

## TIPS & IDEAS



On how to collaborate and learn from each other's professional approaches, skills and experiences  
The Art EQUAL partners share their experiences and advice

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### USE ACTION LEARNING TO "ZOOM IN"

Most professionals reflect on their practice every day. Action learning helps you to structure your reflections and zoom in on specific situations in your practice which you would like to develop or change. By having a clear focus on concrete situations, you might see and realize things you have not noticed before. This could help you to solve specific problems or develop new ways of working. In collaborative action learning processes, you should find time for joint reflections after each action and use the zoomed in reflections as an ongoing development of your everyday practice.

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### FOLLOW THE CHILDREN'S INITIATIVES, MOTIVES & ACTIONS

Our first job is to support children at their earliest stages of development. In collaborations between early years professionals and artists/culture workers the aim is to follow the children's motives and actions in terms of supporting their interests, commitment and well-being. Therefore, it is important to have a thorough observation on the children's behaviour, interaction and level of participation. The focus of the adults should thus be to guide and support the children's aesthetic processes rather than controlling and leading them in a certain direction.

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### ESTABLISH A SECURE ENVIRONMENT BUT BE OPEN TO UNEXPECTED REACTIONS

Security is important for both children and adults, and it takes time to build a relationship of trust. We must provide a secure room for the children by listening to the adults who know them best. At the same time, it is important to be open to each other's experiences of the children's behavior and actions. Sometimes we see that children act in surprising ways when they meet new professionals who might not have the same expectations to them as the adults in their everyday. Again, it is about being open to the process.

### FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN OWN AMBITIONS AND EVERYDAY REALITIES

Ambitions are good, but sometimes everyday realities can get in the way. We have experienced professional artists with great artistic ambitions for the collaboration, but in the process, they have to adjust their ambitions due to everyday realities, such as the children are hungry, tired, or one of the pedagogues have to stay with one child and cannot participate. Be ambitious, but focus on the everyday perspective of the collaboration.

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### INVOLVE YOUR COLLEAGUES AND SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

It is recommendable to involve the whole house in the collaboration from the beginning to the end, although some of your colleagues might not be directly involved. See the collaboration as a source to development and change, not only for yourself but also for your colleagues.

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### SEE THE COLLABORATION AS CONTINUING EDUCATION

Collaborations with professionals from outside require time and resources. It is important that especially the manager see the collaboration as an investment in continuing education of the staff members – like any other education. The staff must feel they have a responsibility for what they learn and can bring further into their pedagogical practice.



### INVOLVE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

In our local community we find many interesting and useful resources and potential partners. This can be cultural institutions, museums, libraries, music halls, after school services, sport organisations, playgrounds, parks, forests, beaches, shopping centres, etc. Think of how you can involve your community and make use of the children's physical surroundings.

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### OPEN YOUR SENSES

Bring your senses into play and let the children taste, feel, see, hear and smell. When you focus on sensuous experiences you stimulate the children's interests and engagement in new ways. We have experienced that the children's concentration, learning and memory are increased when their senses are activated in aesthetic processes. At the same time the senses can help to make the abstract more tangible, concrete and present.

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### KEEP IT SIMPLE

Less is more! Make sure you do not overload the actions with many different activities. The children experience a great amount of new sensory perceptions in art and culture-based activities. If there are too many things going on they can get confused and lose their motivation. Simplicity provides a room for the children's own imaginations, actions, ideas and expressions. Use simple tools and do not hesitate to repeat activities again and again.

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### MAKE A MISTAKE

We learn from our mistakes. In collaborations between early years professionals and artists/culture workers experiments are important. We must step out of our comfort zones and accept when things move in another direction than we expected, also when we think it is the wrong direction. Be open to each other's positive as well as negative feedback.