



STORIAS

PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE



Co-funded by
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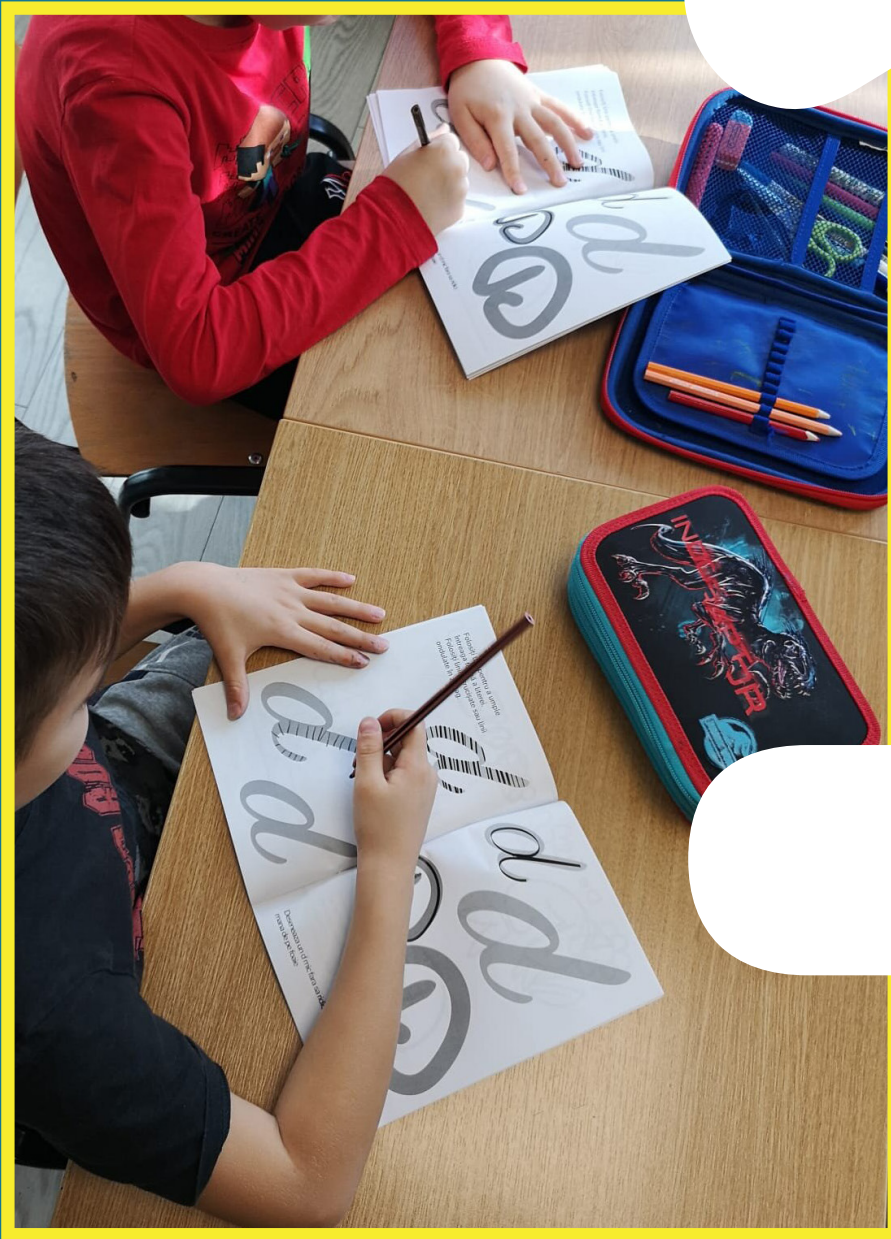
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INTRODUCTION

Literacy and knowledge

In our western societies, it is easy to forget that knowledge and writing are two separate things. Indeed, virtually all pieces of knowledge and information accumulated in the West are almost systematically transcribed and most often passed down through writing – through books, or at best through "texts" of various formats and lengths – so much so that these two seem nearly indissociable.

It is interesting to note that a communication system so highly mediated through writing has the particularity of requiring no direct involvement on the part of the people possessing the knowledge for its transmission. But it does require, on the part of both the people possessing the knowledge, and of the people seeking to acquire it, a mastery of the written language: in other words, a mastery of literacy.

Indeed, while learning can occur through both theoretical study and direct experience, societies governed by writing nowadays learn rather little through the experience derived from observing and practicing, but a lot more from formal study, an activity almost inseparable from the written text. In fact, the Oxford Dictionary defines studying as "The devotion of time and attention to gaining knowledge of an academic subject, especially by means of books."

Literacy and academic achievement

Mastering literacy skills – knowing how to read, understand and learn from books, and eventually, knowing to write down one's own knowledge – is therefore paramount for the intellectual development of individuals and for everything that derives from it. Suffice to say that successfully learning how to read and write in primary education is a prerequisite for, and a strong predictor of, later academic achievement.

As far as Europe is concerned, for one thing, early academic achievement is typically measured according to skills that fall under the realm of numeracy and literacy primarily. We know for example that the vocabulary of children aged 6 reaches an average of 10,000 words, when it revolves around about 200 four years prior.

Based on such measurements, it has also been possible to measure that children experiencing difficulties in the first year of primary school when they are 6 years old, are at an 88% risk of continuing to experience such difficulties in the fourth year when they are about 9 years old. A study went so far as to show that literacy skills – in the form of print knowledge, in particular – fully mediate the acquisition of numeral knowledge.

Therefore, if literacy is so crucial to early academic achievement, and early academic achievement itself is crucial to later success in the same field, it is important to ensure that the teaching of literacy skills is effective in children's first years of schooling.

At the very least, it is important that it shouldn't aggravate the inequalities that exist between schoolchildren due to factors outside of their control: due to learning disorders, gender or social class for example.

Defining literacy

Narrow definition

But what do we mean exactly by "literacy"? The definition of the word is subject to debate. In the narrow sense of the word, and since the 19th century roughly, the word "literacy" is taken to mean the mastery of language in its written form in opposition to language in its spoken form, that is, writing and reading proficiencies in particular.

This can include the intellectual ability to read and write, but at an early stage, it can also include according to Purpura et al, three underlying skills:

- **Print knowledge**, meaning the "awareness of the basic conventions of print, such as how to hold and use books, the directionality of print, and letter names and sounds" (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).
- **Oral language skills**, meaning "word knowledge, vocabulary, understanding of word order, and grammatical rules" (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002).
- **Phonological awareness**, meaning the "ability to detect and manipulate language through such tasks as matching, blending, or deleting parts of words" (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987).

Broad definition

What all these skills have in common is that they converge towards a better capacity to approach texts. "Texts" in turn are typically defined as written documents where spoken language is encoded in an alphabetic script (Purpura 2010 : 399).

In a broad sense of the word, however, literacy questions this very definition of the notion of text. Indeed, some argue that the category of "text" should include not only written media but also "audiovisual texts of television, film, video and computer generated images". In Paulo Freire's words:

"I would find it impossible to [...] reduce learning to read and write merely to learning words, syllables, or letters."

An equally broad definition of the word "literacy", as a consequence, would correspond to the mastery of not just one but of several ways of reading, and the reading of not just one but of various types of "texts". That is, it would include the ability to decode and understand not only words, but also "signs, symbols, pictures and sounds, which vary by social context", and which vary also by medium.

Teaching literacy

To go even further, many authors underline – beyond its multifaceted nature – the fact that reading is also a dialogic process through which "readers bring experiences, ideas and intentions." It follows from all of this that teaching literacy requires a thorough understanding of the students who are learning. As Freire puts it:

*"I would find it impossible to [...] reduce learning to read and write merely to [...] a process of teaching in which the teacher *fills* the supposedly *empty* heads of learners with their words."*

In other words, teaching literacy requires an inclusive pedagogical approach whereby "the instructor humbly gets to know the students and their unique backgrounds" first, in order to best accompany them in the reading and writing of words and worlds.

The purpose of this guide

In summary, what emerges from our introduction is that literacy – which is crucial to academic achievement – is a multifaceted and dialogic process and as such, requires inclusive teaching methods in order to ensure that children acquire it successfully.

The purpose of this pedagogical guide is therefore to explore the topic of the inclusive teaching of literacy. It will first review the limits of traditional approaches to teaching literacy which fail to take into account the students' individual needs and in particular those of children with learning disorders. It will then review more inclusive approaches: learning approaches that centre on learners and learning approaches that leverage their creativity in particular.

Then, it will put forth a method combining these two approaches through the means of storytelling: the Storias method, designed within the framework of the Erasmus+ project of the same name. Finally, it will present the resources produced for this project and provide instructions for their use in the classroom and the home.

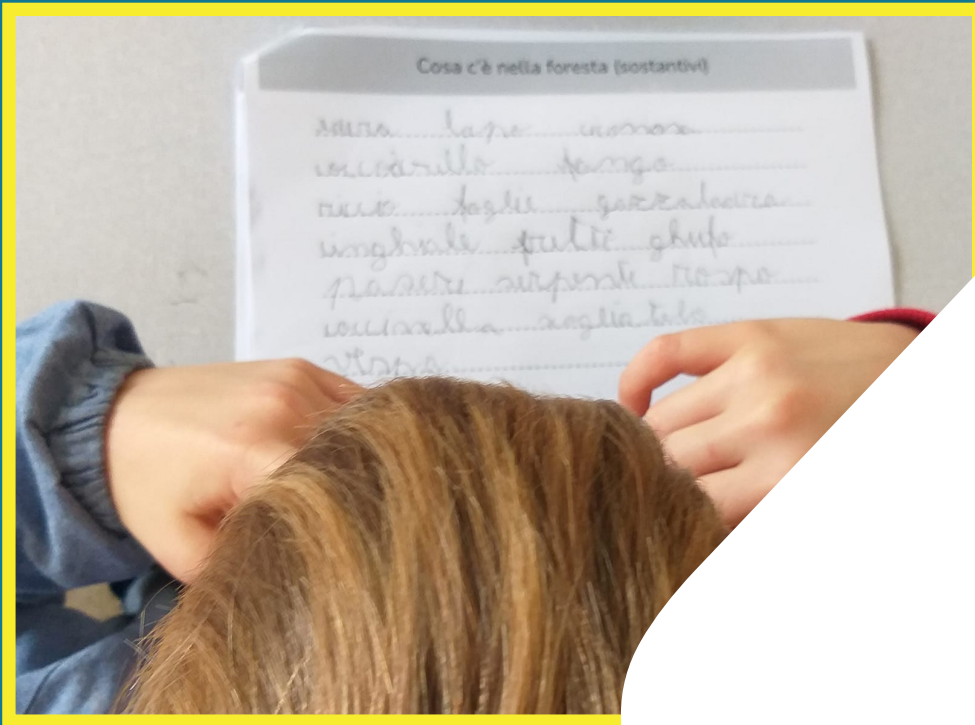
About the Storias Project

Storias is an Erasmus+ project co-financed by the European Commission whose aim is to promote the teaching of literacy skills among school children through storytelling.

This project is carried out by 6 partner organisations from various

European countries – Les Apprimeurs from France, Arsakeio Primary School of Patras from Greece, Scoala Primara EuroEd from Romania, Miedzynarodowa Szkola Podstawowa Edukacji Innowacyjnej w Lodzi from Poland, SC LogoPsyCom from Belgium and Associazione culturale Grimm Sisters from Italy – between January 2022 and March 2024. On top of designing a storytelling-based teaching method of literacy – which is explained in this guide – , it offers resources and training for its implementation.

In particular, it offers a collection of 24 European stories in the form of storytelling activities of two types (storiaskits and participatory stories), the use of which will be explained in part IV of this guide.



THE LIMITS OF TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING LITERACY FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISORDERS

OVERVIEW OF TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING LITERACY

There are as many ways of teaching literacy as there are of defining it, if not more. But in this section, we will attempt to review the main methodologies that have been used historically and to this day, focusing on methodologies to teach reading and writing in particular.

Teaching to read

We can delineate three main methods designed to teach children to read: the phonic method, the global method and the mixed method. Inspired by Goigoux's 2004 article, we will define them by comparing their orientation along two main axes, namely, the degree to which they rely on:

- **oral/writing correspondance** over **intuitive recognition** of words
- **neutral decipherement** over **contextual understanding** of words.

The **phonic method** is located at one end of the spectrum. In order for a child to read a given word, it favours a focus on:

- the **oral/writing correspondance** of each letter/grapheme of the word with its sound;
 - **neutral deciphering** of the word outside of context.
- For example, it might prompt children to read the word "dog" by teaching them
1. the **correspondence** between the letters "d", "o", and "g" and the phonemes /d/, /ɔ/ and /g/
 2. all the while **avoiding a context** favourable to guesswork (such as having an illustration of dog on the page).

The **global method** is located at the other end of the spectrum. In order for a child to read a given word, contrary to the phonic method, it favours a focus on:

- **intuitive recognition** of the word without focusing too much on the letters and graphemes it is made of;
- leveraging of the **context** where the word occurs in order to guess its meaning. For example it might prompt children to read the word "dog" by relying on the fact that:
 1. they might have already encountered it – or a close equivalent such as "fog" or "dot" – in the past and might figure out how to read it from **memory** and/or;
 2. from deduction based on the **context**.

The **mixed method**, in turn, lies somewhere in between: a child might be prompted to simultaneously decipher letters and graphemes and reflect on the context in order to read a given word. The main difference that persists and differentiates it from the phonic and the global methods – as well as these two methods from each other – is that the phonic method will delay the work on texts to a stage where children are largely familiar with deciphering individual words, while a global method might trade ABC books with children's books altogether from the start. Mixed methods in turn will alternate the two types of reading exercises, setting different goals for each.

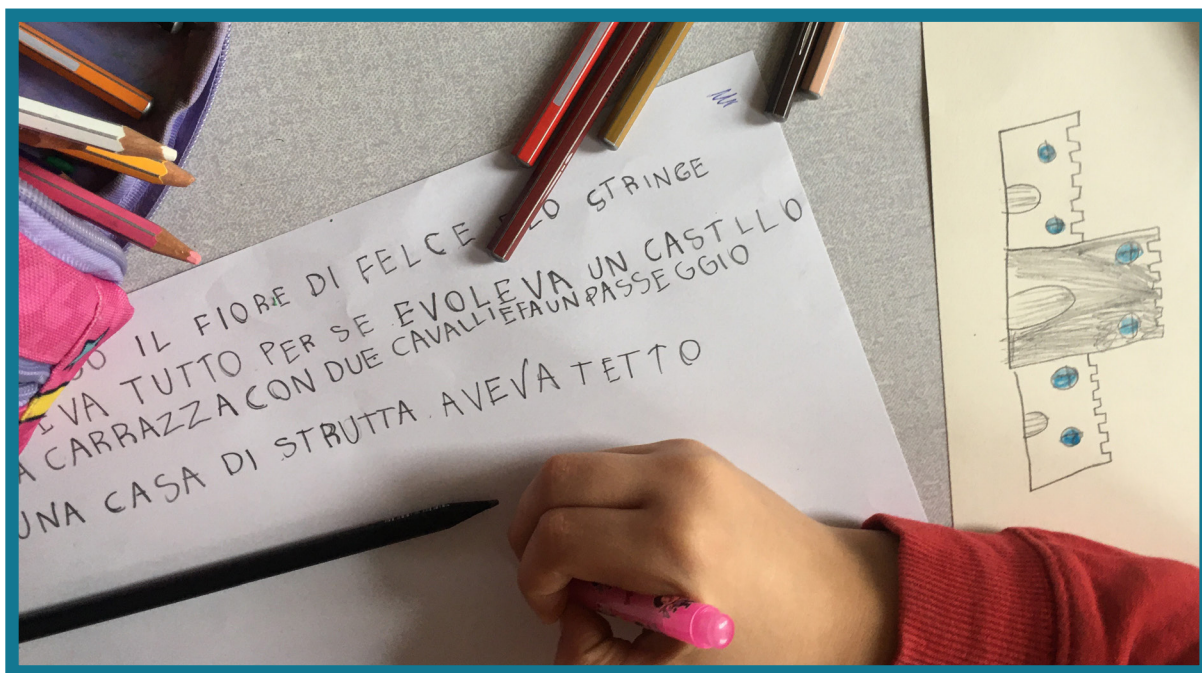
Attempts to measure the effectiveness of each method have been largely inconclusive. It is important to know that most quantitative research has proceeded from instructors' subjective identification with one method or another despite the fact that their practice might not have agreed fully with the actual requirements of said method. Nowadays, one can say that the phonic and the global methods coexist in most classrooms and in most reading exercises.

In France, only the global method has been prohibited as the sole instruction method for teaching to read, based on the fact that it is important that children be taught the main graphophonological correspondences as not all will necessarily be able to figure them out by themselves. But like all other methods it also has its benefits, such as the potential to train visual memory of written words, itself necessary for spelling memorisation.

Teaching to write

Compared to reading, the topic of how to teach writing skills has been sparsely researched, but there are still a few things we can say on the matter. First of all, the onset of writing instruction although it varies (and does so regardless of the reading method chosen by the instructor) typically happens simultaneously to or after the teaching of reading.

Writing skills can be defined as all the skills (whether cognitive or motor) involved in the process of generating a meaningful text regardless of its nature (letter, poem, nonfiction, etc.). It can be divided further into composition skills and transcription skills: **composition skills** being the ability to transform ideas into language to be written, and **transcription skills** being the ability to transform language into orthographic symbols through writing or typing on a keyboard.



Just like reading and writing, there is no fixed temporality when it comes to the teaching of transcription compared to that of composition, although composition typically never happens without a basic understanding of transcription.

There are, however, two main tendencies:

- English-speaking countries tend to engage in early composition as they encourage children's creativity despite the fact that they might make transcription and spelling mistakes, an approach labelled **emergent writing**.
- French-speaking countries on the other hand tend to favour a suitable mastery of handwriting before moving on to composition tasks – an approach labelled "**graphisme**".

The teaching of transcription is generally synonymous with handwriting, and is achieved through letter and word copying exercises and easy assignments such as writing one's own name with a pencil. The stakes of handwriting skills are that they become **automatic** in order to avoid that "young writers have [...] little [working memory] left for higher-level processes" such as composition.

Indeed, although a lower-level skill (contrary to composition which is a higherlevel one), handwriting still takes up a significant amount of working memory as long as it is not mastered fully. An important recommendation for achieving automatic handwriting skills is therefore to reduce the need for neatness – oftentimes an indicator of academic achievement in primary schools – as it intereferes with automaticity and thus composition without adding to transcription.

When it comes to the teaching of composition, Graham (2010) has contributed a series of recommendations for children to make the most of writing workshops, notably:

- integrating them in a writing routine;
- encouraging strategic approaches (structured in small writing tasks of planning; rereading and revising for example);
- ensuring sufficient transcription skills as well as
- ensuring enjoyment and motivation.

OVERVIEW OF LEARNING DISORDERS AND LITERACY LEVELS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISORDERS

We've just reviewed traditional approaches to teaching literacy, but we will now see that these approaches are not adapted to all students, notably students with different learning needs, such as those with Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) – but what are SLD?

Definition

SLD are neurodevelopmental disorders which affect how the brain receives, integrates, stores and expresses information. This, in turn, leads to **difficulties with processing and learning. In particular, students with SLD have difficulties with memory, writing, reading, problem-solving, time management, calculations, organisation, attention and staying focused.** The latter two difficulties could be in the form of sensory distraction (an inability to ignore distracting visuals or sound) and sensory overload (a greater sensitivity to visuals and sound in busy environments).

Due to the variance in their cognitive processing, students with SLD fall under the umbrella of **neurodiversity**, meaning that they experience the world in different ways. However, it would be a misconception to deduce that having an SLD, therefore, negatively impacts a student's level of intelligence – on the contrary, neurodiversity does not point to intellectual insufficiencies and people with SLD have average or above average cognitive abilities.

As the name suggests, learning disorders are not a singular disorder. Rather, the scope of learning disorders includes:

- **Dyslexia**: difficulties with reading and language-based skills
- **Dysgraphia**: difficulties with writing expression, handwriting ability and fine motor skills.
- **Dysorthographia**: difficulties with spelling
- **Dyspraxia**: difficulties with physical coordination, movement, language and speech
- **Dyscalculia**: difficulties with understanding numbers and learning maths calculations/formulas
- **Dysphasia**: difficulties with oral expression and understanding spoken words

Often, a student can have more than one SLD, which is known as **cooccurrence**.

There can also be overlap with disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder and other information processing disorders.

In addition, students with SLD may present with emotional and social difficulties, including behavioural issues.

Symptoms and diagnosis

According to figures from the European Dyslexia Association (EDA), there are between **9% and 12%** of people with learning disorders in Europe. As the most frequent SLD, dyslexia has been recognised and mentioned in many acts of legislation in European countries, such as the UK's Disability Discrimination Act from 1995.

Legal recognition is an important step towards improving the lives of these students as many acts of legislation require education settings to make **reasonable adjustments** for ensuring that those affected by SLD are not disadvantaged compared to their peers.

One phenomenon that the research has pointed to is that SLD have a higher tendency of being present in families with existing histories of learning disorders.

However, for many, their learning disorder(s) may go undetected by health professionals, teaching staff and even family as this is an "invisible disorder", meaning it does not manifest with physical symptoms. Therefore, adequate support may be lacking without an official diagnosis. Even still, a student being diagnosed with an SLD is not a death sentence despite the fact that there is no "cure" for this lifelong disorder. Practice has shown that those with

SLD respond well (at all ages but especially with early identification) to targeted and evidence-based pedagogical support and intervention, thereby improving their quality of education and life in general.

Early signs of SLD may occur in **preschool and early elementary school** years; these include difficulties with rapid naming, learning the names of the letters, difficulties in counting objects and rhyming. Many of these activities are encompassed under the skill of **early literacy attainment**. Literacy requires the use of language and images to read, write, listen, speak, discuss and think about concepts. Due to its importance in the overall shaping of students' educational development, literacy is an integral skill taught to students in their formative schooling years. However, SLD students can struggle with reaching the same performance scores as their peers. As already mentioned, students with learning disorders often have difficulties with the **two core components of literacy attainment: learning to efficiently and effectively read and write**.

Impact on literacy

SLD have an impact not just on early literacy attainment but on literacy in general. When it comes to reading, they manifest themselves in students' struggle with letter sounds in particular and **phonological awareness** more generally i.e. the ability to identify and sound out the spoken parts of words and sentences.

For learners with SLD, this inability results in **poorer spelling, word recognition, vocabulary development, and later, reading fluency**. Reading fluency is an important marker of literacy as it not only encompasses the ability to read text accurately, expressively and quickly, but also the ability to comprehend the words that are being read in order to derive meaning from overall context.

When it comes to the second component of literacy – writing, SLD manifest themselves as students with learning disorders struggle with **handwriting** i.e. the physical act of putting letters in paper, as well as **written expression**.

Written expression is a very complex yet indispensable marker of written literacy as it denotes the ability to transform ideas into an organised written format.

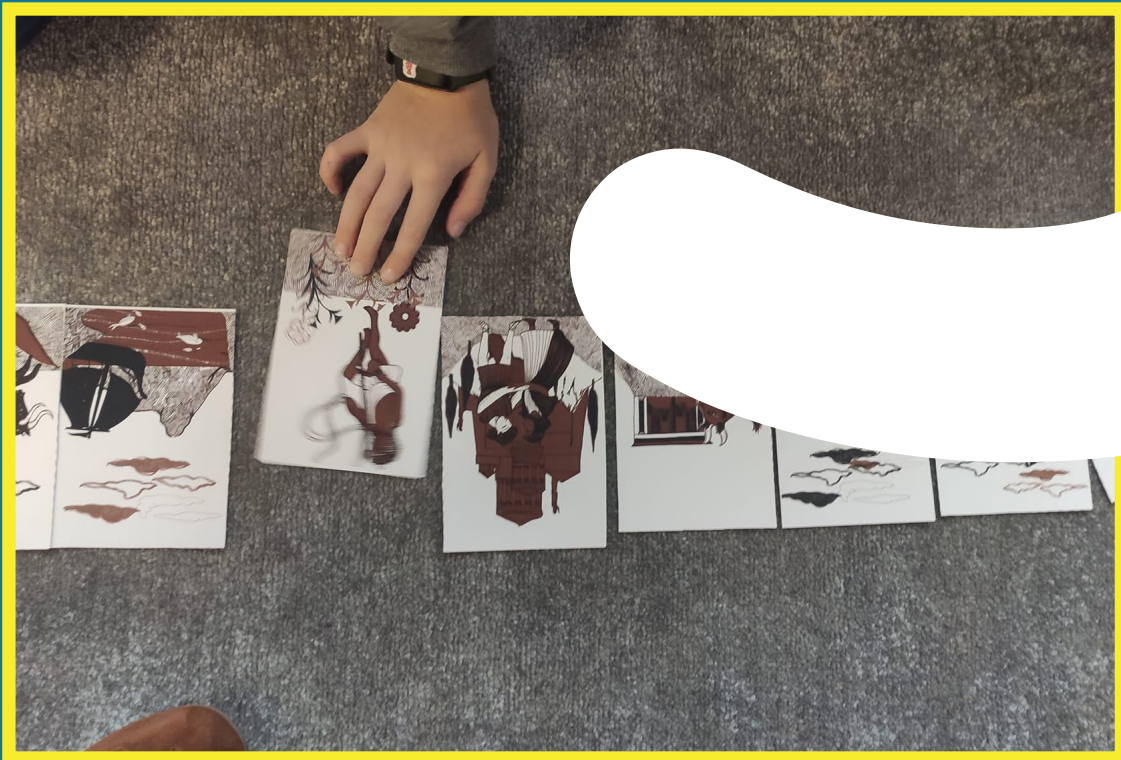
Being able to write down your thoughts in an organised and structured manner requires a learner to be able to follow the teacher's instructions and adeptly demonstrate **the proper letter formation, spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary**.



Without proper support, low literacy levels among students with SLD can have long-term effects. These students have a higher likelihood of **experiencing low self-esteem, anxiety and depression, poor educational engagement, truancy and isolation and exclusion in educational settings.**

Therefore, it's important for education professionals and specialists to be able to identify reading/writing difficulties on time and use teaching strategies to address them and accommodate them in order to develop speaking, learning, reading and writing skills. Tools and resources that teach **storytelling** have shown promise as they promote interactivity, active participation of all and can activate multiple senses (multi-sensory method for teaching). So let us now review storytelling and other inclusive methods of teaching literacy.





**MORE INCLUSIVE
APPROACHES
TO TEACHING**

LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACHES

Before we dive into storytelling based approaches to teaching literacy, it is important to replace them in the context of inclusive approaches to teaching in general.

The main requirement for learning to occur is the adequacy of the methods of teaching with the needs of learners: in other words, the adoption of a learner-centered approach. This can be achieved in two ways: through individualisation and through interaction

Interaction

The contemporary world is characterised by a rapid and unpredictable evolution of science and technology, generating a gigantic movement of ideas, interventions and discoveries and an exponential growth of information and cuttingedge technologies.

These have caused the computerisation of society and the restructuring and renewal of some pluridisciplinary epistemological approaches in all sectors of social life.

The necessity of using interactive methods is supported by this context of change, but also by:

- the idea that true learning is one that allows **the transfer of skills and knowledge** acquired to new contexts;
- the practical observation that students are **more involved** in the learning process when working in a group and have a well-defined task or purpose;
- the fact that frontal or individual approaches **no longer manage to captivate** students or motivate them.

Interactive methods are ones that determine both the profound-intellectual, psychomotor, affective and volitional involvement of the subject of learning in acquiring and building new knowledge, and in forming and developing skills, capacities, competences, behaviors, as well as collaboration and interaction between students. The use of interactive methods and the activation of students that goes with it are an objectively imposed necessity for two reasons. On the one hand, they are required by the educational objectives of the education system and by society which needs active individuals. On the other hand, they are required

by the classroom dynamics and by the energy levels specific to the child's psychic processes and activity. The desire for knowledge of the child manifests itself early on, especially in our age. Interactive methods can be divided into three categories:

- Methods for developing the active spirit: heuristic conversation, didactic play, independent work, exercise, problematisation, learning through discovery, case study, role play, etc.;
- Methods for developing the creative spirit: brainstorming, etc.;
- Methods of development of the critical spirit: dials, bunches, quintet, gallery tour, the cube, mutual teaching, character network, double diary, etc.

Individualisation

In the field of education, individualisation signifies the adaptation of influences and methods to the individual specificity of each person, to her or his possibilities and needs through a harmonic development. The principle of individualisation in didactic theory states that education must start from the quantitative and qualitative differences between young people of the same age, generated by the uniqueness of their personality.

It is expected that instead of a leveling and equalising attitude, the fundamental activities (play, learning, work, creation) must be differentiated according to individual preferences and the training must be accommodated to the psychophysical possibilities of assimilation of each child or young person.

The individual perspective starts from the following hypotheses:

- a child or a group of children can be identified as special;
- this child (group) has the need for individualised teaching-learning in response to the identified problems;
- it is good to learn together with and separately from the other children;
- each child needs attention;
- the difficulties caused by learning disorders can be solved together in class by contributing all resources.

Also, learning is much more enjoyable and efficient if in the class of students:

- learning is used in interaction with other students and with the subject matter;
- learning objectives are negotiated, demonstrated, applied and then the reactions are analysed;
- a permanent evaluation is made in response to learning;
- learning provides support for the teacher and for the students.

Engaging in strategies to support learning in the classroom is especially important for the development of an effective learning program.

The most useful methods and techniques are: providing a favourable social climate; gathering knowledge of learning behaviors typical of each student; setting up learning in pairs and learning from child to child; pairing teachers up in teaching; treating parents as partners; improving forms of communication with other professionals outside the school; working on continuous improvement of school, teacher practices and forms of learning.

In summary, in non-individualised traditional style activities, the differences between students are ignored, unless they become problematic. The child's interests are rarely appealed. The selected activities are carried out with the whole class.

Whereas in differentiated activities, differences between students are studied and accepted as the starting point in the instructive-educational approach. The students are guided in the sense of their own interests and the choices guided by them. Different forms of organization of activity are used: by groups, in teams, frontally or individually.

SLD learner-centred individualisation

When working with children with learning difficulties, teachers need to take extra steps in order to adapt teaching to their needs, such as:

- knowing the learning difficulties of each student well.
- adapting the teaching material used to each topic.
- providing additional support material when needed.
- ensuring that students in difficult situations have acquired the prior skills.
- reserving time during each learning chunk/lesson to evaluate the effectiveness.

In this respect, teachers are responsible for carrying out the following important tasks:

- designing personalized syllabi;
- distributing differentiated or even individualised exercises and tasks;
- adopting differentiated methods of teaching reading / writing and calculation skills;
- adapting the methods and means of teaching where needed;
- adapting lessons and evaluations to the specificities of the students;
- using alternative means of communication;
- using methods suitable for each individual, adapted to their understanding abilities;
- using simplified contents and tasks in school activities;
- elaborating personalised intervention plans for students who have fallen behind.

Overall, the teachers carry the following responsibilities:

- providing children with learning difficulties individualised support and approaching issues on a case-by-case basis;
- teaching them to work independently;
- giving them support, encouragement and positive appreciation in carrying out school tasks;
- guiding them to specialized people in order to benefit from therapy programs;
- using frequently the rewards system;
- creating an affective, comfortable climate for them;
- collaborating closely with parents, schools and students.

Teachers must provide the student with the appropriate social framework for differentiated development to individualisation by discovering and cultivating personal skills, their own characteristic features, an individual cognitive style, a learning and development rhythm adapted to each one. This conception is psychologically supported by the statement that the subject is individualised by their behavior and activity, reactivity and style.

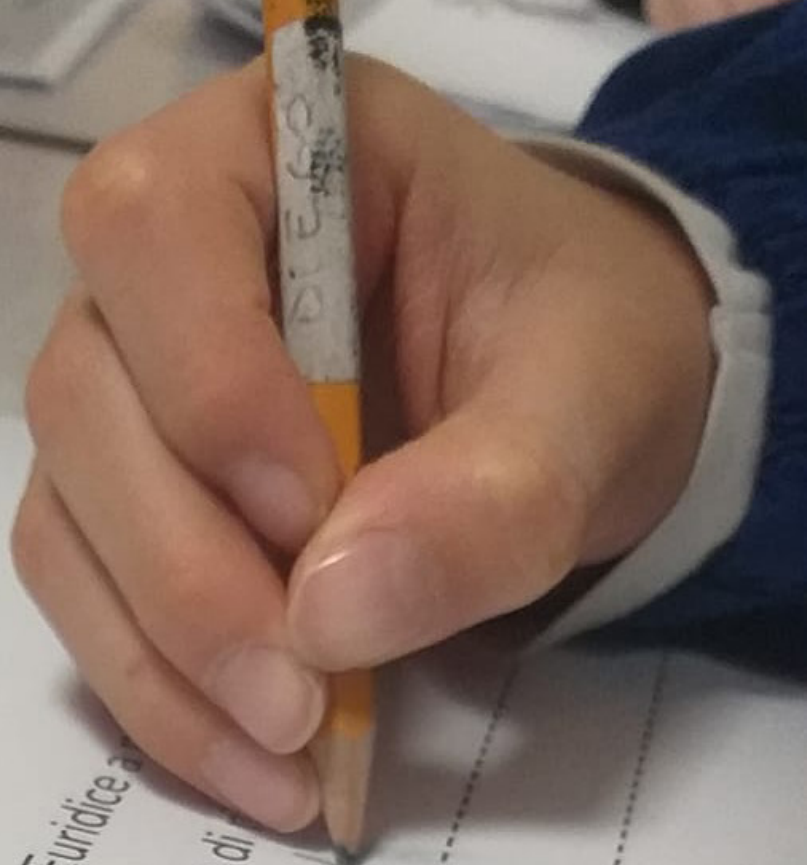
Now that we have seen learner-centred approaches to teaching – through individualisation and interaction specifically – as well as additional guidelines to make learning inclusive for students with SLDs, let us move on to creative approaches to teaching.

... della storia



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DIRIFERAN COSI FELI



CREATIVITY-BASED APPROACHES

The importance of creativity

Creativity plays an important role in the individual, group and social level.

In fact, rankings of global competitiveness now include indicators for countries' creativity as a vital factor of societal, organizational, economic innovation and development and also personal prosperity and individual well-being as creativity is connected with science, exploratory and problem solving aspects and has a dynamic in everyday life. Following this, the educational community has turned its attention to approaches that promote creativity – a fundamental construct of 21st century education, as the needs and expectations of the modern workforce, intelligent economies' markets and contemporary national and global economic system necessitate not only the development of foundational literacy skills (e.g. reading comprehension) but also the enhancement of creativeness in order to be innovative and have entrepreneurship skills.

The importance of promoting creativity and innovative thinking at the individual, group and social level has been also highlighted by the EU as, for example, the year 2009 was named "the European Year of Creativity and Innovation"

(EYCI, http://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/european-year-creativity-and-innovation0_is).

Through this initiative multiple partnerships to foster creativity and related concepts and skills have been initiated and disseminated across European countries but also globally. The conversation about creativity has intensified and is also sustained nowadays by worldwide educational systems in the base of the global commitment to Education for All. This commitment, expressed as one of the Millennium Development Goals for 2015, was re-mentioned within the revised Sustainable Development Goals of universal education for 2030 because it could not be satisfied by the original due date.

Defining creativity

Creativity is a term that is much used but seldom defined "yet we readily recognise creativity when we meet it, even if we cannot precisely define it". (Peachey & Maley)

It is generally accepted that there is not one unitary creativity; there are multiple types of creativities. Moreover, some theorists frequently differentiate between various levels

of creativity in individual and collective terms, taking into consideration that creativity nowadays is more a collective characteristic rather than an individual one, as today's social characteristic is connectivity and communication.

Apart from that, there is also an inconsistency in terminology of creativity and a lack of precision in its definition and its leveling, which usually creates confusion among the educational community. For example, distinguish four types of creativity:

- Mini-C (the creativity involved in learning and meaning-making);
- Little-c (the creativity of mundane, everyday activities);
- Pro-C (the creativity involved in professional activities);
- Big-C (the revolutionary creativity that transforms culture and society).

Teaching creativity

Just as there is a large amount of variation in the definition of creativity, there is variation around the world under the label of teaching for creativity: notably regarding what is taught, and how it is taught. Besides, is there enough time for creativity in an already overcrowded curriculum? Many teachers, despite believing that creativity is important for learners in the 21st century classroom, often state "I do not know how best to support creativity in the classroom". A key question that concerns them is: "How do I know if I am creative?". Teachers should be assured that all that is required for creativity in the classroom is the self-confidence to adapt in order to enrich the basic curriculum with innovative tools and to apply interactive projects and cross – curricular methods beyond a learner – centered pedagogy.

More specifically, creativity can be accomplished in the classroom in many ways. For instance, teachers can enhance creativity in general through a specific attitude in teaching. In other words they can make a classroom environment permitting and encouraging unusual ideas. Teachers should use failure as a positive way to help them realize in depth errors. Also, they should create a supportive nonjudgmental atmosphere that provides freedom and security in their knowledge exploration and by ensuring that students' work "is open to public debate" in some way, e.g. large noticeboard, class magazine or class website. Furthermore, teachers can use lessons that are aimed at enriching children's life experiences in class. The material that may help students develop creativity skills is, without doubt, material and equipment that will spark and encourage student experimentation and hands-on engagement in combination with providing them with time to cooperate, analyze, evaluate and discuss.

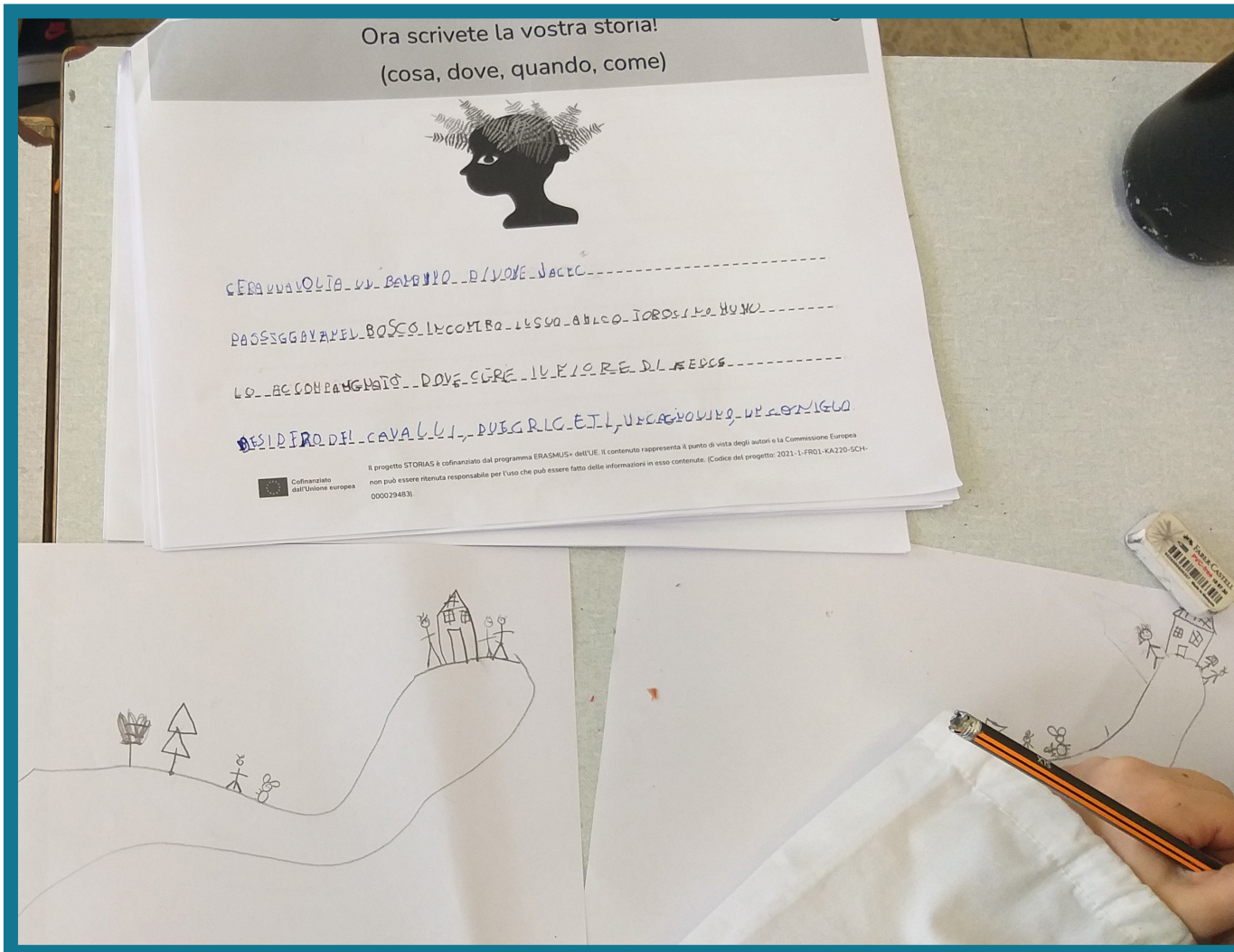
Such material can stem from the fields of art, dance and music: fields that are connected through an interdisciplinary approach and serve "learning by doing".

Playing role games can be one method to enhance creativity. Furthermore, the strategy "still image" enables children to organize themselves into creating a threedimensional image to represent a visual "summing up" of a situation. For example, they exercise to give "freeze frame" on a video, use cartoon strips or add captions to them.

Moreover, the children who create mathematical games with an unusual set of roles and compare two mathematical resources often show high creativity and high metacognitive abilities. For instance, clarification, meaning and structure (e.g. placing work in a real context with money) as well as means of modeling personal theories and ideas (e.g. challenging children to use equipment), strengthen these skills. Web-based resources, digital image manipulation, making connections with projects, creating and making meaning from media (e.g. image, poem, 3D construction, digital dialogues), and collaboration with online institutes and social organizations can unlock creativity through ICT (Information and Communication Technology). Creativity can be achieved by starting with children's knowledge of and interests in the world and continuing with building on their competencies by exploration. In other words, creativity can be increased in multiple ways as long as there is a willingness to achieve and embed it in the school community.

Inclusive approach to creativity

We believe that creative teaching could and should support the development of the creativity of students with learning disabilities in particular. Creativity can be developed in various sets of activities available to them depending on the type of disability at play. Such activities include: visual creativity, theatrical plays, singing, linguistic creativity in the use of gestures, playing musical instruments, composing music, creating literary works of different genres, and sculpture. More broadly, creativity develops when children's life experiences are enriched through exposure to art, and even more if professors take into account children's special needs in the process.



Therefore, parents, teachers, and society as a whole should be aware of the need to create necessary conditions for the development of creative abilities of children. Creativity in education is an important factor to make school more interesting and the lesson more effective for children to learn and understand in different ways. It can also allow students to solve academic and difficult personal problems, find innovative alternatives and succeed in a fast – changing world. Needless to say that stimulating creativity has positive effects for supporting and enhancing self-learning, critical thinking, learning to learn (metacognition), life-long learning and collaborative skills and competences. But more importantly, it makes teaching more inclusive – for students with SLDs notably – which is why we will now explore its role in the teaching of literacy.

STORYTELLING-BASED APPROACH (BOTH LEARNER-CENTERED AND CREATIVITY – CENTERED)

The fundamental role of storytelling

"To read is to play: to play with imagination, to play with words, to play at diving into environments, to play at being afraid, to play at risking getting hurt, to play at confronting oneself: and playing is fun, young and old alike."

Reading, storytelling or, as Luigi Ferrareso (Italian writer and teacher) writes, "animating reading" is therefore a playful activity that, however complex, offers numerous advantages.

The profound relationship that each person establishes with books and the stories they contain are the basis of our being: we are what we read. The more we read, the more we know; the more we know, the greater our ability to observe and see the immensity of the world, the infinitesimal nuances that life holds in store for us. Books with their stories mirror all lives past, present and future.

Storytelling is a form of expression that we can say is ingrained in human nature, through storytelling humans have not only recounted their experiences but have "invented" meanings to events that would otherwise have no explanation (creation myths). The evolutionary history of humankind shows us how storytelling can be regarded as a necessity, humans moved from oral storytelling in prehistoric times to written storytelling. Storytelling is the basis of sociality and relations between peoples because it allows us to interpret the world around us, to understand it and make it our own in order to share it with others.

It could be said that storytelling has always been *forma mentis* that allows us to structure knowledge and thus create the basis for school educational practices.

The school, in fact, has the enormous primary task of transmitting and acquiring culture, in the broadest and most extensive sense of the term. However, the pedagogical language used by the teacher is different from the language of the child, so in order to reach the child's mind and heart, the teacher will have to resort to all the old and new teaching "techniques", the storytelling is the answer.

Through storytelling, in fact, mankind has been able to create its own memory, because by narrating, it is possible to explore collective and individual experiences, to place them in a field of action that makes it possible to identify all situations of conflict and crisis, to understand them and thus resolve them.

By narrating, all the characters' actions are placed in space/time, their cause and effect are discovered, the intentions and motivations that led the protagonists to perform those given actions are understood. By listening to these stories that resemble reality, children assimilate, learn, recognise themselves and grow.

The function of this social and educational practice is not only that of pure entertainment but the much more complex one of learning. Through storytelling, in fact, one not only acquires meanings but also has the opportunity to learn how to give order and form to experiences. Through storytelling it is possible to trigger processes of social and organisational change, as well as facilitating learning; all aspects that even science (psychoanalysis, child psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.) recognises and indeed emphasises their high significance value.

Storytelling with children in the classroom

Using storytelling in education is therefore not only desirable

but fundamental. Storytelling makes it possible to express oneself on several levels, to open oneself up to the "possible", allowing the cultural framework to remain unchanged and stable while at the same time stimulating its renewal. Storytelling in fact triggers creativity, transforms us men sapiens into men ludens, as J. Huizinga (Dutch historian) intends, men capable of producing and building cultures, searching for new meanings. Play is the basis of everything.

Storytelling is a beautiful, inclusive game that enables cognitive and socioaffective development, because it can actively involve children, triggering interest and engagement, and encouraging participation. Through listening to stories, children build themselves, find their own voice and the ability to relate to others.

By reading and listening, children are challenged in their individual and subjective complexity. Books, stories and tales in general have the power to promote a deeper knowledge of oneself that passes not only through individual abilities and aptitudes but also through relational ones.

Storytelling is therefore first and foremost a space, a place where adults and children meet and relate. Knowing how to narrate, however, is not an innate talent but a skill that must be developed and refined through practice. The pedagogical objective will therefore be to enable each child on the one hand to create their own store of knowledge and information, which must be understood in depth and contextually framed, and on the other hand to acquire awareness in order to be able to prepare to become an adult, capable of relating to the rest of the world.

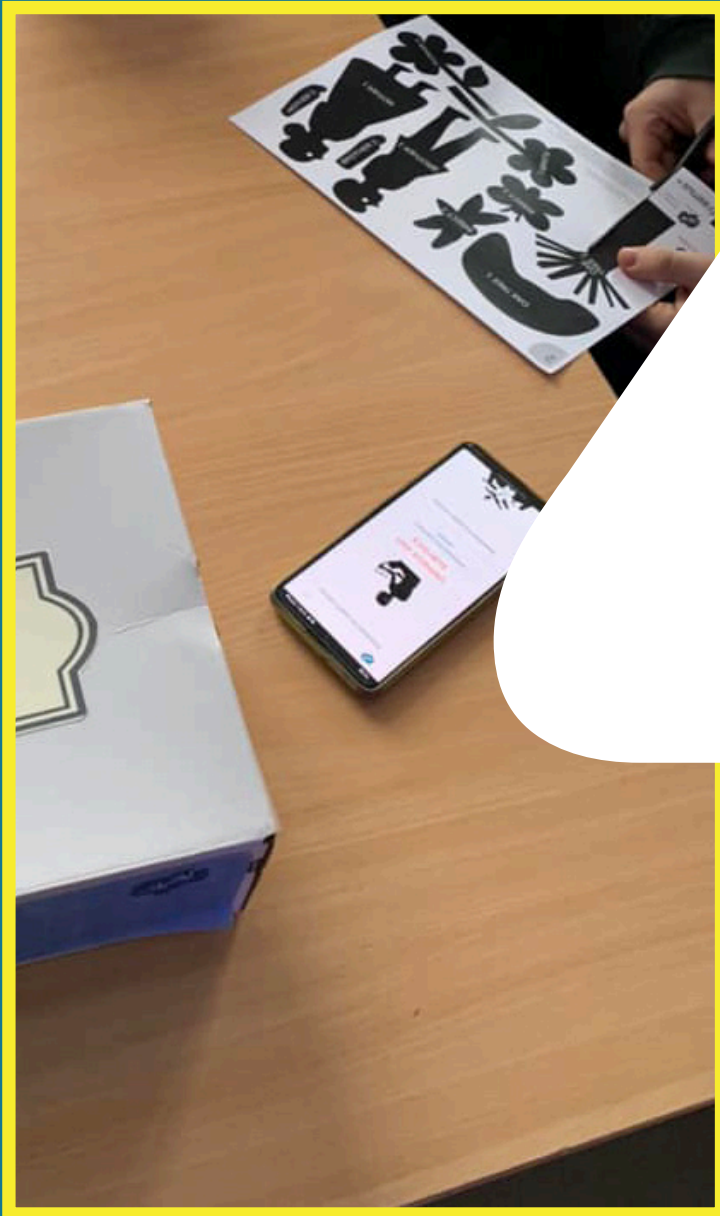
One of the most significant ideas of psychologist Jerome Seymour Bruner, is that there is no subject that cannot be explained to a child of any age as long as it is done in an "acceptable form": through simple arguments and examples that "the child" understands, and then gradually adding information of increasing difficulty until it is fully understood. This so-called spiral curriculum method is perfectly reflected in narrative practice.

Through storytelling, children are also "educated" to manage their emotions and feelings. In fact, in an empathic manner, children come into contact and identify with the characters in the stories by "living" their own adventures. Indirectly participating in the emotions of the characters is a reassuring experience. The psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, in addition to recognising the formative role of fairy tales, emphasises their cathartic function, which is why the use of fairy tales in primary school creates the right environment in which the abilities of each individual can develop to the full. The stories, through storytelling, "come out" of the books to be experienced, they become an incentive for each child to cultivate the desire for an autonomous approach to the infinite opportunities that the stories told offer. The teacher thus transforms school duty into a pleasure that will involve the children in a multi-sensory way.

Storytelling, reading stories, animating reading, is the most beautiful of games, as Umberto Eco also stated, because it allows one to make sense of everything "that happens, will happen and has happened in the real world".

Through storytelling, children improve their oral and verbal skills, their self-esteem and thus their autonomy, comprehension which increases their language competence, and memorisation which leads directly to learning.





4

**RESOURCES AND RESULTS
OF THE STORIAS
STORYTELLING METHOD
FOR TEACHING LITERACY**

THE POTENTIALS OF STORYTELLING

At the intersection between inclusive teaching and literacy lies the method of storytelling: a practice which is both creative and learner-centred (with the student as the narrator of a story in particular) and also conducive to developing literacy skills as we defined them above.

Indeed, on the one hand, storytelling has enormous power and plays a significant role in bringing children closer to books, not only from an intellectual but an emotional point of view. In fact, it is of crucial importance that children develop a deep relationship with books from an early age, because reading is not simply scrolling through the pages of a text by storing content; rather it is **growth, experience, lived life**.

Children evolve if they "freely choose" to read a book, if they are passionate and curious about it. The teacher's task is to ensure that positive dynamics are triggered between books and children, between reading and children; and that reading moves beyond the disciplinary and language education perspective which going to school entails.

Storytelling therefore, understood as oral narration, can become a way, if not a method, of introducing children to reading.

Storytelling can be made even more stimulating through animation with the help of tools such as Storiaskits, and it will be not only more inclusive but become a real strategy for literacy.

Through animated storytelling, the teacher will ensure that children can actively enjoy the text even if it is long or complex, making it inclusive for everyone. Through the use of voice, expressions, gestures and the Storiaskit, the story will become alive and emotionally charged. Highlights will be emphasized, making the book a world within which children can immerse themselves, so as to accompany them in their discovery of the text, supporting but at the same time enhancing their engagement and effort. The teacher's narration will stimulate children to seek an autonomous approach with the text, sparking in them desire and curiosity. However, it will be necessary for the teacher to be prepared; "to practice" by studying their own expressions, voice intonation, gestures and movements. During the narration, the teacher will, in fact, have to pay close attention to all the details, by pausing on the scenarios, actions and relationships (in order to allow

everyone to understand and memorize), and by describing and emphasizing with their voice, with looks and with movements. Through storytelling, in which the teacher will engage children with the use of the Storiaskits as well as Participatory Stories, children will be able to approach reading in a more playful and joyful way.

In accordance with the age of the children, their abilities will increase; therefore, a deep understanding of the structure of the text will also be achieved.

This approach has a strong inclusive value for all children but particularly for those children who have various learning difficulties; for them listening first and reading later can be obstacles. However, the teacher really has the power not only to help them but to make them participate with others to the point of finding their own "voice" – a verbal language and, in time, a logical and communicative clarity.

The teacher and children will thus form a group in which to trigger positive dynamics based on empathy, trust, listening and cooperation. The group can soon become a kind of micro-community in which through relationships and mutual influence, each individual will be empowered to act with mutual respect.

Indeed, it is important for the teacher to know how to build an environment, and then a community, in which to carry out their role and pedagogical and teaching activities.

The joyful and playful aspect of these activities can greatly affect how children will "respond". The more the teacher is able to create a flexible, generous, welcoming and peaceful atmosphere, the likelihood and number of positive "responses" will be higher. The methodology we propose should be understood not as a separate merely recreational activity, but as an integral part of the educational path.

Both Storiaskits and Participatory Stories allow children a wide creativity margin. This possibility is exactly the key that enables all children to improve their literacy. In fact, children feel motivated to learn new skills through simulation, wherein, logical and cognitive aspects become more developed.

The teacher has at their disposal a varied set of tools that guarantee the possibility of making an extremely articulate and harmonious path of growth.

While the various Storiaskits offer "physical" support for storytelling, enabling children to gain self-confidence as well as the necessary skills; the Participatory Stories become

the foundation on which children put pen to paper.

By disassembling and reassembling the stories, handling unexpected contingencies and above all interweaving the original tale with their own creative options, children reach new starting points each time that will lead them further and higher.

It is necessary that the teacher, like the children, knows how to get involved, since this methodology is based on creativity, exploration and curiosity and must necessarily lead to the shared creation of new rules that are inclusive and make all children feel safe and secure, and able to evolve in this way.

Each tool (Storiaskit) allows for a different but also homogeneous approach, almost an evolution from one "action" medium to another. By the use of images that can be made, using for example the Kamishibai, or Shadow Theater, or perhaps "puppets" the teacher offers children expressive means that will open endless possibilities up to them.

The experience itself as such will be an opportunity for enrichment. Indeed, each "path" will lead in even unexpected directions as the experience will add to past ones to be innovated in future ones. Especially since the variable will be composed by the children and them transporting themselves "into the game". Thus the sum of the experiences will become an enrichment for both the teacher and the children.

Each child, of course will have different ways of acting and intervening at different times. It is important that the teacher respects these needs and never forces any child. The child himself will be the one who, seeing the others, will want to imitate them and follow them in the "game". When the teacher will ask the children to take their place to narrate, the children will do so not only by imitating, but will add something of themselves with each "rehearsal". They will gain self-confidence, and consequently they will also "import" the same method into other subjects, turning, for example, even math or geography into storytelling.

USING STORIASKITS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Storytelling as learning by doing

Teaching and learning evolve as societies and technologies evolve, yet not all societies progress in the same way and often school systems seem to trail behind new tools.

Learning should be inclusive, just as Articles 28 and 29 of the **Convention on the Rights of the Children** state. It should be open and attentive to diversity, starting from what has been done well in the past and projecting and innovating it to carry it into the future. There are indeed many virtuous models, but they also show an evergrowing gap where disparities and inequalities are evident.

Many school systems in Europe follow predetermined procedures, ministerial formats that do not take into account changes to the educational landscape, but above all do not seem to take into account the individual. Everything is grouped together, labeled so that a solution can be found that is "spread out" to everyone. We believe, however, that inclusivity has a deeper and broader meaning, we believe that 'inclusive' means respectful of diversity and welcoming. The school and teaching system should evolve to allow each student to learn according to their own qualities and schedule, leaving no one behind.

The method we have designed is based on a phrase by Bruno Munari that uses a few lines to sum up not only an important concept but also the meaning and purpose of our project. Bruno Munari wrote:

"If I hear, I forget. If I see, I remember, but if I do, I understand"

Therefore, we learn by doing, by "practicing," – but for practice to be truly effective, it is important that it be quality and child-centered.

Storytelling as inclusive teaching

To us, the word "child" is understood not as an abstract entity but as an individual and person who is, therefore, "different " and requires attention and stimulation.

A recent scientific study from the University of Cambridge done by cognitive science researcher Helen Taylor and neuroscientist Martin Vestergaard (Taylor & Vestergaard, 2022), analyzes the issue of dyslexia not as a deficit but as **a value**; an approach that is based on forty years of research.

The dyslexic mind is defined as the result of specialization that occurred during evolution, making their brains more suitable for exploration and innovation. Therefore, we must ask: what does the dyslexic mind excel at?

According to researchers, dyslexic individuals are able to recognize so-called impossible figures, such as Escher's drawings. They are good at identifying recurring patterns and integrating information creatively. Dyslexic people, among other things, also have a natural aptitude for art; they are predisposed for creativity.

The idea, therefore, of including the strongly "art-based" Storiaskit tools is aimed at enhancing these skills. However, we believe that the use of these tools is useful for everyone, as they constitute a motivating and meaningful experience from a pedagogical point of view.

The strength and innovation of this approach is the integration of the ludic, playful component with didactics. Each of these tools can be used by children at home, just like a toy, therefore allowing them to modify, act, explore by creating experiences.

The relationships that each student creates with their classmates and with the teacher start from himself or herself, from their own microcosm and from all the actions performed in everyday life. Therefore, it will be easier for the child to bring to school their experience, the experience made at home in a familiar and reassuring environment.

Storiaskits

The various Storiaskits are designed to be creative "toys" with which the child (either alone or in a group) can interact, take on different roles, create processes of interaction and communication. Many of these (Silent Book Theatre, Story Box, Story Map, etc.) use silhouettes or puppets for storytelling, which for the child are representations of their "own Self" and with which they can express their full potential.

In the "dramatization" of the stories, using the characters/puppets, the child accompanies the words with gestures and actions, which thus contribute to organic and functional play.

In school, children will have the opportunity to compare different experiences and create a new shared one. While the teacher will have at their disposal a set of tools that will allow him or her to interact with the children, in such a way that teaching and play are complementary, the same way that rules and freedom are complementary.

"Freedom" thus becomes the space and time necessary for each child to act creatively, finding their own way and their own solution.





The Storiaskits allow both children and teachers to evolve, to grow together and to find the right balance made up of rules and freedom, stability and change.

The use of these tools, such as Silent Book Theatre, Miriorama, or Shadow Theatre, etc., thus presents itself as a **didactic method** applicable not only to the stories proposed by our project but to all school subjects, since through playful practice, the "doing" described by Bruno Munari, children learn, because they are involved both at the cognitive and logical level and, above all, in the emotional and affective relationship with others.

These tools "engage" children on a number of fronts, stimulating them both physically and mentally via their senses and their bodies through the movements that will accompany storytelling.

The use of the stories that the project provides teachers (as examples on which to base and imagine the teaching of other subjects) shows how each subject, in the moment it becomes an exercise in "storytelling", becomes a real place that children can explore and occupy with their own intentions and purposes.

Through storytelling, in fact, children create and shape their own version of the story. By playing with imagination, confronting their fears and overcoming them, each tool is shown to be not only a game, but also a kind of toy – a true extension of being a child.

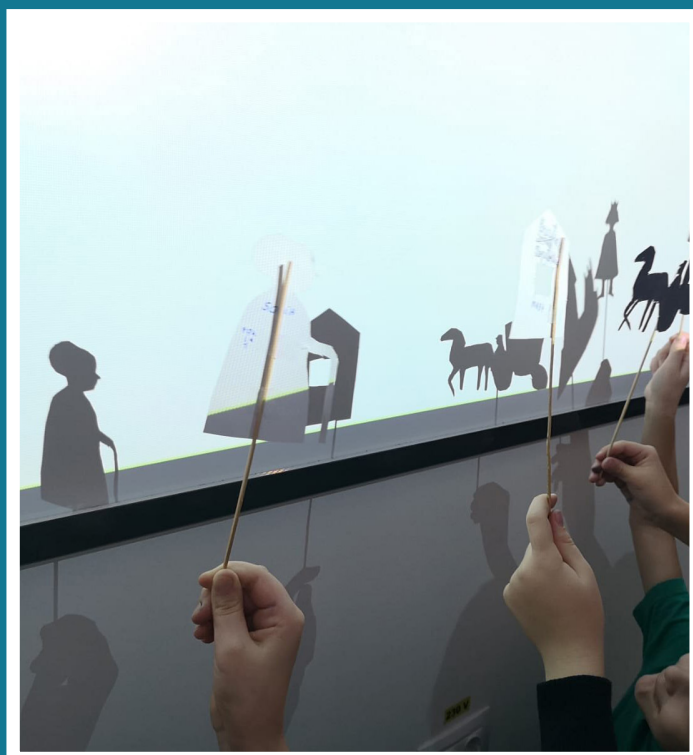
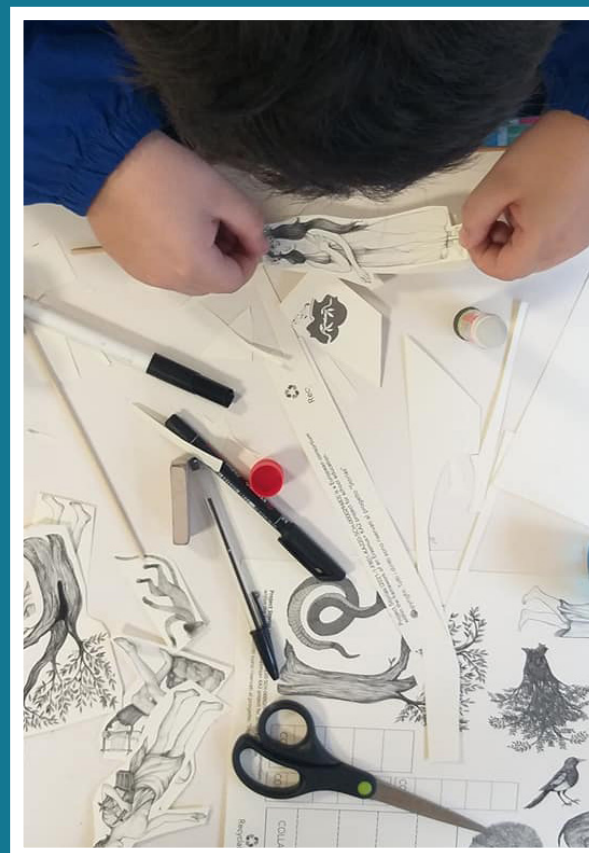
There will be a filter between the child storyteller and those who listen, which, thus acts as a means of support for their own anxieties, but also allows for the triggering of an empathic mechanism to expand the enjoyment of the storyteller and the listener, releasing new energy.

The teacher will use the various Storiaskits but must also make sure that it is then the children themselves who become the protagonists and use these means, which constitute a real "reminder" that will allow them, through practice, increasingly autonomous access.

The "method" consisting of a series of stimulating activities that we propose with this project follows a path that moves from drawing to storytelling. It might seem inconsistent; however, keep in mind how even today illustrations can tell a story without the help of words. But there is more, the first alphabets were drawings, stylizations that gradually evolved. Graphic signs that became writing.

By connecting these aspects from a playful point of view we've built a new approach.

Drawing – as a movement of the hand, as play on paper on which free signs are traced that follow the thread of one's thoughts, as artistic scribbles that become shapes and only in the end become letters – constitutes the basis for the consolidation of a "spontaneous behavior" that will form the spirit of children and their ability to challenge themselves and, thus, grow. With the same authenticity and naturalness, children will go from creating signs and drawings to inventing stories following the same creative "red thread". **They will learn by doing.**



USING PARTICIPATORY STORIES IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

The value of interactivity in stories

Children love telling stories, especially those they can change or modify. Therefore, stories have a special place and value in the classroom and at home. A chance to listen to the sounds and rhythms of the native language helps children to acquire their first language. They can identify vocabulary and expressions that they have learnt or heard regularly and see them in use. Frequent telling can help children to learn new phrases and expressions with the correct emotional resonance.

Storytelling brings language learning alive and creates a participatory and immersive experience that allows kids to enjoy hearing the language in a dynamic, often stylistic and entertaining way. Participation is defined as a process in which a group or groups of people exercise initiative in **taking action**, stimulated by their own thinking and **decision making**, and over which they have specific control.

The designed **participatory stories** are examples of a learner-centered approach of teaching / learning that encourages **learning by doing**, small group work, open questioning and peer teaching. It uses experiential learning to ask about what is happening to the characters and what they should do next, or offers a learner the chance to step into the shoes of that character and hear/say their words in a true context.

Participatory stories

The authors of the designed participatory stories made them appropriate to three age groups. The youngest students (aged 5-6) can enrich the base text of a story with more adjectives to describe nouns in detail. Moreover, they can make the story more complex by adding onomatopoeia and dialogue or even creating their own ending to the story.

The next age group (7-8 years old students) is supposed to make the story come to life even more. The goal is for them to collaboratively enrich the story, and to learn to better visualize, feel and experience the setting of the story in the process. Going from one level (activity) to the next, the students can enrich each story with various prompts and activities, such as drawing a map, adding characters, designing the surroundings and asking questions for hints in small groups or even guessing other student's answers.

Finally, participatory stories constructed for older students (9-10 years old) target more advanced writing skills, and can therefore include activities such as identifying synonyms and antonyms, using different types of adjectives, substituting verbs and adverbs, adding various other story elements in order for the students to be able to expand their vocabulary, diversifying the structure of sentences, and overall having more freedom to manipulate the story to their liking.

While working with the smallest age group (children at the ages of 5-6), the teacher or parent starts with the simplest version (base text) of the participatory story and reads the key words expressively to emphasize them. Depending on the story, learners can then enrich the base text by adding adjectives related to the physical appearance of the characters, adjectives of colors and those of feelings. If working with an advanced class, adjectives can be used to describe nouns, characters and objects and learners can decide on their own what type of adjectives to choose. The next level of enriching the story may include the addition of onomatopoeia and dialogue. Being led by their imaginations, learners may add words such as "pew" and "crash", changing their voice and intonation appropriately. This gives them the chance to be in the character's position and generate replies and sentences. Such additions will create an engaging and creative atmosphere for young learners.

Participatory stories focused on using key vocabulary and phrases can create an awareness of rhythm and structure. These types of stories also help children to enjoy and be aware of intonation and tone of voice, natural sounding expressions and phrases as well as interaction between peers or the teacher. The atmosphere of play and imaginative expression creates an appetite for similar experiences. Students who have enjoyed storytelling in class often ask for more stories and also feel motivated and encouraged to create and tell, act out or illustrate their own stories in a variety of ways and in a different place, for example at home.

The act of storytelling appeals to different learning preferences and personalities ensuring that, from the shyest to the most active children, everyone has a chance to participate in a way that they can enjoy. This ranges from listening quietly to taking part as an actor. In addition, all designed participatory stories provide teaching aids for students with learning difficulties (SLD) in order to encourage them to talk, keep their attention on the plot and details, enrich their vocabulary scope, practice new vocabulary usage, and help them stay motivated by creating their own endings to the stories.

For older students (7-8 years old), some activities such as drawing a map, adding characters, drawing lines and arrows to show movement of characters can make storytelling more fun. They might be required to communicate and cooperate within small groups, which may pose a challenge for this age group, but it's an absolutely necessary skill to possess as well. Finally, all children of this age group are involved in the autonomous writing and telling of the story. Children at this age want to have more independence in decision-making, take initiative and have an influence. Those capabilities need to be allowed the space to be nurtured and to flourish.

For the oldest group of students (9-10 years old) participatory stories offer the opportunity to retell, rephrase, enact or summarize what they have heard, to rewrite the ending of the story or to create their own as a group or as an individual.

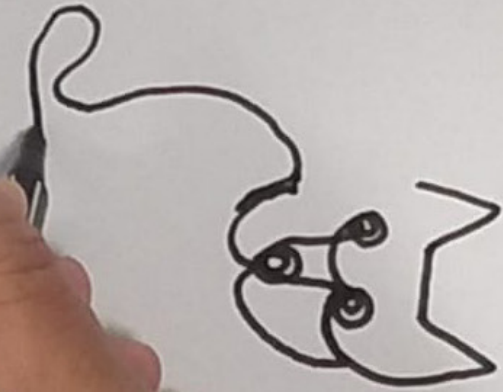
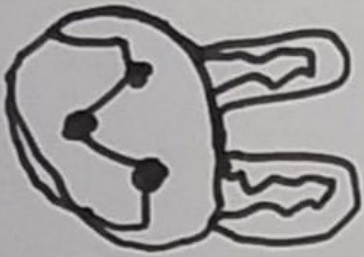
Replacing synonyms and antonyms will help them to enrich their vocabulary scope. Expanding sentences by inserting adjectives before nouns or adverbs of manners after verbs will help them make complex and longer sentences. Choosing alternative endings and justifying their choices is another chance to speak and get to know new vocabulary and structures. Comparing group choices or proposals can lead to new insights or ideas for the story arising.

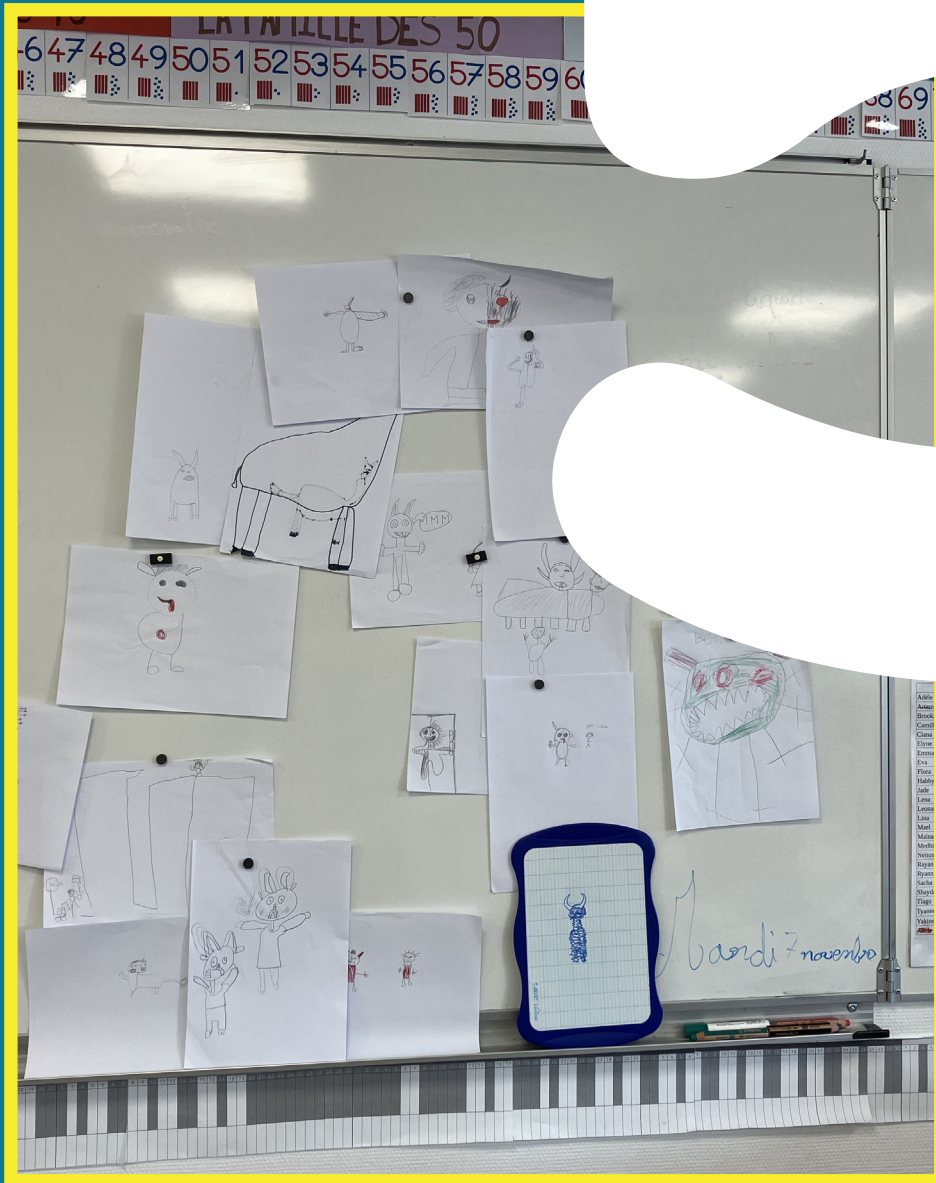
According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), active learning is "anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (p. 2).

Active learning is related to those instructional methods that closely involve students in the knowledge constructions process, including:

- Student-centered learning, where the diverse learning needs of students, rather than the need to push through content, are at the center of the learning process.
- Experiential learning, where students learn by engaging in learning activities.

All the above conditions are fulfilled in the designed participatory stories.





CONCLUSION

This guide is targeted towards pre-primary and primary school teachers, as well as education professionals more generally, to better understand and put into context the need to diversify their teaching approaches to help their young learners get a good foothold in mastering literacy. The impetus for the writing of this guide has been to shed light on the need to improve the current state of literacy attainment in Europe among our youngest learners.

Namely, the current data on literacy from the latest PISA report in 2018 paints a bleak picture:

- 17% of European 15-year-old (13% of 15-year-old girls and 27% of 15-year-old boys) have poor reading skills and have difficulties comprehending their own school textbooks
- 18% of nine-year-old (13% girls and 24% boys) never or almost never read for pleasure outside school
- Around 13 million children under 15 years of age have literacy difficulties
- Only four countries in Europe met the 15% benchmark for underachievement, while 6 countries had an underachievement rate of 30% and higher among their students (meaning 1 in 3 students experienced difficulties with reading)
- Overall, the reading performance in the EU as a whole has deteriorated since previous PISA report

The short – and long-term impacts of such poor performance in literacy to the individuals themselves and our society as a whole cannot be understated and are a cause for concern. According to the research, individuals who struggle with low literacy are burdened in all aspects of their daily lives – from not being able to comprehend signs, make sense of timetables, fill out forms, follow instructions or even use the internet in a conscious and informed manner. Therefore, this is not an issue that manifests and remains within school parameters – poor literacy is a burden that carries over to professional, social and personal lives throughout an individual's lifespan, making it difficult for them to find and retain a job, seek out proper care and services, and increasing social exclusion, inequality and mistreatment.

With this guide, we've aimed to argue that getting ahead of this outcome begins in the early years of a classroom. Therefore, with its structure and content, this pedagogical guide has strived to address this pressing issue and train teachers to adapt their lessons and teaching practices accordingly.

Firstly, we began by covering the limits of traditional approaches to teaching literacy, which encompass those that focus solely on learning to read or learning to write. In most classrooms and most reading exercises nowadays, teaching to read implies the application of the Phonics Method (breaking words down into sounds, transferring sounds into letters and joining those letters to create new words) and/or the Global Method (presenting a whole word to students and relying on their visual perception to remember the word). On the other hand, teaching to write focuses on composition skills (transforming ideas into language) and transcription skills (transforming language into symbols). However, these methods, although in many ways complementary to one another, often place too much emphasis on neatness and fail to provide individualised support and ensure enjoyment and motivation from the acts of reading and writing.

Seeing as how these traditional methods fail to take into account students' individual needs, they also cannot provide the targeted support that students with learning difficulties require. Since these students struggle with poorer spelling, word recognition, vocabulary development, and written expression they need to be accommodated with approaches that are more inclusive.

In that vein, we've identified two such teaching approaches: learner-centred and creativity-based, which differ based on their learning focus, and a third approach which functions as an amalgamation of both – a storytelling-based approach. The first two approaches promote student brainstorming and collaboration, use failure as a stepping stone for improvement, and nurture a supportive and non-judgmental setting in which students will have the freedom and comfort to forge their own learning paths. The third approach, storytelling, acts as a bridge between "learnercentred" and "creativity-based" ways of teaching by prioritising more than simply students' knowledge attainment, but passion and curiosity as well.

This is because learning to read and write must be reinforced with a love for reading and writing. In the words of Mark Twain: "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read".

We believe that sparking and encouraging student involvement and engagement in such a way to cultivate a love of literacy can work better with the hands-on use of appropriate literacy tools. For that purpose, we've created Storiaskits and Participatory Stories.

Storiaskits are designed as creative "toys" with which children (either alone or in a group/pair) interact, roleplay and communicate freely and flexibly. Examples such as the Silent Book Theatre, Story Map, Shadow Theatre and others use silhouettes or puppets for storytelling in order for children to use their creativity to "breathe new life" into the characters, setting and plot of stories. These tools, therefore, engage children on a number of fronts, activating their senses and their bodies through the movements that accompany their storytelling endeavours.

Another storytelling-based tool that we've adopted are Participatory Stories. This tool uses writing prompts and story bases to help children mold stories to their liking and imagination. In the process, by asking students to think outside of the confines of established story elements (allowing them the freedom to determine the traits of characters, the setting, the plot and the ending), Participatory Stories prioritise student autonomy and greater self-confidence during writing tasks. An added bonus is that children are able to further make their stories come to life by recording their storytelling creations once they're complete.

Being both learner-centred and creativity-based, the Storiaskits and the Participatory Stories aim to enhance the natural gifts and skills of today's learners, especially those with learning difficulties who struggle with traditional approaches to literacy.

Literacy is not only an essential skill for students to facilitate and improve their academic achievements and learning paths – it also enables greater lifelong learning and fuller participation in society as those students become the citizens of tomorrow, voicing their thoughts and expressing their opinions. A student who has attained the skill to read and write effectively is one equipped to meet the world head-on.



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**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The STORIAS project is co-financed by the ERASMUS+ programme of the EU. Its content reflects the views of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information therein. (Project code: 2021-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000029483).