

“CHILDREN ACTING FOR WELLBEING IN AN OPEN-SCHOOL” CONFERENCE
13 MARCH, VENISSIEUX, FRANCE



PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL METHODS TO HELP CHILDREN LEARN FROM ARGUING

Within the frame of the Erasmus + Arguing at School project, the Forum of European Regions for Research Education and Training hosted an event about wellbeing in schools fostered by the Whole-school approach.

Arguing at school is a project led by the Psycho-pedagogical Center for education and conflict management with 9 partners from 6 countries of the European Union.



The day started with an ice breaker session with the Totem Game:

The Totem Game is a game aimed at valorising others' qualities and helping bond with each other. In our event we used this game and its cards to present ourselves with some valuable insights on who we are and why we are interested in the topic of conflict mediation.

In the room we had : a workaholic bee, a chameleon able to adapt to very various situations in the educational system, a wolf going with a pack, tiger, a coq waking up the community, a panda willing to make people comfortable, a perfectionist eagle, a chihuahua keeping its inner child expressing, a camel who walks a long road, a wood-pecker, an orca, a coordinating kangaroo jumping from tasks to tasks and many others. Try to find the 12 of them in the minutes!



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Why the Arguing at School project ?

Children need to learn from their environment and identify what they are experiencing in society. Children may then be playing war. In this journey it is crucial to enable them to understand the difference between conflicts and war. For the CPP, there is no need to avoid children conflict at all, but rather a need to create a suitable setting enabling conflict transformation and resolution. The right setting and the use of relevant tools may help children learn from conflictual situations. This approach and the tools identified in the Arguing at School project can be found on the project [website](#).

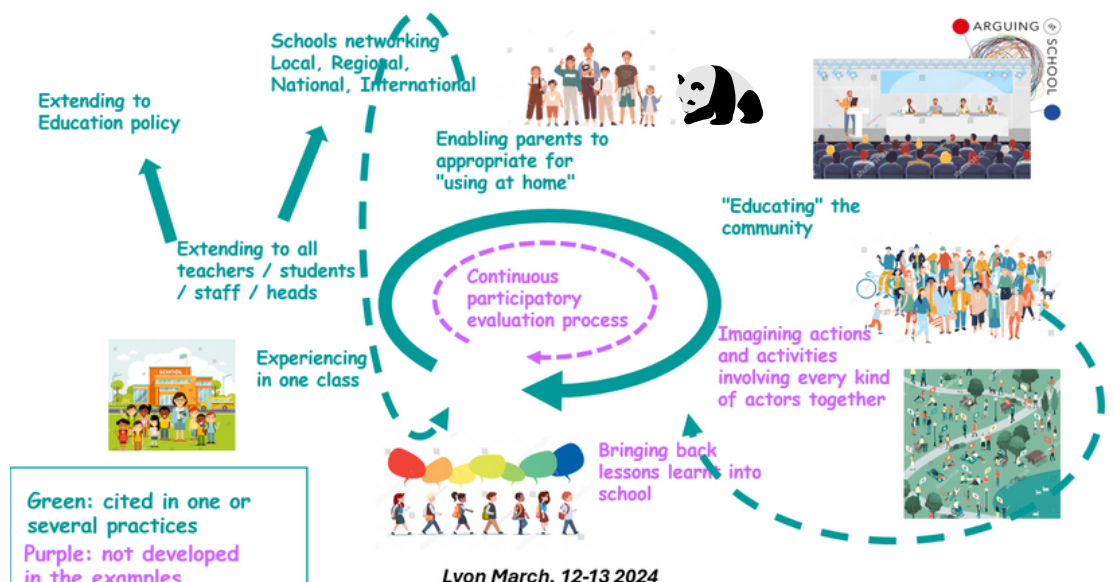


Painting of Francisco Goya - "Children fighting over chestnuts"- olio su tela, cm 29 x 41,

What is the Whole School Approach ?

The whole school approach intends to involve a wide community of actors around pupils and educational matters. The involvement of a whole set of actors around the children enables them to implement a cohesive and effective practice of conflict management, with a continuum from school to the home passing by the civil society.

The project presents how the whole school approach could be implemented regarding pupils quarrels and conflict mediation in Guidelines, addressed to newcomers and more experienced actors. The guidelines include some key concepts; a synthesis of the practices and examples coming from the survey among the project partners; elements coming from the practice survey and an indicative process to implement a whole school approach to wellbeing at school and benefiting from arguing





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World Café

1) The classroom, the school, the parents

Space for parents initiative / Open days

Meeting with psycho-social professionals

PARENTS

Interpreters if needed

Practice of the school brought in the home

Neutral place
Online place
"win-win posture"

Periodical informal meetings
"School Café"
Games

Needs of each actor

Arguing = life skill

Joint activities

Information for parents

Allowing the expression of various points of view

SCHOOL

Activities in the school for parents (workshops)

Institutional entry point

2) taking the school in the city and the city in the school

Simplified administrative procedures

- having specialists in school is good the problem is getting the green light from the government;
- this process takes time, but it is important to persevere;
- time consuming, money consuming, but extremely valuable;

Enabling legal frame

- facilitating inclusion of external actors;
- supporting teachers in organising activities (responsibility).

Governance

- children municipality council;
- students' assemblies may invite mediators to talk about arguing well;
- links between school councils and municipality governments mediation and mediators from civil society in the schools and vice versa.

Awareness of the initiatives "outside"

- open school festival to all people
- gardening at school;
- festival / events for families to spread knowledge;
- intergenerational learning trough reading and discussing.

Mobility:

- transnational
- across sectors
- for every education type: formal, dual, professional, etc.
- use mobility (as in Erasmus but not only);
- informal teaching, teach through projects, service learning, formal and informal learning.

Create spaces where you can "speak about, create your own place



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Awareness of the initiatives "outside"

- open school festival to all people
- gardening at school;
- festival / events for families to spread knowledge;
- intergenerational learning trough reading and discussing;
- opportunity for new learning contents and new actors involved in school activities through a different school
- bring the extra-curricular activities in the school premisses
- learning citizenship "outside" and bringing it into the curriculum

Extra-curricula activities

- national program, a one-week planned for activities different from "regular" curriculum;
- good results for active schools, less for disadvantaged ones;
- plans for additional support, methodological and financial;
- school holiday programs;
- the "different week";
- pilot programmes for primary schools;
- "whole day programme" with agreed associations

3) Impacts and benefits

The EPALE Erasmus + Space "Arguing at School – Psychopedagogical methodes to help children learn from arguing" has been launched ! Join the group if you are interested in the discussion.

The screenshot shows the EPALE website interface. At the top, there is the European Commission logo and navigation links for 'English', 'Notifications', and 'Julie Raouane'. Below this is a dark blue navigation bar with links for 'EPALE', 'Contribute', 'Collaborate', 'Learn', 'MyCommunity', 'EU Policy', 'About', and 'MyEPALE'. The main content area has a pink header for the group 'Arguing at School - Psychopedagogical Methods to Help Children Learn from Arguing', featuring a tiger illustration and a tree icon. Below the header, there are links for 'Overview', 'Latest Content', 'Events', and 'Documents'. The breadcrumb trail reads 'EPALE > Collaborate > Erasmus+Space > Arguing at School - Psychopedagogical Methods to Help Children Learn from Arguing'. The main content area displays the group logo, which includes the text 'ARGUING SCHOOL' and a tangled ball of colorful lines. To the right of the logo is a search bar with the text 'Search inside group' and a 'Request membership' button. The search bar contains the text 'Enter keywords' and a 'Search' button.



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Keynote Speech

Mrs Angélique Figari – Maison de l'Apprendre, Lyon

Mrs Sarah Zorman – Camus-Sermenaz Highschool, Rillieux-La-Pape

Mrs. Angélique Figari coordinates educational and pedagogical activities, and connects actors, public and private bodies and NGOs. Sara Zorman is a teacher in high-school. They met while working on a project based on students' guidance. They accompanied students around 14 years old, with no clear professional project and low level of social inclusion.



They helped the students to work on their self-conception, and improve their views on themselves. This approach enables them to work on professional projects but also of personal trajectory and the relationship with the whole society. They improved their views on themselves but also the perception of their parents.

In Rillieux La Pape, the area is quite marginalised and pupils are facing difficulties at school. They worked with 24 students facing difficulties. It is particularly difficult to work with them. City and parents went into the school. The project lasted 1 year, and in addition to specific pedagogical action, the students have a collective community project (for instance setting up a restaurant, working with an NGO). The actors meet 5 times over the year and students can display their achievement, and build a community, and change the perception of each other.

They focused on psycho-social skills, through informal learning and learning by doing process. One stake is also to re-engage the learning capacity of students and also parents. Through this experiment, all actors felt empowered: to improve the capability of students but also of teachers, who are discovering and adopting new ways of teaching. Local companies and NGOs also improve their skills in working and engaging this type of public (young facing difficulties).

For one class there are 50 partner institutions. The project is upscaling next year with 9 educational institutions and 3 districts. In 2 years the objective is to have a national coverage of this initiative. This project was co-developed by Lycée Camus-Cervenaze and Maison de l'Apprendre; they will pilot the mainstreaming of this initiative. Developing this kind of initiative with an external actor (not part of the Education Nationale) brings new competences to teachers and a better knowledge of the actors acting in the territory according to the teachers who participated in this initiative.



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Questions, debate and interventions


Intervention of Mister Fartusnic - Education Research Unit, National Center for Education Policy

Mr Fartusnic stressed that, even if national policies were important, regional and local policies are crucial for maximising the impact of innovative initiatives. In Romania, the issue of violence in school was not identified, 75% of schools reported having no problem at all, which is a problem because it would not be able to prevent violence. The Education Research Unit, National Center for Education Policy and Evaluation conducted a study, deconstructing some preconceived ideas. They disclosed that authors of school violences were very often also victims of violences, and that no policy was addressed to authors of violence. The study also highlighted that teachers can feel uncomfortable in managing conflicts. 2007 : joining the EU, joined a programme training 3000 school-heads. This raised awareness on school-strategies to address and prevent school-violence and bullying (and low-intensity violences).

Intervention of Evelina Dubovik - Belarusian State University

Children tend to try force before other methods to obtain something, we have to learn and move away from this reflex. Peer mediation is a method useful for secondary school but not for younger children, this is why Mrs Dubovik presented us an experiment conducted with young children in order to help them better understand the roots of conflict and how to better communicate.

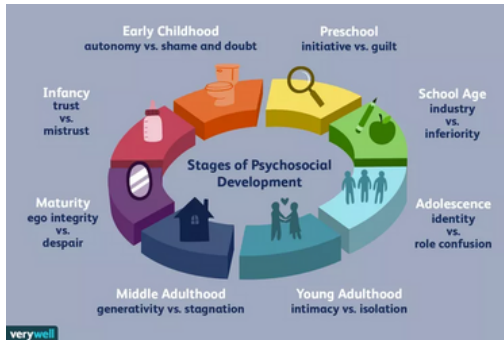
The aim of the experiment was to recreate a possible situation between two kids, in which one of them was holding a really valuable item. The other child saw it and felt jealous. For this reason they decided to act and tried to take this item with the use of force. "We asked the audience to reenact this scenario with a twist. In fact, we gave them one simple task: to do whatever it takes to get the item. In the first place, the approach used by everyone was to use the force. However, after a couple of unsuccessful tries, some of them started trying a different approach. At the end of the experiment, we asked how many people managed to get the object in question and, to no one's surprise, only a handful of people managed to achieve this goal. Interestingly enough, all of them had to try a different approach, the most common one being to speak and offering something in return. However, this was not an infallible method, as it has been demonstrated by those people who tried it but didn't manage to get the object."

In this experiment, the moderator explains the ideal approach, which intends to go a step forward in understanding the feelings of both people. Instead of simply explaining the reason why they wanted that object so much they should try and see with the other people what they could give them and what they could do in order for them to give them the object. Most of the time this approach works and people will obtain what they wanted in the first place. If instead this approach does not work and people are still reluctant to give up the object, there is still another way to go. The idea would be to ask them why there is nothing that could help them change their mind and try to work it out together. By doing so, the two people would have avoided any kind of conflict in the first place. What is the lesson learnt from this story? Use the force and you will never get what you want. Communicating and understanding what others are thinking might help you solve conflict and bond with others. 

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Intervention of Julian Sant Fournier - Relationships are forever Foundation

Julian introduced the concept of Erikson’s Psychosocial Development Stage, which states that each phase encounter specific issues, needs and threats.



According to this psychological base, then the need to have specific and adapted tools for each stage of life appears crucial. This is why the Arguing at school project is articulating several methods and tools to cover peer quarelling from the age of 2 until 18 years old. The Friendship Last Forever Foundation also adapted their tools (initially the Friendship Cards) to various stages and stakes of a lifetime.

The Friendship Cards are aimed at supporting and framing conflict mediation with children, with simulated or applied conflict situations, insights on emotional state (how does it make me feel ?) and about mediation process (what is the next step ? Was my action a bad move or a good move ?). This Cards have been the basis for a set of Cards adapted to each life stage and context and constitute a comprehensive toolkit for conflict mediation.

Intervention of Carl Coleiro - National School Services Malta - Anti-bullying department

Mr Coleira started his intervention by introducing the maltese country : Malta is a small island, with a lot of people : it is the 5th most densely populated country in the world and it is also a multilingual country : the older generation speaks Italian, and the younger generation speaks English in addition to Maltese. There are many subcultures and mobility within the country. Regarding Education, there are public, religious and independent schools. Mr. Coleiro works at the National School Services in the Anti-bullying department, which includes fighting against addiction and child-abuses.

The Maltese classrooms can be very heterogeneous, the average age of children falling into addiction is decreasing, including addiction to porn, this may be explained by unsupervised use of digital tools such as social media and streaming platforms. To tackle these issues, some educational policies include a specific attention to mobile devices, and emotional and sexual education is provided in an adapted format for each age.





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Intervention of Lucija Skvarca and Mirjam Francetič – Osnovna Šola Pivka School

As teacher and documentalist, Lucija and Mirjam experienced that most of the parents think they cannot solve their children's behaviour problems. Some parents actually feel that they do not have the skills, nor the patience to solve it. In the school, teachers are already over-busy, and they dedicate specific time for special-need students. This lack of resource or capacity to act, often prevents conflict prevention and mediation, which is detrimental to children. Both parents and teachers could benefit from specific tools and methods on conflict mediation. In the Osnova Sola Pivka school, teachers used the tools promoted by the Arguing at School project : Litigare bene method, the Friendship Cards, to solve behaviour problems.

The school library also implemented intergenerational reading of a book and debriefing session with the support of the Friendship Cards to get children and adults gained tools to solve their problems. Watch the video to discover how intergenerational reading was conducted in the school:



Conclusion and next steps

During this day of exchange, participants identified 3 challenges:

- Build a closer connection between kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and between the educational institutions and the civil society;
- Promote a wide conception of citizenship education including digital citizenship;
- Make school a well-being place rather than competing and performance-oriented places.

Policy consultation is ongoing. If you would like to be included in the process to elaborate policy recommendations at local, national and European level, please reach out to us, we would be glad to include your expertise.

The Arguing at School final conference will be held in Sanremo, Italy in early November 2024 (more details coming soon). You are of course warmly invited!

