

Table of content

Introduction	2
Activities before the workshop	4
Read before the workshop – Learning activities for transversal skills development	4
Do before the workshop – Reflecting on your teaching practice: Learning Activities and Transversal Skills	9
Do optional – Get to know the structure of the description of a learning activity designed to develop transversal skills	10
Workshop activities	12
Activity 1 – Becoming aware of learning activities in your teaching practice	12
Activity 2 – Giving meaning to a Learning Activity	14
Activities after the workshop	16
After workshop activity 1 – Adapt the activity to curriculum needs	16
After workshop activity 2 – Implementation and reflection	17

Introduction

Welcome to the SPIRIT project's in-service teachers' training module called "Activating Learning Activities to Develop Transversal Skills." This module is about the capacity of learning activities, meaning active learning techniques and methods, to develop SPIRIT transversal skills of the 6-10 years old elementary students.

The SPIRIT "learning activity" approach (as the project partners interpret it) is an interactive, purposeful, curriculum-implementable short activity – meaning it can be used in any lesson – that involves student activities in individual, pair, small groups, or the entire class, which teaches through experience-based activities and joint discovery rather than passive knowledge transfer, thereby developing students' skills. For the 6–10 age group students, this method is highly recommended and extremely effective because active participation builds a bridge between concrete experience and the understanding of concepts that are still abstract to them, while successfully focusing their easily distracted attention on the given lesson topic.

Beyond subject-specific connections, this method also fundamentally develops transversal skills: during group activities, students unconsciously practice paying attention to one another, emotional communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving. They can develop their creativity and flexibility while becoming more open and tolerant of others' thoughts and values. As a result, children not only understand academic material more easily, but their empathy and sense of belonging to the community also strengthen, shaping them into confident, open, cooperative, and mentally and emotionally healthier, happy people in the long run. In addition, well-designed activities provide an immediate sense of success, which in the long run motivates primary school children and makes them confident and open to further learning.

What to Expect

Like the other modules of the SPIRIT in-services teachers' training, this one is also designed in a blended way and includes both face-to-face workshops and online self-learning materials and activities. This module is also structured in three parts: Before the Workshop, Workshop Activities, and After the Workshop

In the Before the Workshop section, you will prepare through Read, and Do tasks. In the reading materials, there will be a clarification of learning activities. These materials will help you to enter the face-to-face workshop, to actively participate in it, and to get the most benefits for yourself.

In the Workshop Activities section, you will take part in a series of practical and reflective "active learning" experiences. These activities are designed to help you experience learning activities from the learner's perspective, analyse them from the teacher's perspective, and reflect on how they can be used strategically in your own classroom. You will explore how learning activities/active learning techniques can support the development of the 10 SPIRIT Skills, and how they can be linked to curriculum content.

After the workshop, you will also be asked to do some individual activities, such as choosing and adapting a learning activity and trying it out with the children in your class..

Learning Objectives

By the end of this preparatory study, you will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of learning activities and the wide variety, and recognize that you are already using it as part of your practice.
- Understand that learning activities are perfect for developing transversal skills and that they develop transversal skills in a complex way (not just one skill).
- Understand the role of the teacher during the learning activity in order to effectively support the development of the targeted skill.
- Understand the logic of the template and be able to use it effectively.
- Understand that learning activities can be adapted to different contents.
- Adapt and implement the learning activities in the toolbox in line with the needs of the children.
- Reflect and assess the success of their application of the LA in real life and be able to improve and refine their future practices.

Let's start!

Read before the workshop – Learning activities for transversal skills development

Introduction

The SPIRIT “learning activity” approach (as the project partners interpret it) is an interactive, purposeful, curriculum-implementable short activity – meaning it can be used in any lesson – that involves student activities in individual, pair, small groups, or the entire class, which teaches through experience-based activities and joint discovery rather than passive knowledge transfer, thereby developing students’ skills. For the 6–10 age group students, this method is highly recommended and extremely effective because active participation builds a bridge between concrete experience and the understanding of concepts that are still abstract to them, while successfully focusing their easily distracted attention on the given lesson topic.

Beyond subject-specific connections, this method also fundamentally develops transversal skills: during group activities, students unconsciously practice paying attention to one another, emotional communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving. They can develop their creativity and flexibility while becoming more open and tolerant of others’ thoughts and values. As a result, children not only understand academic material more easily, but their empathy and sense of belonging to the community also strengthen, shaping them into confident, open, cooperative, and mentally and emotionally healthier, happy people in the long run. In addition, well-designed activities provide an immediate sense of success, which in the long run motivates primary school children and makes them confident and open to further learning.

What are Learning Activities?

A lesson consists of different components, and one of these is a learning activity. A learning activity is a methodology – a general teaching strategy, method, or specific instructional approach – that actively involves students in the learning process. Instead of passively listening, students take an active role in their own learning. They are generally more motivated and engaged when they participate actively.

In educational literature, several terms are used to describe learning activities, including learning techniques, didactic methods, teaching methods, work forms, pedagogical approaches, etc. These terms may have subtle differences, but in this project, we have chosen to use the term “learning activity.”

A learning activity can be:

- a specific teaching method that has been deliberately developed (for example, emotional mirror);
- or a certain ‘method’ or ‘work form’ that can be applied to different learning contents while teaching subjects such as math, science, or history. For instance, anticipatory reading can be used in history, literature, etc.

These activities can include interactive group activities, role plays, individual assignments, paired tasks, quizzes, creative projects, or even game-based activities that integrate learning content.

Games as a Learning Activity?

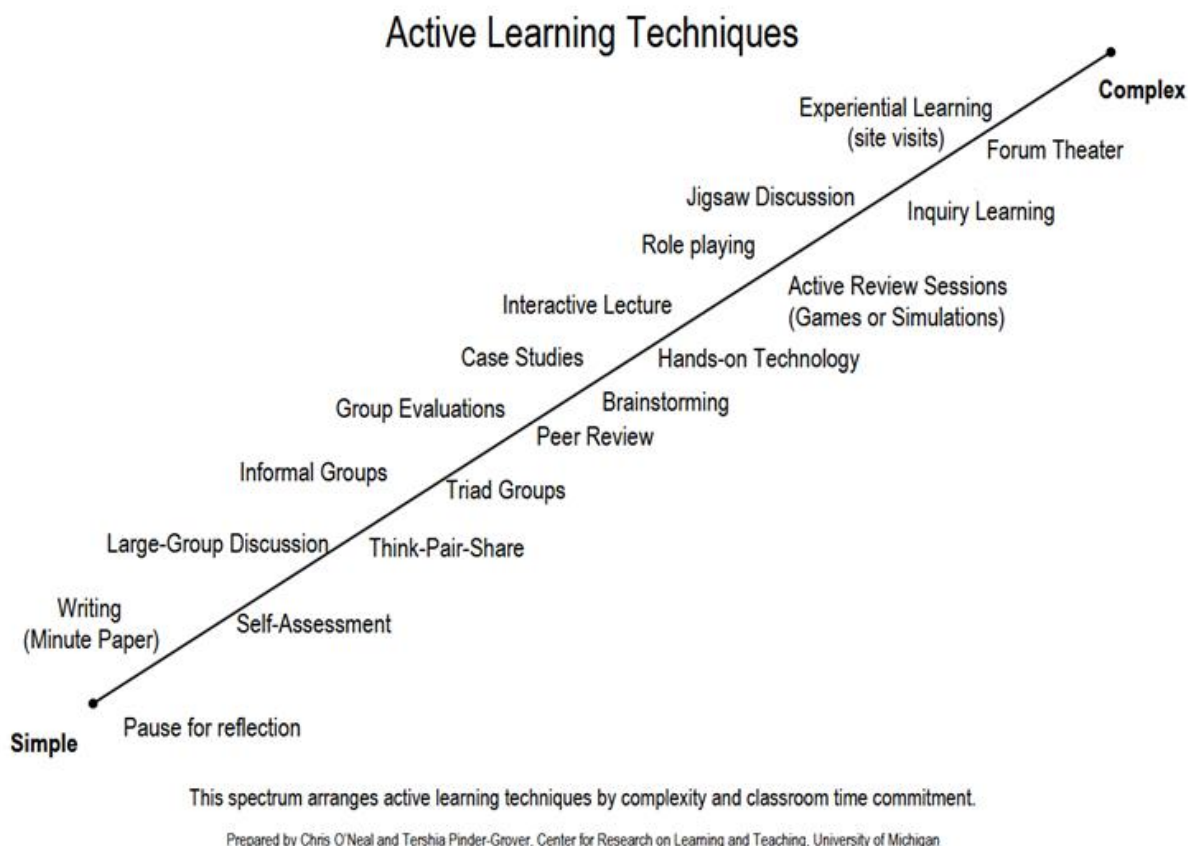
In the interpretation of the project’s partners and experts, if an existing game is adapted to include learning/actual lesson content, it becomes a learning activity, as it is then used to teach specific subject matter. For example, if you replace all the faces in Guess Who? with animals that students have learned about in class, the game is no longer just for entertainment but actively supports learning.

Flexible Use Across Subjects

The learning activities in this toolbox are described in a general way. In principle, they can be applied to multiple types of learning content. For example, a “Gallery walk” or Jigsaw activity could be used in any lesson. The 50 learning activities included in this toolbox have been carefully selected to ensure that, in addition to developing the specific skill, they support this Flexible Use Across Subjects. Each learning activity description includes several practical examples on how it can be used in different subjects. They are therefore applicable to the various contents of the partner countries’ national curriculum.

Use and placement of learning activities in a lesson

Such a learning activity can be part of a larger lesson plan that includes other learning activities. It therefore usually forms part of a bigger whole. The duration and complexity of a learning activity can be highly variable, ranging from very simple 5- to 10-minute activities (such as the Think-Pair-Share activity, which typically takes between 5 to 10 minutes to complete) to much more complex techniques that may require significantly more time. (see below for a simple and, of course, far from complete illustration). This spectrum arranges active learning techniques by complexity and classroom time commitment.



Source: [Chris O'Neal and Tershia Pinder-Grover, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan](#)

When do you use the Learning Activities?

When you wish to use learning activities in your lesson and want to select the ones that best suit the lesson's content and the age-specific characteristics of your students, consider the following:

Start with the Learning Objective:

- What do you want students to learn, train, or achieve?
- How will you test their understanding?

Match the activity to the Goal:

- For example, if the goal is to improve teamwork, use collaboration forms, like group problem-solving or project-based learning.
- If the goal is knowledge recall, consider quizzes or brainstorming.

Always let your learning objective guide your choice of technique. Begin with the outcome in mind and select methods that help students achieve that goal effectively and actively. This comprehensive toolbox offers a variety of practical learning activities to help you create engaging, interactive, and goal-oriented lessons to train transversal skills. By embracing activating learning activities, you can transform your teaching, empower your students, and prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century.

Why flexibility matters?

Activating learning activities can be adapted to different class sizes, subjects, and teaching moments. For example:

- In a lecture setting, interactive tools like quizzes or Q&A sessions can energize a large group.
- In a smaller group, role-plays, debates, or discussions allow for deeper interaction and personalized learning.

This approach makes teaching dynamic and ensures students are not just explicitly learning content but also the skills they need to thrive in the modern world.

Adjusting Activities to different levels

Each learning activity can be adapted in terms of difficulty (beginner – advanced – expert) by providing more or less support or by making specific adjustments. Let's look at an example of the interpretation of this, which we quote from the Object Lesson Energiser learning activity, found in full detail in Chapter 3.10.5 of this book:

- Beginners (6-7 years old): Use a very concrete, obvious symbol. Teacher models the connection explicitly. Students get sentence stems or fixed prompts, work in pairs or small groups with assigned roles, and do a simple, single-step action/commitment. Reflection is guided (“I notice..., I will...”) with yes/no or fill-in-the-blank support.
- Advanced learners (8-9 years): Use a symbol with a bit more nuance; students help generate the analogy. Small groups discuss guided open questions, compare ideas, and choose a related action. Teacher scaffolds but let us groups revise or extend their commitments. Reflection asks “what” and “why” and includes simple self-assessment.
- Experts (9–10 years): Students select or adapt their own symbolic objects, frame the connection themselves, lead peer discussions, and design multi-part or sustained actions. Feedback (peer and teacher) informs iteration. Reflection is metacognitive – students articulate how their thinking is changing and set next-step goals.

Using Learning Activities for developing transversal skills

Purposefully designed learning activities provide meaningful opportunities to foster transversal skills, such as empathy, critical thinking, and others. We have chosen to place one central skill at the core of each learning activity. However, other skills are naturally developed as well. For each learning activity, we also indicate two secondary skills that are addressed.

From Activity to skill development

Each learning activity should follow a structured process, consisting of a core phase and a conclusion or recapitulation phase. It is important that the teacher actively observes students during the activity and asks guiding questions as needed.

During the reflective phase, the central skill being addressed should be explicitly highlighted, accompanied by debriefing and reflection questions to consolidate understanding and encourage deeper thinking.

These questions are really the key to developing the skills! They help make learning visible, prompt reflection, support skill development, and encourage students to articulate their thinking, strategies, emotions, and choices. To develop a particular skill effectively, multiple learning activities should be conducted over an extended period, with that skill serving as the central focus in each activity. It is only after performing a particular activity multiple times, with a specific progression and by practicing a certain skill, that it becomes a habit for the students.

Final reflection

Integrating short, interactive activities into the lessons helps 6-10 years old students understand and implement abstract ideas through hands-on experience. By shifting away from passive listening, the teachers allow children to enjoy and love to learn. These methods naturally weave the practice of essential life skills, like problem-solving, emotional control, creativity, connectedness, or resilience, into everyday lessons. Guiding the process with targeted guiding and debriefing questions allows you to make their development visible and recognisable for the students and the teacher as well. Consistent use of these techniques builds lasting habits that prepare students to a meaningful, happy life.

Do before the workshop – Reflecting on your teaching practice: Learning Activities and Transversal Skills

Now that you have been introduced to the concept of learning activities, the next step is to reflect on your own teaching practice. This reflection will help you connect what you have learned with what you already do in your classroom. The following questions are designed to support your thinking about learning activities, transversal skills, and areas for further development. Your reflections will help you actively engage in the training.

- What kinds of learning activities do you typically use when teaching to make students active?
- Which transversal skills do these learning activities develop in your own teaching practice?
- Which skill is most underdeveloped in your current learning activities?

Make a brief note about your thoughts, as this may be useful during the training.

This self-exercise requires approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Do optional – Get to know the structure of the description of a learning activity designed to develop transversal skills

Before you participate in the face-to-face workshop, we would like to ask you to become familiar with one of the Learning Activities in the Toolbook. We recommend the “Scientific concepts in motion” activity in Chapter 3.3.3. This is also a learning activity that develops transversal skills – in this case, problem-solving. We would like you to understand the logic of the template and be able to use it effectively before the workshop.

If you have already learned the structure and logic of the description used by the project partners in another module of the training, you do not need to complete this task.

Explore the different subheadings in this description.

- Basic information: age group, student number and duration
- Skill focus. Here you can see which skill is primarily being worked on (main focus). The 1 – 2 additional (secondary) SPIRIT skills are also listed.
- Brief description
- Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity, showing how the activity unfolds.
- Indoor/outdoor classroom layout note. This provides very practical information about the organisation.
- How does this learning activity develop this particular(primary) skill? For this part of the description, the focus is on why this activity specifically targets that skill and how the learning activity develops the primary skill. This explains in what way a certain skill is being addressed in that learning activity.
- What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)? – which means what behavioural and knowledge-related changes or developments we want to achieve. This helps us identify, observe and measure the development of learners’ skills.
- Suggested use and practical subject-related examples
- Materials and tools needed for implementation: a list of materials needed
- Guiding questions: These guided questions are designed to help students if they get stuck or encounter difficulties while completing the task. Our general recommendation is to let students discover the solution on their own and to use the guided questions only when absolutely necessary.
- Tips and tricks for dealing with challenges: We would like to draw your attention to a few common problem scenarios and help you to prepare yourself for them in advance. In connection with this, we always suggest a solution for each specific challenge.
- Difficulty level tailoring: Here you read how the learning activity can be simplified or made more challenging.
- Debrief and reflection questions: these are the questions you ask at the end of the activity.

Be aware that the learning activities are written in a very general way. It is presented without specific content. The intention is that for each learning activity, you add concrete learning content aligned with the national curriculum, as most skills can only be effectively developed within meaningful, concrete contexts.

Timing: 30 minutes – we recommend you spend 30 minutes completing this task on your own.



Activity 1 – Becoming aware of learning activities in your teaching practice

In this activity, we will review the diversity of available learning activities and help you identify the effective methods you are already using in your own teaching practice. Through a collaborative exercise and peer evaluation, you will share your existing teaching practices with your colleagues. The aim of the exercise is to demonstrate how you can develop students' skills without overwhelming them and yourselves with additional tasks.

Learning outcomes

Understand the meaning of learning activities and the wide variety, and recognise that you are already using it as part of your practice

Introduction: 0-10 minutes

The trainer briefly welcomes the participants and introduces themselves. Participants are then invited to briefly introduce themselves as well (name, grade level they teach, place of teaching, and years of professional experience). After the introductions, the trainer presents the overall structure and objectives of the training programme.

Activity/exercise in details

Divide the class into groups of 4-6 participants. Use the snowball technique to let participants discuss which learning activities they know and already use in their classroom practice.

Each group creates a poster with an overview of their collected learning activities and their practices. Using Gallery Walks techniques, each group looks at the poster of the other group(s). After that, the participants come together as one group and create a collective overview of all the learning activities on the board.

Ask whether anyone recognises the learning activity that was used during this exercise. If no one does, briefly explain the Snowball technique and Gallery Walks as a learning activity.

Conclude by emphasising that participants are already using many learning activities in their lessons. The aim of these modules is not to add extra tasks or time, but to raise awareness that many skills can already be developed through these learning activities, so that teachers can work more intentionally and in a more focused way within their existing teaching practice.

Time allocation

- Introduction: 10 minutes
- Discussion by Snowball technique in small groups: 10-15 minutes
- Reviewing other groups' posters by Gallery Walks: 15 minutes
- Plenary discussion and Co-creation of a common list of the learning activities: 10 minutes
- Conclusion: 5 minutes

Total: 55 minutes

Required materials

Post-its, presentation paper, flip-charts and a colour marker, stationery.

Handouts

No specific handouts are required to carry out the activity.

Pay attention – Important note

Avoid mentioning the terms “Snowball” and “Gallery Walk” in the introduction or while you are explaining the activity, so that the effect of the reveal is fully realized at the end.

Managing the physical space: To ensure the success of the Gallery Walk, make sure there is enough physical space in the room so that participants can move comfortably among the posters without crowding.

Activity 2 - Giving meaning to a Learning Activity

In this session, you will discover how to flexibly apply both familiar games and structured learning activities to teach a wide variety of subject matter. First, you will integrate specific lesson content into a familiar game selected by your group. Then, working in groups, you will brainstorm ideas relating to a learning activity selected by the facilitator from the toolkit, and then demonstrate in plenary how it can be used in different subjects or lessons.

Learning outcomes

Understand that learning activities can adapt to different subject/curriculum contents

Activity/exercise in details

Trainer presentation

The trainer briefly explains the difference between game-based learning as a learning activity, free play, and gamification. Participants discuss the different types of GBL and share their own experiences related to it. They also identify the characteristics – including implementation in lessons/subjects – that place GBL in the category of a learning activity.

Part 1: Transforming an Existing Game into a GBL Learning Activity

Let's form groups of 4–5 people. These can be the same groups formed in the previous activity, or we can form new ones.

Group activity: Ask participants to reflect on which skill is central in this game.

- Participants work in groups and choose one existing game that can be linked to learning content.
- Brainstorm examples of how learning content can be added to the game.
- Identify what SPIRIT skills are needed to play the game, that is, which SPIRIT skills the game focuses on developing.
- Share their ideas with the group using post-its on the wall.

Part 2: Adding Learning Content to a Learning Activity

The trainer chooses one learning activity from the toolbox that can be linked to different types of learning content. Using the Station rotation learning activity technique, set up 5 stations: math, environment/sustainability, reading and writing, grammar (vocabulary) and language, and music and visual arts.

Group activity:

- Participants work in groups, and each group spends 10 minutes at each lesson-based station. There, they brainstorm ways to integrate the given learning activity into the lesson context.

- The participants write down their ideas on the flipchart paper at each station. By the time the groups have completed the task at every station, there will be five suggestions for each lesson on the flipchart paper.
- These are posted on the wall, and the groups read them using the Gallery Walk method and can add to the ideas with Post-it notes.
- After Gallery Walks, each group presents its best idea to the other groups.

Time allocation

- Trainer's brief presentation: 10 minutes
- Transforming an Existing Game into a GBL Learning Activity: 20 minutes
- Station Rotation – Learning Content implementation of the Learning Activity: 50 minutes
- Gallery Walks: 10 minutes
- Closing and checkout: 10 minutes

Total: 100 minutes

Required materials

Post-its, presentation paper, flip-charts and a colour marker, stationery.

Handouts

No specific handouts are required to carry out the activity.

Pay attention – Important note

Strict Timekeeping for Station Rotation: The Station Rotation phase is exactly 50 minutes (5 stations x 10 minutes). Time will easily slip away if transitions aren't managed. Use a visible timer, a bell to signal the 1-minute warning and the hard stop to rotate.

Strategic Pre-Selection: As the facilitator, carefully pre-select the learning activity for Part 2 before the session begins. You must ensure the chosen activity is highly versatile and broad enough to be realistically adapted to all five diverse subjects (math, environment, reading/writing, grammar/language, and music/visual arts).

After workshop activity 1 – Adapt the activity to curriculum needs

After the workshop, the next step is to continue building on what you have experienced, discussed, and reflected on. At this stage, the goal is to deepen your understanding by looking more closely at the SPIRIT learning activities examples provided by the toolbox. You are expected to transfer insights from the workshop into your own teaching practice.

Please adapt and implement the learning activities in the toolbox in line with the needs of the children.

Activity in details

- Download the blank template for learning activities from the website.
- Analyse the structure and learning objectives of the activity.
- Identify the transversal skills targeted.
- Adapt the activity to your own classroom context (age group, learning goals, available materials).
- Integrate the activity into your curriculum planning.

Timing

Flexible (recommended: 1–2 hours for preparation).

Materials

- SPIRIT Toolbox
- Blank learning activity template (from the website)
- Curriculum documents
- Lesson planning materials

After workshop activity 2 – Implementation and reflection

Learning objective to be achieved

- Reflect and assess the success of their application of the LA in real life, and be able to improve and refine their future practices

Activity/Exercise in detail

Implement the adapted learning activity in your own classroom. After implementation, conduct a structured evaluation:

- How did the activity unfold in practice?
- Which transversal skills were effectively developed?
- How did the students respond (engagement, participation, understanding)?
- Which teacher interventions (e.g. questioning, guidance) supported skill development?
- What worked well? What could be improved?
- How could the activity be refined for future use?

Participants may

- document their experience (notes, photos, short video fragments);
- share their reflections with colleagues;
- discuss improvements in a follow-up session or professional learning community.

Timing

- Implementation: during regular classroom practice
- Reflection: 30–60 minutes (individual or group reflection)

Materials

- Adapted learning activity
- Reflection template or guiding questions
- Documentation tools (notebook, digital tools, camera if appropriate)