



"Hope for Children" UNCRC Policy Center
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ECLN Artist-Led Learning Activities Menu (ALLAM)

ECLN 6P Framework

I - PEOPLE + PURPOSE

In Cyprus, "Hope For Children" UNCRC Policy Center (HFC) has designed a pilot testing together with Sofia Alexandra Dias Panay, a visual artist with experience in working with vulnerable children and young people. She will be working with unaccompanied minors residing at Home For Hope, a children's shelter run by HFC, as well as the staff working at the shelter (the officers: social workers, psychologists, music therapists, sociologists; and the kitchen & cleaning assistants). The visual artist will lead a series of workshops in which artistic activities will be used as a catalyst of the healing process of children's traumatic life experiences. These workshops will also be used to train the shelter's staff into applying arts on their work routines with the children. Our focus will be the testing of the effectiveness and relevance of developing and using Creative Practice as a skill with the potential to enhance 3 other main skills of great relevance in the working context of the shelter, these are Communication, Mentorship, and Teamwork. The Creative Practice, through artistic techniques, is seen has an engine which will gear a circular communication process between all individuals at the shelter and, in turn, enhance the staff's mentorship skills in relation to the children, and teamwork skills of both staff and children. Such learning process also includes the artist whose main role will be the implementation of the project and, simultaneously, to develop herself the above mentioned skills. We expect to accomplish results that, not only reinforce the usefulness of such project in this specific work context, but also to be able to design a model that can be implemented in other similar contexts.



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Creative Practice

Communication

Mentorship

Teamwork

Direct Beneficiaries:

- Children
 - Unaccompanied minors.
 - Children coping with different kinds of abuse.
- Staff of the Shelter
 - Increase communication and use art to cope with issues which come up with the children.
- Artist
 - Cultivate a better understanding of people and develop artistic ways of helping people who need it.

Indirect Beneficiaries:

- Other shelters and organisations choosing to use similar methods can be trained and share the resulting information on this strategy's benefits.
- Other people who will be able to be benefited by this as a result of this method being adopted.



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II - PLANS + PLACES

Duration:

Ongoing project. Stage 1 began 1st August and is expected to end 31st Sep 2014. The sessions/activities took place twice a week and the duration of each session was, on average, 1h30min (sometimes 2h), a total of approximately 21h so far.

Place:

"Home For Hope" in Nicosia, Cyprus.

Strategies:

- Cultivating enthusiastic communication, first with the staff to better identify the issues that come up for any particular child, or the entire group of children, and secondly by creating good communication with the children themselves.
- Using creative processes to instil values, respect in various areas (environment, self, authority, other cultures, etc.) and to gain self awareness, a sense of responsibility and self-confidence.
- Using teamwork with the staff to promote unified mentorship, and using art as a catalyst.

Overall Description of Activities

- Identifying group or individual issues of children.
- Adjusting 2-3 projects to the issues which need to be addressed both on an individual or group setting (mentorship).
- Using continuous input from the staff; working with the children in groups. This will be organised and managed in collaboration with the shelter's coordinator.
- Work with each child individually in order to develop their own personal creative process.
- Display the created art work to an audience; open public, selected groups.



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Activities

- **Stage 1: Personal Shelter**

Through artistic and cultural activities participants have built a personal shelter made of plain cardboard boxes aimed at: developing mentoring skills; communication strategies; self-awareness; Identify strengths and weaknesses to work on; cultural acceptance

This activity starts off with the use of plain cardboard boxes which are then manipulated into shapes to form an external shelter for each child. The boxes, now shelters, will remain untouched on the outside but be transformed on the inside using mixed media so that the children's personalities are portrayed in a spherical or total way. Good features and bad, strengths and weaknesses! The art work will be then photographed, in order to be made into a book.

The result of this activity, and in fact throughout the whole duration of this project, we will be benefiting from evaluations from child psychologists who will also follow the curriculum of these activities. Any information and result of this project can then be used not only for the healthy running of this shelter but used to help other shelters governmental and non-governmental.

- **Stage 2: Story Telling**

A storyteller's performance and workshop followed by creative drawings to reflect how the story has been identified with each child. In turn, this tells staff and psychologists more about the children which may have been more difficult to determine through conversation.

The children then will create a story of their own with guidance, and illustrate it in part or in whole. The art work of this activity will also be exhibited. Depending on funding, a book of stories could be compiled for their personal accomplishment or to raise extra funds for the shelter.



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- **Stage 3: Collaborating Work**

The children, after the 2 previous activities, both in groups or individually depending on the children, will help and even impose on art work I have developed through my experience with them, combining their stories and potential outcomes, heritage and humanity, creating several pieces. Many methods will be used. The objectives of this:

- Team work
- Communication
- Creative process
- Mentorship
- Self worth
- Progress report
- Create awareness on problems faced in our country and culture
- Create awareness on how art has helped and how it can continue to help people facing issues.

ECLN Core-Curriculum testing strategies (questionnaires and guidelines attached)

- Questionnaires** – Before-session and Mid-session to participating staff
- Video interviews** – Mid-session interview to participating staff
- Website** – showcasing the project and allowing further communication



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III- PROGRESS + POINTS OF VIEW

a) 'Before-session' Questionnaires to the Shelter's Officers

Skills considered necessary by the Officers before the start of the project

Skills	Teamwork	Communication	Creative Process	Mentorship
Patience				
Understanding				
Flexibility				
Open minded				
Adhere to the rules				
COMMUNICATION				
Problem solving				
Effective guidance				
Teamwork				
Organizing				
Stress management				
Creativity				
Motivation				
Cooperation				
Accepting others				
Good listening				
Empathy				
Good temper				
Calm disposition				

The combination of relevant skills, as suggested by the officers, gives us an insight to their perceptions on what is the necessary to be good **mentor**, **communicator** and a **team worker**. It is, thus, possible to conclude that our main core-curriculum skills result from a set of other 'sub-skills'.





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Difficulties and Challenges anticipated by the officers:

The results indicate that the core-curriculum skills being tested in our sub-group are of great importance in overcoming the difficulties and challenges anticipated by the officers in the 'Before' questionnaire.

They were mostly concerned with:

- To accomplish a balance in implementing the rules of the shelter.
- To gain the trust and build a relationship with the minors.
- Communication and cooperation (particular regarding language barriers, as all minors come from foreign countries where the main language is neither Greek nor English).
- Communication with the welfare services, the legal guardians of the children.
-

Skills which the Officers want to improve:

- creativity in dealing with situations
- psychotherapeutic skills for working with unaccompanied minors

- communication both with the minors and the carers

- management skills

- capacity to adjust to changes

- creativity

- calmness

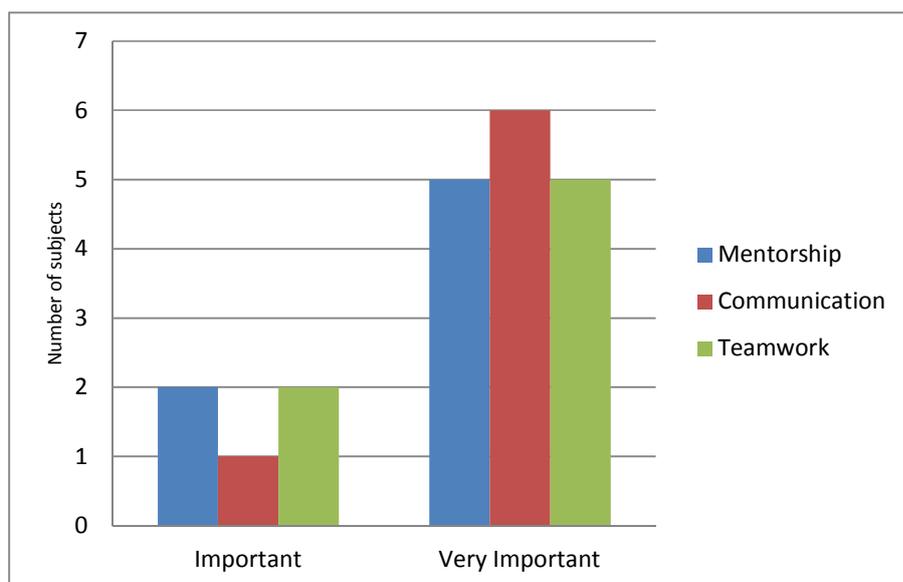


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The related core-curriculum skills were rated as shown:



Understanding of creative process and its importance at the working place:

- Creativity as a tool to help in the everyday running or the shelter.
- A way to find alternative ways of dealing with matters, use of imagination.
- Communication and development through any kind of art.
- Innovative ways of dealing with things not only in the arts but also in communication.

There seems to be an enthusiasm to be creative and a good understanding on how creativity is very useful, especially in their field of work. Using art projects, which is the end result of practicing the creative process, will sub-consciously enrich their capacity for creativity in all areas of life, such as their job.



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Can art help?

The analysis of the 'Before' questionnaires suggests that the officers consider that Art can be a way, a tool which can be used to develop, enhance and teach our core-curriculum skills:

- Helps people step outside their boundaries.
- It's a means of expression.
- It helps to discover capabilities.
- It develops skills.
- It will help in understanding the children and in learning more about them (as a form of communication).
- It is another way of teaching.
- It is an easier way of expression, than talking about issues in a foreign language, especially in cases of abuse.
- It has the ability to enhance cooperation.
- Enhances creativity.
- It can help the children to bond (and create bonds between the staff).
- Art is something everyone can relate to.



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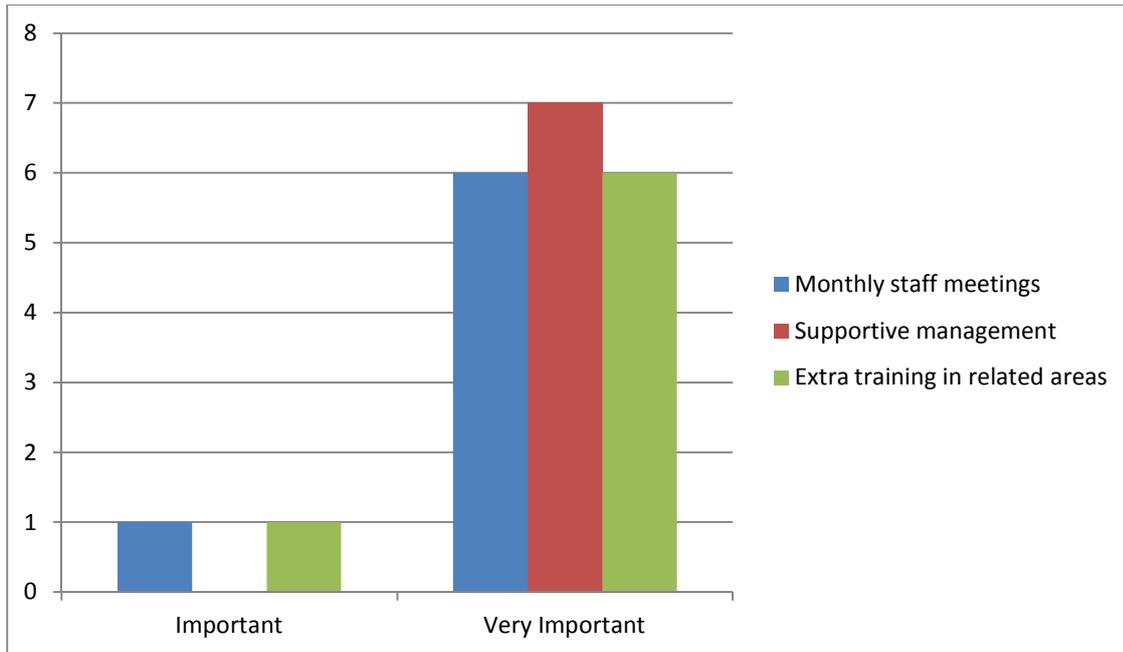
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Important features of the work context dynamics:



Again, all are conscious about the importance of communication. Monthly staff meetings and demonstration of appreciation and approval of our work is a good way of practicing communication skills.



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b) 'Mid-Session' Questionnaires to the Shelter's Officers

The project was overall rated as useful:

1. The choice of subjects approached helped in getting to know the other officers and the boys better, and facilitated an understanding of their behaviors.
2. The project brought staff to an equal position to minors'.
3. The project was an ongoing process, permanently evolving and each session allowing the discovery of something new.

Aspects to improve on:

1. Need to better coordinate workshop schedules
2. More organization in acquiring needs materials.
3. Staff's work schedule and workload more compatible with in-house workshops
4. Preparation of workplace in advance of each session.

Impact on Communication Skills:

1. Better nonverbal skills which helped to find appropriate learning methods for each person based on their needs.
2. Learning to interact with the minors as equals.
3. Learning more strategies to approach individuals differently according to their personalities.
4. Increased easiness to communicate with the minors due to establishing a closer relationship through the project.
6. Opportunity to associate with people and get to know them better, facilitating intercultural exchanges and interaction.



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Impact on Mentorship skills:

1. Increased aptitude to guide and interact with the boys
2. Understanding how each boy approached different parts of the project helped in finding creative ways to guide and assist them throughout the process.

Impact on Creative Process:

1. Cultivated personal imagination and prompt sharing of ideas.
2. Put creative skills to use which were not used for a long time.
3. Learning to use new materials.

Impact on Teamwork:

1. The use of new materials prompt collaboration.
2. Creative and constructive time to observe others and bond.

Suggestions for project improvement:

1. Further emphasis on the recognition of art has a global form of communication appreciated further than individual, regional, or national borders, in order to developed individual's pride for self and own cultural background.
2. Include other art forms, such as applied art (pottery, metal work etc), and photography



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After project:

1. To still give the boys who are interested the ability to do art and expand their skills.
2. All activities are vital contributing for interaction and understanding of the other.
3. To keep materials and a weekly time allotment for artistic activities, particularly relevant for this population who need this different means of expression.

Extra training :

1. Any information is welcome as long it is compatible with work load
2. Learn more on how art can be used as a method of therapy.

Challenges mentioned 'Before-Session' and successfully addressed by the project thus far :

- Gain the trust and build a relationship with the minors.
- Communication and cooperation (language barriers).



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