



Agents of Change Toolkit

Serious Games to progress schools towards Sustainable Development Goals



The A-Ha! Moment

This is an ongoing, gamelike activity for school staff, aimed at identifying potential areas of change in the school environment by gathering and combining information about the school's current situation. The participating individuals record pieces of information by being observant during their daily work-routines and subsequently gather together in once-per-week social sessions to try to combine that information in ways that can trigger useful changes in the school's procedures.

This activity fits into the ACT change model Steps 1-3 – Aim, Outcome, Action plan.

**Who?**

Any school staff

**Where?**

Common space in the school premises or a webpage online

**When?**

Phase 1: individual / throughout the week, during work hours
Phase 2: in group / once per week for 15'

**What?**

Noticeboard and colourful post-it notes (or digital alternative)

You will need

This activity can take place physically or online. Participants will need (real or digital) sticky notes for the players to write down their observations. Provide notes of 3 colours for the players: "have" coloured notes, "need" coloured notes, and "a-ha!" coloured notes. You will need a board on which

to post them and a piggy bank for contributions in order to finance small treats as rewards to players. You will also need a scorecard with the participants' names to keep track of their current score. Ideally, also have an archive box to store outdated unpaired sticky notes and successful pairings from previous sessions.



Figure 1 Activity materials in a sample set-up

How to play

Setup

To initialize the game, set up the physical or digital board. Set aside an area to display the scorecard and to provide empty sticky notes for use. Roughly divide the playing space into the "Have" and "Need" categories. Keep the piggy bank for monetary contributions close to the board.

Phase 1: daily

Each participant tries to be observant of their familiar surroundings and take note of anything that seems "*inspiring, new, or out of place*". Provide these keywords as a prompt to the participants.

Each participant leaves a post-it note with their observation under the category "Have" or "Need", as appropriate in their opinion. Each post-it should include date and the author's name.

Participants can repeat the process as many times as desired.

Phase 2: group meeting

Participants gather together either physically or through a video call.

Participants go through the notes and try to combine them in matching "have-need" pairs. The person who first spots a potential pairing should call out "A-Ha!" and present their idea. Afterwards, the whole group discusses the proposed idea, the merits and the risks involved. You can provide the following points for discussion:

- 1) What are the potential changes that this idea will bring about?
- 2) What benefits could arise from this change?
- 3) What costs or risks could be associated with this change?

If the group votes on moving this idea forward, the group then negotiates on how the change can be realized by constructing an action plan. You can provide the following considerations:

- 1) Are the involved participants able and willing to collaborate?
- 2) What else is needed to support this change?
- 3) What kind of new potential for further change does this action plan open up?

If the A-Ha! Moment turns into a successful action plan, all directly involved members in the action plan receive a score point as reward. In the proposed action plan, school staff that don't directly participate in the game can also be involved.

Upon collection of five points, a participant is awarded with a small treat (tea/coffee/cake) financed by the piggybank. All participants contribute a symbolic amount to a piggybank at each social gathering.

End of round

After each weekly group session, reset the game. To reset the game, remove the notes that have been paired, store them in your archive (or give them to the person most responsible for moving the change forward) and keep all unpaired previous notes for the next session (making sure to leave space for new ones). If the board gets too cluttered over the weeks, remove older or outdated post-it notes to clear up space and archive them for future reference.

Game adaptations

The Have-Need board enhanced with a minor reward scheme is suitable whenever bottom-up data gathering about the current state of a system is needed. Instead of the general prompt for being observant for anything "*inspiring, new, or out of place*", participants can be provided with a problem-focusing question to guide their attention on, such as "student dietary habits" or "our school's outdoor learning space".

Understanding “The A-Ha! Moment” better

Game purpose

The overall purpose of this game is to activate the school staff to participate in an ongoing, bottom-up information gathering process, thereby amplifying the change potential in the school environment. Within the ACT change model, this game supports Steps 1-3 (Aim-Outcomes-Action Plan), by providing procedures to identify potential areas of change in the school environment (Aim), envision immediately affordable changes, and collectively negotiate an action plan.

Desired change

Improving staff relationships and networking, as well as empowering feelings of individual initiative and collective action are among the main goals of this game, therefore it relates to the ACT priority area “Communication and building relationships”. By implementing a “low hanging fruit” approach, it also provides opportunities to witness small daily changes executed in relatively effortless manner, thereby challenging the concept of change as risky (ACT priority area “Addressing the perception of change as ‘too risky’”).

Instructional design

Intended Learning Outcomes

An intended learning outcome from this game is raising “awareness of how relationships impact on learning and other aspects of school life”. The underlying assumption is that the foundations for positive change exist unknowingly already around us and can be illuminated by sharing information with each other from each one’s unique perception and perspective.

Desired Learning Behaviours

- To observe and think critically about the current situation
- To combine existing information envisioning change
- To collectively construct action plans
- To carry out change in small, manageable ways supported by informal social networks

Specific learning mechanics are captured in the gameplay loop diagram below.

Gameplay loop

The below diagram shows the gameplay loop for this activity. Specific learning mechanics are shown in blue and specific game mechanics are shown in yellow.¹

¹ For more on the game design framework being used here, see Arnab et al (2015) Mapping learning and game mechanics for serious games analysis. British Journal of Educational Technology, 46, 391–411.

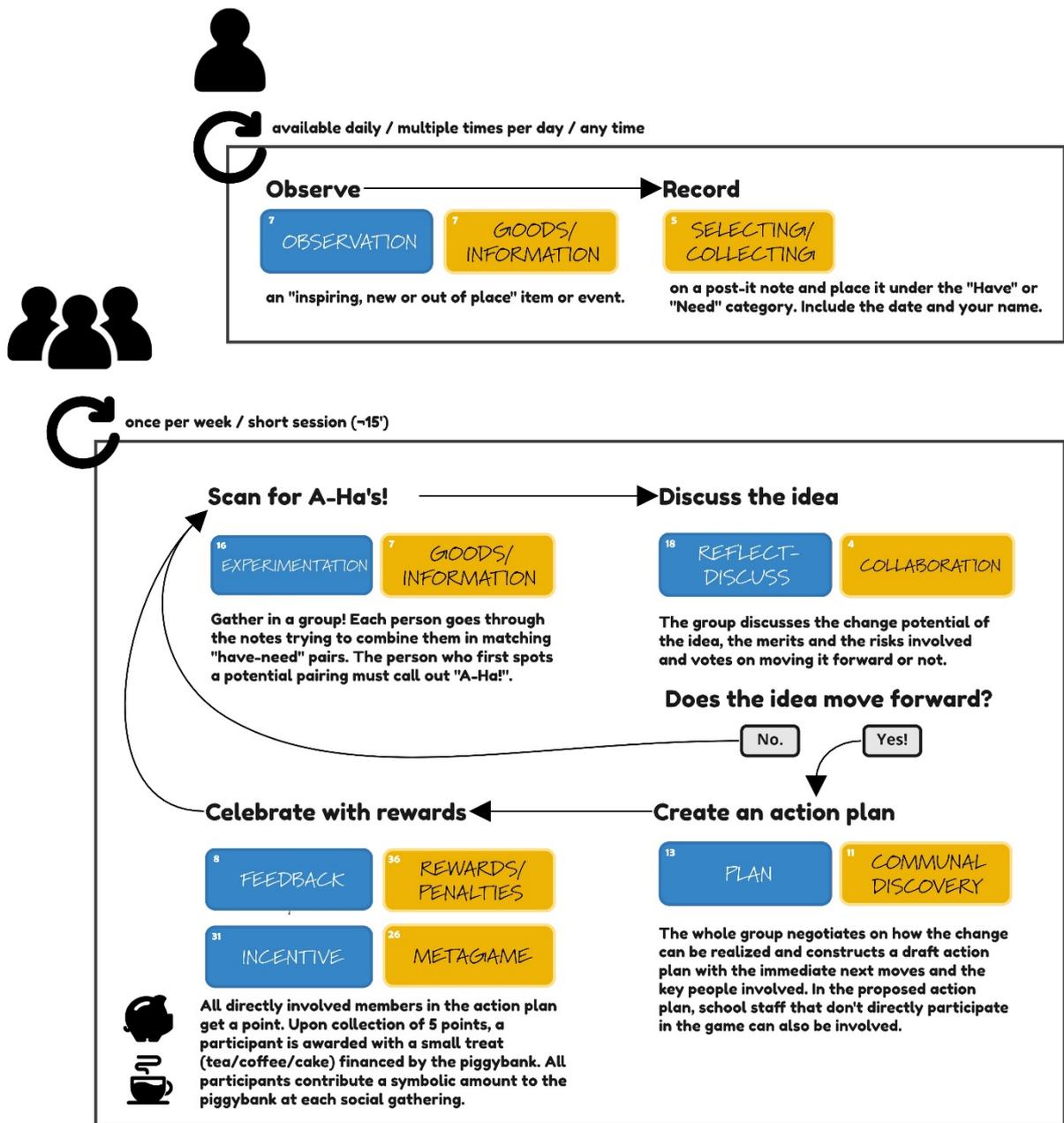


Figure 2 Game loop with mapped learning and gaming mechanics

Credits

This game was co-designed and developed by Nataša Pantić and Olga Chaztifoti as part of the Agents of Change Toolkit project funded by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute. Explore the whole toolkit at <https://teacher-act.net/>

