rocks because very big waves are coming. Look, a giant wave! Hold on tight!*



## To know more

**How we put our experience into play to understand stories and what relationship exists between fiction and reality .**

**From a research by Colorado Boulder University (USA)**

Nicole K. Speer, a researcher at the University of Colorado Boulder, together with some colleagues has carried out research that demonstrates how readers understand a story heard or read, simulating it in their mind and integrating with the information that the text offers the their broadest knowledge of the world. In support of the research conclusions, functional neuroimaging evidence is presented that shows how neural systems in different regions of the brain track changes that occur during the development of history. It is interesting to note that some of these regions, including the motor ones, are the same ones that are activated when people imagine or observe similar activities in the real world or experience them first-hand.

Speer, NK, Reynolds, JR, Swallow, KM e Zacks, JM, *Reading stories activates the neural representations of perceptual and motor experiences*, published on the magazine *Psychological science*, 20 August 2009.

## Learning to understand stories beyond pictures.

Some studies cited in the in-depth analyzes (Read more) tell how in children subjected to early reading practice, frequently and with quality choices, more robust neural circuits are stimulated and developed to support the understanding of texts and narrative skills. In particular, Batini and Bertolucci point out that the activation of the brain areas that support mental images (those that help the child to "see the story beyond the pictures") will be fundamental when children begin to read books without images and will have to understand. relying only on the text.

Federico Batini, Marco Bertolucci, *Emotional development and narration, from cognitive empowerment to the maturation of the processes of recognition of emotions*, in Carlo Andrea Bollino e altri (a cura di), *Emotions in individual and social contexts*, Morlacchi Editore, Perugia, 2019.

## To know more

**As adults read stories and converse with the children they listen to, they learn to understand and use the language.**

**The virtual interview with the neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf goes on**

**In your book "Proust and the Squid" you argue that before the age of 5/6, by reading books aloud to children and leafing through them with them, without explicitly teaching them to read, they learn many important things for the future learning of reading..**

I will give you some example.

- In the period in which children begin to recognize the feelings that bind them to others and also draw the boundaries that separate them from the others, an intuition of a cognitive nature arrives: in books there are more or less long words, which, like illustrations, at each reading are always the same. That is, they discover that books have their language. They also realize that (in Italian) the words are read from left to right and from top to bottom. In the meantime, they keep learning the meanings of words: the lexicon of books is one of the sources of approximately 10,000 words that five-year-olds know. And the more words they learn, the more children are able to understand spoken and written language, read aloud.
- The children then become familiar with metaphors and similes and, by increasing their lexicon mastery, they progressively refine the conceptual ability linked to the use of analogies.
- The ability to imagine probable scenarios opens the way to the development of inferential capacities: they make deductions and guesses based on the information that the text provides.
- Furthermore, some children realize that there are written words that represent words of the spoken language and that the written letters correspond to the sounds that form the words.
- Hidden in nursery rhymes and poems, it is the latest example, there are alliterations, assonances, rhymes and repetitions that help develop phonetic awareness and rhythm.

(from 3-4 years) A book to the Everyone stands

Maryanne Wolf, *Proust and the Squid. History and Science of the reading brain*, Op. cit. pag. 97 - 110

Benji Davies, *The Storm-Whale in winter*  
 EDT - Giralgangolo, 2017  
 (from 4-5 years)

*Nico is a brave child. When his fishing dad doesn't come home, he goes looking for him. A story of adventure on the frozen sea, a thrilling rescue and a friendship that resists the passage of time.*

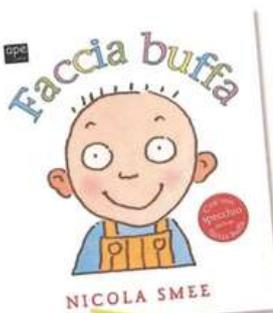


Nadine Robert, Valerio Vidali, *Listen to me, Elephant, Terre di Mezzo Editore*, 2020  
 (from 5 years)

*The elephant is very sad and everyone would like to distract him, but no one can, until a lost mouse stops to rest next to him. A simple and true encounter, capable of demonstrating the power of listening, reciprocity and friendship.*

Trish Cooke, Helen Oxenbury, *So much!*, Pulce Edizioni, 2019

*rhythm of rap. there doing nothing, but her aunt arrives and kisses, cuddles and scrambles her nephew. Thus the party begins. Then all the others arrive who, one after the other, kiss, cuddle and scramble the little protagonist. The party goes on, until...*



Nicola Smee, *Fanny Face, Ape Junior*, 2016  
 (from 3 years)

*What do you look like when you are happy, then surprised, angry, worried, scared, and then happy again? The protagonist experiences all these emotions and shows us his expressions. A simple and attractive cover hides a story that requires a little experience to understand.*

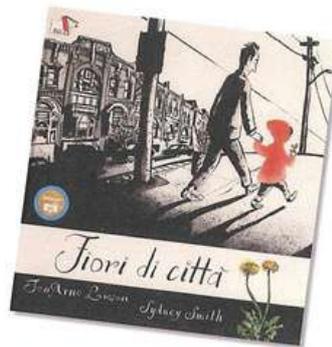


# A book for everyone

Children always surprise us: from an early age they have very specific preferences and choose stories they want to hear and listen again. It is important for the children to find many quality books at home and at school, in the library and in the bookstore ... where they can meet the stories that fascinate them. We can't always understand the reasons. Books always open a window on the inner world of the child, on his thoughts, sometimes on his fears. It is not always necessary to interpret, we can accept that we do not know everything, that we do not have all the answers. As adults, we should accept the children's message without judging, without criticizing their preferences, even when they are far from our expectations.



**Lena Anderson, TempeStina,**  
Lupo Guido, 2018 (since 5 years)  
*TempeStina spends her summer holidays on the island where her grandfather lives. Every day she sets out on her explorations, in search of the objects that the sea brings to shore. Curious as she is, on a stormy night she ventures towards the rocks to see the storm coming. There her grandfather finds her, cold and crying. What do you do now?*



**JonArno Lawson, Sydney Smith,**  
*City flowers,* Pulce Edizioni, 2020  
(since 4-5 years, silent book)  
*While walking around town with her father, a little girl collects colorful wild flowers that are born in a hostile environment. Each flower becomes a gift ... A silent book on the importance of small gestures and small things that appear insignificant to most.*



**André Dahan, The cat and the fish,** Equilibri Editrice, 2017  
(since 3-4 years)  
*A story of respect and understanding, of trust and friendship. Certainly not easy to cultivate, because the surface of the sea is the only place where the fish and the cat can meet.*

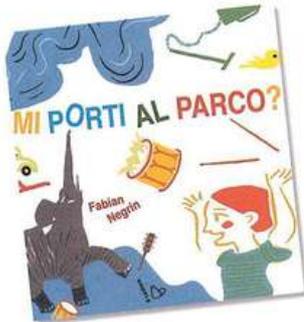


**Mo Willems, Shall we go out and play?, Il Castoro,** 2013  
(since 3-4 years)  
*Reginald and Tina are happy: it's time to play outdoors, but suddenly it starts raining. But anger! What if I tried to play in the rain? The two friends try and when they start having fun the sun comes out. And now? Reginald takes care of finding a solution.*

**Lúcia Hiratsuka, The snail race,** Pulce Edizioni, 2019  
(since 3 years)  
*For Lia and Nico it is enough to go to the garden to find themselves in a forest facing a mountain. They leave for a futuristic journey guided by the wake of two snails and their imagination.*



**Fabian Negrin, Let's go to the park?, Il Castoro, 2008 (da 4-5 anni)**  
*Nothing can disturb daddy's rest. Nobody can wake him up, not even the noisy attempts his son has made. Yet there is something unexpected that can wake him up. A book full of colors, sounds, noises and irony.*



**Jerry Spinelli, Jimmy Liao, I can be everything, Camelozampa, 2020 (translation made by Bruno Tognolini) (since 4 years)**

*"What would you like to do when you grow up?" adults always ask that to the children. This book wants to help them, offering a fantastic and ironic vision of the unlimited possibilities offered by life.*



**John Hare, trip under the ocean, Babalibri, 2020 (since 5 years, silent book)**  
*The main character of this silent book goes on a trip under the ocean with the class. He comes out of the submarine together with his friends and his teacher to explore the ocean. Attracted by the wreck of an old ship, he approaches with the hope of finding a treasure, but he discovers a submerged city. Everything is at the same time interesting, and dangerous. What will he do?*



**Marc Barnett, Jon Klassen, Sam e Dave dig a hole, Terre di Mezzo Editore, 2015 (since 5-6 years)**

*One day Sam and Dave decide to dig a hole in search of something spectacular. They dig, they dig, but they find nothing. Hope is not badly placed, the place is interesting and their dog knows it! But, at a certain point, a chasm opens and they fall. Fall, fall, fall... until they are on another page and return to the beginning of the story.*

## To do

### Girls and boys have the right to meet quality books and stories.

#### What is a quality story like?

"The story - write Federico Batini and Marco Bertolucci (\*), researchers from the University of Perugia - must be clearly accessible for the child's age level and adequately stimulating contents. If the child is able to follow the story, he will be motivated to interpret the contents and the emotional states of the characters, putting them in relation with his own emotional states of the moment or with those experienced in particular situations, thus triggering a sort of recognition / reconfiguration of the same. . "

When we manage to understand a story that involves us, in fact, we put our experience into play and we feel interested, entering into a relationship with ourselves. It's the same for the children! If the story is too difficult, the motivation to listen slowly fades away. But it is also tiring to listen to a story that appears foreign, says nothing and is not passionate. For this reason, strong narratives must be chosen, which allow children to follow a character to which something happens, has to solve a problem, encounters obstacles or imagines something that turns out to be illusory, there is a surprise, a twist.

.. Finally, and this is fundamental, a quality story (\*\*) has no didactic purpose, it teaches nothing.

Its richness lies in the ability to capture the attention of a child, to call him into play and to help him remember or discover something about himself, finding the words to think about it and, perhaps, to tell about it. Between a fairytale (with morals) or a fairytale (of magic, with a happy ending), we choose the fairytale. The adult reading does not have to worry about the "message". If there really is one, let the children discover it, with the confidence that every story is like a seed: perhaps it will not become a seedling, but if it grows we will see after a while, how the water of a karst river. If we are impatient, we risk ruining the game. Because reading and storytelling are a game. Sure, a fundamental game to grow, but if it's not free, it doesn't work.

*\*) Federico Batini, Marco Bertolucci, Emotional development and narration, from cognitive empowerment to the maturation of the processes of recognition of emotions, in Carlo Andrea Bollino and others (edited by), Emotions in individual and social contexts, Morlacchi Editore, Perugia, 2019.*

*\*\*\*) Although we are not talking about it here, the quality of a book depends not only on the text, but also on the images (a book, as we have seen, can also consist of images only), on the relationship between text and images, on the graphics, format, choice of paper ...*



## To do

How should we read a story?

While reading or telling a story to a child or group, it is interesting to observe and listen them. Grasping the reactions of the listener allows us to understand when it is convenient to take a break, to answer some questions, to re-launch a comment or to ask us some questions in front of an expression of surprise or on what it is expected to happen in the continuation of the story. The aim is to transform reading into a dialogue and listening to children into a narrative.

During the readings at the nursery or kindergarten, in fact, if a participatory modality is adopted, the children insert their personal stories on the main story. First of all, when they are very young, are family scenes or small daily actions; as they grow, they add comments and opinions on a growing variety of topics.

These dialogues allow us to understand if a child is mature to understand the moods of the characters and find elements of his personal story in the story, managing to understand and live the narrative, to put himself in the shoes of the characters, to make inferences, enriching his skills.

A rich and stimulating narrative climate is kept alive, especially if we do not replace the children and if we show genuine interest and fun. Children, as we know, have antennas capable of understanding if we do something with pleasure or with difficulty, or if we read or narrate with a didactic objective, which risks cooling their involvement and extinguishing the ferment of their mind.

Therefore quality stories are needed!



Polly Dunbar, *Why you don't speak?*, Mondadori, 2008 (since 4 years)

Ben unwraps a package and finds Penguin inside. He would like to play with it, but Penguin stands still, motionless and silent. Ben Tries everything to get him to say something, but there seems to be nothing to be done. Only exasperation and a twist will resolve the situation



Matthew Cordell, *A wolf in the snow*, Edizioni Clichy, 2018 (since 5 years)

Struck by a blizzard, while returning home from school, a little girl in a red cape discovers a lost wolf pup. He is alone, helpless and desperate. A meeting of friendship, generosity and courage.

## Where can we find quality book for children?

Children usually encounter quality books at daycare and preschool, in a library and in a children's bookstore. However, it is important for them to find books even at home. Parents can therefore inquire with the educators and educators, but also by talking with the librarians and librarians and with the booksellers and booksellers experts in literature and books for children and teenagers. In Imola, the Casa Piani children's library and the Mosaico children's library are a sure point of reference. Furthermore, a fundamental tool is the Bibliographic Guide of Born to Read.



AA.VV., *Nati per Leggere. Una guida per genitori e futuri lettori*, Associazione Italiana Biblioteche, Roma, 2021



Beatrice Alemagna, *A big day of nothing*, Topipittori, 2016 (since 5-6 years)

The protagonist of this story is on vacation in a lonely place, surrounded by nature. It's raining cats and dogs. His mother has hidden from him the video game with which he tries to pass the time, so with a raincoat and a pair of boots our hero ventures along the path that leads to the pond and ... discovers the world.

PITEÅ

SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Where children grow



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EMBASSY OF SWEDEN



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

### Can you introduce any topic in children's books?

Many Swedish books for young readers deal with subjects that adults may consider too advanced for children. There are books about loneliness and death, but also about friendship and fantasy.

Children like being able to identify with the things they read. But that doesn't mean the books have to be set in the child's own environment. One of the greatest assets of literature is that the stories broaden your horizon.

Among the characters in the exhibition are smart kids who solve mysteries, tough princesses who rescue princes, and young children who are envious, angry and sad. There are children who wonder where they were before they were born, lonely children and children who want to decide over their own lives. The children have the opportunity to be different, to make their voices heard and to develop.

Access to literature that all children are included in and feel a part of is an important issue for Sweden. To this end, international exchange is vital. Ensuring that books are translated and reach readers in different parts of the world is to further our awareness and understanding of one another. This is particularly important in the case of young readers.



Astrid Lindgren perhaps put it best herself: 'Good literature gives the child a place in the world and the world a place in the child.'



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Pom and Pim

Tripping over a stone and bursting your balloon is bad luck, but finding a coin that will buy you an ice cream and coming out into the rain just when you've made a raincoat for your cuddly toy is of course good luck. That's how eventful and fluctuating a day in the life of **Pom** and **Pim** can be. The books are sparing, focused stories for the very young about an independent child and a floppy cuddly toy. We never learn whether Pom is a girl or a boy, and nor does it matter. Lena Landström's texts are short and simple and Olof Landström's illustrations clear and easily understood by the youngest readers.



# Max

In the innovative books about Max, Barbro Lindgren adopts the child's earliest use of language, where each utterance is just a few words long. By this simple device she lets Max himself describe his dramatic day-to-day life with his bow-wow. He is a strong-willed, inventive child who sometimes gets into unexpected situations. If things become too exciting, Mum is there in the background and can step in.

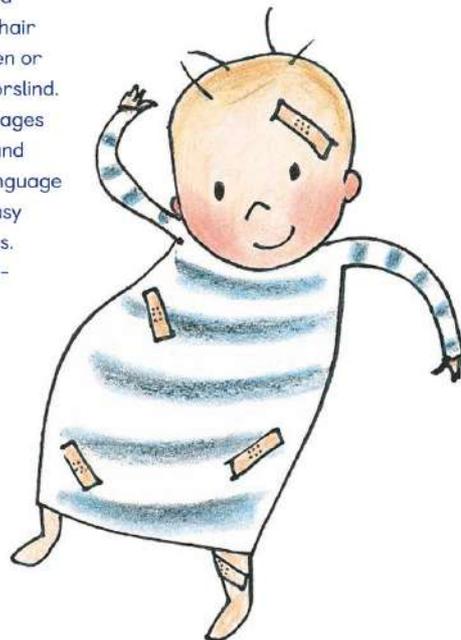
The action in each book is in real time so the reading takes the same length of time as the course of events.

Eva Eriksson's illustrations match the text perfectly and the result is a humorous, expressive series of adventures for the very young.



# Baby

The gender-neutral **Baby**, dressed in a striped nightshirt and with strands of hair sticking up, is the protagonist in a dozen or so books for the very young by Ann Forslind. Words are few and the simple, vivid images reflect emotions such as fear, anger and curiosity by means of precise body language and facial expression. This makes it easy for a young child to relate to the books. Ann Forslind's thickly contoured mixed-media images skip the detail and go straight for the emotions.



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Bridget

**Bridget** is a preschool child who has a knack of landing in strange situations while wandering about on her own. When she loses touch with her preschool group and has to spend the night in the woods, she meets a flock of wolves and tames them without fuss. Other episodes concern dopey sheep and rowdy elks. With unflagging optimism and ingenuity, Bridget works through her fears and shortcomings. As always, Pija Lindenbaum's books bring together text and illustrations in her own special, unerring brand of comedy.



# Micke and Manne

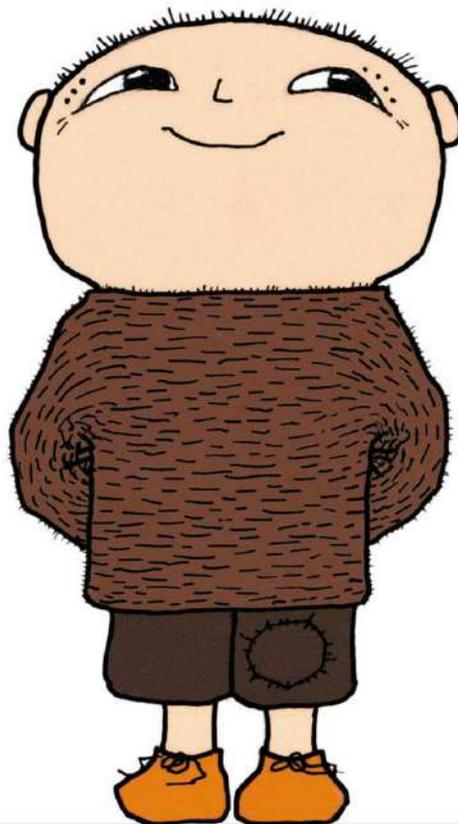
In the books about **Micke** and **Manne**, it is Micke who talks about himself and his friend Manne. Micke would love to be brave but in all honesty he has to admit that Manne is braver. In *I Watch the Dog* (*Jag vaktar hunden*), Micke would love to give the dog sweets, to throw sticks and to put a collar on it, but on second thought he'll let Manne do it. The story is actually told in Pija Lindenbaum's humorous illustrations, and the text is almost superfluous.



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Alfie Atkins

**Alfie Atkins** is a well-known figure for many children, both in Sweden and abroad. Gunilla Bergström describes in words and pictures the everyday lives of Alfie and his father. The books are set in an urban environment and Alfie has both an imaginary friend and real friends. His world is full of flights of fancy, games, ideas and inventions, but also of emotions such as anxiety, jealousy and fear. These, too, are a part of everyday life, all described without any finger-wagging or moralism.



# Leni

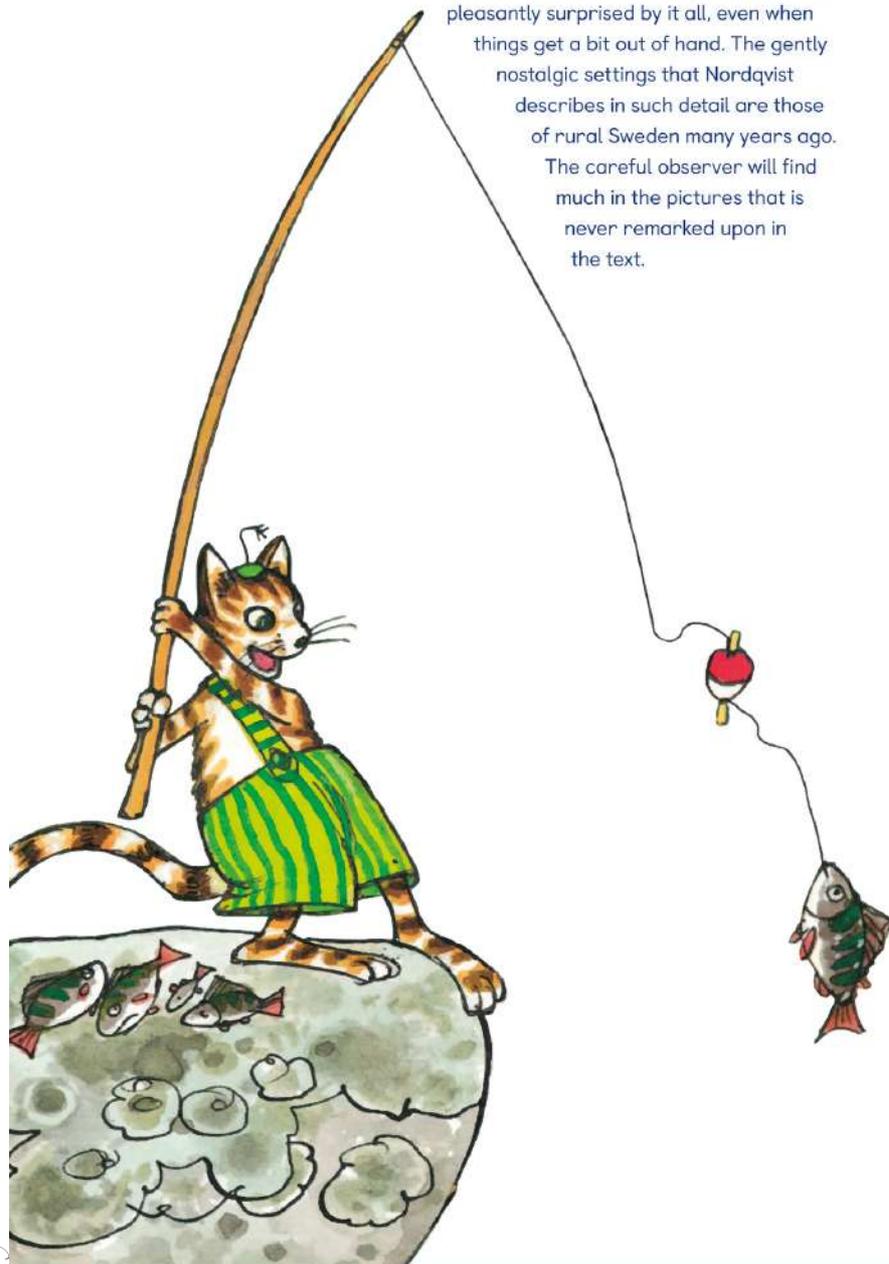
Sometimes Leni pretends she's a baby and sometimes she wants to be a grown-up. She gets upset when the ladies at the pastry-shop call her sugarplum and she's jealous of her younger brother who rides in a pram while she has to walk. Emotions present in everyday life, such as jealousy, anger and uncertainty, are described with a comic touch. Emma AdBåge uses a wealth of period detail to help create a personal picture of a home in which a child is allowed to grow and develop both physically and emotionally.



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Findus

While **Findus** may be a mischievous little cat and Pettson a kind, patient old fellow, it feels natural to view Sven Nordqvist's books as stories about a boy and his father. Findus wants to try out new things while Pettson prefers the status quo. Findus often gets his way, however, and Pettson is sometimes pleasantly surprised by it all, even when things get a bit out of hand. The gently nostalgic settings that Nordqvist describes in such detail are those of rural Sweden many years ago. The careful observer will find much in the pictures that is never remarked upon in the text.



# Pippi Longstocking

The most famous character in Swedish children's literature, **Pippi Longstocking** has already reached the ripe old age of 70. When Astrid Lindgren's first book about this strong, rebellious girl appeared, it brought both acclaim and controversy. Pippi is not a well-mannered child – she says what she thinks and does what she likes. Also, she's so strong that she can lift a horse. But, like Astrid Lindgren herself, she always sides with the weak. The illustrations for Pippi Longstocking were by Danish artist Ingrid Vang Nyman. Her image of Pippi is that of an independent, outspoken girl with plaits that stick straight out at the sides.



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Princesses

Princesses in fairy tales usually sit at home in the castle waiting for a prince to come and propose marriage. But **The Princess** in Per Gustavsson's picture-books prefers adventure. When a magician makes the guests at her party disappear, she immediately sets off to rescue them. She may wear a pink dress but she rescues princes, vanquishes dragons and plays ice hockey as energetically as she organises parties and inaugurates bridges. Employing an equally playful approach, Per Gustavsson has also written a couple of books about princes who don't fulfil their traditional roles.



# Princes





## Sirkka and Margareta

The two stand-alone books *A Star Called Ajax* (*En stjärna vid namn Ajax*) and *The Sister from the Sea* (*Systern från havet*), written by Ulf Stark and illustrated by Stina Wirsen, are about friendship, grief and loss. **Ajax** the dog is seven years old when **Johan** is born and they become the closest of friends right from the start. When Ajax grows old and dies, Johan refuses to accept it. His longing for Ajax is so great that he travels through the universe and brings him back. The sister from the sea is called **Sirkka** and she arrives on her own from the war. At first, **Margareta**, the daughter in the family that takes her in, is not at all kind to her. She'd wanted a dog instead. But when the war is over and Sirkka is due to go back, they feel like sisters and are sad to say goodbye. Both books discuss serious and important issues in a sensitive and respectful way.

## Johan and Ajax



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Zackarina

One day when Zackarina is angry at her dad, she digs a hole in the sand – and the Sand Wolf suddenly appears. They become friends and playmates and meet on the beach every day. He's happy to listen to Zackarina's reflections on all kinds of subjects, such as where she was before she was born. Zackarina gives expression to many of the things that occupy an imaginative child's mind, and even if the Sand Wolf doesn't have all the answers he helps her to move on. Åsa Lind's read-aloud books about the Sand Wolf inspire both children and adults to engage in philosophical discussion. Kristina Digman's illustrations nicely complement the text in a gently humorous tone.



# JerryMaya

Unstoppable private eyes Jerry and Maya solve crimes in the small town of Valleby. Whether it concerns stolen dogs, fires or spooky mummies, they always clear up the mystery. In *The Whodunit Detective Agency* (LasseMajas detektivbyrå), Martin Widmark has found a form that suits both beginner readers and much older children. Helena Willis' artful illustrations reflect Widmark's humorous approach. More than twenty books about the two young sleuths have appeared so far.



## SWEDISH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

# Vita and Windsor

**Vita** is a little girl who paints the white lines in the middle of roads. She paints them completely straight. But one day she meets **Windsor** who is blowing about with the wind, and he wonders whether lines couldn't be made crooked sometimes. Sara Lundberg depicts the various worlds in which Vita and Windsor move in bright colours and whirling brushstrokes. Her books about the friendship between these two lonely children can be read in differing ways – as existential meditations or as fairy tales. In both cases, they allow free rein for both reflection and imagination.



# A new generation

A generational change in children's book publishing in Sweden has opened the door to artistic innovation and new characters. Writers and illustrators are continuing to emphasise the right of children to make their voices heard and express thoughts and feelings. Here, too, we find characters that represent contemporary Swedish society in all its ethnic and cultural diversity. Below is a selection of the new generation's literary figures.

**Selma** has a little bird that pecks at her body because she's lonely. In Ellen Karlsson's read-aloud book, *String, the Bird and Me* (Snöret, fågeln och jag), Selma acquires a friend in the girl next door, String. This little neighbour does what she likes and no bird is going to peck at her. Eva Lindström's quirky drawings effortlessly capture the tone of the story.

**Those Left Behind** are unnamed people – a father, two children and a granny. Mum has died. Forthright and in very few words, Karin Saler describes how grief affects people differently. Siri Ahmed Backström's illustrations vivify a family who have managed to survive and move on.

**Moa** writes a letter to the moon, which she thinks looks so lonely. When she gets no reply she goes there in a rocket. In Emma Virke's picture-book *Letter to the Moon* (Brevet till månen), with its subtle illustrations, we realise that it's probably Moa who feels lonely.

**Big Brother** is supposed to put his younger sibling to bed in the picture book *The Lightning Gobbler* (Blixtslukaren). Instead, however, the two make up a daring tale of wild adventure to help combat their fear of thunder and lightning. Jonatan Brännström's efficacious text is well illustrated by Joanna Hellgren's dramatic, brightly coloured images.



*String, the Bird and Me* (Snöret, fågeln och jag), Ellen Karlsson and Eva Lindström.



*Those Left Behind* (Dem som är kvar), Karin Saler and Siri Ahmed Backström.



*Letter to the Moon* (Brevet till månen), Emma Virke.



*The Lightning Gobbler* (Blixtslukaren), Jonatan Brännström and Joanna Hellgren.

[www.sweden.se](http://www.sweden.se)

For more information about the authors and illustrators, scan the QR code.



# A Tribute to Children's Books

The light falls across the page. You've found a place of your own, some time to yourself and you'd prefer not to be disturbed, for the story has come alive. It speaks to you. You live with and feel for the people in the book. You see the places, hear the rustling of the leaves and the pounding of the waterfall. And all of this has come to life inside you through words and illustrations in a book. What a gift!

Through all ages and in all cultures, we have used stories both as entertainment and in search of knowledge, to strengthen our ties with others—both those who are like us and those who are unlike us—and not least in order to understand our own existence.

Children's books are often the first contact we have with literature and art, and they make a powerful impression. Doubtless you recall one or the other of the first books you read. Do you still remember having the feeling of time and space having ceased to exist?

We know today that reading develops the brain. It takes us to a new level of abstraction. Our children's future will test their ability to solve problems and conflicts, to think in new ways and understand people and cultures.

The Swedish Academy for Children's Books is an association with no political or religious affiliation that seeks to enable children to have access to powerful and enriching reading experiences.

In this exhibition the Swedish Academy for Children's Books has collected 17 reasons for children's books and 17 illustrations by Swedish illustrators.

*Svenska Barnboksakademin* 





Stina Wirsén

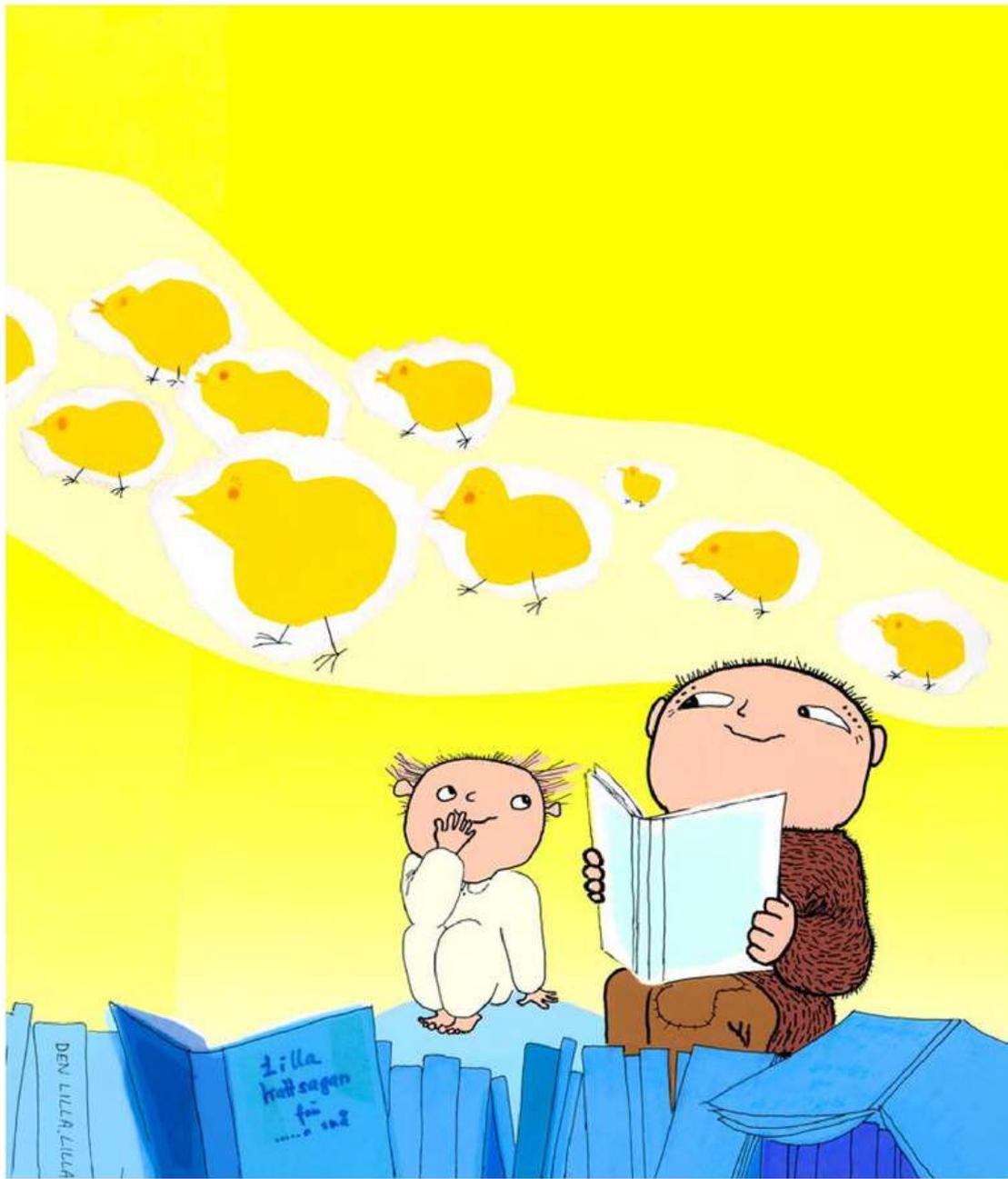
**Books can make us laugh and cry.  
They can comfort us and show us  
new possibilities.**



Per Gustavsson

**Books help us develop our language  
and our vocabulary.**





Gunilla Bergström

**Books fire our imagination and  
train us in finding inner images.**



Ann Forslind

**Books can ask fresh questions that  
arouse our interest and cause us to  
reflect further.**



Johan Unenge

**Books give us concepts to think with.  
They broaden our consciousness  
and our world.**



Lena Andersson

**Books give us knowledge about nature,  
technology and history, and about other  
countries and other ways of life.**





Pija Lindenbaum

**Books enable us to become someone else.  
They develop our ability to empathise  
and to feel compassion.**



Gunna Grähs

Books make us reflect on what's right  
or wrong, good or bad.





Sara Lundberg

**Books can explain reality and help us understand how things are connected.**



Cecilia Torudd

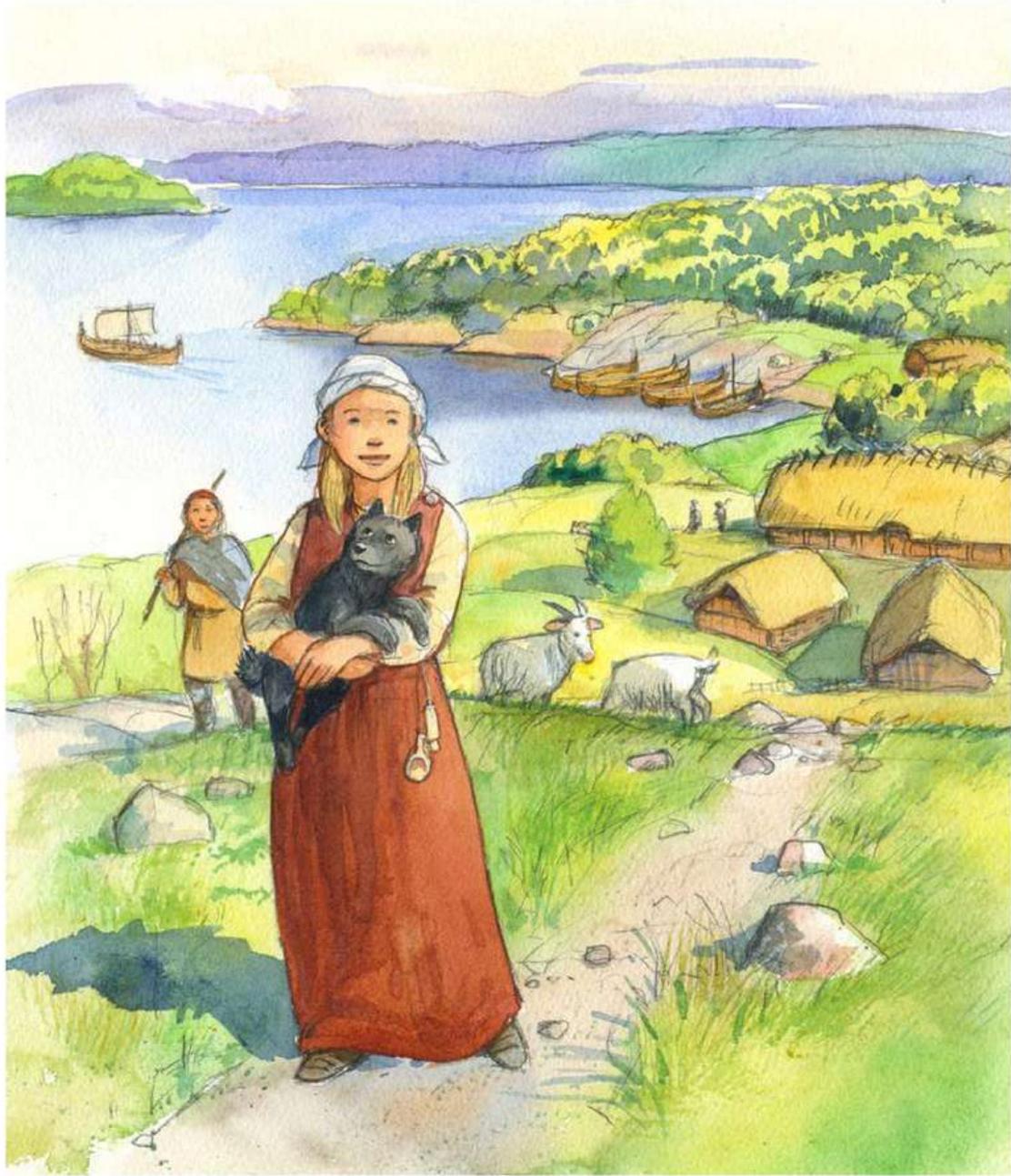
**Books can show us that most things can  
be seen from different points of view.**





Sara Gimbergsson

**Books boost our self-confidence  
when we realise that others think  
and feel as we do.**



Jens Ahlbom

**Books help us understand that we are both similar and dissimilar.**





Anna Bengtsson

**Books offer company when  
we're lonely.**



Pernilla Stalfelt

**Books are part of our cultural heritage.  
They give us shared reading experiences  
and common frames of reference.**





Sven Nordqvist

**Books that are read aloud bring children and adults together.**



Barbro Lindgren

**Children's books give us access to different artistic forms such as illustration, photography, poetry and drama.**

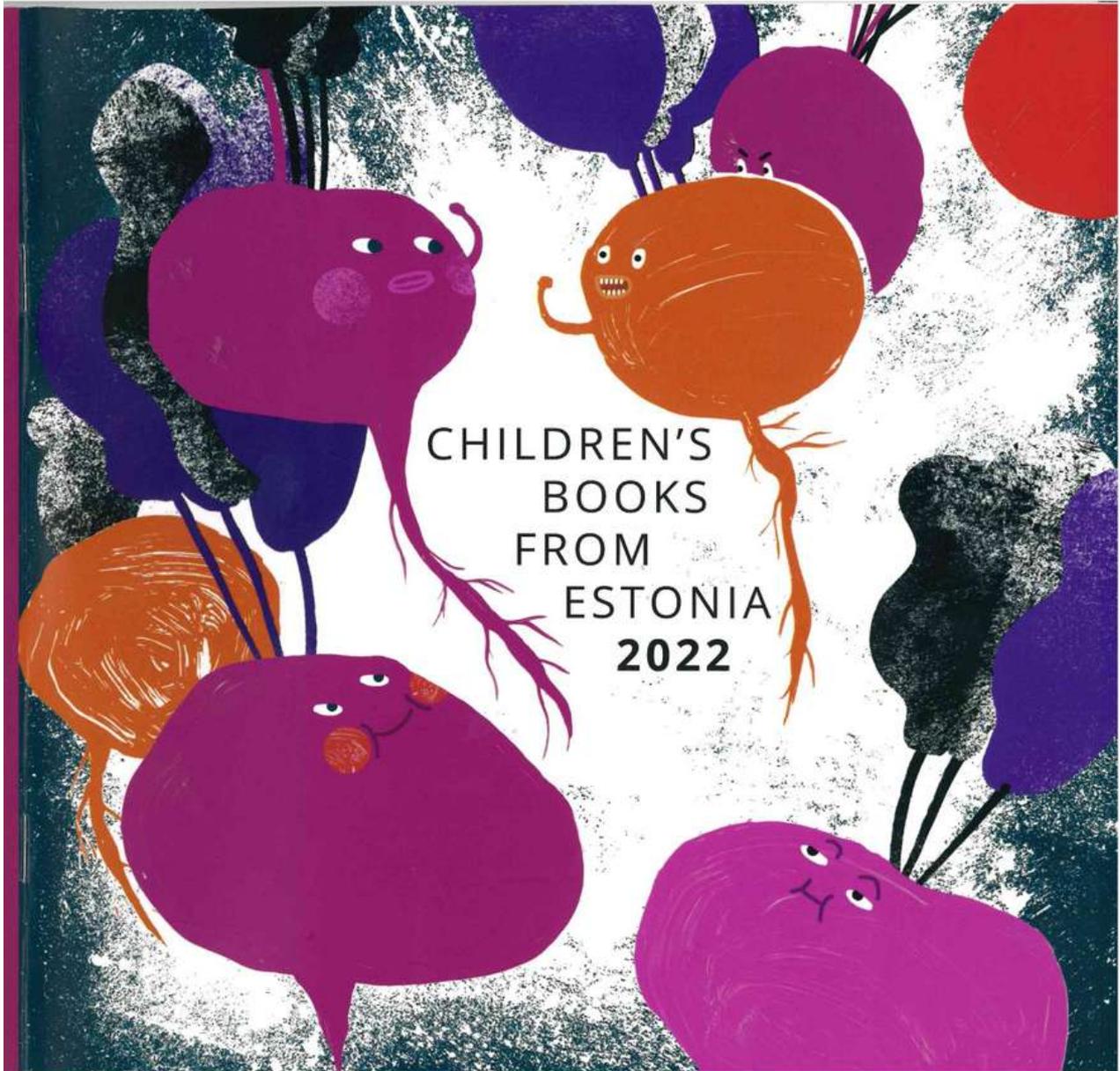




Emma Virke

**Children's books represent our first  
contact with literature—an unending  
world that lasts all our lives.**

# TALLIN



## THE ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CENTRE

The Estonian Children's Literature Centre is a specialised competency organisation that promotes the country's most outstanding children's works abroad. This includes representing Estonian children's authors at the world's largest book fairs, organising their appearances abroad, maintaining a database of Estonian children's literature, and producing publications on the topic. The Centre collaborates on a large scale with publishers, researchers, translators, teachers, and other specialists.

### How can we help? We ...

- provide information on Estonian children's writers, illustrators and translators from Estonian.
- publish topical information in print and at [www.elk.ee](http://www.elk.ee).
- send newsletters to publishers and translators.
- help interested parties contact Estonian authors.
- assist in the selection of suitable translators for Estonian children's literature.
- inform publishers and translators about opportunities for financial support.

### The TRADUCTA grant programme

Traducta offers grants to translators and foreign publishers to promote the translation and publishing of Estonian literature abroad.

Norsk Pengepung supports the translation of Estonian literary works into Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish, and Danish, and their publication in Norway, Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark.

Application deadlines are 20 February, 20 May, 20 August, and 20 November of each year.

Apply here:  
<https://www.kulka.ee/programmes/traducta>  
[traducta@kulka.ee](mailto:traducta@kulka.ee)



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## Karl the Bumblebee Waits for Rain

Written by Tia Navi

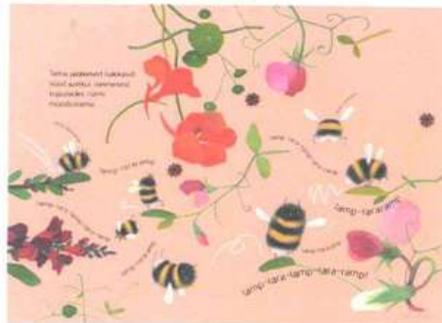
Illustrated by Regina Lukk-Toompere

Päike ja Pilv, 2021

183 x 266 mm, 32 pp

ISBN 9789916630020

A little bumblebee named Karl is buzzing across the lawn, which is mowed as straight as a board and hasn't a single blossom. Suddenly picking up a sweet scent, he follows it to a wonderful second-floor balcony. There are blossoms galore! Runner beans, nasturtiums, vervains, snapdragons – each and every one holds a magical power that makes them grow. A sprinkling of water is needed, too, but that's no problem. Oskar, the boy who lives in the apartment, is very responsible about watering the flowers. Yet, one day, the family goes on vacation to the countryside, leaving the potted plants high and dry. Karl is at a loss for what to do to prevent the incredible blossoms from losing their vibrancy.



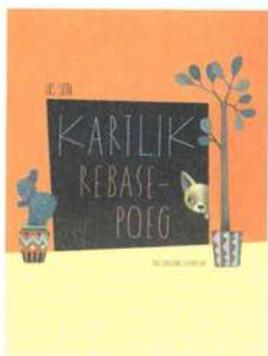
**Tia Navi** (Tiia Kõnnussaar, 1965) is a children's author, editor, and columnist. She studied media and communications at the University of Tartu, and works at the University's Centre of Ethics. Navi has written five children's books, a wealth of journalistic articles, a book of parenting advice, and a young-adult play. She also runs creative writing courses. The writer's books contain humour, wordplay, and a projection of the world as seen by sharp-eyed children.

**Regina Lukk-Toompere** (1953) graduated in 1981 from the Estonian State Art Institute's Graphic Art Department in illustration and book design.

She is a member of the Estonian Artists Association, the Estonian Graphic Designers Association, and the Estonian Section of IBBY. She has illustrated and designed more than 90 books and textbooks, as well as posters, record covers, postcards, magazines, and packaging. Lukk-Toompere was on the 2014 IBBY Honour List and has received several awards in annual Estonian book design and illustration competitions.



4+



**Timid Little Fox**  
 Written by **Liis Sein**  
 Illustrated by **Catherine Zarip**  
 Tammerraamat, 2021  
 206 x 256 mm, 24 pp  
 ISBN 9789949690718



The Fennec family is busy at night and asleep during the day. Only Suzu, the little fennec girl can't fall asleep when the sun is shining so disarmingly on the entrance of the family's hiding place. If she could only see how the world looks in broad daylight! Suzu recalls the stories she's been told by her relatives – Giraffes' ruleless football game, Elephants' ear-splitting song festival, scary story-time with the Ostriches and other daytime dangers that are just waiting to happen. If only she could gather her courage to peek outside, if only she could take a glance...

**Award:** 2021 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, Certificate of Merit



**Liis Sein** (1983) is a playwright and children's author. She graduated from Tallinn University in adult education and has trained in playwriting and creative writing. Sein currently works as an administrative assistant at the Estonian Children's Literature Centre. She has written seven children's books and won the Knee-High Book Competition in 2019. Sein conveys the world through children's eyes such that adults also see it as a bigger, brighter, and more lucid place.

**Catherine Zarip** (1966) is an illustrator and graphic designer. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in ceramics, after which she worked at the publisher Avita as a book designer and art director. Zarip has illustrated dozens of textbooks, more than 30 children's books, and has designed about 200 works in total. She has been awarded twice at the Tallinn Illustrations Triennial and ten times in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition. Her art is fresh and elegant – simultaneously animated and restrained, detail-rich and simplified.

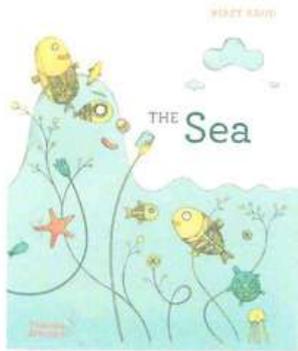


family • being afraid • rumours • prejudice • exploring the world • brawery



4+

sea • fish • books • relationship • importance of reading



### The Sea

Written and illustrated by Piret Raud

Taanapäev, 2021

195 x 240 mm, 32 pp

ISBN 9789949859689

Rights sold: English, German, Slovenian

Mother Sea loves her family and everyone in it – the fish, the starfish, the turtles, the worms – and her family loves her back. The only problem is... they are so loud! So, the Sea takes a vacation to clear her head and enjoy some peace and quiet. In her absence, the fish run amok, loving their newfound freedom, but they soon realise that their favourite part of the day is missing: there is no one to read them a bedtime story! Enter a very naughty cat with ill intentions who promises to read to them. Once the sea animals realise their mistake, their tears bring their mother back and she promises to teach them to read so they can always enjoy a bedtime story.



**Piret Raud** (1971) is the most successful contemporary Estonian children's writer and illustrator. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic arts, and initially set off on the same path. After trying her hand at writing, Raud has since become the most renowned and widely-translated children's author in Estonia. She has written 19 titles (six of which were commissioned by Japanese, French, and British publishers), has been translated into 18 different languages, and has illustrated more than 50 titles. Her writing has received spectacular recognition both at home and abroad. She was included on the 2012 IBBY Honour List as writer and in 2018 as illustrator; in the 2010 and 2013 White Ravens catalogue; and was awarded the Estonian Order of the White Star, IV Class in 2016.



4+



**Help!**  
**Written and illustrated by Kertu Sillaste**  
 Koolibri, 2021  
 250 x 251 mm, 24 pp  
 ISBN 9789985046425

A girl walks in a meadow. The sun is shining and the flowers nod to greet her. She hears a cry for help and starts searching for the source of the call. From inside the battered forest, she finds all kinds of creatures great and small who need nurturing and care. The girl wants to help them all. She fills her pockets and arms; those in need find a place on her shoulders and in her hair. Carrying the precious cargo, she finally arrives home and falls onto the lawn, exhausted. Luckily, she receives help. The joy of those she has saved returns a smile to her face.

**Award:** 2021 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, Certificate of Merit



**Kertu Sillaste** (1973) graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in textile design in 1996 and from the Tallinn University with a Master of Arts in Education in 2017. Sillaste has illustrated books and textbooks; written and illustrated seven picture books and one silentbook; designed books, posters and more; and has collaborated with children's magazines. She teaches art to kids in the Estonian Children's Literature Centre. Kertu Sillaste is a member of the Estonian Graphic Designers Association and the Estonian Section of IBBY.

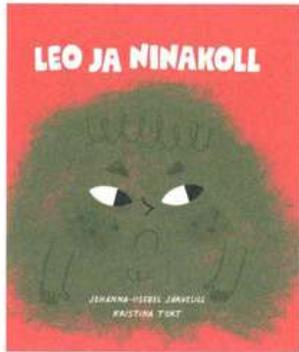


silent book • climate change • migration • helping • care for those in need



4+

getting a cold • toddlers refusing to blow their noses • imaginary friend • bullying • kindness



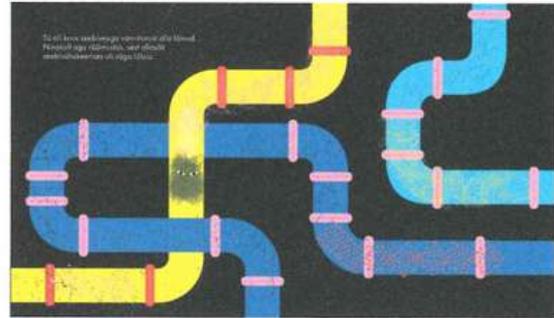
## Leo and the Bogey-Man

Written by Johanna-Iisabel Järvelill  
Illustrated by Kristina Tort

Varrak, 2021  
210 x 241 mm, 32 pp  
ISBN 9789985351017



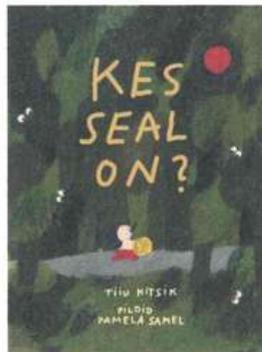
Leo went for a swim at the pool, but on his way home he caught a chill and is now down with the flu. Leo doesn't like to blow his nose and refuses to take any medicine. Instead, Leo wipes his nose on the sofa. The Bogey-Man, who Leo wiped out, doesn't want to stay put on the sofa, he wants to play with Leo instead. Leo is kind enough to agree, but it turns out the Bogey-Man is rather horrible and mean. What on earth should Leo do now?



**Johanna-Iisabel Järvelill** (1987) was born in Võru, and holds an MA in geocology from Tallinn University and a PhD in ecology. Järvelill began writing children's stories while working on her doctoral dissertation, ideas that were already spinning around her head and had been told to her own children long before. *Leo and the Bogey-Man* is her first children's book.

**Kristina Tort** (1985) grew up on the island of Hiiumaa and received a degree in graphic design from the Estonian Academy of Arts. She has illustrated and designed children's books and collaborated with magazines including *Täheke*, *Hea Laps*, *Pere & Kodu*, and *Mesimumm*. Tort designs posters, postcards, educational materials, brochures, large-scale illustrations, and much more. She has taught illustration at the Estonian Academy of Arts since 2019, and also works as a freelance illustrator.





**Who's There?**  
**Written by Tiiu Kitsik**  
**Illustrated by Pamela Samel**  
 Koolibri, 2022  
 210 x 286 mm, 22 pp  
 ISBN 9789985047996



Three little elephant kids, Stella, Leo, and Karl, play together in the woods near their home. It's so fun to build forts and play hide-and-go-seek! The hours fly by and, before they know it, it starts to get dark. Now is the elephants' last chance to go home. On the way, Karl realises his key is no longer in his pocket. "What now?!" he cries in dismay. "You're the one who lost it, so you're the one who has to find it," Stella says as she grabs their little brother Leo's hand and marches away. Karl has no choice but to head back into the woods alone, even though he's terrified. The wind sighs in the trees and he starts to hear creepy noises. Who is rustling in the brush, refusing to come out?



feelings • emotions • fear • speaking up about emotions • siblings



**Tiiu Kitsik** (1981) is a visual artist, illustrator, and children's author. She graduated from Tallinn University in advertising and media and has also worked in the field. Kitsik is a co-founder of the Estonian crowdfunding platform Hooandja, where she has worked for several years. She has written four children's books and contributed to the children's magazines *Hea Laps*, *Täheke*, and *Mesimumm*. She lives and works as a freelance artist in Berlin.

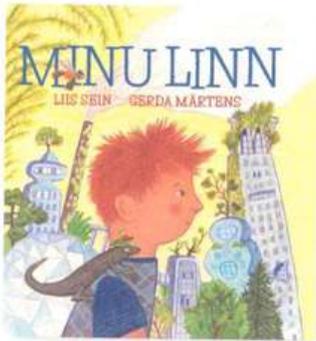
**Pamela Samel** (1985) graduated in art education from Tallinn University in 2007 and acquired a second bachelor's degree in textile design from the Estonian Academy of Arts in 2014.

She has illustrated newspapers, magazines, and internet publications. Samel received third place in the Knee-High Book Contest, which encouraged her to dabble more in the field. *Who's There* is her debut as a children's book illustrator.



5+

climate change • green environment • caring • greenhouse • awareness

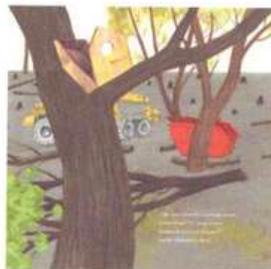


**My City**  
**Written by Liis Sein**  
**Illustrated by Gerda Märtens**

Päike ja Pilv, 2021  
 214 x 216 mm, 36 pp  
 ISBN 9789916630044



Hugo has built a grand city. He has filled it with skyscrapers, shopping centres, and gas stations. There is even a little greenhouse made from a small, see-through cake box. His great city fills an entire room! When Mom asks Hugo to get some herbs from the real greenhouse outside, he jumps up with a start and the city collapses. In the greenhouse, Hugo notices that the plants are no longer as lush as they used to be, that the bugs and birds, and mice and moles have disappeared. Hugo gets frightened and rushes back inside. Now he starts to build a totally different city. The kind where everyone can live happily.



**Liis Sein** (1983) is a playwright and children's author. She graduated from Tallinn University in adult education and has trained in playwriting and creative writing. Sein currently works as an administrative assistant at the Estonian Children's Literature Centre. She has written seven children's books and won the Knee-High Book Competition in 2019.

Sein conveys the world through children's eyes such that adults also see it as a bigger, brighter, and more lucid place.

**Gerda Märtens** (1987) is an illustrator and an art teacher. She holds a master's degree in printmaking from the Estonian Academy of Arts; has studied illustration at the Academy of Arts in Macerata, Italy; and participated in the New York School of Visual Arts' Summer Illustration Residency Program. Märtens has illustrated seven children's books and regularly collaborates with the Estonian children's magazine *Täheke*. She is a highly unique, talented illustrator whose visual style blends influences from the Estonian and Italian schools in the best way imaginable.





### The Great Knight

**Written and illustrated by Kristi Kangilaski**

Päike ja Pilv, 2021  
 195 x 257 mm, 32 pp  
 ISBN 9789916630006

Rights sold: South-Korea

The King gave the Knight a sword and a shield before he left on a long journey. While the King is away, the Knight feels it's his duty to protect the Queen, a difficult task, indeed! Today, they are going out on a dangerous errand. The great Knight dons his knight's jacket, pulls on his knight's pants, and crowns his head with a knight's hat – pom-pom and all. Before he goes, the Knight grabs his sword and shield – now, he's ready to defend his Queen. He bravely guides her to the library through the city so they can check out books about tractors, backhoes, and dinosaurs. Once they finally return home to the castle, the Knight is all tuckered out. Now, it's the Queen's turn to take care of him!

**Award:** 2021 Nominee of the Annual Children's Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia

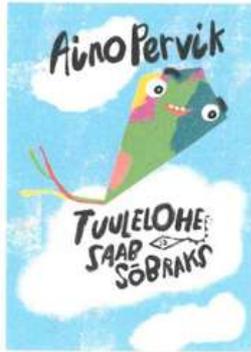


bravery • care • responsibility



**Kristi Kangilaski** (1982) is an illustrator, book designer, graphic designer, and author of children's books. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic design, but loves writing as much as she loves drawing. She also illustrates for various magazines, designs posters, and teaches art at the Viljandi Art School. Her books have been translated into several languages and she has received numerous awards for the works she has written and/or illustrated. Kangilaski's book *Tiu and the Dove* was included in the 2015 White Ravens catalogue. Her illustrations are inquisitive and experiment with a rather wide range of techniques. Kangilaski is a member of the Estonian Graphic Designers' Association.





## The Kite Spreads Friendship

Written by Aino Pervik

Illustrated by Ulla Saar

Taanapäev 2021

150 x 216 mm, 64 pp

ISBN 9789916171066

One fine day, a kite is born. This kite is over the moon about himself. And why shouldn't he be? He has big eyes that show him quite a lot, a mouth that lets him speak, and a tail of colourful ribbons that wave proudly behind him in the breeze. The kite doesn't like being tied to his master's string, so he decides to break free and explore. One new encounter after another shows the kite how diverse the world can be and how many different beings live here. The discovery makes him consider who he really is, what he yearns for, and what's important in life.

**Award:** 2021 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, Special Prize of the Jury



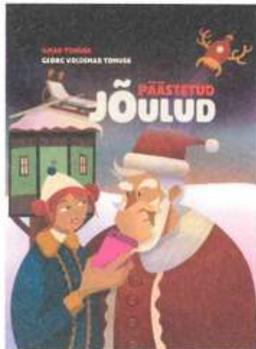
**Aino Pervik** (1932) is one of the most influential authors of modern Estonian children's literature. She graduated from Tartu State University in 1955 with a degree in Finno-Ugric philology. Pervik has lived in Tallinn since 1955.

She worked at the Estonian State Publishing House as an editor of children's and young-adult literature, and at the Estonian Television studio as an editor of programs for the same age group. Since 1967, she has also worked as a freelance writer and Hungarian translator.

**Ulla Saar** (1975) is an illustrator and graphic artist. She graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in product design. Her first illustrated book *Lift* achieved immediate widespread recognition and was listed in the 2014 White Ravens catalogue.

Since then, every one of her books has received international attention. Saar practices a contemporary, design-like approach to book illustration: her spirited and playful art is often more a part of the work's overall design than free-standing pictures.





### Saving Christmas

Written by Ilmar Tomusk and Georg Voldemar Tomusk  
 Illustrated by Karel Korp

Tammerraamat 2021  
 207 x 274 mm, 36 pp  
 ISBN 9789949690893

Snow has blanketed the little town of Viljandi. The smell of gingerbread drifts in the air. Everyone's waiting for Santa! The clock strikes eight, then ten, but the big man in the red coat still hasn't shown up. Mirjam, Taavet, and Naatan start to lose hope, so they decide to climb up to the attic and see if he's on the roof, too shy to come in. There's no one there, but they do notice strange lights on the town's water tower. When they arrive, they find that Santa landed his sleigh there. Why did Old St. Nick stop at the water tower instead of the main square, and how can they get him down so that Christmas can go on?

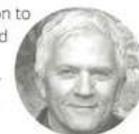


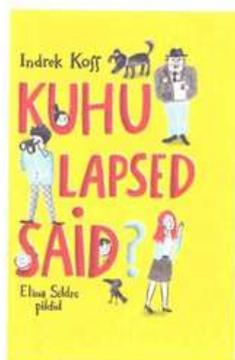
Christmas • Santa Claus • collaboration • helping



**Ilmar Tomusk** (1964) graduated from the Tallinn Pedagogical Institute in Estonian language and literature education, and currently works as Chief Director of the Estonian Language Inspectorate. Tomusk has written more than 30 children's books. His humorous stories, which alternate between elements of realism and fantasy, tell of clever, busy children's everyday activities and adventures. Testament to his popularity among young readers are his three Nukits Awards in addition to several other reader's-choice prizes.

**Karel Korp** (1967) graduated in art education and drawing from the Tallinn Pedagogical Institute in 1993. He is a head of the Estonian Graphic Designers' Association and the member of the board for its creative committee. In addition to illustrating children's books, Karel Korp has created illustrations for Eesti Pank, the Estonian Financial Supervision and Resolution Authority, the Chancellor of Justice, the Estonian Employer's Confederation, the Estonian Cooperation Assembly.





**Where'd the Kids Go?**

**Written by Indrek Koff**

**Illustrated by Elina Sildre**

Härä Tee & proua Kohvi, 2021

147 x 214 mm, 70 pp

ISBN 9789916964927

Rights sold: Latvia

Life couldn't be better in the bustling little village. That is until the day all the kids decide to run away because they've been bossed around too much; leaving their parents devastated. The grown-ups miss all the shouts of glee and the children running around, playing hopscotch, and jumping in the leaves. The mayor dispatches the army, the teacher tries luring them back with cake and candy, ornery Uncle Rein makes angry threats, and the conductor tries using Mozart and Bach, but nothing works. How can they tempt the kids to come home so there's life in the village again?

**Awards:** 2020 Raisin of the Year award for the most remarkable children's book of the year  
2021 25 Best-Designed Estonian Books, Certificate of Merit  
2021 Nominee of the Annual Children's Literature Award of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia



**Indrek Koff** (1975) is a writer, translator, and publisher who graduated from the University of Tartu in French language and literature. He writes for both children and adults, translates French and Portuguese literature into Estonian, and runs a publishing house. Koff has written twelve children's books and several plays (in collaboration with Eva Koff). The author's works are characterised by compact writing in broad strokes, occasional inner monologues, and alternating viewpoints.

**Elina Sildre** (1980) is an illustrator and comic artist who graduated from the Estonian Academy of Arts in graphic design. She has illustrated over 30 children's books and contributed to the children's magazines *Täheke* and *Mesimumm*. Sildre has also created illustrations and comics for anthologies, textbooks, and activity books. The artist has been awarded in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books and the Knee-High Book competitions.



## A Happy Town

Everybody likes our town  
A visit turns frowns upside down

Our uncles smile and share their joys  
As if they were much younger boys

Our aunties love to dance and whirl  
As if they were much younger girls

And yet this pains the tender hearted  
As our dear children have departed

Yes - yesterday they just upped and left.

They felt we thought of them as fools  
And crushed their souls with stupid rules

Come over here! Go over there!  
Clean your teeth! Brush your hair!

Don't make noise, or shriek or talk  
Line up nicely when you walk

Make sure your clothes are properly pressed  
And check you are correctly dressed  
No phones for you, no friends, no fun  
Well, only when your homework's done  
And as for letting you go online  
Well we think it's a waste of time

"That's enough! We need some space  
We're leaving for a different place

Somewhere without so much fuss  
Where we can be truly us

The time has come for us to go  
We're leaving now, so Cheerio!"

And there they were – gone.

*Translated by Nikky Smedley*





**If I Were a Grandma**

**Written by Indrek Koff**  
**Illustrated by Kadi Kurema**

Härä Tee & proua Kohvi, 2021  
168 x 231 mm, 48 pp



If I were a grandma, then I'd be a sprightly little old lady. My heart would be big enough to fit in each and every one of my grandchildren – all 77 of them, at least! And I'd have gigantic, burly muscles for tossing them all into the air at once. Still, my hands would be as soft as downy feathers so that whenever I comforted and cuddled them, they'd know any problem would go away in seconds. I'd run around and roughhouse and play with my grandkids, tell them bedtime stories, and push them on the garden swing. They'd be as good as can be and would never get into trouble! And whenever I felt worn out and needed a break, I'd throw them the best party that 77 grandkids could ever dream of.



**Indrek Koff** (1975) is a writer, translator, and publisher who graduated from the University of Tartu in French language and literature. He writes for both children and adults, translates French and Portuguese literature into Estonian, and runs a publishing house. Koff has written twelve children's books and several plays (in collaboration with Eva Koff). The author's works are characterised by compact writing in broad strokes, occasional inner monologues, and alternating viewpoints.

**Kadi Kurema** (1963) is an illustrator and printmaker who graduated in graphic arts from the Estonian Academy of Arts. She has illustrated 18 children's books and collaborates regularly with the Estonian children's literary magazine *Täheke*. Kurema has been awarded for her works in the 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books competition. The artist's illustrations, which are entrancing and packed with provoking ideas, mix etching with other techniques while using very little colour.





### How I'd Raise My Grandkids

If I were a grandma, then I'd raise my grandkids so well that they wouldn't even realise I was helping them grow. They'd always listen because they'd love me and understand that I know how things work, and know a whole lot of things in general. I'd be like their teacher! Now that I think about it, I reckon I'd sometimes listen to what they had to say because my grandkids would be very, very smart and would also have a pretty good handle on the way things work. Every time they got ready to go home, I'd be amazed by how much we'd grown in the time they were here. Not taller or wider, but kind of a little . . . more mature.

Sometimes my grandkids would pitch a fit, and I'd let them pitch it until they'd finished. I might even pitch a fit along with them, because pitching a fit alone is really no fun. It wouldn't be a very bad one, though, because a room packed with kids pitching fits is actually a pretty funny picture and we'd realise it ourselves before long, too. By the end, we'd be laughing so hard that our bellies hurt. It'd even be a little hard to breathe after that sort of good old laugh!

My grandkids would want to spend some time on their phones and computers every day. I wouldn't be all that interested, because I'd be a grandma and grandmas don't like phones and computers very much. It'd be a bit of a shame, of course, because I do like the thing that replaces your face with a cat head. That's hilarious! All in all, I'd have a lot of other fun and interesting things to do and wouldn't regret it at all. What's more, my grandkids would soon see that spending time with me was much more fun and interesting. They'd help me do trapeze tricks and juggle clubs and learn to walk a tightrope. But whenever I got tired from climbing around and doing other circus stuff (even I would get tired every now and then), I'd sit in my rocking chair and read old books or think about all

the incredible things I'd done over my life and how I might tell my grandkids about them.

At night, I'd always tuck my grandkids into bed. I'd tell them such exciting bedtime stories that they'd fall asleep right in the middle of each and every one. The only problem would be that they'd never find out how the stories end . . . After I'd finished, I'd give them each a goodnight kiss on the cheek. Goodnight kisses are a very important part of raising children.

*Translated by Adam Cullen*





## The Potato's Kingdom

Written by Helena Koch

Illustrated by Anne Pikkov

Koolibri, 2021

170 x 226 mm, 40 pp

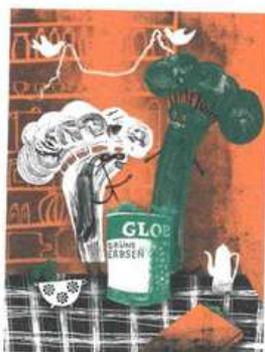
ISBN 9789985046227

Rights sold: Finnish



There sure is a lot going on in Auntie Tiia's vegetable patch! The cauliflower's deepest desire is to get married, the carrots are solving the mystery of the baby carrots, the onion wants to become a stand-up comedian, and the tiny pea is crying her eyes out from loneliness. The chili and the bell pepper cannot figure out who is related to whom, the pumpkin growing in the far corner yearns for a more central position, and the radish does not want to become a salad, but to go on a round-the-world trip. It's no wonder that the potato who rules over this kingdom is completely exhausted by the autumn.

**Award:** 2021 5 Best-Designed Estonian Children's Books, Certificate of Merit



**Helena Koch** (1989) was born in Põlva, and has a BA in literature and theatre studies from the University of Tartu and an MA from Berlin Humboldt University in European literature studies. She has completed additional training in the Free University of Berlin, in the University of Konstanz, and attended Drakadeemia playwriting courses. Helena Koch has written 3 children's books.

**Anne Pikkov** (1974) is an illustrator, graphic designer, and book designer. She graduated in graphic design from the Estonian Academy of Arts. She has worked at an advertising agency, and as a visiting professor and the Vice Rector of Academic Affairs at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Pikkov has illustrated 16 children's books and contributed to the Estonian magazines *Täheke*, *Pere ja Kodu*, and *Jamie*. She has received many awards at annual Estonian book design and illustration competitions. Her art is ornamental, laconic, spiced with humour, and evocatively expressive.



## The Onion's Tears

**T**he onion was having a hard time – all the other vegetables were avoiding him. There was a rumour going around the field that anyone who talked to him would start crying. Even vegetables who had never spoken to the onion were keeping their distance, just to be safe.

In his family, the onion was known as a jokester and the life of the party. The shallots and pearl onions were especially fond of his humour. But even though the onion tried to convince himself that the attention of his closest relatives was enough, he gradually became unhappy.

Secretly, the onion dreamed of becoming a stand-up comedian and making big crowds laugh. He knew the vegetables on the field would be more than enough for an audience. Still, all of them scurried away the moment he walked past.

On a couple of occasions, the onion tried to blend into a crowd of other vegetables, even disguising himself as a potato! But when the potatoes started counting off as they usually did, they quickly figured out who was extra and the poor onion's cover was blown.

The onion felt very sad. So sad that tears welled up in his eyes. A life without jokes seemed pointless, but what was the point of coming up with jokes when you couldn't share them with the world?

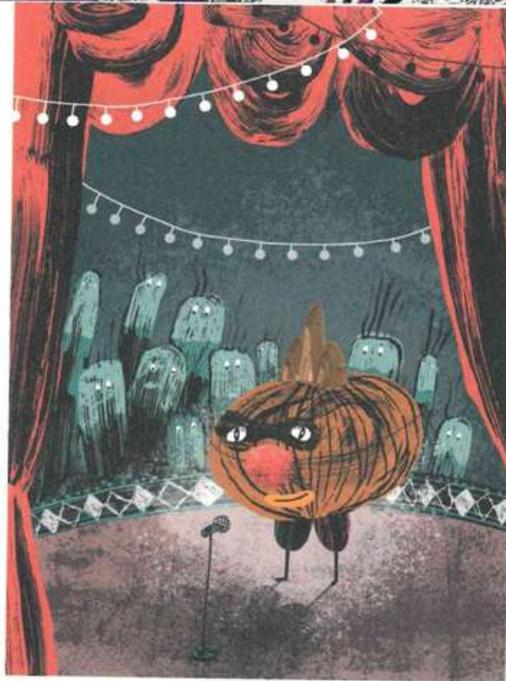
One day, a new vegetable moved onto the field – a leek. The newcomer was excited to meet everyone, so she organised a garden party and invited the whole neighbourhood.

The onion decided to show up early so he could get to know her a little better in private. His jokes were a hit with his new neighbour, and he quickly won her over. But as soon as the other vegetables showed up and spotted him, they turned right back around to leave.

"Hey, everybody," the onion called out, trying to stop them. "I only make humans cry, not other vegetables! You don't have to be afraid of me!"

The vegetables completely ignored the onion, and the number of guests kept shrinking.

Not wanting the leek's party to be ruined, the onion decided to go home himself. The leek stopped him, though, and whispered: "Tell them one of your jokes!"



So, the onion worked up his courage and said loudly:

"Lots of people cry when they chop onions. But we're the ones heading for the frying pan!"

A few of the vegetables on their way out paused and gaped at the onion. Bolder ones chuckled to themselves.

"Honey, why are you crying?" "Because of the onion!" "Jeez Louise! You vegans..." the onion continued, growing more and more confident.

Now, the guests were even laughing.

The onion kept telling more jokes. At first, he didn't dare tease any vegetables other than onions, but before long, he gave the tomatoes, green beans, and others a chance to laugh at themselves, too. Soon, the roaring laughter coming from the garden party persuaded the rest of the vegetables to return.

They all laughed so hard that there were tears in their eyes.

*Translated by Adam Cullen*



## ANNEX II

### STORIES FROM CHILDREN TO CHILDREN

#### THE MAKING OF A STORY BOOK FROM CHILDREN FOR CHILDREN

While observing young children play, each spectator interprets the playing in his own way, using his own frame of reference. Young children can't explain yet what they're playing. Still, we liked to gather and share some of their narrative stories in a book. To avoid putting words into children's mouths, we've chosen illustrated poems to describe the children's play.

By using poetry, the reader gives meaning and interpretation to the words, like teachers and parents interpret the narrative story of the children.

Each poem is illustrated by a 'homemade' visual, produced either by the children (4-6 years) themselves, or, for the youngest children (1-3 years), by teachers and parents, derived from the documented narrative story.

In this "making of" we share our ways to develop these illustrated poems.



#### Step 1:

##### Document the narrative story (at least 4 parts) – see handbook Narrate

- Document the children's narrative story by filming and taking pictures
  - Divide the narrative story into 4 interesting parts
  - Choose what video to use for the story
- In case the narrative story was very short:
  - Continue/expand your narrative approach for at least 4 sessions in total
  - Observe what the children are interested in / triggered by.
  - Document this playing by video and photographs.
  - In case you could not document the first activity/interest, relaunch the interest by re-using what triggered the children. (object, music, movement, image, temperature...)
  - Observe closely, watch the video, exchange with colleagues about the playing, show the video to the parents or older children to truly understand the child's playing.
  - Continue/ relaunch the activity until you have a sequel of 4 parts/sessions. Make sure to document each part of the narrative story.

#### Step 2:

##### Gather information (when working with young children that don't talk yet)

During the narrative story:

- Ask older children about the younger ones (in case the younger can't talk yet)
  - What is s.he playing?
  - Why does s.he does this?

After the narrative story:

- Show photos and videos to the parents of the children involved
  - Do you recognize this play?
  - Can you tell us more about it?

#### Step 3:

##### Prepare pictures

- Select a few pictures depicting each part of the narrative story
- Print the pictures (e.g. size A5)

#### Step 4:

##### Discuss each part of the sequel

- Watch the video you've selected from the narrative story
- Share the information you've gathered already (step 2)
- Discuss with colleagues / parents and write down

- What do you see?
- What you think/believe/presume the children were playing/interested in?
- Organize the answers in a table
- Make sure you cover 4 sequels of the narrative play

Example:

WHAT DO YOU SEE?	WHAT DO YOU THINK?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children go in and out the cardboard box</li> <li>• Children close the box from the outside</li> <li>• Child tries to close the box from the inside</li> <li>• Child takes a blanket inside the box</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children use the box as a tunnel</li> <li>• Children play hide and seek</li> <li>• Children create their tiny house</li> <li>• ...</li> </ul>

### Step 5: Look at poems

- Gather a few illustrated poems; chose poems with short combinations of words, not full sentences (combinations of words, more than full sentences, better reflect the children’s playing + the teacher’s interpretation + leaves room for interpretation by the reader)
- Hang the poems on a window or spread out on a table
- Give time for the participants to read different poems in order to get more familiar with this way of expression and to get inspired
- Pay attention to both text and illustration

### Step 6: Gather words for each part of the sequel

- Make a table of 5 columns on a big paper.
- Each column gathers a different type of words, described in the tasks below.

1 keywords	2 describe	3 colors	4 alliterations	5 rhyme
'gone' cardboard box in - out open - close blanket cozy house ...	Can't see him anymore	brown pink(c)astle  <i>sounds</i> aïe aïe broom	box beyond bottle brown box bring	Close, rose, dose, hose, brose

### "KEYWORDS"

In the first column, write down about 20 keywords you associate with the narrative play you’ve watched. Think about different types of words: verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs. It can also be short descriptions of 2-3 words, but no sentences.

Be inspired by

- what you’ve written down in the ‘What I see/think’- table
- the words the children used
- the triggers you’ve observed/used

Make sure you cover the whole sequel of narrative play. (min. 4 parts)



## "DESCRIBE"

Describe words like sad, joy, play ... in a more precise way: 'doesn't want to get up', 'drives the car around', 'laughs out loud', 'runs towards friends'...

Write them down in the second column

## "COLORS"

Read the words you've written down aloud. Think of colors you associate with the story / the list of words / objects from the story. The colors can be invented / derived from / combined with words that have been written down. Write them down in the third column.

\*According to your preference or to what matches the story, you can also replace by / add: taste, feelings, smell, structure, numbers, shape ...

## "SOUNDS"

Still in the third column, underneath the colors, write down a few sounds

- Did the children make any sounds while playing? (onomatopoeia)
- What sounds do you associate with the playing?

## "ALLITERATION"

From all words you've written down so far, select 4 words you think are most meaningful to describe the playing. Circle these words.

For each of these 4 words, think of another 4 words that start with the same letter or sound. (alliteration) E.g. soap – slippery soap, stubborn soap, sliding soap, stinky soap

Write down 4x4 alliterations in the fourth column.

## "RHYME"

From all words you've written down so far, select 4 words you think are most meaningful to describe the playing. Circle these words.

For each of these 4 words, think of another 4 words that start with the same letter or sound. (alliteration) E.g. soap – slippery soap, stubborn soap, sliding soap, stinky soap

Write down 4x4 alliterations in the fourth column.

## Step 7: Combine words

Don't start writing sentences!

And in case they've been already written down, oblige yourself to continue the exercise to improve the original text you've written.

- Take a blank paper next to your table from the previous tasks.
- Make meaningful combinations of the words you've written down:

E.g. smashing slippery soap, white bubbles balancing, round faces, squared boxes, ...

You can decide to divide the group into 2 or 4 subgroups, so that every person/subgroup works on one or 2 stanza/sequels. In the end, you can bring all together and you've written a poem!

## Step 8: Write a poem

Take another blank paper. Your meaningful combinations of words are your starting point. Leave blank between every line you write, so that you can still add more words / lines in between.

- Switch your word combinations into a logic order
- Add single words / sounds in between

(not necessary to combine with words, it can be a separate line of the poem)

- Add content to your meaningful combination of words

(not necessary to make full sentences)

- Write and rewrite
- Combine, add, change, leave out ...
- Reorganize once more

(the order possibly changes several times)

## Step 9: CELEBRATE!

Read your poem a few times aloud.

Once you're happy with the result, you can celebrate and combine with the illustration you've created with each part of the sequel.

## LIST OF MATERIALS

- Video!
- Pens
- Big paper, divided into 5 columns
- Extra blank paper

## HOW TO ILLUSTRATE THE NARRATIVE POEM – FOR THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN

### Step 1: choose a picture

Look at the pictures of the narrative play. Choose a picture for each of the 4 sequels. Considers what depicts the story best.

### Step 2: draw

Put a blank paper on top of your photograph and hold both papers to the window. Overdraw the main lines you want to use in your illustration with a pencil:

- You can overdraw the full picture
- You can choose to overdraw just the parts you would like to use
- You can separate background from foreground and change the positioning
- You can leave information from the picture out of the illustration (toys, children, background...)
- You can put parts of the image on a different place in your illustration
- You can separate or enlarge a detail of the illustration to use as an extra illustration
- ...

### Step 3: Color

If necessary, you can glue your drawing on thicker paper.

For coloring, you use your preferred materials:

- Pencils
- Crayon
- Paint
- Magazine / wrapping paper (collage)
- ...

Make sure to push hard while coloring with pencil or crayon.

At the end, you can choose where to pass with your black fine liner.

! Careful, the fine liner does not like crayon! If they touch, the fine liner becomes useless.

### Step 4: combine with the poem

Read the poem of your colleagues and show them your illustration. Discuss:

- Does the text need a particular lay-out?
- Where will you put text and illustration?
- Do you want to repeat a detail of the illustration elsewhere on the page?

Enjoy the final touch and celebrate when you're happy with the result!

## LIST OF MATERIALS

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Photographs! (printed)    | • Black fine liner pen (0,4mm) |
| • Coloring pencils, crayons | • Glue stick                   |
| • Scissors                  | • Magazine paper               |
| • Rulers                    | • Thick paper A4               |
| • Pencils, rubbers          | • Blank white paper            |



## SOME EXAMPLES OF THE CREATION PROCESS

### “Bird in danger” and “The four princesses at Rapunzel’s party”– Sweden

When we worked in the Mamma Mia Pizzeria project, we asked the children who they would like to invite to dinner. The children began to talk about who they wanted to offer a party and what pastries or food they wanted their guests to have. We teachers asked the children if they would like to create a story or a kind of cookbook where they could draw, paint, and tell. It became the starting point for the children’s own stories for a storybook.

#### Selection of material from the teachers

We bought black waterproof felt-tip pens so that the children could first draw and then color with watercolor. Children like to use water paint and mix to different shades. We noticed that the children put a lot of effort into choosing colors, one girl chose to paint most of it in pink. They drew details and decorative elements. The atmosphere in the room was cheerful and lively. The children talked to each other while drawing. They listened with great interest to each other’s stories and looked at each other’s illustrations. They were really interested in the work of their friends.



#### One image at a time

The children worked with one image and one sequence of events at a time. Sometimes the child continued a picture that had not been finished since the last time. We offered several opportunities for this creation until they thought they had created/finished painting for their stories.

#### Original stories become side stories

The children were so fond of the characters they had illustrated and wanted to play with them. We copied these and laminated them so that they could be a part of the children’s playing and constructions. Many new stories were born thanks to these characters.

#### Asking productive questions

We didn’t want to influence the children’s creation of their stories, but sometimes we asked questions to make a story with coherence between the images in the story. We also wanted to bring in poetic elements such as sounds, descriptions of how the characters in the story felt, or how the food tasted, or how something smelled. We also borrowed poetry books from the library to be inspired what poetry can be. One child also wanted to strengthen the story with real sounds. We solved this by recording the sounds and putting this as a QR code into the story.

#### Interest in the written language

Some children have written some of the text themselves for the story, but we teachers have written down what the children have told on the various occasions and gathered the text into a longer narrative. During this work, we saw how the children’s interest in the written language also increased and their willingness to write and produce written words themselves.



#### We meet again

The children’s stories were just finished when it was time for summer vacation. We saved the stories at the preschool. When the autumn semester started up, these children had started preschool class at school. We invited them to the preschool again so they could meet old friends and tell them their stories. Before it was time to read their stories for the friends. We read them together and heard if they wanted to make any changes to the story. The children changed some things and came up with the titles of the stories, “A bird in danger” and “The story about the princess” Then it was time to tell and show the stories to the preschool friends (who are a little younger). The children wanted help from the teacher to read out the content, so we helped each other. The audience listened with great interest and was captivated by the content of the stories. We clearly see that the children’s way of telling and expressing themselves with these stories captivates other children.

We educators asked the question to the “authors”:

Are the stories finished or can they have a continuation?

No, they should have a continuation, the “authors” reply.

But we can get them ready! the children who have listened to the stories respond.

We see it as a great opportunity to construct new stories that can become continuations of the original stories.

#### A new story has started

We provide opportunities for the children to continue the original stories that have been created. A teacher reads out the story “Bird in Danger”. We ask the children the question again:

–Is the story over? Or could it have a continuation?

“It may have a continuation of what happens when the bird comes home from the hospital.”



The children were given paper and pens to draw and tell what happens in the story.

“The mother is waiting at home and says hello when the bird came home. They played on the mat which then started spinning but everyone could stay put because they were heavy. After the game, they went to the table and ate cookies”.

It is for us the first time that we have worked with children's stories in this way but certainly not the last.

It is for us the first time that we have worked with children's stories in this way but certainly not the last. We see that the children are involved with great interest and pride in their stories. We see great opportunities in using children's individual stories to create a mix of different stories that can create a diversity of more a different way of telling.

### Airplane story – Estonia

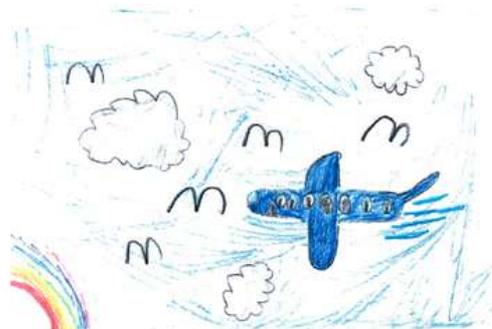
The children played freely. One boy came up with an airplane game and directed others to play it. I filmed them playing and another teacher took photos.

The next day we watched this movie together with the children. A couple of kids laughed. When I wrote the poem, I used the sentences the children said while watching the movie.

I asked the children what sentences we could write at the beginning of the poem. A girl said two sentences and a boy said two more sentences.

This is how the poem that we wrote down came into being.

I printed out two photos. The children copied the photo on paper and coloured it. We analyzed the content of the poem and the children suggested what other things could be drawn to illustrate the poem. The children drew airplanes, clouds, rainbows and birds.



### Sea adventure of ladybirds – Estonia



One week, in our group of Lepatriinud (“Ladybirds”) we had a topic of sea creatures and sea vehicles – everything connected with the sea. Of big Lego blocks, children had an idea to build a passenger ship with a dining area. And they had other ideas, as well, and that drove teachers to record everything by taking photographs and shooting videos. This game developed on, and then a new character was added – an evil shark starting to harass the crew of the ship... and there came the next great idea – quickly building another ship for rescue and one could see that children helped each other (swimming across the “sea”). It was great to observe how children's vocabulary developed, according to the topic. After the game, we all watched the video together and while discussing it, a small fairy tale grew out of that.

This was followed by an idea to draw a picture together about the sea adventure. And as each child tried to put themselves into the character's shoes, verbal comments were added to each character and the teachers recorded them. So, our mutual comic book “Sea adventure” was ready. Originally it was a poem, as children observed that some words rhymed and with the help of teachers, this fun poem was ready. When listening to it, children were drawing bigger pictures based on all four passages.

### Red Riding Hood at school – Italy

Teacher: “I'm going to get something...” (mystery). The children remain silent... they whisper. “In this little box is something precious...”

Child: “The photos!!!”

Teacher: “The cameras”

Child: “Look at them”

Teacher: “Why do we take pictures?”

Children: “To see beautiful things”, “because you like something”, “because we want to see smiles”, “when we do birthdays”, “like videos...I make them”, “you don't play with it (with the f. machine) or else it falls down”, “even when we make biscuits”.Teacher: “With photos we can tell things.”

Children: “Also to the little sisters”, “also to mums and dads”, “grandparents and uncles”. “Because otherwise they forget.”

Teacher: “How about now a little at a time you take your camera and take some photos? You can go and take them wherever you want, inside or outside. Maybe think about why you choose to take a photo there and then tell us about it!”



One points to their monster photos. Some go outside and start taking pictures. Another child photographs his companions and his shadow; one did not photograph anything. He goes out and tries again: “I photographed my feet and my trousers”. Another takes a photo of the garden. “I did that too!”, “If you open here it opens” (he is studying the instrument). “a kitchen because I liked it”



All took photos.

Together with the teacher they look at the photos they have taken, the teacher then prompts them to invent a story from looking at the photos.

A child proposed "Little Red Riding Hood!"

Teacher: "Let's try telling Little Red Riding Hood but in a different way..."



This is how the story came about in the Sante Zennaro municipal kindergarten. The children started to tell their story. Then we created a book with the pictures and the story so that they could leaf through it freely. We then decided to represent the story with the children so that their story would have their drawings.

Little Red Riding Hood takes a wrong turn one day and arrives at our school. Here he meets Haron and Lorenzo on the slide who are putting on their shoes... They say "Hi!" to each other. They also say that they are friends and that they are happy!

Afterwards they go to play in the park, and then Little Red Riding Hood wants to play in Vittoria's kitchen. Vittoria gives her permission and together they prepare spaghetti with ketchup for Haron and Lorenzo. Little Red Riding Hood, Haron and Lorenzo have gone to play in the little house and to rest.

When they wake up they find Cecilia taking pictures of her feet and legs. Cecilia gives her a kiss and cuddles her. Inside the school Little Red Riding Hood sees monsters and gets scared!!!

There is also a witch!!! Little Red Riding Hood gives Haron and Lorenzo his hand and they run away together into the woods. The witch chases them because she has her broomstick and casts a spell to turn them into frogs. Near the tree the frogs find the potions to become normal children again. Then they take the potion and give it to the witch to drink and do to her what she did to them: they turn her into a cat. After this adventure, Little Red Riding Hood, dead tired, goes to school to rest with the turtles.



## The Vegetaple Garden – Belgium



Elmer West is located next to a social economy organisation with an urban farming project. We have easy access to and are always welcome to visit 'La Petite Senne', a big organic vegetable garden that lies next to our service's backyard. At the very back of this vegetable garden, there's a compost heap. Since we have a lot of fruit peels on the daily, each group has small green buckets that the kids can use to carry the fruit peels to the compost heap themselves.

We try to go out to the garden with two or three kids every day, their buckets filled with peels from apples, pears, oranges ... One day, we spotted a neighborhood cat whom the children were very excited about. Ever since, we've encountered the cat on multiple occasions and the kids look for it when it's not there. Just like the fruit peels and the vegetable garden, the cat became a big part of our narrative story.

In autumn, the kids were also very fascinated by the brown leaves on the ground. They loved stepping on them, hearing them crunch underneath their rain boots. More often than not, it was difficult to get them away from the leaves. So we decided to return to the garden with empty buckets and fill them with leaves. Once inside, we spread them out on the table and found ... a snail on top of one of them! Another animal that would come to play an essential role in the story. After looking at the snail and seeing it's slippery tracks, we decided to put some paint on the leaves to recreate the slimy feeling of the snail.



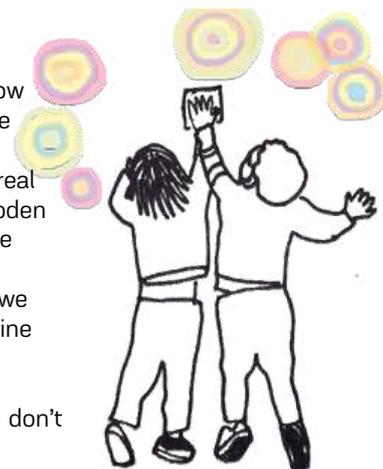
## Lights off, darkness on – Belgium

After their nap, the toddlers were playing with the light switch: on-off-on-off. We noticed how much fun they were having, so got a string of lights for them to play with. Coincidentally, the hangers on one of the strings had the form of different fruits.

We then proceeded to experiment with a light box and flashlights in combination with both real fruit and laminated drawings of fruit. The kids shone their torches into the holes of their wooden cube chairs, so we decided to put the fruits underneath them. They continued to look for the 'hidden' pieces of fruit with their flashlights.

We often visit the weekly fruit and vegetable market on the nearby town square. This time, we took some of the flashlights with us. The children spontaneously used their flashlights to shine into the stacked crates to look for fruit. Amazing!

After this series of narrative activities, we sat together with the daycare workers to create a poem. Since our children are between the ages of three and thirty months old, a lot of them don't speak yet or are unable to tell coherent stories.



Our version of their story is always an interpretation, so poetry seemed like a nice form of storytelling to us. The reader can then reinterpret the poem themselves, just like the childcare workers interpreted it for the children. We looked for words, sounds and combinations to express concisely what fascinated the children. During the whole process, we took a lot of photos, which we matched up with each stanza. The creation of the poems became an intense and collegial moment to process our daily activities. Writing poetry was completely new to us, and we needed each other to come up with the right words and associations. We exceeded our own expectations and became very proud of what we had written together while looking through the eyes of ‘our’ children.





