

METHOD GUIDE

Literature and Rap | Finland

Simo Nieminen



ASSOCIATION OF
CHILDREN'S
CULTURE
IN FINLAND

MIND | THE
GAP |

METHOD GUIDE

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FOREWORDS

Dear reader,

In your hands is our project's method guide, offering a look into the art education laboratories held in Finland during autumn 2024 and spring 2025.

These workshops, called laboratories in the project, were organised for young athletes aged 13 to 16 as part of middle school training camps coordinated by the Finnish Olympic Committee. Young athletes from many different cities and regions across the country attend these week-long camps at sports institutes during the school year.

This entirely new form of cooperation between sports institutes and the cultural sector progressed smoothly. We introduced the possibility of integrating art workshops into the psychological training component of the camps. One workshop was held at each camp, and during the school year the young athletes participated in a total of four art workshops.

The exercises in this method guide can be applied to various youth groups. Based on feedback from participants and art educators, the activities were calming and supportive of group cohesion. They helped build team spirit among young people who had not previously met.

We wish you rewarding moments with this guide and its exercises.

About Mind The Gap

Mind The Gap is an innovative Creative Europe project that strengthens artistic and cultural education while promoting wider participation among children and young people across Europe. It builds cross-sectoral cooperation between culture and education to address key challenges affecting young people's well-being.

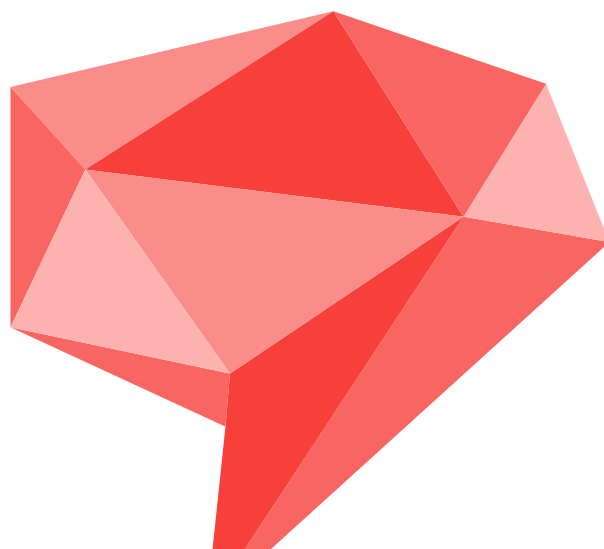
Throughout the project, each partner has designed a unique art education laboratory within an educational environment. Partners share methods, conduct peer reviews, and provide feedback. This collaborative approach equips art educators and organisations with tools to support children's and young people's well-being, creativity, and self-expression.

The learnings from the laboratories are collected into four method guides, which make the implementation of the methods easy. The method guides are available both in the partners' national languages and in English.

These method guides and the Mind The Gap project have been made possible through the co-funding of the European Union.

Mind The Gap project (11/2024–8/2026) is coordinated by the Association of Children's Culture in Finland. The project partners are Kulturtanken (Norway), the Małopolska Institute of Culture in Kraków (Poland), and Pionirski dom – Center za kulturo mladih (Slovenia).

MIND
THE
GAP



Arts and cultural education with young people – how to use this guide

Adolescence is a period of significant growth and change, during which identity, self-esteem, and a sense of agency are shaped in relation to peers. At the same time, sensitivity to evaluation and fear of failure often increase. In arts and cultural education, this calls for a safe, trusting, and voluntary working environment where participation is not based on performance but on the opportunity to experiment, express oneself, and remain unfinished.

From a pedagogical perspective, flexibility and adaptation are essential. The exercises function as tools and ideas that can be applied according to the needs, skill levels, and motivation of the group. They can be combined, modified, and used in different orders, the key is to choose approaches that best suit the situation. When activities are accessible and meaningful, they support young people's sense of competence and strengthen confidence in their own abilities.

Creative work is interaction within and with the group. The facilitator's task is to listen, support, and respond to the group's needs. The role is facilitative: the educator enables learning and creativity, encourages participation, and makes space for young people's own ideas, opinions, and shared decision-making.

Alongside artistic practice, emotional, interaction, and participation skills, such as the ability to recognise and express feelings, listen to others, and act and build meaning together, develop. In this way, arts education supports not only artistic expression but also holistic growth, wellbeing, and collective agency. The plan prepared by the facilitator provides a reliable backbone and sense of security, but the work itself emerges through interaction with the group.

Art-based methods can be successfully applied to different themes, situations and sports according to the needs of the groups. The exercises in this guide are intended as methods to support your work with your own group. They offer ideas, structures, and examples that can be combined, adapted, shortened, or expanded according to the situation. They do not need to be followed in a fixed order or completed as whole packages. Take what you need, apply freely, and make the exercises your own.

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Method

Literature and Rap

KEY WORDS: literary education, imagination, rhythm, together, alone, group work, success, self-confidence, strengthening identity, relaxation, teams, language, playing, performance skills, basketball, teens

Age recommendation: 12–16 years

Duration: Four meetings 2 x 45 min, with a 15 min break in between

Number of participants: 6–16 people



Description of the method

In literature or verbal art, language is used creatively as a method of expression, play, and interaction where the imagination takes precedent over linguistic correctness. Literature can be accessed by writing, reading, listening, speaking, and performing. The basis for the method lies in diverse works of verbal art, such as songs. In literary education the most important thing is one's own approach to language and the playful ways in which one may develop their self-expression and access their imagination.

Literary exercises can be done alone, in pairs, or in groups. Group exercises act to strengthen teamwork and social skills. For young people, solo exercises are related to the development of personal voice, self-confidence, identity, emotional expression, experiences of success, and the formation of a system of values. The art of words is a safe and permissive avenue for young people to experiment and play with language on their own terms.

Literature combines learning and expression in ways that feel significant and personal. It gives everyone a voice — regardless of age, background, or linguistic capability. The methods are also flexible: they can be applied in different age groups, levels of learning, and diverse environments.

The literary exercises of this guide were designed with young basketball players, and implemented over a total of four five-day sports camps across the school year. Each camp week included one writing workshop, each two lessons long.

The middle school students at the sports camps are united by basketball and their secondary education curriculum. They did not know one another beforehand, but all the teens were highly active and cooperative, and familiar with directed workshops.



Meeting 1

Before the workshop

Prior arrangements

- **Facilities:** Classroom, blackboard/whiteboard, table groups
- **Equipment & materials:** Writing utensils (paper, pens/pencils, erasers, sharpeners)
- **Planning:** A good starting point is to highlight and map the interests of the young people in question. This happens through fun introductions and teaming up into groups, and investigating writing guides.
- **Partners:** Suitable spaces are surveyed and chosen beforehand with the partners, technical presentation requirements are planned, and the weekly itinerary is checked. It is good to have someone present who is already familiar with the group.

Description of the workshop

THEME: Us, introductions, courage, daring, creativity, and self-expression

20 min
solo

Exercise 1: Basketball aphorism

1. Write down a personal place that relates to basketball.
2. Write down an important object, subject, or event that relates to basketball.
3. Write down a basketball-related adjective.

4. Compose an aphorism using a simile, with this method:

Basketball is like [adjective + object/subject/event + place]

E.g.: Basketball is like a pair of elastic Air Jordans in the Mäkimatti locker room.

5. Everyone shares their own aphorism aloud, and/or produces a shared basketball-themed collage board full of aphorisms.

25 min
solo

Exercise 2: Sensory basketball poem

1. Everyone will write basketball-related places on the board (locker room, court, bus, bench...)
2. Everyone writes down two odors related to basketball.
3. Everyone writes down two flavors related to basketball.
4. Everyone writes down two sounds related to basketball.
5. Everyone writes down one tactile sensation related to basketball (how something feels on the skin or in the air).
6. Everyone writes down three visual things related to basketball.
7. Based on these observations, a basketball poem based on repetition is composed, as below:

Kentällä tuoksuu hiki ja hengitys

Pukukopissa maistuu energiapatukka ja urheilujuoma

Kentällä kuuluu valmentajan huutoa ja pillin vihellys

Kentällä tuntuu jännitys ilmassa

Kentällä näkyy sukka, pallo ja pitkät paljaat kädet

8. Those who went to may read their own poem aloud to the rest of the group.

Compliment, encourage, and cheer on the participants as they write and/or recite.

20 min
solo

Exercise 3. Seven-sentence basketball game

1. Describe in one sentence how the court looks just before the opening jump ball.
2. Write one sentence describing a person (e.g. player, coach, referee) doing something on the court.
3. Write one sentence describing someone else saying or shouting something on the court.
4. Write one sentence describing someone else reacting to the speech or shout.
5. Write one sentence describing some unexpected turning point that affects the game in a big way.
6. Write one sentence describing someone doing something on the court.
7. Write one sentence describing how the court looks at the end of the match.

Finally the teens may read their work to the rest of the group. Remember to applaud after each performance, and give some small piece of spontaneous feedback.



20 min
together

Exercise 4. Basketball terms and rhymes

1. The participants start adding basketball-related words onto the board together. Beginning with playing positions, the areas and lines on the court; asking about tactics of defence and offence; gathering verbs (what actions are possible for a player, with and without the ball); nicknames given to positions (point guard, shooting guard, small forward, power forward, center) and especially talented players.
2. When the basketball words have been gathered, go through the definitions of different types of rhyme (perfect rhyme, vowel rhyme, end rhyme).

So-called perfect rhymes contain all the same letters as the starting word except for the first letter ("fast / past"). Vowel rhymes may switch consonants but keep all the same vowels ("mission / ribbon"). End rhymes only retain the same vowels from the final syllable ("destroy / employ").

3. The participants are directed to find a partner and then to find and write down different rhymes on their own paper.
4. When the participants have found about 20 rhyming pairs of words, they will choose one of them to start off a small basketball rap.

*We regain possession when the point guards fall
A long pass to Santeri who spikes the ball*

Finally the teens may read their own work to the rest of the group. Remember to applaud after each performance, and give some small piece of spontaneous feedback.

After the workshop

1. Gather the finished basketball rhymes for later use.
2. Request verbal feedback about the exercises: which ones were fun?; which ones were difficult?; what sort of exercises would you like?
3. Wish everyone a great week and best of luck, with writing and life in general.

Conclusion

1. The workshop teacher must have an interest in basketball and youth life. They should present the exercises engagingly and show an interest in the teens themselves.
2. While running the exercises, the teacher must listen to the teens and accept their ideas and development suggestions, and maintain motivation.
3. Compliments and encouragement are key parts of working with young people. A writing coach is an ally to the teens, facilitating their wellbeing instead of creating pressure or stress in a sensitive period of their growth, as well as during a potentially tense workshop situation with new acquaintances.
4. The teacher must also take immediate action if they observe any kind of discrimination or other bullying among the teenagers.
5. The teacher will do well as long as they are prepared to react sincerely to the teens' conduct, and to be present for them as a trustworthy adult.

Tips and additional resources:

[More ideas of writing workshops \(Yöstäjä\)](#)

[Ideas for youth literacy exercises \(in Finnish\)](#)



Meeting 2

Before the workshop

Prior arrangements

- **Facilities:** Gymnasium, yoga mats, bouncing balls.
- **Equipment & materials:** Writing materials (papers, pens/pencils, erasers), sound system, drum machine.
- **Planning:** It is good to base the planning of the workshop on the wishes of the teens themselves, and through a self-appointed theme.
- **Partners:** The space reservation must be agreed beforehand with the collaborator. It is also important to test the audio system and ask about the group's other weekly classes and activities in person, along with someone the group is already familiar with.

Description of the workshop

25 min
solo

Exercise 1: Basketball rhythms, each with a ball

1. Play back a recording of a simple 4/4 drum beat, starting at around 80 bpm.
2. The teens acquire the rhythm by learning to bounce their ball in time with the tempo. They will find the right beats by listening to the rhythm created by the bouncing balls.
3. The bouncing is varied by switching hands and directions of motion.

4. The rhythm is varied and the tempo is raised, by bouncing half-tempo first and then increasing the speed to two bounces per beat. (Bounce style: slow-fast-fast-slow).
5. Raise the tempo to 140 bpm and make fast series of eight per beat followed by slow ones on every other beat.
6. Choose a partner and pass the ball in rhythm. One passes underhand with a bounce and the other overhand through the air.

**25 min
solo &
grouped**

Exercise 2: Adjectives and acrostics

1. Each person thinks of one adjective relating to themselves, chosen based on the first letter of each of their first names (the method is called acrostics).
2. If someone has more than one given name, they will choose one of the adjectives that they feel best describes themselves.
3. The teens are assigned to groups of four, which form individual rhythm circles.
4. Once the groups are familiar with the bouncing rhythm, each person will take their turn to speak aloud the phrase "I am..." plus the adjective they have chosen.
5. The group maintains the bouncing rhythm and will rehearse a short, mantra-esque chanting performance going around the circle.
6. Each group performs their collaborative performance to the others.

**30 min
solo &
grouped**

Exercise 3: Game day exercise

1. The groups are provided with large sheets of flipchart paper.
2. The paper is divided into four quadrants, labeled Morning, Changing Rooms, Game Time, The Bench.
3. The group members each write down four things that they usually do in those moments.

4. The groups present their game days in turn. They are encouraged to include specific details as well, from preparation and training to the habits and actions of the match itself.
5. Each participant writes their own personal short story about their game day, using the omniscient narrator style (third person).
6. The workshop facilitator reads aloud a few of the gathered texts anonymously.

15 min
solo

Exercise 4: Poetry relaxation

1. The young participants are asked to lay down on yoga mats while the lighting in the room is dimmed.
2. The sound system can be used to play soothing music or other recordings, such as nature sounds (rainfall, waves, birdsong).
3. Speak to the participants gently and encourage them to relax and breathe deeply. Then read out loud, also with a gentle and expressive voice, some chosen poems to create a serene and imaginative atmosphere.
4. When the poems have been recited, end the relaxation slowly by fading out the music/sounds and gradually bringing back the lights.
5. Ask the participants about how the session felt to them, and wish them a happy day.



Meeting 3

Before the workshop

- **Facilities:** Gymnasium, yoga mats, bouncing balls.
Equipment & materials: Writing materials (papers, pens/pencils, erasers), sound system, drum machine.
- **Planning:** It is good to base the planning of the third meeting on the wishes of the teens themselves, and through a self-appointed theme.
- **Partners:** The space reservation must be agreed beforehand with the collaborator. It is also important to test the audio system and ask about the group's other weekly classes and activities in person, along with someone the group is already familiar with.

20 min
solo

Exercise 1: Poetry selfie

1. Distribute A4-sized papers cut into the silhouette of a human head. Make sure to note that this is a free-wheeling, surrealist, and humorous kind of exercise.
2. Ask the teens to think about what shapes, colors, and random images come to mind when they think about their own eyes. Have them write: "My eyes are like [color + shape/object]" — e.g. "My eyes are like turquoise rowboats."
3. Ask the participants to do the same while thinking about their noses — e.g. "My nose is like a two-way tunnel."
4. Repeat for their mouth — e.g. "My mouth is like two pink bananas."
5. Repeat for their ears — e.g. "My ears are like an easy labyrinth."

6. Repeat for their hair — e.g. *“My hair is like a wind-tossed bush.”*
7. Combine all these lines, and you have a poetry selfie! The participants should be encouraged to read their poems aloud.

**25 min
solo**

Exercise 2: Me and basketball

1. In this exercise, participants reminisce about how their interest and love for basketball was first born, how they discovered their spark. The teens begin by writing a short five-sentence paragraph, using the phrase *“I remember...”*, recalling their experiences.
2. Next, write five sentences about what a good game is like.
3. List five things that help you succeed in a game.
4. Write three sentences about how it feels when the game is really intense.
5. Go through the responses together after each step. The participants get to relate to each other's perspectives, see similarities, and integrate their experiences together in a safe and conversational environment.

**45 min
grouped**

Exercise 3: Game day rap verses

1. Let's learn to combine words and rhythm and to use the 4/4 rhythm chart along with some prepared examples, and as a jointly written chorus.
2. The contents and structure of the songs are agreed with the groups. Each group writes one eight-line verse, composed of 4x2 lines per subject: the first couplet about the morning of game day, the second about the changing rooms, the third about the gameplay, and the fourth about the feelings of victory/loss after the match.
3. The game day flipchart papers with the adjectives are used as an aid in writing the rap verses.



4. While writing, reciting the verses will be rehearsed together. Groups will also decide how to record their own finished rap verses (also called bars). In order to get over some possible uncertainty about recording with a microphone, and to help to get in the zone, participants can rap in the role and with the mouth of a basketball player character. Exaggeration and humor can also lighten the mood and make the recording a fun experience.
5. Each group records their own verses among themselves, without any pressure or expectations from the others.
6. We listen to the raw recordings of all the groups' verses, and everyone's fantastic tracks are applauded. Great work!

After the workshop

Once the workshop is over, the facilitator will ask around and let the teens describe how the new and brave situations felt to them. The facilitator prepares, edits, and/or masters the recordings into finished tracks.



Meeting 4

Before the workshop

Prior arrangements

- **Facilities:** Gymnasium, yoga mats, bouncing balls.
- **Equipment & materials:** Writing materials (papers, pens/pencils, erasers), sound system, drum machine.
- **Planning:** It is good to base the planning of the third meeting on the wishes of the teens themselves, and through a self-appointed theme.
- **Partners:** The space reservation must be agreed beforehand with the collaborator. It is also important to test the audio system and ask about the group's other weekly classes and activities in person, along with someone the group is already familiar with.

Description of the workshop

20 min
solo

Exercise 1: B-ball rhythms, with bouncing balls

1. Play a recording of a simple 4/4 drum beat using the sound system, starting with 80 bpm.
2. The young participants will find the rhythm by bouncing their balls. They will find the correct beats by listening to the rhythm produced by the balls.
3. Vary the bouncing by switching hands and directions of motion.
4. Vary the rhythm and raise the tempo.

5. The rhythm is varied and the tempo is raised, by bouncing half-tempo first and then increasing the speed to two bounces per beat. (Bounce style: slow-fast-fast-slow).
6. Raise the tempo to 140 bpm and make fast series of eight per beat followed by slow ones on every other beat.
7. Choose a partner and pass the ball in rhythm. One passes underhand with a bounce and the other overhand through the air.

**25 min
solo**

Exercise 2: The game and emotions

1. Let's talk about gameplay and match situations, and the many diverse and fluctuating feelings that they involve.
2. We'll discuss the importance of community during a game, and the meaning of team spirit and how it is practiced.
3. Each person by themselves writes down the emotions that they usually feel most strongly in the following gameplay moments:
 - a) shooting
 - b) three-pointer
 - c) free throw
 - d) defense
 - e) passing
 - f) catching a pass
 - g) winning

**10 min
solo**

Exercise 3: Commentator metaphors

1. Ask the teens to consider their own strengths as players: what kind of praise have they received from coaches or teammates, what are their strong suits compared to other players.
2. Have them think about a metaphorical/poetic image that they feel describes their strengths.

3. Write down the image as a simile (using like) as though spoken by a basketball commentator.
E.g.: *"He's like a storm under that basket. Everyone is blown away and he's going for the play...!"*
4. Everyone reads each other their own similes.
The facilitator will give each teen a short and spontaneous, encouraging piece of feedback.
5. Applaud the brilliant metaphors and the teens' agile minds!

25 min
solo

Exercise 4: Details and focus on the court

1. Guide the teens in thinking about a basketball match through their own playing position:
 - a) point guard
 - b) shooting guard
 - c) small forward
 - d) power forward
 - e) center.
2. Ask the teens to list things that happen during a basketball match, and tasks assigned to each of their playing positions.
3. Ask the teens to describe the following basketball-related things with three adjectives:
 - a talented opponent
 - a good pass
 - a long shot
 - a successful block
 - the fourth quarter
 - a free throw
 - a speech on the court
 - a steal
 - a foul

4. Everyone participates in going through each subject, discussing the responses so that the teens expand their understanding of basketball and notice the diversity within the whole team and group.
5. Together, write some rhyming couplets about the most popular subjects of discussion, and rap them together in a jammin' rhythm.

**10 min
together**

Exercise 5: Victory spell-rap

1. Together, think up and write down a list of necessities for a victory in basketball.
2. Compile another list of the different feelings that winning can elicit.
3. Start writing eight lines of rap, almost like a spell for good luck and success, into the rhythm chart.
4. When everyone is satisfied with the first line, brainstorm the next line through an end-rhyme on the fourth beat.
5. Perform, chant, rap the couplets when they are ready. Continue the victory spell-rap.
6. Keep all the teens together and write a shared verse. While rapping the bars or reciting the spells, the intention is to create an empowering experience and feel the magic power of words and rhythms, written and spoken together.





Conclusion:

Familiarize yourself with the rhythm chart method and the construction of hip hop and rap verses.

Tips & additional resources:

Paul Edwards, *How to Rap: The Art & Science of the Hip-Hop MC* [in English]; and Esa Salminen and Karri Miettinen (Paleface), *Kolmetoista kertaa kovempi – Räppäriin käsikirja* [in Finnish]

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