

**Tool 4.2**

# Growing Futures Literacy

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**CLARITY Competence Area:**

Opening up to diverse climate-resilient and regenerative futures

**GreenComp Competence Area:**

Envisioning sustainable futures

**Why use this tool?**

Futures Literacy and future thinking are rarely taught in schools and teacher training, although it is critical to discussing climate change, sustainability, resilience, regeneration, and transformation. Futures Literacy provides critical information and competences to reflect on our use of “the” future and make better-informed decisions in the present. It is not about creating a desirable vision of the future and defining steps to get there. Futures Literacy is about exploring how our different visions of the futures reveal what matters to us in the present and values we can embody today more courageously.

## Activity 4.2.2

## Futures Literacy Labs (FLL)

## Overview

Futures Literacy Labs (FLLs) are based on a method developed by UNESCO following a 4-step process: making desirable and probable futures explicit, re-imagining/reframing the future, asking new questions about the present, developing an action plan based on new questions. FLLs help learners identify their assumptions and biases about the future, so that they have the tools to stop colonizing the future, embrace emergence, and make better-informed decisions in the present.

## Curriculum linkage

Ethics, Religion & Philosophy, Civics & Social Studies and Sustainability & Climate Education classes that use projections and future scenarios.

## Competences built

Futures literacy, critical thinking, imagination and exploratory thinking.

## Prep Work

- Familiarize yourself with what Futures Literacy is, what it can do and what it cannot do.
- Define a topic for your FLL: which future are you going to talk about? It could be “the future of schools”, “the future of our city”, “the future of nature”...
- Print out some iceberg models with the 4 layers indicated on the side (see below)



## BASIC INFO

## Age range:

14+

## Duration:

3 hours to 3 days

## Group size:

Flexible. Smaller groups of 6-8 people will need to be formed during the exercise

## Level of difficulty:

Advanced

## Materials/space required:

Post-its, markers, material to draw, or random material (e.g. clean trash to be recycled) to create assemblages or sculptures

## Location:

Indoors

## Engagement of external stakeholders:

No



**Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:**

- Exploring the iceberg (3.4.)
- Moving to reduce climate anxiety (1.2)
- Optional:
  - Solarpunk art exploration (4.1.1), in case you would like to bring some art into your FLL
  - Envisioning the most beautiful future (4.2.1)

**Steps in the activity**

1. Reveal
2. Reframe
3. Rethink

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**Step 1: Reveal**

1. Make sure you have all materials ready including Post-its, markers, A3 paper sheets and spaces to create sculptures or assemblages or images and objects to represent different possible futures.
2. Introduce the FLL by explaining that Futures Literacy is a capability that enhances our imagination and diversifies futures. We use those Futures to see things differently in the present.
3. Explain that several dimensions of climate science rely on projections and future scenarios based on past data about the Earth system, as well as data about our economy, society and governance. Projections and scenarios are based on observed phenomena, trends and extrapolations. Such a structured and systematic method, which defines possible developments in order to prepare for the future, falls under the umbrella term of foresight. However, Futures Literacy is different. Futures Literacy can help us better understand the assumptions and biases that are part of foresight approaches, as well as relate differently to the future.
4. Introduce the topic of the FLL that learners are going to work with. Examples are 'The Future of Schools,' 'The Future of our City,' 'The Future of Nature'... Try and make sure you are exploring the future of a concept that your learners can relate to and have mental images of. Feel free to give some definitions to support your learners.

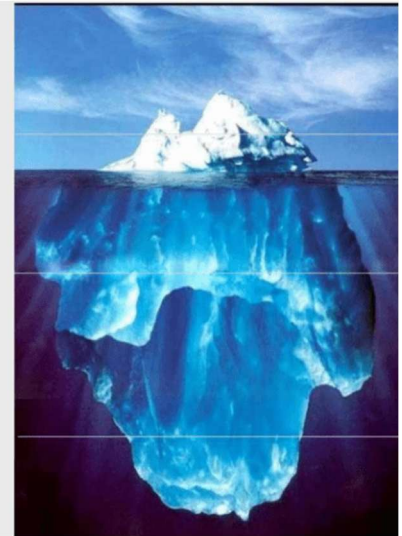


5. You can start with a polak game. For more details about the polak game, check the resources section below.
6. Create groups of 6-8 learners, have them sit around a table or group of tables in circles, and distribute writing and drawing material to them.
7. Let them know that you will invite them to take part in a few practical, hands-on exercises for which there are no right or wrong answers, and for which they are welcome to express their imagination fully.
8. For the first exercise, you can start by sharing some trends, data and scenarios related to greenhouse gas emissions and planetary boundaries until 2100.
9. Feel free to remind learners of breathing techniques and movements they can practice, if the information you shared makes them feel anxious or overwhelmed (see activities under competence area 1).
10. Invite learners to close their eyes and imagine they wake up in what they think the year 2075 will be. It should be what they predict the world 2075 will be like, based on what they know of various projections and scenarios today. They are not older versions of themselves; they are the same people waking up in the 2075 world. Ask them to spend some time in what 2075 will most probably be for them.
  - a. What does it look like?
  - b. How does it smell or feel?
  - c. What are the headlines in the press or its equivalent?
  - d. What do [schools] [the city] [XXX] look like in the most probable version of 2075 for them?
11. Invite your learners to take a few minutes to write down or draw the highlights of their vision or experience in their most probable vision of 2075.
12. Invite learners to share their highlights with the other members of their small group. They can start putting some words or images regarding the probable 2075 world on the different levels of the iceberg (see illustration below and activity 3.4.1 for more details).
13. In case learners have not studied the iceberg already, you can introduce the different levels of the iceberg very briefly. It is ok if the words or images are not all put under the correct categories of “headlines”, “systems”, “worldviews” or “myths and metaphors” on the iceberg for the learners who are discovering the approach on the spot.



14. Invite each group to briefly share the highlights of their discussions with the other groups, showing their icebergs with Post-its or images on them.
15. As a second exercise, invite learners to shift from the probable future to a desirable future. You can start by sharing some images of a desirable future (e.g. solarpunk artworks) or any other image evocative of values or approaches to making the future desirable.

1. THE LITANY, UNQUESTIONED DATA, HEADLINES
2. SYSTEMIC APPROACHES AND SOLUTIONS
3. WORLDVIEWS, WAYS OF KNOWING AND ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES
4. MYTHS, METAPHORS, AND NARRATIVES



*Iceberg Analogy for Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)*  
(Inayatullah, 2020)

16. Invite learners to close their eyes and imagine they wake up in what they would like the year 2075 to look like in their wildest dreams. They are not older versions of themselves; they are the same people waking up in the 2075 world. Ask them to spend some time in the most desirable version of the year 2075 for them.
  - a. What does it look like?
  - b. How does it smell or feel?
  - c. What are the headlines in the press or its equivalent?
  - d. What do [schools] [the city] [XXX] look like in the most desirable version of 2075 for them?
17. Ask your learners to take a few minutes to write down or draw the highlights of their vision or experience in the desirable world of 2075.
18. Encourage learners to share their highlights with the other members of their small group. They can start putting some words or images regarding the desirable 2075 world on the different levels of the iceberg (see activities under tool 2.4 for more details). It is ok if the words or images are not all put in the correct place in the iceberg, for the learners who are discovering the approach on the spot.
19. Invite each group to briefly share the highlights of their discussions with the other groups, showing their icebergs with Post-its or images on them.
20. Explain to learners that this first phase is about revealing the visions of both probable and desirable futures they are having now, and that were likely



influenced by the numbers/trends they saw and the images that were presented.

21. You can explain more about the iceberg now (see activity 3.4.1 for more details), if you wish.

## Step 2: Reframe

1. Invite learners back to their groups, and instead of inviting learners to envision either a probable or a desirable version of the future, invite them to listen to a different scenario of the future, which is called a reframe 'scenario'.
2. Share a scenario that helps learners question the assumptions and biases about the future that they have expressed during the first phase of the FLL. You will need to conceive this scenario while listening to both the probable and the desirable visions of the future that the learners come up with.
3. A possible 'reframe' scenario about the future of planetary health would be: 'Imagine you wake up in the year 2075, and the health of human beings is no longer a priority. The entire health system focuses on the health and wellbeing of plants, animals and fungi'. For more guidance and ideas about the reframe scenario, check the references and resources section below.
4. Once you share the scenario, ask learners to take a few minutes to reflect and respond to the following questions: how does the scenario make you feel? What makes you curious about this scenario? What did you take for granted about the future before hearing this scenario?
5. Invite learners to create or 'build' a 3D sculpture of the reframed world within their group, without too much discussion, by using all the material available. This work will help identify assumptions and biases about the future.
6. Offer each group the opportunity to present their sculpture/collage to the other groups.

## Step 2: Rethink

1. Let the learners know that step 3 is about coming back to the present and reflecting on the experience.
2. Offer learners the opportunity to explore and compare/contrast the first phase's probable and desirable futures, as well as the reframed future of the second step.



3. Invite learners to address the following questions, in relation to the topic of their FLL. For instance, are there any approaches to [schools] you had not thought about before? Are there different ways of [educating children] you had not considered before? Are there questions or ideas you thought were important before the exercise but seem less important now?
4. Invite learners to address those questions by asking new questions. Ask each group to select 3 of the most interesting emerging questions, and share them with the wider group.
5. Invite reflections from the learners about the questions that were selected.
6. Close the activity with a recap of the 3 steps and associated learning curve, as well as with more information about the purpose of the activity in building the learners' futures literacy skills.



## Dos and don'ts

### Do

- Stress that there is no right or wrong vision of the future as there is no possibility to know what the future will look like in 2075. Sharing visions of the probable or desirable futures is not about being scientifically accurate, it is about offering an opportunity to expand one's imagination.
- Welcome all visions and questions with curiosity.

### Don't:

- Don't grade the exercise.
- Don't select the 'best' vision of a desirable future as a means to guide action. The desirable futures being expressed are simple representations of what a group dreams about at a given time, and are not meant to be used literally to define a new "mission" for the group.

### Adaptations:

- Feel free to encourage learners to draw instead of writing elements of their visions of the future.
- When exploring the reframe, you can offer a variety of options and artforms to create and explore the reframed world. Those options could include drawing, creating collages, creating sculptures out of available materials, performing short plays or tableaux vivants.
- We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how *you* want to be



treated, but how *they* want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

## Resources

A facilitation guide for a [3-hour Futures Literacy Lab](#). In this guide, you will find a more precise description of a polak game. Running a Futures Literacy Lab is complex and you may want to access a dedicated training offered by One Resilient Earth, or another academic organization part of the UNESCO Futures Literacy Chairs network.

## References

This activity was adapted from resources of the Erasmus+ FUTURES project by One Resilient Earth.

- [Demystifying Futures Literacy](#)
- [Teaching Futures](#)
- [What is Futures Literacy](#) and why is it important?
- [Futures literacy laboratory playbook](#): an essentials guide for co-designing a lab to explore how and why we anticipate
- [Transforming the Future](#) is essential reading, and offers a theoretical approach as well as practical case studies of FLLabs
- [Embracing Complexity - R. Miller](#)
- [Making experimentalist Leadership practical - R. Miller](#)
- Bentz & Ristic Trajkovic (Eds.) (accepted) Imagining, Designing and Teaching Regenerative Futures: Creative Approaches and Inspirations From Around the World, *the Science for Sustainable Societies*, Springer Nature.
  - Expected publication is August 2025



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