



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

H-LABS: ABF for Hospital Schools

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Italy

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Andrea Bocelli Foundation

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Children, Youth, Digital Transformation, Community, Growth, Inclusion, Empowerment, Unlocking Potential, Networks, Hospitals

6. What makes it a best practice? *

This innovative, replicable project is aimed at resolving the issue of lack of engaging and powerful education programs at paediatric hospitals by inserting a series of tailor-made digital education initiatives that not only transforms the experience for the staff and patient, but ultimately empowers the person and community.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Hospital schools guarantee hospitalized children and young people the right to education and learning. In Italy, there are over 70,000 “hospital” students – those students attending the hospital schools in specialized facilities and/or at home – mainly in pre-schools and elementary schools. This rises to one million if we include children with chronic diseases.

When the project began, OECD had recently revealed that in Italy almost half of teachers (48%) never received formal training on use of new technologies for teaching and only just over 1 in 3 (36%) feel particularly prepared to use them. Despite the fact that the use of new technologies of communication and information by individuals and families represents one of the fundamental goals of the policies of social and cultural inclusion of the European Union, the level of general literacy for these two areas - in particular in schools - is therefore very low. When analysing the capabilities and offerings across Italy’s paediatric hospitals, the need was even more evident. Not only through the need of a more structured approach to education, but also to provide the ability of leveraging technology to elevate the hospital educational experience for all stakeholders involved.

Thus, the ABF H-LABS Project incorporates and implements the intervention models that were piloted in the ABF School Network within Italian paediatric hospitals, with the aim of giving hospitalized children and students beautiful, curated and welcoming places where they can interact with others. The expressive languages of art and music are central to this and are conceived as a tool to foster, support and promote the talent of every child. New educational technologies have also been implemented, which represent a precious tool for communication and curricular integration, with the aim of improving quality and advancing educational innovation.

Key objectives include:

- Create aesthetically beautiful, curated and welcoming spaces where new connections and skills can be built through rich opportunities for interaction with others.
- Foster learning contexts that promote interaction, both face-to-face and at a distance, with their schoolmates and peer group that are present.
- Offer suitable conditions so that each child may discover or enhance their talent.
- Reinforce the curriculum by complementing it with an innovative design that includes art, music and foreign languages as the backdrop for integrating and promoting new knowledge, awareness and skills.
- Create and maintain the conditions that make the new educational technologies tools for supporting, integrating and enriching relationship-building, knowledge and learning processes.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

The H-LABS project began in 2020 with a pilot that was focused on implementing the aforementioned objectives by fine tuning and creating a project that drew on ABF's multi-year expertise in developing acclaimed digital education methodology. Two critical stakeholders were contacted and involved in the project: AOPI (The Italian Association for Paediatric Hospitals – which had direct contact and involvement with the network of the 16 hospitals in the country) and the Italian Ministry of Education (which has oversight and governance of ensuring young patients have access to ongoing education during their recovery process). The first pilot was done in the city of Genova, with the Gaslini Institute in 2020, and has since been extended to hospitals in Ancona, Trieste, Naples, Florence, and Padua. The objective is to implement the project through the entire Italian network and share best practices for potential projects outside of Italy.

In order to support, encourage and promote effective use of sustainable use of new technologies in educational and school contexts the Digital Lab project responds to some key issues identified across the network of hospitals:

- The lack of digital devices available to students, of teachers and families
- The organizational challenges
- The lack of technical and methodological skills in use of new technologies
- The need for physical time and adequate spaces to create true bonds and an engaging experience for all stakeholders involved: including relationships between teachers, between teachers and students, and between the students themselves.

Key Actions to support the project – funded by the Foundation through private and corporate donations, include:

1. Donation of an ABF TeachBus: a library of devices (notebooks and tablets) able to guarantee the children involved the right conditions for engaging and connecting with other students, the teachers and “atelieristas” (ABF education specialists that oversee the individual projects). Each device is delivered configured with the possibility of being granted on loan of use for individual use for school purposes.
2. ABFEducational.com: an online platform for ABF Labs, which offers access to a rich selection of educational content and tailor-made lessons for individual students. The platform also enables students to share and collaborate with their work.
3. Digital “Atelierista”: an ABF professional specialized in employment of new technologies for education which, in collaboration with the full working group, promotes new and transversal perspectives for how to best use the new technology for each student through tips and co-creation of lesson plans.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

The implementation of this project is generating a unique impact for Italian paediatric hospitals, thanks to its unprecedented approach. By collaborating closely with our partners and helping as a central driver for change, the project is truly transforming the way education is handled within a hospital. The effects range from creating an understanding – as in many cases – strategic public-private partnerships can be successful drivers for change, all the way through the development of concrete and replicable methodologies that can be easily implemented through the network of hospitals in Italy, and hopefully, beyond in the near future.

As of 2021 alone, the project has involved five hospitals (with a sixth in Padova currently being set up in 2022):

1. SIO Genoa – Gaslini Paediatric Hospital

Teachers involved: 12

Estimate of children hospitalised per week on availability of beds: 500

2. SIO Naples – SantoBono Pausillipon

Teachers involved: 6

Estimate of children hospitalised per week on availability of beds: 50/60

3. SIO Ancona – Salesi Paediatric Hospital

Teachers involved: 8

Estimate of children hospitalised per week on availability of beds: 180/200

4. SIO Trieste – Burlo Paediatric Hospital

Teachers involved: 3

Estimate of children hospitalised per week on availability of beds: 100/130

5. SIO Florence – Meyer Paediatric Hospital

Teachers involved: 5

Estimate of children hospitalised per week on availability of beds: 200/250

In terms of measurement, we carried out an assessment of the teachers who participated in the first year of the project which provided some interesting feedback on their perception of their digital skills after the first cycle of activation. 56.3% of the teachers involved in the first year of the project Digital Lab confirm they are continuously motivated to further explore new technology strategies, while over 90% are still in need of furthering their skills in this area, stressing the importance of this project. Almost the 95% of respondents reported “excellent” opinion in terms of effectiveness of the project, citing different and multiple strengths, with three key words coming out as particular drivers: Opportunity, Motivation, Cooperation.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The key triggers for transformation was a dire need for upgrading and creating a replicable model that would elevate the experience of youth education in Italian hospitals. The strengths in partnerships and an openness to collaboration is a critical success factor, as is the onboarding and empowerment of all stakeholders involved, particularly with the hospital educators and staff, with a continuous process of co-creation, coaching and feedback to optimize the program.

In terms of impact, the success lays on not only providing new digital tools through the help of funds raised through donors and key partners, but more importantly by providing a structured upskilling program for educators that are able to create personalized, structured courses for children and youth going through already stressful and difficult situations. The creation of these programs enable the student to be motivated through the creative use of technology (levers for creative approaches to learning and collaboration), as well as the creation of physical, dedicated spaces that are inspiring for all involved. The ultimate goal is to drive the student to have an active role in learning (not just passive in terms of receiving information) and creating an overall positive and pleasurable experience of studying and enticing their curiosity to “go deeper” in their specific assignments.

In terms of the biggest challenge, as evidenced in our assessment of the first year of the project, is coordination with all the organizations involved in the project. It is important and critical to ensure the role of a central figure for coordination is a facilitator and problem solver in terms of identifying solutions and being linear in terms of optimizing the strengths and potential for each partner involved. For example, oftentimes there are many volunteers, and other non-profit organizations that support these daily tasks, and so ensuring continuity and full integration in terms of objectives is essential.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

At ABF we have fine-tuned a unique approach to education through:

- Generating value through concrete projects.
- Leveraging educational moments as opportunities with intention, communication and development with a focus on creating new ways of understanding and seeing the world.
- Continuously working to identify the right and tailored-made pathways for a pupil to fulfil their potential for expressing themselves, with a keen understanding of interconnectedness, culture and their future goals.
- Ensuring the concept of a first-person, subjective experience but at the same time relatable.
- Stressing that an individual is not a person who simply has a limited number of experiences, but rather has a number of opportunities to continuously grow.
- Creating awareness of knowledge as it relates to the right relational contexts, and being aware of the complexities and contradictions this comes with.

Ultimately, our approach works to ensure that the individual is supported in a process to unlock their human potential as students undergo a process of self-fulfilling valorisation and qualification.

Key takeaways include ensuring:

- You have solid partners with access to key stakeholders within the organizations
- You have a clear understanding of the baseline need and common objectives through an easily replicable approach that leverages technology
- Engage key professional figures fully dedicated to driving the project integrating resources
- Keeping the end beneficiary in mind helping to elevate difficult moments and make education a pleasure; a moment not only for individualized learning but also for dialogue and helping unlock potential

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

- Project website: <https://www.andreabocellifoundation.org/projects/h-labs-project-abf-for-hospital-schools/>
- Project workshop recap (in Italian): <https://bit.ly/3DCV6DN>