



Second Book Launch and Creative Bilingual Workshop “Follow Your Heart. The School for Multipotentialites”

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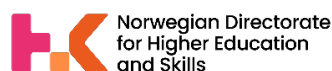
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Illustrations: Valentina Russo, Mucho Amor; **Pictures:** Emily Margaret Murray-Cora and Valentina Russo, Mucho Amor



Figure 1 The poster of the event created by Valentina Russo



Summary

The overall aim of this report is to document the experience gained during the second book launch and the second experience of a creative and emotional education bilingual workshop on the book [Follow Your Heart: the school for multipotentialites](#). Continuing along the lines of the first book launch and the co-created scientific workshop in Shepton Mallet, UK, in February 2023, the authors of the book, in collaboration with the teacher Jorinde Green (LaLa Land, Torino), organized a second event targeting primary-school aged children and their families to join for an afternoon of Follow Your Heart-inspired activities, storytelling, and collaborative work on ecological and emotional education in the Space Habitat, in via Le Chiuse 66, Torino. Building off the first book launch in the UK, which was hosted by the educational farm The Good Life Projects, this second event was held in a community center and project called "Habitat" and brought together 18 children (ages 4 to 9) and their parents and/or guardians. The proceeds from the event, which were collected through book sales, were donated to Windsor Hill Wood and to Space Habitat (our host) itself, to support educational spaces that promote quality education for all. In continuity with the previous report (Septentrio Report 1, 2023) this report aims to share the key lessons learned from the event and promote further discussion within the field of emotional and ecological education, in line with the project ECO_CARE. The report is accordingly divided into the following sections: 1. Aim of the workshop and content; 2. Participants; 3. Activities; 4. Ways forward; 5. Next event.

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Figure 2. Emily Margaret Murray holding a copy of the book at Mucho Amor Home, March 2023.

Aim of the workshop and content

The aim of the second book launch and bilingual workshop for the educational resource *Follow Your Heart: the school for multipotentialites* was to implement and test the Follow Your Heart philosophy and teaching methods by focusing on the emotional education of primary school-aged children. Through a series of activities, all of which were connected to the co-created activities chapter in the book, and a bilingual reading of *The Story of Cora*, children were encouraged to reflect on the potential of their multiple talents and the importance of understanding their emotions. The families of the children were invited to observe the activities conducted by Jorinde Green and to converse among themselves and with the authors to foster a conversation around the importance of bringing more awareness of emotions into educational spaces, including the classroom and the home. The question that guides our work include the following: Can an emotional educational approach based on feelings of empathy, compassion, and care improve the academic performance of students, improve the learning environment, and also contribute to creating spaces of understanding and care?

An innovative co-created approach through book launches and workshops

Unlike a typical book launch event where the author(s) present their recently published book to a targeted audience, typically for the purpose of sales and marketing, we decided to take an innovative approach that goes a step further. Taking a co-creation methodology, which aligns with Follow Your Heart from a theoretical and practical standpoint, the series of book launches are shaped around involving children, educators and families in an engaging atmosphere that allows experimentation with the book content, specifically the Activities from the co-created chapter. The observations and debrief sessions following each event, amongst the authors and their colleagues, have led to further development on the next steps for Follow Your Heart as a learning space that is more than *just* a standalone resource. In addition, the profit made from any sales of the book has been donated to a local initiative in the region hosting the event; an initiative that supports emotional and ecological education with a focus on accessibility and quality community services.

Participants

The key participants in this event were primary school-aged children from various schools and backgrounds across Torino (Italy), who were invited by Jorinde Green, coordinator of bilingual educational programs in the city through her school LaLa Land. The majority of the children and their families are connected to Jorinde Green through her educational programming and were invited to the event through an open-invite on the Facebook page for LaLa Land. Jorinde is also one of the co-authors in the "Activities" section of the Follow Your Heart book. In addition, children and families were also invited to the Space Habitat (through posters placed around the building), who come from public schools and have all been exposed to bilingual education (Italian and English). They were 18 children in total, and their families participated alongside them during the organized activities.



Figure 3 Valentina Russo preparing the materials for the Arts and Crafts workshop

Activities

The following activities were held during the event in coordination between the three authors and Jorinde Green.

(1) Illustrated storytelling in Italian and in English: The Story of Cora

Storytelling plays a key role as an instructional method in our educational approach—one that strengthens imagination and creativity while improving reading skills and emotional awareness by helping children associate meaning with emotions and words. As a workshop kick-off, we asked the children to sit comfortably on a large blue circular mat and listen to “The Story of Cora”. This story forms the first part of the book and visually demonstrates the pressure that comes from the question adults often ask children, “what do you want to be when you grow up?”.

Taking a bilingual approach, the co-author of *Follow Your Heart* and author of *The Story of Cora*, Emily Murray, narrated the story in English while her co-author Margherita Poto followed each page with the Italian interpretation. The story is mostly illustrated with very little written content, leaving room for interpretation (and imagination!) to the readers

and listeners. The illustrations (by Valentina Russo) follow the thoughts and experiences of a young girl who struggles with the question proposed by her teacher, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”. Surrounded by her classmates who all seem certain about their future direction, Cora shares her inner thoughts which portray the many future possibilities she imagines and the anxiety she experiences with the thought of having to choose her career path at such an early age. In a roundabout way, the story connects to the overall book and educational approach when Cora discovers a book at the library with the exact same cover as *Follow Your Heart: the school for multipotentialites* (Figure 4). The story concludes with Cora sharing with her classmates the idea of multipotentiality, and that having multiple interests and skills is at the intersection of innovation and creating a meaningful life.



Figure 4 Illustrated page from *The Story of Cora* by Emily Murray and illustrated by Valentina Russo

During the reading and interpretation of *The Story of Cora*, the children actively followed along and often raised their hands to add to the story or highlight an aspect of the illustrations that was of interest to them. Following the reading and throughout the remainder of the event, Cora was brought up when discussing the overall concept of *Follow Your Heart* and acted as an example for both children and adults.

(2) The mystery box: You can be anything you want to be

After the story, Jorinde invited the children to start the Mystery Box Activity with the theme: “You can be anything you want to be”. The materials used for this multisensory activity, as explained in the Activities chapter of *Follow Your Heart*, consist of a medium-sized bucket-like container with a fitted opaque cover to hide the contents of the container. The fitted cover contains a small opening to allow the children to reach into the “mystery box”, feel around, and pull out an item. The items inside the container as associated with the theme of the mystery box activity, and match a set of flashcards that

are shared with the children prior to the start of the activity. Typically, there is one mystery box but in the case of our event and the intersection between traditional and less-traditional, more creative professions, there were two mystery boxes and the addition of heart-shaped necklaces as will be further explained below.

One group of children was assigned necklaces which each had a different colored heart-shaped piece of felt and were asked to sit at the front of the room and act as role players. In turns, another group of children, who were sitting together on the blue mat, were asked to first pick an item from one mystery box, and the item was associated with a certain profession or job which was displayed on large flash cards placed on the floor between the two groups of children. Each item had a half-heart in color attached to it, and the children had to connect the color (and the job-item) to the one of their friend-role players who were wearing them as necklaces. In this first round, children learned about different (traditional, linear) professions in English and Italian. When the first mystery box round was complete, the children were asked to pick an item from a second mystery box: each item was connected to another type of (creative, less traditional) profession. Again, each item was pinned with a colored half-heart, and the children were asked to match the two pieces of the same-colored hearts. After this, they were asked to define the new job created by the union of a conventional and a more innovative job. For example, a physician was matched with a singer, prompting the children to suggest a physician could also be a singer (i.e. a singing doctor). The main learning objective of this activity was to show children that you can bring multiple interests and skills together, and that there are more possibilities than the “traditional” professions that are encouraged in early academic years (e.g., physician, lawyer, dentist, teacher, etc.).

(3) Singing a song: I am a super hero

Moving, singing and playing are three key aspects of emotional education and Jorinde knows it well. Following along with a curated song played over a speaker (Figure 5a), the children followed Jorinde and her actions (matched to flashcards at the front of the room), based on the theme that we can do anything because we have multiple talents and a beautiful, strong body supporting us.



Figure 5 (a) Jorinde Green and children following along to the “I am a super hero” song (b) children participating in self-directed arts and crafts

(4) Arts and crafts: Co-creating the Follow Your Heart banner

To continue the work done in the first book launch, children used various craft supplies (ribbons, buttons, fabric, glue, etc.) to decorate the letters created from upcycled cardboard that composed the title of the book, “Follow Your Heart” (Figure 5b). Using a self-directed approach to place creativity and imagination in the hands and hearts of the children, the materials and letters were placed on the tables without any instructions. The families and authors interacted with the children while they expressed their creativity to develop something that will represent the book and the approach in future events.

(5) Planting seeds: When I grow up, I will be a...

With the aim to implement another activity from the book, connected to mindful and conscious gardening, we worked with the children to plant seeds in small biodegradable pots, while asking them to think of how the seeds will develop and to imagine what the seeds will become when they grow up. Through conscious gardening, one of the main learning objectives is to instill within the pupils the joy of taking care of other living beings, nurturing them, and developing an attitude of respect and kindness toward any form of life.

Ways forward and next event

Following the first two events in the Follow Your Heart book launch and workshop series, the authors plan to further develop this approach through future opportunities by collaborating with educators, university students and entrepreneurs. In May, a book launch and workshop will be held in Marseille, France (where one of the authors is currently based), where the main objective will be around sparking conversation around emotional and ecological education through a “drop-in” library. Starting with the presentation of Follow Your Heart and the inspiration for its development, the event space will be transformed into a “mix and mingle” learning environment where guests will find other books and resources on emotional and ecological education. Pending the securement of further funding, the book launch and workshop series will possibly extend to other locations in Autumn 2023 (Norway, Tanzania, Canada).

Moving forward with the implementation of Follow Your Heart within a learning environment, the authors and Jorinde Green will possibly collaborate to co-create a bilingual summer camp series based on Follow Your Heart in July and September 2023. Following this most recent event held in Turin, Italy, the positive response from the children and their families to the educational approach of the book inspired Jorinde to propose the idea to the authors in a debriefing session. This would be a strategic next step in developing the Follow Your Heart approach and gaining traction for future directions—such as introducing the book to different school systems and establishing an online presence, and founding a start-up connected to this research and educational approach in Canada.

The future developments will be further disseminated via the ECO_CARE website and social media. Moreover, the authors have already contributed to a book chapter on the analysis of the methodology adopted in the book and are now co-authoring a scientific article on sustainable education that is expected to be published in 2023. The project received also additional funding from Strategiske Midler 2023 and is expected to further develop following a dissemination and communication strategy co-created by the team members.

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