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Introduction

Welcome to the “**Power of the Games**” module of the in-service teacher training course, “**From the Elementary Classroom to Future Wellbeing: Skills for Tomorrow for the Children of Today**”. This module is about the capacity of traditional games (social, indoor, and outdoor) to develop transversal skills.

If we were to summarise its goals in few bullet points, they would be:

- be familiar with a lot of games and know which skills they can develop,
- let children play the game for fun (and not on direct purpose),
- let them choose freely from the games while being aware of what skills you would like to develop,
- sit among them and play too, because your behaviour demonstrates the skills you want to develop.

What to Expect

We hope that you enjoyed the first module of the training and got familiar with the 10 transversal skills what we strongly believe that the today’s primary school children need in 15 years in order to maintain emotional and social wellbeing. Like the first training module, focusing on the 10 skills, this one is also designed in a blended way and includes both face-to-face workshops and online self-learning materials and activities.

Once you have read this introductory chapter and are familiar with both the purpose of this module and the knowledge we want you to learn, we kindly ask you to complete the read/do/watch components in the “Before the workshop” section. These materials will prepare you to actively participate in the face-to-face workshop, and to get the most benefits for yourself.

We ask you to complete the following activities **before the workshop**:

- read the “Power of the game” document in the READ section and then compare your own practice with the information described in it;
- review some game scenarios on the SPIRIT portal. If you think so and have time, play with it.

During the workshop, you will work in small groups with the other participants and share your ideas in plenary sessions. All participants will be expected to actively contribute to the workshop by carrying out the tasks.

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

Learning Objectives

By the end of the module, you will be able to:

- understand that games are perfect for developing transversal skills and that they develop transversal skills in a complex way (not just one skill).



- be aware that changing the rules and conditions of the game (classroom/environment) creates opportunities to develop different skills/in different ways/different levels.
- understand the power of play.
- understand the differences between games and game-based learning.
- understand the importance of involving yourself in play and playing with children for developing transversal skills.
- be able to match games to skills and vice versa.
- understand the logic of the template and be able to use it effectively.
- apply the games in the toolbox in line with the needs of the children.

Have a good learning journey and have fun discovering this really fascinating topic.



Read before the workshop - Games, board games and playing for the development of transversal skills.

The evolution of modern games has led, albeit not immediately, to a reflection on the pedagogical benefits of playing. Thousands of new games are developed every year, most of them available in all partner countries. This creates a huge variety and a huge number of opportunities for teachers.

A wide variety of games means a wide variety of ways of thinking, a great diversity of activities, a large choice of topics, the possibility to play alone or with lots of people, to play for 3-4 minutes or 3-4 hours, with one and a half year olds and with adults.

Whatever you are looking for, you will find it. For example, if we are looking for board games that are good for developing different competences, we will find them, the immersion is so huge. This requires a good pedagogical approach, a great knowledge of games and a great knowledge of the learners. But then there's nothing else to do but just teach the children to play and let the playing work.

However, to achieve our pedagogical goals (which in this case is the development of transversal skills) the most important criterion is that play should always be play! "We must respect this in all our planning and decisions. No matter how great our pedagogical and skill development goals we have, if the child is not yet at the level of the game, if there are no suitable playmates, if the location is unsuitable, if the participants have other interests, etc. We need to think through all the possibilities, we need to have plans B, C, D and it is almost impossible to achieve a sure success with only 1-2 games."¹

The power of play - Lifelong kindergarten approach²



The mission of the Resnick's [Lifelong Kindergarten](#) research group is „to extend the kindergarten approach to learners of all ages (including the elementary school students too). To do that we are cultivate caring community that, in the spirit of kindergarten, engage young people in creative learning experiences, so they have opportunities to think creatively, engage empathically, and work collaboratively”

¹ József Jesztl – Máté Lencse: Boardgame pedagogy 2018.

² The idea and the phrase of **Lifelong kindergarten** was firstly raised by Mitchel Resnick, LEGO Pappert Professor of Learning Research at the MIT Media Lab, Resnick's [Lifelong Kindergarten](#) research group has developed a variety of educational tools that engage people (particularly children) in new types of design activities and creative learning experiences.

The principle of the „kindergarten learning model” called as 4P’s of creative learning: project, passion, peers and play.

For development of the transversal skills, we will collect and offer a wide range of games (indoor, table outdoor games) that are in line with our pedagogical credo of creating and keeping learning passion for learners, as follows:

1. **Let the game always be a game** (and make the learning and development game based). It means that enables children to **learn and be developed through play**
2. Focus on **doing, exploring, experimenting and not teaching/developing directly**. Involve as many activities, games into the development journey as possible, and encourages hands-on experiences, tinkering and ensure the active participation for all.
3. Focus on **children's interests and organise their development journey around activities and games they enjoy doing** (interest driven learning and development). Use, keep and develop the students' intrinsic motivations and passions as the long-term driving force of their development by allowing them to pursue topics that excite them. **Let them choose the games and activities they like.**
4. **Put the children to the “driver’s seat”** and allowing them to control their learning experience. Do not tell and control them what and how they must play. Do not show them the suggested tactics in advance, how they can win for sure, but let them discover their own tactics and methods. Let them explore, lose, think, be curious, do and decide on their own and win according to their own ideas. But leading them with opportunities and encouragement. (Don't show them in advance the suggested winning tactics, how they can win for sure, but let them discover their own tactics and methods. Let them explore, lose, think, be curious, do and decide on their own and win according to their own ideas.)
5. **Ensure the collaboration, not only the competition.** Doing and playing together and in teams. Do the thing together is exciting.
6. Creating a playing **climate** and using **tools that ensure open discussion, creative thinking, and learning from mistakes, as well as create a safe environment to meet and deal with failure.**
7. Use **different games and wide variety of activities**. The chosen methods have to ensure to connect to real life, community, solve an open-ended issues and challenges, experimenting, discovering, tinkering, etc.
8. Support and **focus on process, not only the results**. Let the games develop open mindset.
9. Let the **flow feeling** for the kids. Keeping the students in a psychological state of deep engagement and concentration that the students can experience when the challenge of a task matches an individual's skill level, are sufficiently stimulating to capture their interest.

Based on the requirements for games and play, the partnership has adapted and successfully piloted 30 games (mostly well-known in the partner country) that develop the competences of primary school students for future well-being through playing. We invite you to try them out with your students.

How to develop children's transversal competences with board games³

The simplest, shortest and perhaps most surprising answer to this question is "don't develop them, just let them play". There are so many developmental elements in every game. Some games focus on very clear areas of development, even some that are strongly linked to a single discipline. We can think here of maths, addition, if you have to add up the scores. But games in general, or more specifically, playing games, develop in a much more comprehensive way. For example, with a very simple game, in addition to playing, we can observe whether we're risk-averse, whether we're able to change our attitudes, because it's often not good in a game if we're too safety-oriented, and the question is whether we're able to change our attitudes in order to win or just to enjoy the game more.

To be able to develop complex skills or skills in a complex way through playing games in a way that is not noticeable and enjoyable for children, but at the same time, as a teacher, we still need to be able to consciously develop complex skills or skills in a complex way, it is essential to find games that develop those areas. And one of the most important requirements for this is to have a great knowledge of games and to be able to select the games that are suitable for the development of the given area.

It is essential that play always remains play for the child! In other words, never let children know that we are playing this game because we want to improve their reading comprehension and we would like them to be a bit more creative. Everything should be about getting the children as motivated as possible. Apart from that, these should be planned, structured, thoughtful and conscious situations for the teacher!!

Another very important thing to be able to develop the child's flow feeling is that children can choose and decide what they want to play with in a given situation. So, when we want to develop some skills area, we should not just have one or two games, but several ones that develop that particular area, so that the child can choose which game they are more interested in, which one suits them or their mood, without knowing the area we want to develop. In other words, in order to develop a given skills, or skills area effectively, we need to know and have 8-10 games for the skills area.

For example, adequate knowledge of games is also important to be able to select games of different difficulty levels, to be able to offer games based on very simple choices, but also to be able to support development by teaching complex games where a number of factors and correct interpretation of information are required over a long period of time and where the route to winning is not the easy one.

³ An extract from the thought inspiring introduction of Máté Lencse's presentation about the games for transversal skills development during the 6th Hungarian SPIRIT CoP

Emotions, empathy, resilience and more

Let's talk a little about some specific SPIRIT transversal skills. To start with, it's no coincidence that we talk a lot about emotions in relation to games and playing. Especially about whether someone can lose or how they handle situations of stress, temptation of luck, or even success. Almost any board game or game can serve as an example in this domain, as we can experience emotions and learn to manage them in a protected environment, fighting for symbolic goals.

As parents or teachers, one of our most important tasks is to ensure that children can develop through play, joyfully and spontaneously, experiencing their emotions freely and respecting each other. Playing, especially board gaming, as an activity, can be a very good way to support the development of this area.

If we simply consider that good board games are building on trying to make the best possible decisions based on the interpretation of the information available, then there can be no doubt that children's creativity, problem solving or critical thinking develops whatever we play with them.

Adaptability, reinvention and flexibility are essential aspects of the games. Information is constantly changing, well worked out plans can fall to pieces. Moreover, most good games don't even give us a complete set of information, so we have to adapt to a lot of uncertainty. Games, whether outdoors or in the classroom, played in groups or individually, create "what if" situations, so they are a great way to test ourselves in difficult situations that require flexibility, resilience, structured problem solving, information selection and evaluation, but have no real stakes.

Even ordinary games require a high level of interdependence if you really want to play well. Moreover, group games or board games are themselves a social activity that is much less enjoyable without a high level of empathy. Building a shared culture of playing is also essential in groups of children, and empathy is a key element.

One more thing – final thought

It is strongly recommended that the teacher should, if possible, participate in the game, as he or she can teach and educate a lot through his or her behaviour patterns and reactions to situations.

After reading this chapter, please watch the video presentation of Máté Lencse called **The Power of Games for Skill Development**.

Content of the presentation is:

- What kinds of board games do we play with children?
- What skills can be developed through board games?
- How do we organize play in a school setting? How do we organize it in a family setting?
- Are there opportunities within the educational system—and if so, where—that can be utilized to organize these activities?
- How can we find the time for this?

Do before the workshop - Self-reflection and experiences sharing exercise regarding the games in school before the workshop

After reading the introductory material about games and watching the video of Máté Lencse's thought-provoking presentation titled "The Power of Board Games in Skill Development," ask your colleagues who teach elementary school and share your thoughts regarding the following questions:

- to what extent are the points discussed relevant and applicable at your school?
- what kinds of games do you typically play with children during class or at school, and for what purposes?
- what skills can be developed by playing these games/board games/outdoor games you use?
- how can you ensure the requirements for these games in a school/classroom environment?
- are there opportunities within the educational system—and if so, where—that can be utilized to organize these activities?
- how can we find enough time for them?
- what was the last game you played with the children?

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

This self-exercise requires approximately 60 minutes to complete

Watch before the workshop - The Power of Games for Skill Development by Máté Lencse

After reading this chapter, please watch the video presentation of Máté Lencse called **The Power of Games for Skill Development**.



Content of the presentation is:

- What kinds of board games do we play with children?
- What skills can be developed through board games?
- How do we organize play in a school setting? How do we organize it in a family setting?
- Are there opportunities within the educational system—and if so, where—that can be utilized to organize these activities?
- How can we find the time for this?

The video presentation is available on the project's YouTube channel. The original language of the presentation is Hungarian, but by clicking the  icon, you can set the subtitles to the languages of the project partners or to English.

Activity 1 – Check in and Introduction to the impact of games on skill development

The goal of the first activity of the workshop is that participants get first-hand experience of the possibilities, benefits, and importance of using games in the classroom through on-site teamwork, guided small-group sessions, and plenary discussions

Learning objective to be achieved

- Understand that games are perfect for developing transversal skills and that they develop transversal skills in a complex way (not just one skill).

Activity/exercise in details

Trainer explains the purpose of the training – not the procedure – and the rules. The trainer writes the rules on a flip chart and put it on the wall so that all participants can see it.

Step 1. - Introduction and Ice breaking: 0-10 minutes

Ask the participants to form 4-5 groups (no more than 8 people in a group) and choose a suitable place for themselves. To form the groups, use some kind of learning activity/ice-breaking technique, e.g. have them choose colours from 4-5 colours; put 4-5 known quotes on the table and each participant chooses the one they particularly like; put 4-5 SPIRIT skills on the table, and each person chooses the one they are particularly good at

Step 2. - Introduction to the impact of games on skill development – Learning from first-hand experience and discussion

Keep the group structure that was established in the check-in activity. Give each group a short game(s) (max 10 minutes playing time, preferably from the toolkit – this can be the same for each group, or as many different ones as groups are formed) to play, to begin to discover the impact of the game/playing on the player. Ask them

1. to try to observe on their own the issues that were covered in the material they read before the workshop (readings – “The power of play – Lifelong kindergarten approach”). To support the work of the participants, each group can be given the 9 aspects.
2. to observe which transversal skills were triggered during the game. Which of these were SPIRIT skills, which were other skills and think about the interconnectedness of the skills. To support the work of the participants, each group can be given the 10 SPIRIT skills.

Use „Think-Pair-Share” methods

- participants should collect and name their experiences individually).
- then share and discuss their ideas in pairs or triads and synthesise them into a common group opinion.
- then share with the whole group.

It is recommended that the trainer records the main findings of the plenary discussion on a flipchart, which the participants can prioritise using a simple and quick prioritisation technique.

The flipchart is left up until the end of the training. The flipchart could be entitled, for example, Our common feeling when we are playing.

And/or ask the participants to draw a “system diagram” illustrating the relationships between the skills (what were triggered by the game), to visualise the complexity of skill development of the games.⁴

Timing

- Check in and introduction: 10 minutes
- Playing the game: 10 minutes
- Think-Pair-Share: 15 minutes
- Whole group discussion (including periodisation and drawing the connection map): 15 minutes

In total – 45-50 minutes

Materials

Post-its, presentation paper, flipcharts, blue stick, stationery (including colour markers), cards with game rules and materials, handout with guided questions.

Pay attention

The success of Activity 1 may largely depend on your choice of game. It is very important that the game lasts no longer than 10 minutes. Choose a game that involves everyone in the small group. No one should be an observer! Everyone should play. Make sure that the game is not focused on developing a specific skill.

Handouts

For the Step 2 exercise, please give the participants the handouts. The two handouts can be found in the appendix to this material. The two handouts are as follows:

- Nine features of the Lifelong Kindergarten approach
- Rich-pictures of the 10 SPIRIT skills

⁴ We strongly recommend this activity. Only skip it if, for any reason (group size, check-in, or the game ran over time) there isn't enough time to complete the task.

Activity 2 – Play in the school – Learning from real-life experiences of the participants

The primary aim of this training activity is to create an opportunity for teachers to learn from and share with their colleagues how to integrate play into the teaching process. By sharing real-life experiences, teachers can develop their own practices through peer learning. Ultimately, the session aims to provide positive reinforcement and inspire an “Aha!” feeling regarding the implementation of the game and play in the teaching practices.

Learning objective to be achieved

- to be aware of how colleagues integrate games and play into their teaching practice
- to be able to develop their own practice based on the experiences of others

Activity/exercise in details

Form groups of four (The groups can remain the same as in Activity 1, but you can also form new groups). Each group member will describe the game they last played in class. Participants have a maximum of 5 minutes to share their experience and present the game.

During the group discussion, participants should address the following:

- What was the game?
- How were the game chosen?
- Did the game have a specific objective, or was it free play?
- Did only the children play, or did the teacher play with them as well?
- How did you find time for the game?
- How were they able to ensure inclusive participation?
- Did you link the game to a specific subject or lesson content?
- What skills do you think can be developed through the game?

The list above can be freely adapted to reflect the group dynamics and the interests of the participants, but it must focus on sharing experiences and discussing the question of “how the game can be integrated into everyday teaching/learning in school”. It is recommended to print out the questions in as many copies as the number of groups and place one on each group table.

Teachers who have not played games recently should explain why they were unable or unwilling to let the children play. For them, the group members who regularly engage in play in the classroom should give ideas on how to create conditions for play during instruction. In this way, the opportunity to learn from one another is created.

As a conclusion to the group discussion, the group should select the three most important thoughts from the conversation and share them with the other groups in a plenary session.

It is recommended that the trainer records the main findings of the plenary discussion on another flipchart. This flip-chart – similar to the one created during Activity 1 – is left up until the end of the training. While the flipchart from Activity 1 collects answers to “why” questions, this one gathers

and highlights answers to “how” questions regarding the integration of games into school teaching and learning practices!

Timing

- Group discussion: 20 minutes
- Plenary group discussion: 15 minutes

In total – 35–40 minutes

Materials

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

Pay attention

The moderator should ensure that everyone in the group has an equal opportunity to speak, and that those who initially said that they have not played recently do not become passive observers.

It is very important that the task be precisely formulated so that it is clear to all participants that the task focuses on the “how” question. This prevents participants from feeling that the task is almost identical to Activity 1

Handouts

No specific handouts are required to carry out the activity

Activity 3 – The Conscious Use of Games in Skill Development – Working with Game Templates

The purpose of this activity is to help teachers become familiar with a structured approach to game selection, introduce them to the template developed by the project, and guide them in using the template so that they can consciously and thoughtfully select appropriate games to develop the skills of children aged 6–10.

Learning objective to be achieved

- Understand the logic and structure of the template
- Be able to use the template to establish a direct logical link between the game, the skill to be developed, the outcome of the development, and measurable changes in the child's behaviour.
- Be able to match games to skills and vice versa
- Be able to select the appropriate game by using the template

Activity/exercise in details

Step 1. – Try out the games.

Divide the participants into groups of 4 (up to 5 groups). Place one game on each of the 5 group tables (including a competitive board game, a cooperative game that requires teamwork, and, if possible, a subject-related logic game). The groups sit down at a table to try out the game. Allow a maximum of 8 minutes to try out each game.

Use the **STATION ROTATION** method for trying out the games. After 8 minutes, the groups rotate to the next table in a Station Rotation-style manner and try out the game at each table. The process continues until the groups return to their starting table.

Step 2. – Trainer's briefing.

The trainer briefly outlines the structure of the template and clarifies the meaning of elements that are difficult to understand:

- How does this game develop the primary skill?
- What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?
- Guided vs Debriefing question.

Step 3. – Working with game template.

At the starting table, for the first game they try, each group fills out a simplified version of the game template (see handout), which includes only the following elements:

- Skill focus
- How does this game develop the primary skill?
- What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

- Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges
- Debriefing and reflection questions

Filling out the simplified template should take about 10 minutes. If necessary, this time can be extended by 5 minutes.

Step 4. – Plenary discussion.

The groups present their work to the other groups. Since every group has tried every game, they can reflect appropriately on what has been said. Using the peer review method, assign a peer review role to each group before the plenary presentation (for example, the group sitting two tables away in the same direction as the clock's movement will peer review the group currently presenting).

Time allocation

- Trying out the games: 40 minutes
- Trainer presentation on the logical structure of the template: 5 minutes
- Filling out a simplified game template: 15 minutes
- Plenary discussion: 5 minutes with peer review – 25 minutes in total

In total: 90 minutes

Required materials

Post-its, presentation paper, flipcharts and blue stick, stationery (including colour markers), 5 games with game rules and materials, handouts.

Pay attention – Important note

Similar to Activity 1, the success of Activity 3 may largely depend on your choice of game. It is very important that trying out the game lasts no longer than 8 minutes. Choose a game that involves everyone in the small group. No one should be an observer! Everyone should play. Selecting games is the trainer's responsibility in order to ensure that they are best tailored to the characteristics of the partner country and the teachers participating in the training.

Similarly, special attention must be paid to strictly keeping to the rotation times during station rotation. For more information, see the "Tips and Tricks" section for Station Rotation in the Learning Activity Toolkit.

Finally, time must also be strictly managed during the plenary presentation and peer review. It is important to assign peer review roles to the groups before the plenary presentation so that they can pay proper attention to one another.

Handouts

For Activity 3, a handout is required, which can be handouts can be found in the appendix to this material and [downloadable from the SPIRIT portal](#).

Activity 4 – Reflection, check out, and to-do “After the workshop”.

Reflection and check out

Before concluding the training module, discuss the “After the workshop” exercise.

To Do after the workshop

Ask the participants to choose a game from the collection of 50 games in the “GAMES FOR TRANSVERSAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT – COMPREHENSIVE TOOLBOOK FOR TEACHERS,” created by the project partners. Please ask them to play the selected game with their students over the next two weeks. (You can find a detailed description of this in the “After the workshop: Do 1” section)

Agree on a time to hold an online Teach-Meet experience-sharing session to discuss their classroom experiences related to the selected games.

Reflection and check out

The training module concludes with a short reflection exercise. The participants individually articulate the most important thought they are “taking away” as a result of the training. Ask participants to frame this idea, if possible, from the students’ perspective: what benefits or advantages will students gain from putting this idea into practice. Have them write this on a Post-it note and place it on the flip chart near the room’s exit. Have them write this on a Post-it note and place it on the flip chart near the room’s exit. This way, as participants leave the room, they can see everyone’s inspiring takeaway idea again.

Time allocation: 15 minutes

After workshop activity 1 - Play with your students

Select a game from the **“GAMES FOR TRANSVERSAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT – COMPREHENSIVE TOOLBOOK FOR TEACHERS”**, which contains 50 games and was developed by the project partners. Play the selected game with your students over the next two weeks.

You decide on the selection criteria. Choose a game that best suits the age characteristics of the children you teach, as well as the teaching practices, customs, and culture of your institution.

Read the detailed description of the game before playing. Pay special attention to the “Tips and Tricks” and Debriefing sections

Immediately after the game, **please take notes on your experiences** so that you can share your classroom experiences with the selected game at the online Teach-Meet.

After workshop activity 2 – Online CoP about the classroom implementation of the game

Let's talk and learn from each other: What is the secret behind the game, and how did the game you chose work in your classroom?

This seminar provides an opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other's practices. In this webinar, we'd like to discuss how the games selected and played by you and your fellow training participants worked in classroom and school environment.

We'd like to discuss:

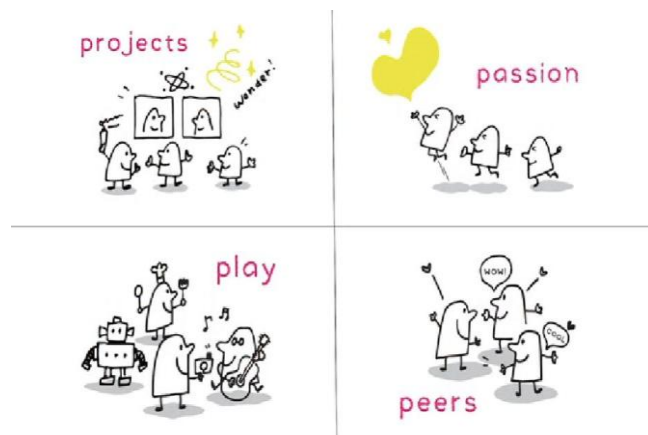
- What impact did the game have on the children?
- What skills did they develop?
- How did you find opportunities and time for the game?
- What would you recommend to others regarding the game you suggested?
- What happened during the debriefing?

Please refresh your thoughts on the game played before the online meeting. If you like, ask your students as well.

The online event lasts 90–120 minutes.



Nine features of the kindergarten approach

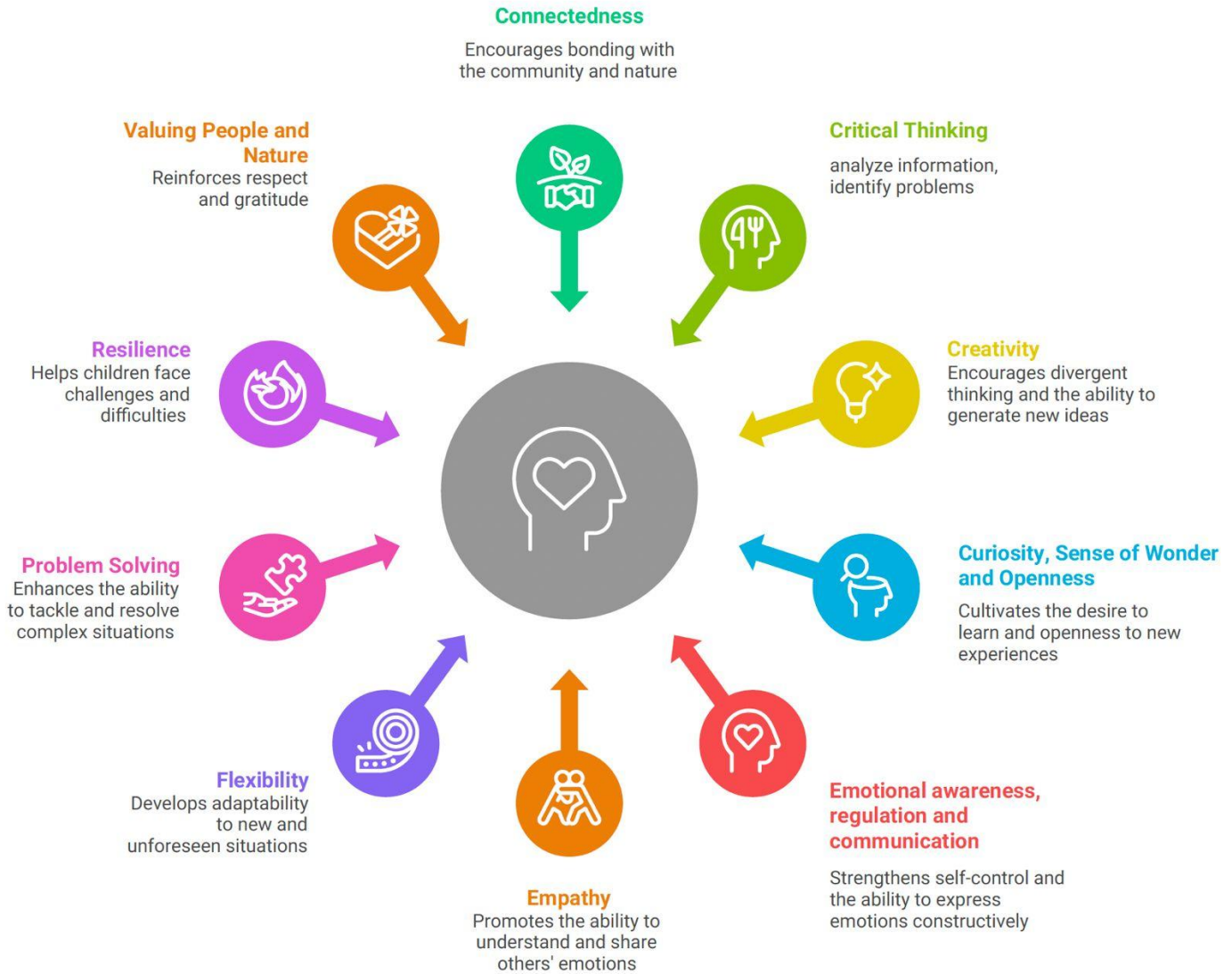


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To what extent could you identify the following characteristics during the game?

The criteria	none	moderate/ medium	extremely
1. Learn and be developed through play			
2. Doing, exploring, experimenting			
3. Player's interests driven			
4. Put the children to the “driver’s seat”			
5. Ensure the collaboration			
6. Climate for open discussion, creative thinking, learning from mistakes, safe environment to meet and deal with failure.			
7. Different active learning methods and wide variety of learning activities			
8. Focus on playing and fun not teaching and performance			
9. Create a flow feeling for the you.			

Rich-pictures of the 10 SPIRIT skills



Simplified Game Template

Name of the game

Brief description, and rules of the game - Leave it blank

Skill focus

Primary SPIRIT Skill Focus

-

Complementary/Secondary SPIRIT Skill Focus

-
-
-
-

Age group	Student number	Duration

How to play - brief game rules - Leave it blank

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes - Leave it blank

How does this game develop the primary skill?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

After this game, students will be able to demonstrate the following (in age-appropriate ways):

-
-
-
-

Suggested use, and practical examples - Leave it blank

Materials and tools needed for implementation - Leave it blank

Guiding questions - Leave it blank

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:**
Tip:
- **Challenge:**
Tip:
- **Challenge:**
Tip:
- **Challenge:**
Tip:

Difficulty level tailoring - Leave it blank

Debriefing and reflection questions

-
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-