

Developing democratic engagements and transformation
in adult, professional and organisational learning

A practice companion for inspiring your
facilitation and change-making

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Developing democratic engagements and transformation in adult, professional and organisational learning: A practice companion for inspiring your facilitation and change-making

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Accessibility and use with read-aloud tools

This document is designed to support use with read-aloud tools and assistive technologies. The text is organised in a clear, numbered structure and presented in a logical reading order to support audio reading. Images and diagrams include alternative text where they carry meaning.

For enhanced navigation, an accessible Word version is also available on request.

All diagrams and tables in this document are accompanied by short explanatory text to ensure accessibility for readers using screen readers or read-aloud tools.

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APPENDICES



1. Introducing the adult, professional and organisational learning practice companion

WELCOME ...

... to the AECED Practice Companion – we're excited to accompany you on the practice-based part of your journey toward developing democratic engagement in adult, professional and organisational learning (APOL).

The Horizon Europe and UKRI-funded project aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy-as-becoming (AECED) set out to transform education for democracy through aesthetic and embodied learning, responsive pedagogies, and an understanding of democracy "as becoming", by which we mean it is never finished, it is a living process that is continually in motion through our actions, relationships, and learning.

Through this project, we have developed materials to support you in exploring the potential of aesthetic and embodied approaches. We wish to support you as a facilitator, counsellor, consultant or curious reader to approach your work in ways that sustain, renew, and cultivate a lived connection to democracy.

In this Practice Companion, we invite you to apply a range of AELD interventions and methodologies to your APOL context, be that adult learning, professional training, train-the-trainer, educational change, organisational transformation, related fields of practice, or work that moves across and between these settings.



This Practice Companion may be useful for you if:

- your goal is to actively engage adults to create a more democratic learning environment
- you want to facilitate democratic principles within your teaching, training and organisational transformation
- you are already working in the field of education for democracy and want to expand your work with aesthetic and embodied approaches
- you are an educator working with adults and multiple stakeholders in settings for professional learning
- your participants and learning partners wish to democratise their organisational settings
- you are working with organisations to support their individual and collective change processes

Our case trials demonstrated that organisational settings operate as contexts and framing conditions, while also acting as spaces for learning and transformation. With this in mind, this Practice Companion refers to the layers of individual and collective learning, organisational learning and learning that transforms the way we relate to ourselves, to others and to the world.

This Practice Companion is not a stand-alone product – it sits with “Connecting with democracy: A pedagogical framework for education for democracy” (henceforth the Framework) and the “Guide for aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy in the field of adult, professional and organisational learning” (henceforth the Guide). You will find the theoretical foundations of our work in the Framework and conceptual reflections and explanations in the Guide. The Practice Companion is designed to support the translation of the concepts described in the Framework and Guide into practical ways of working.



Our practice companion is designed to support you in:

- engaging with fields of attention for democracy
- starting from where you are – exploring a step-by-step approach to AELD interventions
- mindfully reflecting on what to do – and what to avoid – in your AELD practice
- finding inspiration in aesthetic and embodied micro-interventions that can be integrated into any APOL setting
- getting in touch with, and being touched by, aesthetic and embodied methodologies
- diving into a solutionary pattern approach for organisational learning

Our Practice Companion is intended to accompany you on this journey – to be at your side to help raise meaningful questions, walking with you towards new explorations, and at times offering possible ways forward. Friends, colleagues and partners may join you in this exchange of ideas, and we encourage you to invite others to take a look – there may even be clients or community organisers and transformers who will find the resources offered here useful in their own contexts.

So to get started, in the next section, we provide a way into engaging with AELD, through fields of attention.

2. Engaging with AELD through fields of attention

From a constructivist perspective, we know that the way we look at each other and the world, brings about the reality which arises. Our perception and awareness are selective – so where do we turn our attention to? What do we wish to see growing? Our attention can make a difference. The fields of attention were developed on the basis of the values and principles that underpin the AECED project and can help us to develop a clear focus: why do we engage with AELD?

During the project case trials, participants found these fields of attention helpful in orientating practice towards what individuals, groups, or organisations are seeking to turn towards, explore, or transform, and for making explicit links to learning for democracy and the AELD approaches that are appropriate to that focus.

We identified seven fields of attention, presented below. You may identify additional or different fields:

Co-creating & strengthening social togetherness



- exploring how trust can be built
- reflecting on how our own well-being requires the well-being of others
- living diversity and co-creating safe spaces to learn together & from each other
- cultivating rituals of togetherness

Transforming dialogue & communication



- introducing the use of appreciative, non-violent communication
- fostering self-responsible communication
- developing communication through listening
- accepting different perspectives and positions
- experiencing communication as a responsive, whole-body experience

Establishing collective values



- listening to different perspectives & opinions and cultivating shared values
- creating a “Code of Conduct” together
- reflecting on values for the common good
- finding ways to integrate the values into group/organisational processes
- finding out how these values influence others

Living peer governance and power-sharing



- designing collaborative learning processes & settings that are based on participation & inclusive values
- getting inspired by best-practice examples or social experiments
- getting in touch with participants’ collective and organisational (his)stories
- orienting towards plurality, build on heterarchy and reflect on one's own governance
- reflecting on who can fully participate/ how much each participant is able to contribute
- identifying hidden and obvious societal power imbalances as well as discrimination and constraints within the relevant learning setting
- sharing participatory experiences that participants already made and ideas of suitable forms of participation
- creating new ways of collective decision making
- practising education on an equal footing and with mutual respect.
- reflecting on hierarchies and how to share power

Striving for social & planetary justice & care economy



- deepening connectiveness to nature & planetary citizenship
- deepening situational sensitivity and responsiveness to local cultures, place, participants, policy, power & empowerment
- deepening the understanding of relational freedom
- widening education for democracy to posthumanist perspectives
- finding the interrelatedness of specific local, regional and planetary issues
- perceiving care as a shared practice in structures of interdependence
- transforming economical structures towards liveable futures
- adapt & renew infrastructures & (knowledge) production towards solidarity

Reflecting and sharing self- and group awareness



- fostering interaction & reflection at any time in the process.
- mindfully relating to each other
- encouraging self-expression as well as space-giving to others
- including self-reflection as well as critical thinking and individual creativity into the educational process
- reflecting on unjustified inequalities and discussing how they can be counteracted
- search for possibilities for the participants to support/ empower each other
- support participants to explore their own needs and learn how to articulate them

Relational well-being & conflict-solving



- welcoming disagreements
- using chances to deepen connectiveness based on an appreciative attitude
- reflecting on concrete behaviour
- staying in contact while being in conflict
- establishing settings that support everyone's needs

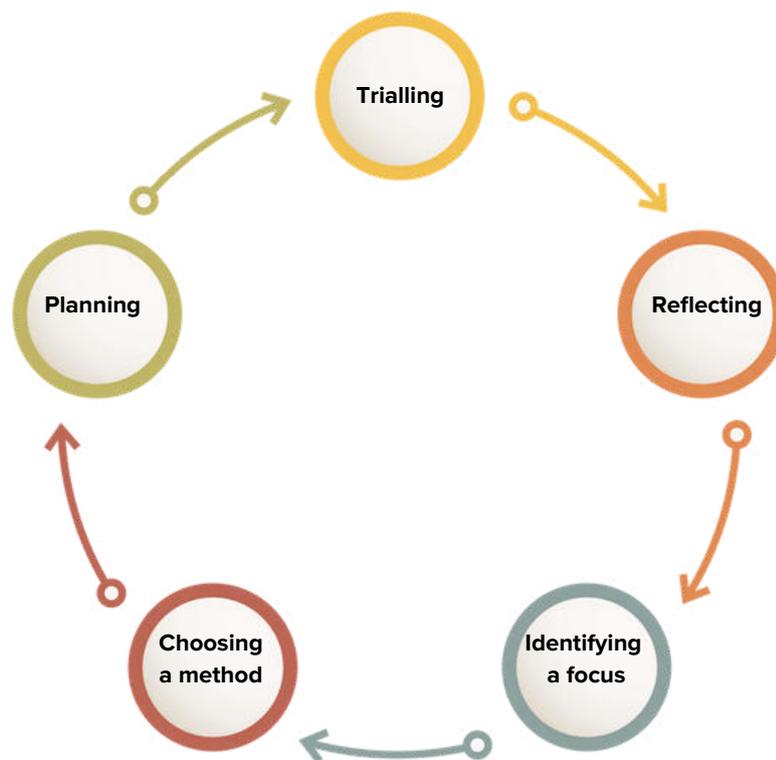
These fields of attention are a way of thinking about potential transformational moments in educational and organisational settings. They have been developed on the basis of the values and principles that underpin AELD, with a focus on responsive pedagogies and reflection, the unfolding of democracy-as-becoming, and the three dimensions of commoning (social togetherness, political self-governance, and care economy) in educational organisations.

In the section that follows, we will show how the fields of attention could be used as part of a step-by-step approach to find focus and methods for AELD, and then later in the Practice Companion as a way of connecting intentions, questions, and methods, linking to six transformational process steps.

3. Starting to work with aesthetic and embodied methods: A step-by-step approach

This section offers a journey of exploration, moving step-by-step into deeper engagement with AELD.

You will be guided through the following stages, which we understand as an iterative cycle:



The cycle always begins in the very moment or situation you are in:

- **reflecting on where you're at** – as the starting point for AELD
- **identifying** the facilitation practice focus and mapping to the fields of attention

- 
- **choosing** an aesthetic and embodied method to work with
 - **planning** the AELD activity
 - **triallying** the activity
 - **reflecting** on where you have been and where to go next.

You may approach these steps on your own, working through the activities to develop your session plan. Alternatively, you may choose to work through the activities with your group, so you come to consensus about a collective focus and way of working.

Within the steps, you will come across a series of mindful facilitation prompts, indicated by the soft pink box: "planning for your learning group". These prompts are there to support your ethical judgement, responsiveness and care in deciding whether, when and how to work with AELD.

3.1 Getting started: reflecting on where you're at

AELD encourages a transformational learning process. Before designing and engaging in AELD, it is useful to begin with a reflection. Here are some questions to support your reflection:

- What draws me to use aesthetic and/or embodied approaches in my particular context?
- How do I understand and experience democracy?
- What assumptions am I making about participants' readiness, interest or capacity?
- How are power, role and authority configured in this learning space?
- What constraints (time, mandate, institutional expectations) shape what is possible?
- How will consent, choice and withdrawal be communicated and supported?

3.2 Identifying a focus

The next stage is to find an area to focus on with your group. The focus could be found through your own facilitation or teaching practice and in relation to the group you're working with, or you may find the fields of attention provide inspiration for what to focus on.

The activity below provides one suggestion on how to identify a focus.



Activity: moving and thinking

We invite you to move about. You might decide to take a walk outside, or to move around the space you're in. As you move, think about your experiences as an APOL facilitator.

- What do you enjoy about being a facilitator? What are the challenges? What are the frustrations? What are your hopes and aspirations for APOL facilitation?

Allow your mind to meander through these experiences as you wander.

- Are there areas of your facilitating practice that you might consider doing differently, where you'd like the people you work with to have more experience of democracy-as-becoming?

Having identified some potential focus areas, can you see any commonalities in the areas that you identified? Are there fields of attention areas, introduced above, that you'd like to explore?

If you're working in a team, you could compare the focus areas each of you individually, or the team collectively, may have identified. Are there particular areas of concern that you share or which differ? You could also use this activity with your learners, working with them to identify the area of focus or fields of attention they would like to develop further.



Activity: fields of attention mapping

Looking at the overview of the “Fields of attention” in section 2 can you map the areas you identified during and after your moving and thinking activity to the Fields of Attention? Does this mapping give you ideas for thinking about the possibilities of doing facilitation and change-making differently?

Is there an area of facilitation and change-making practice that you would like to explore further, individually, if you are working on your own, or collectively, if you are working with others?

Make a note of your facilitation focus area(s).



Planning your learning group: why AELD in your context?

In your role as facilitator of AELD in your own APOL context, you may wish to reflect on:

- Why are you interested in the practice of AELD, and what experiences do you bring?
- What do you hope to achieve through your engagement with AELD?
- Who are your learners and what do they bring to the learning context?
- How might you move into this AELD practice – what steps or orientations will help you begin safely and intentionally?
- What interventions or exercises feel appropriate for your context?
- Which personal, group, and organisational resources might support this ethical, responsible, and responsive facilitation and transformational learning?

These reflections may help you assess your positionality and the appropriateness of using AELD in specific contexts. Understanding your assumptions, questions, and available resources is key to deciding when, how, and whether to use aesthetic and embodied approaches to support learning for democracy.

3.3 Choosing an aesthetic and embodied method

One of the key tenets of the AECED project is that too much education for democracy places the main emphasis on cognitive learning. Too little education for democracy gives centre stage to a fundamental dimension of learning – that is, the aesthetic and embodied nature of learning. You can read more about why we think this is important in the AECED concept paper: The importance of the aesthetic-embodied dimension of being human (available soon at www.aeced.org).

You may already have experience with learning approaches or activities that include aesthetic and embodied pedagogical methods, you may feel comfortable with some more than others, or you may be looking for some inspiration. The following activity provides an approach to arriving at an aesthetic and embodied pedagogical method to trial.



Activity: mapping aesthetic and embodied approaches

Spend some time noting down your experiences with aesthetic and embodied methods on sticky notes. Spend some time noting down your experiences with aesthetic and embodied methods on sticky notes: How were they used? How did they make you feel? What did you learn from engaging with them.

In view of these reflections, return to your focus area and reflect on the following questions:

- What kind of methods are you comfortable trying at this stage?
- Which of the methods that you identified do you think would enable you to explore your focus area?
- Which method(s) are you most drawn to?
- Is this aesthetic and embodied method something that you have tried before, or are you moving towards something that is new to you?

If you are working with other people, are you moving in the same direction? Can you reach a consensus on an aesthetic and embodied method to trial? If you are attracted to more than one method, could the methods be combined? Do you have the resources available to enable you to use the method you have identified, can you get access to them, or might you need to adapt the method?



Planning for your learning group: choosing responsibly

Not all aesthetic and embodied methods are appropriate in all APOL contexts. Responsible engagement with AELD involves careful consideration of purpose, participants and context. Your choice of method may be influenced by:

- What invitation does this aesthetic and embodied method offer, and to whom?
- What forms of participation are possible, including observation or opting out?
- What kinds of vulnerability might be involved?
- How does this aesthetic and embodied method relate to the learning context and participants' roles?

Methods are chosen not for their novelty or impact, but for their capacity to support attentiveness, reflection and relational learning. It's also okay to choose not to use an aesthetic and embodied method.

Situations where using an aesthetic and embodied method may not be appropriate include:

- lack of trust or safety in the group
- high levels of distress or vulnerability without adequate support
- contexts where participation is compulsory or evaluative
- limited facilitation capacity to attend to emerging dynamics

Choosing not to proceed is an ethical decision that respects participants' dignity and boundaries and supports democratic learning through care and restraint.

3.4 Planning the AELD activity

Having decided your focus area, mapped to a field of attention and considered appropriate aesthetic and embodied methods, you are now invited to plan an AELD activity to foster reflection around this focus area.

In planning your activity, think about the following:

- What do you hope to get out of this AELD activity?
- How will it connect with learning for democracy and/or the fields of attention specifically?
- Who is going to engage in this activity within your context?
- Do you have the materials that you need?
- How long are you going to spend on the AELD activity?
- What perspective are you going to approach the activity from: your own, your participants', your co-creator's, your stakeholder's, your institution's, or a combination of more than one?
- Have you built in time for reflection, either individually or collectively, on the activity and what you might learn from it?

When you have decided on one activity to start with, fill in the “make your own aesthetic and embodied pedagogical method” template at the back of this Practice Companion and finalise a time to trial your activity.

Starting small

AELD does not require ideal conditions, extensive preparation or dedicated programmes. In APOL contexts, it is often most appropriate to start small, working with existing practices, relationships and recognising constraints.

Starting from where you are may involve:

- introducing brief moments of aesthetic and embodied activity
- working with participants' lived experiences, questions or professional concerns
- embedding aesthetic or embodied elements within familiar formats (e.g. dialogue, supervision, team meetings)
- recognising limits of time, trust or mandate, and adjusting ambitions according

Beginning modestly supports democratic sensibility ([see position paper here](#)) by allowing participants to explore unfamiliar ways of learning without pressure to perform or transform.





3.5 Trialling the AELD activity

During the trialling of the AELD activity, allow yourself and your learners the time to focus solely on this task. Be open to allowing the AELD to take you in unexpected directions, but be ready to gently draw learners back to the focus, where needed and to bring sessions to a conclusion when there are time restrictions.

Illustrative AELD practices

The following illustrative practices show possible ways of engaging with AELD. The practices are examples, not models or recommendations. They are intentionally brief, adaptable and non-sequential. Each practice assumes a stance of responsive pedagogy and is underpinned by the acceptive gaze, which has been explained in the APOL Guide, is always voluntary, with clear options to observe, adapt or withdraw.

How to read and use these practices:

- you may use one practice on its own; there is no suggested order
- each practice can be short (5–15 minutes) or extended through reflection
- practices are described in terms of what they support and what to attend to, rather than steps to follow
- adapt language, format and duration to your context



Activity: noticing presence and attention

What it supports: attentiveness, self-awareness, democratic sensibility at the level of presence.

Invitation: participants are invited to pause briefly and notice how they are arriving into the learning space: posture, breath, energy, focus. This may be done silently, with eyes open or closed, or through a short-written note or sketch.

What to attend to

- normalising varied experiences (restlessness, calmness, distraction)
- avoiding interpretation or discussion unless participants choose it
- observing without sharing is a valid form of participation

Ethical notes: this practice should remain light and optional. It is not a mindfulness exercise and does not aim to regulate emotion.

Activity: listening across differences

What it supports: transforming dialogue, recognising difference, and relational awareness.

Invitation: in pairs or small groups, participants take turns speaking briefly about a professional experience related to inclusion, exclusion or voice, while others listen without interruption. Listening may include attending to tone, pauses or bodily responses.

What to attend to

- making listening time-limited and voluntary
- emphasising listening, not responding or solving
- seeing silence is an acceptable response

Ethical notes: avoid framing the sharing as disclosure. Participants choose the depth and content of what they share.



Activity: mapping power in everyday interactions

What it supports: awareness of power, equality and responsiveness in professional life.

Invitation: participants are invited to reflect individually on a recent interaction and map (in words, symbols, or simple shapes) where power was felt: who spoke, who decided, who hesitated. Sharing is optional.

What to attend to

- keeping the focus on noticing, not judging
- avoiding asking for organisational critique or solutions
- respecting participants' decisions not to share

Ethical notes: this practice should not be used in contexts where participants feel evaluated or monitored.

Activity: working with discomfort

What it supports: democratic sensibility, capacity to stay with uncertainty.

Invitation: participants are invited to notice a moment of discomfort or hesitation that arose during learning, and to reflect privately on what it might signal (assumption, boundary, fear, curiosity). Sharing is optional.

What to attend to

- naming discomfort as legitimate and meaningful
- not asking participants to explain or justify feelings
- being attentive to signs that indicate a need to pause or stop

Ethical notes: discomfort is not a goal. The practice should not intensify vulnerability,



Activity: closing with reflection and choice

What it supports: agency, responsiveness, relational well-being.

Invitation: participants are invited to choose one of several closing options: a word, a gesture, a written note, or quiet observation, to mark what they are taking with them.

What to attend to

- offering multiple modes of participation
- avoiding evaluation or summary
- respecting silence as meaningful closure

Ethical notes: closure should not create pressure to perform insight or positivity.

Using these practices responsibly

These illustrative practices are intentionally modest. Their democratic potential lies not in their form, but in how they are held: through attentiveness, care and ethical judgement. As a facilitator, you are encouraged to adapt, combine or set aside practices in response to context, always prioritising consent, dignity and relational well-being.



Planning for your learning group

In APOL, participation is often uneven. Some participants may engage actively, others cautiously, and some may prefer to observe. AELD recognises partial and non-engagement as legitimate forms of participation.

Working responsibly with AELD includes:

- legitimising silence, observation, limited and non-participation
- avoiding pressure to share personal experiences
- recognising that learning may occur internally and/or over time

Uncertainty, hesitation and resistance are treated as signals to be attended to, rather than problems to overcome.

Reflection is an important aspect of AELD, and, in the step-by-step approach being outlined here, it is the final step.

3.6 Reflecting on your AELD activity: where have you been and where to go next

Reflection here is not used to assess performance or outputs, but to support ethical judgement, reflexivity and professional learning. Reflection may be undertaken individually, in peer dialogue, supervision or collegial learning spaces. The questions below are offered as open invitations to notice, pause and reflect over time. These reflection questions are intentionally open-ended. They are not meant to be completed systematically or used as evidence of competence. Their value lies in supporting ongoing professional learning, ethical awareness and democratic becoming.



Reflective questions: asking ethical questions for reflection

Rather than checklists or rules, the following questions can support ongoing ethical reflection:

- How are power and authority operating in this learning space?
- Who may feel exposed, marginalised or silenced by this invitation?
- What responsibilities do I hold as facilitator, and which can be shared?
- How am I attending to consent, pacing and relational well-being?
- What signals suggest a need to slow down, adapt or stop?

These questions are not meant to be answered just once but revisited as learning unfolds.

As an educator or facilitator, you are encouraged to adapt these questions, combine them with other reflective practices, or set them aside when they are not useful. Reflection, like democracy-as-becoming, unfolds over time and cannot be standardised.

The activity below provides an example of an aesthetic and embodied method to support reflection.



Activity: collage creation for reflection

To engage in collage creation, you need a large piece of paper and pens, access to different kinds of materials; for example, arts and crafts, such as buttons, ribbon, wool, sequins, and stationery, such as paper clips, sticky notes, paper and card.

Use these materials to stimulate your collage creation in response to the following prompt:

- What have you learnt about democratic approaches to facilitation and changemaking through the planning and trialling of your AELD activity?

When you have finished, you could discuss your collage with someone else or record yourself describing your collage and what the different elements represent. You may also choose to engage in collage with your learners, so you can better understand their experiences of the AELD.



Engaging with ongoing reflection can lead you round the circle to the beginning of another cycle of AELD. Even small interventions with AELD can make a difference for the learning process of the whole group; we invite you to have a try! The next section will give you some more inspiration for what you could do next.



4. Mindfully professionalising yourself in the field of AELD

In this section of our practice companion, we outline a range of possible interventions. This isn't an exhaustive list, but rather a starting point to encourage and inspire you. They range from micro methods – small, simple elements to combine with existing settings and conditions – to more profound aesthetic and embodied interventions, methods and methodologies. After describing AELD (micro-)interventions, we will shift our attention to embodied learning and consider how such practices can foster and support safe, enabling spaces for learners.

The methods introduced here are only a few of many possibilities. Feel free to adapt, renew and/or combine them using the knowledge you gain along the learning process.

4.1 Using AELD micro-methods for freedom, equality and responsiveness

The following three examples provide a snapshot of how you might include AELD into your contexts and apply them to the fields of attention introduced in the second section of our practice companion.

The micro-methods have been designed to nurture democratic values in everyday learning through small, repeatable AELD practices to make freedom, equality/equity, and responsiveness felt and practised across APOL contexts. They can be used as short inputs or combined to make a longer sequence, depending on the format of the session, its duration, and mode.



Micro-method to nurture the democratic value of freedom

AELD method: reflective writing

Context: in discussions, training sessions, or project work, some participants hold back (for fear of judgement, hierarchy, or appearing uninformed), while a few voices dominate.

Why this method: reflective writing creates a private space for reflection, reduces social pressure, and supports authentic, responsible self-expression.

How it is done: participants write a short response to:

“What do I really think about this – and why?”

They write briefly using the sentence starters:

- I think... / I feel... (in my body/emotionally) / I need... (to express myself responsibly in this group).

Each participant then chooses how to contribute: share with a partner / share with the group / keep it private (or anonymous, if possible).

What participants gain: clearer personal viewpoints, more balanced participation, and practice in expressing themselves responsibly.

Final step: participants finish the sentence: “One way I can practise freedom responsibly in our learning/work is...”

Micro-method to nurture the democratic values of Equity and Equality

AELD method: photography (or photo-sketching)

Context: In shared organisational spaces (e.g. a staff kitchen/break area, learning resource space, library, reception area, hot-desking zone, or shared online space), inclusion and exclusion often show up in small, everyday ways – who has a place to sit, who gets approached, whose noise level is tolerated, who feels comfortable taking up space, or who quietly withdraws. These patterns shape a sense of belonging and can affect willingness to contribute elsewhere. The activity can be framed as a social innovation photo challenge: pairs identify equity-supporting and equity-limiting features of the space and propose one small, feasible change to improve equity. The group selects one proposal to trial and review.

Why this method: Photography helps participants notice equity in the environment without focusing on individuals. It offers a low-pressure way to explore what makes participation easier or harder by attending to spaces, objects, layouts, and routines – making equity visible and discussable.

How it is done:

- A shared agreement is established: no identifiable faces are photographed; the focus stays on spaces, objects, signs, and viewpoints (and, where relevant, avoids confidential information).
- In pairs, participants submit two images (or sketches): one suggesting belonging/access and one suggesting a barrier. For each barrier, they propose a micro-change that supports equity and equality in that spot.
- Captions are added using sentence starters:
 - I notice...
 - This feels inclusive/excluding because...
 - A small change could be... (avoiding blame and not naming individuals)
- Proposals are shared in a brief whole-group discussion, then the group votes using simple criteria: feasible / fair / improves access for more people / low cost.
- The selected idea is piloted and reviewed. Where appropriate, it can be taken forward with relevant stakeholders (e.g. team leads, facilities, human resources, training coordinator, or staff representatives).

What participants gain: Greater awareness of how everyday conditions shape equity and equality, a shared language for discussing inclusion without personalising blame, and practical ideas for small, realistic improvements in common organisational spaces.

Final step: Participants complete: “One small change that would make this space more equitable is...”

Micro-method to nurture the democratic value of responsiveness

AELD method: mindful/sensory exercise (embodied mapping)

Context: Shared information spaces (noticeboards, displays, signage, wayfinding, shared documentation areas) are often organised for convenience or visual neatness. This can unintentionally exclude some people (due to differences in height, mobility, or visual needs), reduce access, and increase misunderstandings.

Why this method: This practice is mindful and sensory because it begins with direct embodied perception: participants notice and use their own eye level as first-hand data. It becomes a form of embodied mapping when each person places a magnetic dot on a shared vertical strip beside the board at their eye level. As the dots accumulate, they create a visible map of how people actually engage with the noticeboard. Staff then respond to this map by adjusting the environment (e.g. creating one or two reading bands and posting notices in duplicate), making responsiveness concrete: recognising differences in the group and adapting practice accordingly, rather than expecting everyone to fit a single standard.

How it is done:

- A brief agreement is set: the goal is access, no one is singled out, and embodied experience counts as data.
- Participants place a small magnetic dot (or sticker) on a vertical strip beside the noticeboard at their own eye level.
- The group observes the pattern and identifies the main “reading band” (and a second, lower band if a clear cluster appears).
- From then on, each notice is posted in two copies, one in each band, so that information remains accessible, including for shorter participants and those who use wheelchairs. People may reposition notices within the bands for ease of reading.

What participants gain: A lived experience of responsiveness as attentiveness and adjustment; improved access to information; fewer avoidable errors; and a stronger sense of being noticed and responded to.

Contrast vignette (less responsive approach): Staff set the noticeboard to a single standard height for neat alignment. Notices are laminated and posted in a single band, with a “Do not move notices” label. No participant input is gathered. The board looks tidy, but access is uneven; some people stop reading it, and the number of information errors increases.

Final step: Participants reflect by completing the statement: “One place in our organisation where a small adjustment could make access more responsive is...”

By starting to use such micro-practices of AELD, you will contribute to democracy-as-becoming, as the atmosphere and style of learning can change as well.

4.2 The road less travelled: embodied social transformation

While micro-interventions such as those explored above can help to nurture democratic values, in this section, we especially wish to highlight embodied social transformation. This work is often the most complex, as vulnerability, embarrassment, trust and other sensitive feelings are more immediately present, and learning can be more intense than in a setting where cognitive learning is emphasised. Embodied social transformation therefore focuses on the facilitation of learning environments, through a range of aesthetic and embodied methods that engage participants' sensations and perceptions, as well as their body- and movement-based habits and differences.

As an attitude, embodying social transformation calls us to unlearn much of our institutionalised biography – which often disciplined us to sit still, to learn not by the senses, but by the head and the intellect only and not to pay attention to our feelings and senses. Over time, this can lead us to mistrust our bodily perceptions - and sometimes even to neglect care for our bodies altogether.



Key point

What, then, does it mean to embody social transformation? Engaging with our senses, responses and those of our learning partners directs our attention to our perceptions of our bodies and to movement-based habits. Our gaze turns towards differences, vivid interaction and group work.

Body-based approaches in education for democracy are closely connected to the political dimension of learning and to the demands of democratic practice. Bodies are like a sensorium: they notice and feel atmospheres directly. Listening to the body can reveal dynamics of (in)equality and power – who is invited to speak and who is expected to listen, who has the power to decide and who is expected to comply. Body-based approaches have the potential to access this embodied and situated knowing and make it visible. In this sense, every social and institutional situation ‘begins with the body’.

Embodiment, therefore, also starts with attuning to body-based perceptions of ourselves and the world around us. By doing so, we aim to support individuals and groups in understanding complex social issues and develop innovative solutions for political agency and solidarity.

Example

Introducing AELD into practice: Connecting to biographical experiences & giving space to sensations

“As an educator in higher education, I am teaching aesthetic education for teachers-in-training at a university in the department of sports science. When we first meet in our seminars, we start with a reflection of our own biographical journey in sports. This first reflection usually shows that the students identify with a specific sports practice they know; they usually perceive themselves as ‘good’ at it. Often, I am sitting with a rather homogeneous group of abled-bodied, young students who are equipped with a healthy and athletic body. However, in the seminar, their task is to reflect their own implicit expectations and normative ‘gaze’ on bodies and how they are supposed to move. That’s why we start awareness-based exercises that irritate the function-oriented use of one’s body toward a sense-based practice that may enable them to perceive all bodies as unique and differently abled. So we engage in (self-)observation and discussions sensitive to and appreciative of difference – of bodies, of biographies, of ways of moving.”

AECED case 10: Germany - Higher education and adult, professional and organisational learning

Activity

This example from sports science can be easily translated into any field of education. You can always make use of this process approach for planning your AELD interventions.

1st step is to reflect:

- What is your workshop or course about?
- How could the students/participants relate to this topic? How could the topic be introduced through a sharing of experience or embodied/sensory action?

2nd find possible steps of action:

- Which learning session could include an embodied or aesthetic method that allows the students/participants to learn based on their subjective, sensory and collective experience?
- How could the students/participants be involved in this (decision-making) process?
- How can the expertise / involvement of participants be integrated?
- How can the experience be translated to the personal, social and/or organisational space? How can it become relevant for everyday practices?

3rd select suitable methods, adapt & renew them:

Aesthetic and embodied methods always involve learners as situated bodies: positioned selves in specific contexts, existentially bound to the earth, to our body as our material existence. Because every experience is grounded in the body as a site for perception, reflexion and agency, bodies are not understood as purely individual entities. Rather, they are embedded within social, cultural and political power relations.

The methods we introduce here are only a few of the possible approaches. Feel free to adapt & combine them using the knowledge you gain along the learning process.

Micro-methods for facilitating participation in discussions

Art cards for finding a voice

Art cards and postcards are laid out for participants. Each participant chooses a card that reflects a specific theme, their current feelings, or their goals for the learning. This can be either an intuitive choosing of a card to then ponder what exactly the impulse was about, or a deliberate choice for a card that depicts an already present thought or feeling. The personal reflection is followed by discussion in dyads or a voicing of one's thoughts/feelings with the group.

Click and talk

The participants are invited to take one or more pictures outside the classroom of something that relates to what the students feel is important. The pictures should be collected either through an online tool (e.g. a Miro board), directly transferred to a screen, or printed. The pictures can then be discussed: students can present their own picture(s), or the pictures can be discussed collectively. Questions can start with perceptions, such as "What do you see in the picture?" and then ask for associations, meanings, and interpretations.

You can also ask the participants to give titles to the pictures. Listening to different titles can deepen initial perceptions and create an atmosphere where there is no "right or wrong," but rather multiple perspectives on the same thing.

Journaling

Inviting participants to keep a learning journal can create a safe space for personal thoughts, ideas and insights. It can also be communicated to allow responsibility for one's own learning process. Giving time to journaling creates opportunities for silent writing and reflection in a group. Especially participants who need time to organise their thoughts and voice them can benefit from this time, enabling them to speak more safely through journaling. Excerpts from the journaling can also be shared and discussed in small groups.

Micro-methods for lowering the hierarchy between teachers and students

Yarn exercise

All, included the teacher/facilitator stands in a circle. A yarn ball is thrown to each participant, so that each has an opportunity to hold the yarn, which forms a web inside the circle. While connected to this web, all start to move and have an embodied experience of how each individual's movements are connected to the others'. This illustrates the co-creation of the learning event and that the teacher is just one responsible 'mover' in that process.

Voicing sensations

Leading by example, the facilitator reflects on their emerging feelings, sensations, and thoughts aloud. Making themselves as vulnerable as they expect the participants/students to make themselves. Stepping out of the "expert", authoritative role and becoming a co-wonderer, a genuine co-learner with students.

Deciding together

One way of lowering hierarchies is by involving students in moments of decision-taking: for example, the arrangements of the learning situation, the seating arrangement, the design of a session according to the energy of the group, ... It is important to reflect on what spaces of involvement we open before offering that to the learning group.

Micro-methods for developing embodied responsiveness

Involving the bodies

Doing warm-up movements to raise energy levels and teaching embodied reflection (how to notice one's sensations, emotions and thoughts). Ask participants to stand and walk around the room until they find a comfortable standing position. Then we invite them to close their eyes and feel their breath and their heartbeat. After standing still and observing one's body, we begin to talk them through a whole-body relaxation, starting with the eyes, the lips, the jaw, then the shoulders, the arms and hands, the fingers, the pelvis, the legs, the knees, and the feet. Allowing the body to relax, we give participants some time to simply stand and breathe before asking them to slowly open their eyes and re-enter the space.

Eye-to-eye

Eye contact exercise in pairs: Invite your participants to find a partner and sit/stand face-to-face. Then ask them to take two minutes (or more) to engage in direct eye contact. During that time, the purpose is to be fully present to the other and to reflect on the feelings evoked by being seen. This exercise is about understanding the other's humanness. Take time to debrief: first in pairs, then in the whole group.



Time to reflect

With these impulses, methods, and interventions, we invite you to observe how the learning atmosphere, the relationships between learners, and engagement with content shift toward democracy-as-becoming.

- What are indicators of more active participation, attention to power (im)balances, and initiative to co-create?
- How does the embodied practice engage learners?
- How does engaging different senses change the presence and willingness of participate in learners?

Lastly, we want to draw attention to multi-species entanglement – stretching our own perceptions to more-than-human actors: In times of multiple crises, we engage in intersectional and relational perspectives that acknowledge the multiple interconnected layers of differences and their relevance for participating in social, educational, and institutional settings of learning, decision making and co-creating. Our perspective is the result of interrelations on a global level. We have to refer to our privileges as humans, who have defined the game's roles in so many ways. At the same time, we attend to those who are most disadvantaged – including non-human actors. From this perspective, the human body shifts from being our centre to the margins, raising questions about coexistence, responsibility, and perhaps extinction.

- What does it feel like to imagine democracy beyond the human?
- Why not begin by embodying your relationship with a bee - an existentially symbiotic partner?

These exercises are small reminders to take time to attend to participants as embodied beings – they are also pathways to facilitating connection to oneself and to collective well-being, and to developing embodied responsiveness.

4.3 The Pattern Language of Commoning: an AELD methodology for path-creation

In the APOL guide, we have outlined commoning as an alternative episteme for education, as suggested by the educational philosophers Collet-Sabé and Ball. As the Commoning approach is deeply rooted in an aesthetic and embodied conceptualisation of transformation, it offers an innovative and novel methodology for AELD use. The pattern language of commoning (PLC) is not just a method; it relates to a wider threefold approach of democracy-as-becoming and thus is of interest for different layers of facilitation work in AELD.

German and Finnish teams tested the Commoning methodology in their trials. In particular, the German team explored this perspective in depth with higher education students, professionals, activists, organisational change agents, and educators.

Commoning, as a social practice, sees people organising themselves equally to use and maintain the resources they need within their communities. It is considered a foundational concept because it requires people's active participation in shaping their own lives (see Bollier & Helfrich, 2015).^[1] Our practice companion refers to the three dimensions of commoning: social togetherness, self-governance and care economy, and, drawing on Helfrich and Bollier,^[2] shows how these dimensions build a pattern language, which can be explored through the PLC card deck. In the following, we will introduce this PLC card deck based on the commoning methodology.

^[1] Bollier, D. & Helfrich, S. (2015) *Patterns of Commoning* (Amherst, Mass: Commons Strategy Group and Of the Common Press)

^[2] Helfrich, S. & Bollier, D. (2019) *Frei, Fair und Lebendig. Die Macht der Commons*. Bielefeld: transcript



The Pattern Language of Commoning (PLC) is presented as a card deck for use in a variety of learning and transformational environments. The cards address the three interrelated dimensions of democratic practice: social togetherness, political self-governance, and care-oriented economies. The patterns are informed by insights from over 400 interviews conducted globally and articulate forms of eupraxia – democratising practices that individuals and collectives may find meaningful to explore or adapt.

PLC offers an innovative way of working with haptic, visual, and material elements as “epistemic boundary objects” – objects that can support shared understanding and dialogue across different perspectives. In this approach, we suggest working with solution-oriented patterns, which may help individuals, groups, and organisations navigate processes of change together.

Through its visual and conceptual design, the PLC card deck can support narration, exploration, imagination, reflection, and the co-design of change processes in groups, social movements, organisations, and networks. As with all approaches in this guide, it is offered as a resource to engage with for your own purposes, contexts, and commitments.

One of the patterns we loved most is the most critical one – “preserve relationships in addressing conflicts”. It reminds us to create spaces to address conflict while recognising that conflict is part of relationships. Each pattern card is formulated as a solutionary pattern that helps envision a concrete practice for what to do differently in a given problematic situation. They are reminders to embrace specific topics in (learning) groups, collectives or processes and address them consciously, responsibly and with care – and thus supporting democracy-as-becoming. We introduce additional solutionary patterns, suggesting a process approach to organisational learning based on the pattern language card deck. But let’s first understand better what a pattern is.



Preserve Relationships in Addressing Conflicts

How are conflicts addressed?

It is important to have protected spaces in which conflicts can be made visible and their causes understood. An attitude of respect and mutual concern is critical. Complaints should focus on concrete behaviors or statements, not individuals. Criticism should be balanced with expressions of respect and personal appreciation. An attitude of respect and mutual concern is critical so that relationships can be changed and not destroyed. In some instances, however, separations may be the best option.

*At the Cecosesola cooperative (Venezuela), concrete behaviors are openly and substantially criticized in group settings, but the choice of words and tone remain respectful. After conflict situations, for example, a hug conveys the message: *Whatever our disagreement, I see you as a human being.**

Systemic coaching, mediations and 'Constellations' workshops can address conflicts while preserving relationships.

7



Source: Helfrich & Petzold (2021), Pattern Language of Commoning.

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Illustration © Mercè M. Tarrés (Peer Production License).

Map design © Sibylle Reichel (CC BY-SA 4.0).

What is a pattern?

A pattern describes the core of a solution to a problem that recurs across similar contexts. It captures experiential knowledge that has proven useful over time and can be understood as a versatile tool that offers orientation without prescribing a fixed form of implementation. Patterns are therefore adaptable and open to interpretation, depending on the situation in which they are applied.



Pattern Language of Commoning (PLC) Card Deck

Commoning as a social practice refers to people organising themselves on an equal footing to use, care for and sustain the resources they depend on. This involves collective decision-making as well as an ongoing reflection on governance, social togetherness and production processes.

Commoning patterns describe recurring social, governance, and economic practices that can support collective organisations and communities. The patterns developed so far are compiled in the Pattern Language of Commoning (PLC), presented here as a card deck. The current deck consists of 33 cards. Each card combines visual illustrations, guiding questions, concise descriptions, practical examples, and references to related patterns. These elements allow users to connect cards and explore relationships between practices in an open-ended way.

The PLC cards are designed as a flexible resource that can be used in a wide range of settings, including schools, health centres, workers' cooperatives, student groups, neighbourhood initiatives, firms, and other forms of collective organisation. Their purpose is not to prescribe solutions, but to support groups and organisations in reflecting on and shaping their organisational practices through educational and organisational education processes. Used in this way, the cards can help articulate challenges, open dialogue, encourage shared reflection, and support collective learning and coordination – regardless of group size or level of experience.

How and where to use Commoning Patterns:

In experiments, curricula and organisational learning environments, we may use patterns as resources to support:

- shared understanding and communication
- self-organised development processes
- sustainable, process-oriented forms of management



Reflecting on patterns can support both articulating needs at the beginning of a process and identifying challenges that emerge later. One way to begin is to revisit the shared values and principles that informed the project at its outset and ask whether they are still lived out in practice. At a later stage, different patterns may become relevant in situations of tension or conflict. Re-selecting patterns that seem meaningful can help groups identify emerging issues and explore possible ways to respond to them. In this way, the cards can support ongoing reflection and learning throughout a project's life.

As didactic resources, they can support democratising social togetherness by enabling

- individual and collective capacities to perceive and notice,
- the expression, articulation and description of experiences
- deeper exploration and increased reflexivity
- a shift in attention from self-focus toward the collective whole
- the shaping of alternative images and shared visual imagination
- the strengthening of collective orientation
- the opening of spaces in which transformation can take place

They can inspire collective self-organisation by

- focusing attention on practices of success
- bringing together actors from different social worlds
- recognising rights and supporting forms of polycentric governance
- engaging with boundaries, rules and shared decision-making
- exploring approaches to conflict resolution
- attending to questions of accountability and rule violations
- reflecting on proportional and graduated responses within groups



An example: Starting a project

When starting a project or collaborative process, the Commoning cards can be used to surface what is important to everyone involved. Needs and values can be reflected on by exploring the patterns and relating them to the context. For example, distribute the cards in the room and invite each participant to pick one or more cards that resonate or feel important at this moment. Once everyone has selected and reviewed their cards, ask participants to present their choices to the group. Reflect together on what these patterns could mean for the project, considering aspects such as social togetherness, organisational structures, or production processes. It can also be helpful to draw on participants' prior experiences and lessons learned. Finally, the group may decide on shared values or guiding principles to revisit and uphold throughout the process.

This approach encourages dialogue, reflection, and a collective understanding of the project's priorities, while providing a flexible entry point into the patterns without prescribing outcomes.



4.4 From micro-interventions to methodologies: the variety of AELD

In this section, we have guided you through a spectrum of AELD interventions, ranging from micro-(method) approaches to embodied and PLC interventions. We understand these not as separate categories, but as interrelated practices – in a way, every intervention relates to our bodies and minds. Any transformation is ultimately a transformation of the senses and embodied practices. Transformational processes involve changing how we sense, see, and feel.

AELD is understood as embodied social transformation, and Commoning as a change methodology; each aims to transform social togetherness, foster self-governance, and contribute to economies of care.

Engaging with the fields of attention, each of these resources invites you to integrate, trial and establish aesthetic and embodied practices. They provide foundational elements for developing and designing collective and organisational change and introduce a language of, and for, enabling truly democratic relations, nurturing predispositions and capabilities for active democratic citizenship, and deepening the experience of democracy. They highlight co-creation and the body's role as a sensing, responsive actor in education for democracy.

We understand education for democracy as transforming habitualised thoughts, gestures, and expressions that we have internalised over time. For any educational situation and context, we want to strengthen experiencing democracy – at the individual, collective, and organisational levels. We recognise that – for you as a facilitator, practitioner, consultant, change-agent – engaging with these approaches may feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable – and there may be contexts or situations in which it is necessary to consider your own emotional safety, comfort, and professional boundaries when deciding whether and in which way to work with AELD, embodied and commoning approaches.



However, this companion offers plenty of practical methods that can be applied and adapted to any context. They may help you as a facilitator to plan a session, a workshop or teaching intervention – and they may support collective and organisational learning, too.

4.5 Looking back: on ethical reflection

The following reflection resources support educators, facilitators, and supervisors who engage with AELD. The resources are not evaluation tools and are not intended to assess performance or outcomes. They are designed to support ethical judgement, reflexivity and professional learning, in line with the orientations set out in the main Guide and AELD Framework. Reflection may be undertaken individually, in peer dialogue, supervision or collegial learning spaces. Not all questions need to be addressed; they are offered as open invitations to notice, pause and reflect over time.

1. Before facilitating or designing learning

These questions support reflection before engaging with AELD practices.

- What draws me to use aesthetic and embodied methods in this context?
- What assumptions am I making about participants' readiness, interest or capacity?
- How are power, role and authority configured in this learning space?
- What constraints (time, mandate, institutional expectations) shape what is possible?
- How will consent, choice and withdrawal be communicated and supported?

2. During learning: noticing what is unfolding

These prompts support attentive presence during facilitation, rather than real-time decision-making checklists.

- What am I noticing in the room (or online) beyond spoken words?
- Whose voices are present, and whose may be absent or quiet?
- Where do I sense energy, hesitation, resistance or discomfort?
- How am I responding bodily and emotionally to what is emerging?
- Do I need to slow down, pause, adapt or stop?

3. After learning: reflecting on experience

These questions support reflection after a learning encounter, individually or with others.

- What moments felt significant or meaningful, and why?
- Where did uncertainty or discomfort arise, and how was it held?
- How did power-sharing operate in practice, including my own role?
- What supported or constrained relational well-being?
- What remains unresolved or open for future reflection?

4. Reflecting on democratic sensibility

These prompts invite longer-term reflection on the cultivation of democratic sensibility.

- How is my attentiveness to power, difference and relation shifting over time?
- What am I learning about my own habits of listening, speaking and responding?
- How do aesthetic and embodied methods influence my professional judgement?
- In what ways am I becoming more (or less) comfortable with uncertainty?

5. Reflecting with others

Reflection in AELD can be enriched through dialogue with peers or supervisors.

- What questions emerge when reflecting together rather than alone?
- How do others' perspectives reframe my understanding of an experience?
- What forms of support or challenge are helpful in sustaining democratic learning?

Such dialogue benefits from the acceptive gaze explained in the APOL Guide. The acceptive gaze ensures that reflection remains non-judgemental, respectful and ethically grounded.

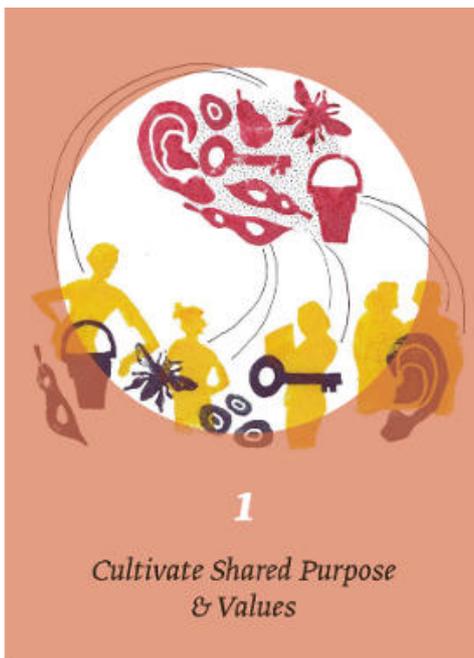
6. A note on use

These reflection resources are intentionally open-ended. They are not meant to be completed systematically or used as evidence of competence. Their value lies in supporting ongoing professional learning, ethical awareness and democratic becoming.

As an educator or facilitator, you are encouraged to adapt these questions, combine them with other reflective practices, or set them aside when they are no longer useful. Reflection, like democratic learning itself, unfolds over time and cannot be standardised.

5. Looking forward: resources and next steps

This section brings together the core resources that support your continuing journey with Aesthetic and Embodied Learning for Democracy (AELD). It also signposts pathways to deepen your practice, connect with the wider AECED project, and sustain the momentum of democratic learning across your professional and organisational contexts.



How do we open doors? How can we dive into co-creating Aesthetic and Embodied Learning (AELD)?

Throughout this Practice Companion, we have introduced AELD to support individual and collective learning. We have integrated a methodology for organisational change and for transforming the ways we relate to ourselves, to others, and to the world we live in. We have encouraged you to (co-)create your own spaces to re-imagine how we relate, learn and work together.

As “Connecting with democracy: A pedagogical framework for education for democracy” and the “Guide for aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy in the field of adult, professional and organisational learning” highlight, a key potential for APOL lies in cultivating fresh ways of seeing ourselves, our environment and each other. We have built on this insight by offering practical approaches that help reorient our gaze – from a self-centred perspective toward a relational and collective one. In doing so, we emphasise complex, adaptive living processes in which values are created, and needs are met through the principles of democracy-as-becoming.



We have invited you to make our bodies our allies again, using all our senses to deepen our understanding of ourselves, of others, and of the situations we wish to co-create – in more caring, meaningful, and joyful ways. In this spirit, we invite you to reimagine how we learn and how we organise ourselves toward democracy.

In this last section of our practice companion, we provide a brief overview of the wider ecosystem of resources that support your exploration of democracy-as-becoming. We also connect you to additional materials created across the AECED project on aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy.

Core AECED resources: a short overview

We have already introduced you to the AECED resources that complement this Companion Guide. These include:

- Connecting with democracy: a pedagogical framework for education for democracy

And the guides and practice companions that support the other phases:

- Growing democracy from the start (Ages 3–10): Early years and primary education guide
- Connecting with democracy in secondary education: a guide to aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy
- Living democracy in higher education: a guide to aesthetic and embodied learning for democracy (AELD)



6. Closing thoughts and ongoing possibilities

This Companion closes by returning to the heart of AELD: the belief that democracy is not only taught — it is practised, felt, experienced, and lived in our everyday interactions.

Throughout this journey, you have encountered values, principles, reflections, pathways, micro-methods, and process approaches that invite you to engage creatively and relationally with education for democracy. You have explored how AELD can help us notice more, listen more deeply, share power, and create conditions where every participant feels seen, valued, and able to contribute.

By working through this Practice Companion, we hope you have gained:

- practical steps for identifying a facilitation focus, selecting aesthetic and embodied methods, planning, trialling, and reflecting
- ethical and reflective stances to support responsible facilitation
- a range of practice activities that can be adapted to your own context
- ways of thinking and working that nurture democratic sensibilities in individuals, groups, and organisations
- a pathway into deeper explorations such as commoning, embodied social transformation, and organisational learning

You now carry a set of tools that can help transform both your own practice and the cultures you work within.



Every session you facilitate, every conversation you hold, every small shift in relational practice contributes to the wider culture of learning for democracy.

As you leave this Practice Companion and continue your work, you might take these key questions on the journey:

- Where can I introduce small, aesthetic and embodied practices that shift how we relate?
- How can I open more space for shared meaning-making?
- What forms of participation or voice are missing — and how might they be included?
- What does power-sharing look like in the moments I am part of?
- How might I nurture democratic well-being in my team or organisation?
- What resources feel most relevant to my context right now?
- Which aesthetic and embodied methods or approaches am I curious to try next?
- Whom might I invite into my learning journey?
- What small, feasible step could I take this week to weave AELD into my work?

These reflections may help anchor your next moves.

We hope you have enjoyed the journey with us and that we can stay in touch!

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: blank planning template

Name of method:

Recommended time:

Materials:

Premises:

Learning opportunities:

Outcomes:



Implementation:

Joint reflection and evaluation:

Reference to AELD:



Appendix 2: exemplar planning template

Name of method: collaging

Recommended time: 60-minutes

Materials: provocation, paper, collaging materials such as tissue paper, crafting embellishments, magazine images, found objects, natural forms or artefacts

Premises: Sufficient space for everyone

Learning opportunities:

- using collage to explore and reflect on democratic practice within professional teams
- develop new insights, meaning-making through an expressive aesthetic and embodied approach
- learn from the experiences of others

Outcomes:

- explore the role of democracy within the work team and possibilities for becoming more democratically orientated
- experience AELD in practice as meaning-making and imagining possibilities for the role

Brief description: In this activity, practitioners explore through collage the idea of democratic practices within teams. The team could work collectively or individually. Once the activity is complete, provide time for reflection either shared as a whole or in smaller groups.

Overview and implementation:

- Ask practitioners to create a collage (no glue) in response to a prompt. For example How does democracy feature/feel in your team and practice now? (10 minutes).
- Remind the group that this is not about precision or technical skill, and that they should not overthink their response. No glue is used so that there is flexibility to move elements of the collage and edit as ideas emerge and thinking unfolds.
- As a group, ask practitioners to reflect upon and discuss their collage. Are there common themes, challenges, etc.?
- As groups or as individuals, invite practitioners to identify and discuss an area of focus that they would like to explore further in their practice. A field of attention, a dimension of democracy (power-sharing, transforming dialogue, holistic learning, relational well-being), or democratic values could be used as prompts. Invite them to write down their focus (20 mins)
- Invite the individuals or groups to redesign their collage, using the same materials, removing and adding anything new. This time, they are imagining possibilities for more democratic practice. Each entails connecting to the field of attention, dimension of democracy, or democratic value. (10 minutes)
- Allow time for questions, individual and group reflection.

Joint reflection and evaluation:

- As part of joint reflection and evaluation, practitioners can discuss their collage responses, for example, what meanings and interpretations emerged.
- Encourage others to listen, without judgement and interruption, to each practitioner's overview of their drawing, before sharing their own reflections.
- Encourage reflection on how it felt to express their ideas differently, through collage, and on their experiences of listening to others' reactions to their collage and discussion of it.

**Reference to AELD:**

This activity involves collage as the aesthetic and embodied method. Using a non-stick approach means practitioners can easily make changes, remove or add elements, start over, or experiment with dynamic collage.

The activity can focus specifically on democracy and its relationship to practitioners' professional practice, as in the example shared here. Alternatively, a prompt, which is not focused specifically on learning for democracy, could be shared, with the collective reflection focusing on how engagement with the activity fostered learning for democracy, though, for example, active listening to different points of view, communication without judgement, achieving mutual understanding, and using different aesthetic and embodied approaches to support learning.

If practitioners choose to develop a collective collage, there are opportunities to work together democratically – ensuring all can participate equally, and all contributions are valued.