LABLEARNING

MEDIA BASED EMPOWERMENT FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH

LAB learning

THE LABLEARNING
GUIDE COLLECTION
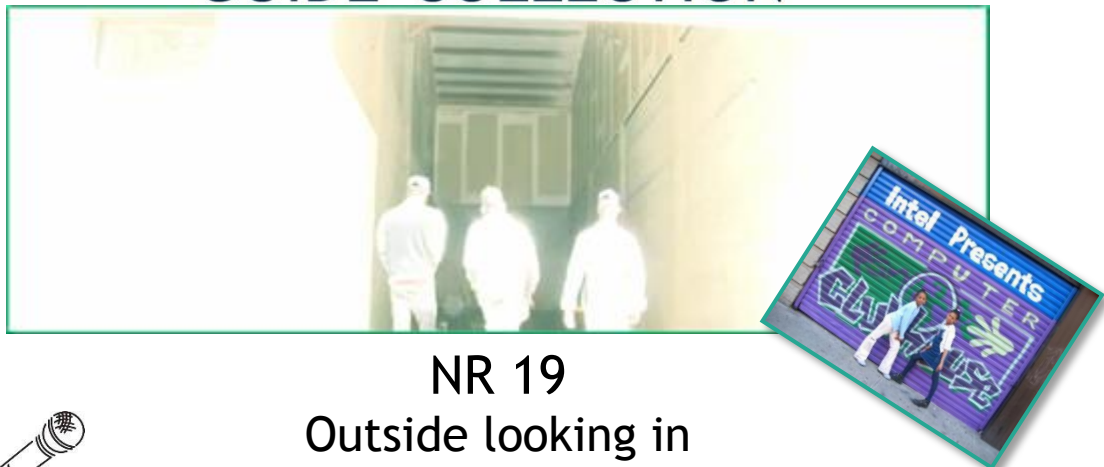
NR 19
Outside looking in
Interview with the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

The LABlearning Guide Collection offers inspiration, tools and principles to establish empowermental media based learning facilities for disengaged youth.
The Guide Collection offers around 20 different guides, including the full collection of guide material.
The media based learning initiatives are contributing to re-thinking learning and to the creation of 21st century learning opportunities for young people.
The LABlearning Guide Collection is synthesizing theory and practice from such approaches as media learning, game based learning, project based learning, entrepreneurial and community based learning. The Guide material emerges from extensive literature studies, the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network's 20 years of experience, as well as from LAB practice in Catalonia Spain, Holland, Italy and Denmark.

www.LABlearning.eu

At the doorstep of 21ˢᵗ century learning

QUALITY APPRECIATED BY EUROPEAN YOUTH
NO MANUALS, LOTS OF INSPIRATION...

The LABlearning Guide Collection is produced by the Comenius LABlearning project 2011-13, funded by the European Commission.
The material is openly available to all non-profit users.
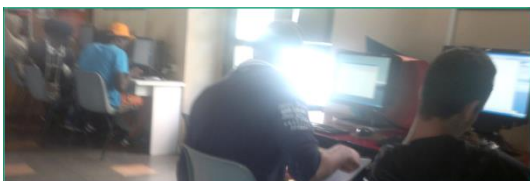More information about the project and the partners on
www.LABlearning.eu

Outside looking in

Interview with the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

The Intel Computer Clubhouse Network, based in Boston US, with more than 100 media exploring clubhouses for disadvantaged youth worldwide collaborated with the LABlearning initiative and offered extremely valuable inspiration.
In this interview we ask them to describe how they see the LABlearning initiative and collaboration – *from the outside looking in…*

Gail from the ICCN explaining the key principles of a Computer Clubhouse

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. . . Outside looking in
Interview with the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

Which are the most important things that European media learning initiatives for disengaged youth should learn from the ICCN experience?

Technology is merely the vehicle for youth engagement. Relationships with people are really the backbone. Historically Clubhouse youth members tell us that their initial interest in participation may start from the "hook" provided by access to new technologies, but their sustained attendance and engagement stem from the support they receive to pursue their own interests and the safe yet challenging social networks they form with peers and adults with common fuel for learning.

As a result, finding the right "host" organization for a Computer Clubhouse or a similar kind of program is key – a committed leadership, an organization that embraces an informal learning approach and a model of youth agency. This common understanding of values and motivation must be rooted in local community organizing and demand from the youth and adults for this kind of program.

The Clubhouse learning approach is a paradigm shift and takes time and process to develop – it's not a program implemented overnight but rather represents a change in culture for most organizations.

How do you see the European attempts to establish such media laboratories for disengaged youth in formal school settings?

From our observations, the successful attempts are ones that start small – one classroom, one group – to experience an early success and persuade others that this is a winning approach.

Also the more successful attempts are in organizations where the culture is already attuned to empowering young people to express their own ideas and interests, rather than where there is a more formal hierarchical top-down approach to education. The opportunity to adopt new technologies or programs such as game

design or "making" may spark interest, but there also needs to be genuine interest in seeding these explorations as part of a larger plan for youth engagement and empowerment.

Is the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network engaged in initiatives trying to take the clubhouse didactics into formal school settings?

The Clubhouse Network's primary function is to create and sustain an international peer-sharing network of locally hosted teen afterschool programs. That said, we have learned after 20 years that no Clubhouse can survive without a holistic network of local support. Some of the longest-running Clubhouse programs have done so by building working relationships with other institutions that are also involved in educating their youth participants, including formal schools.

So, on a local level, several of our veteran Clubhouses have created satellite or feeder programs with partners such as local formal schools or like-minded youth development services. For example, in the US, the Gold Crown Computer Clubhouse in Denver, Colorado hosts younger students from a local middle school for digital art and technology courses in the mornings. This serves to "feed" into the Clubhouse as teens later in the afterschool hours, but also to model the Clubhouse learning approach in a formal school setting. Clubhouses in Bangalore, India and other countries have also expanded their reach through programs like this as well. In Ireland, the Clubhouses hosted by Foróige worked with the larger host organization to support a series of trainings and programs of "digital hotspots" where smaller, more formal youth-serving programs hosted "Clubhouse-like" projects and activities. While this is not a school, this adaptation of the Clubhouse learning activities is promising for translating to other educational contexts, and we continue to document and network with our Clubhouse Network host community based organizations in order to support this grassroots expansion of the learning model.

From a Clubhouse Network level, we have tried not only to document and share these local Clubhouse innovations, but also to work to pilot teacher trainings with our host Museum of Science Boston's Educator Resource Center, as part of their Teacher Training Series and Teacher in Residence program. We are especially interested in developing ways to engage those students who might have shown little interest in STEM subjects or are disenfranchised from school altogether, who often become youth members in our Clubhouses.

In the summer of 2013, a local high school teacher was engaged as a Museum Teacher in Residence to support curriculum development, professional development training, and social networking resources to adapt the Computer Clubhouse after-school learning model for school settings. He then worked with Clubhouse staff and mentors to develop a set of hands-on pilot activities and facilitation materials for experiential projects using digital media and technologies ranging from graphic, video and interactive design, to fabrication and robotics. The Resident worked with the Network's knowledge manager to adapt and update existing training materials and online-tutorials on the

internal ClubhouseVillage.org social network for use by teachers in school environments. The Resident will also help us develop a plan to pilot the activities as well as support Network outreach to other Boston-area teachers to participate in further pilots. During the 2013-14 school year, the Resident will test these curriculum and facilitation materials in his/her own classroom or school setting, as well as co-lead a few professional development trainings for teachers at the Flagship Clubhouse at MOS Boston.

As to media based learning for disengaged youth, do you feel there are different mentalities in the US and in Europe?

Not really. Around the world there is a different mentality between formal and informal settings. That is a bigger difference than any kind of geographic distinction. The formal educational systems are different in the US and in Europe, but that is another matter.

In what ways have the Computer Clubhouse media approaches changed during 20 years of practice?

Our guiding principles have remained the same over 20 years of practice. They are simply stated as:

1. Learn by Design - Members completing projects, taking it deeper, and/ or try new tools or techniques
2. Follow Your Interests - Members attend regularly, share their personal stories and interests, and evidence lives on the walls or testimonials of participants
3. Build Community - Active volunteers and leaders, specialized programming based on member demand and interests, and collaborative group projects
4. Respect & Trust - Participants feel safe, included, brave enough to fail & try again, and own the space

But although are principles haven't changed, the technology tools of course have evolved. On-line tools, miniaturization of technology, GUI. Beyond the 4 walls of the Clubhouse – mobile, Clubhouse impact on community, creating with purpose – after tinkering, you start realizing you have a voice and a role in your community.

One specific area where our approach to learning has evolved over the years is online on our private social network for youth and adult members, the ClubhouseVillage.org. Recently, we surveyed some of the most active Clubhouses and their staff about the value of this tool and space as a place for the Clubhouse learning model to thrive. The findings of this survey express both the core sustained values of the learning model, but also how it has adapted in a virtual and local/global context:

1. For youth participants, Village participation is a great way to get inspiration and share **projects**
2. For Coordinators, the Village backbone is also project based, but more around **facilitating projects and finding inspiration for new activities**
3. **Studio52 Challenge is an essential resource** for skill building and creating containers for youth and mentors to both get started and take it further
4. The Village creates a pathway for each Clubhouse to empower youth to make concrete local/global connections
5. The Village is unique in the current environment of social networking communities because it is a **trusted community of learning**, built on **common interests** and trust, where conversations are **comfortable but also constructive and fun**.
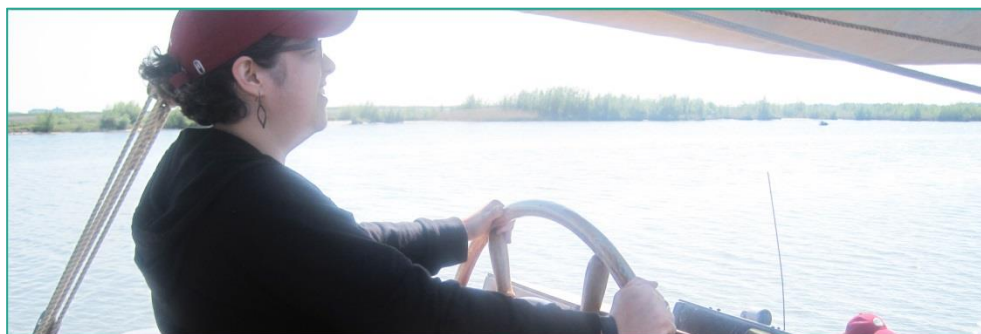
In response to this feedback, the Network Village development team plans to take advantage of 4 opportunities created by the adoption of new technologies around make and mobile - creating doors & windows to existing infrastructure of the site:

1. Inspire and create new projects through new containers or prompts for projects, like the weekly question #theHunt and featuring connections to curricular partners around coding, making / personal fabrication, and STEM careers, and creating learning and network opportunities around the theme of youth rights culminating in collaborative track projects at our Teen Summit in July 2014.
2. Introduce mobile tools to spark and enhance collaboration
3. Take first projects deeper through (1) skill-building, (2) documenting physical design processes using mobile technologies such as phone or tablets, (3) building portfolios for post Clubhouse pursuits

Share views of Village learning and conversations respectfully with external audiences (host organizations and funding stakeholders, parents and friends of members, etc.) through mobile apps for viewing projects or galleries or embeddable gallery viewers for other social media sites.

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Danielle in total control…

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From your point of view, which are the main obstacles to establishing media laboratories for disengaged youth in Europe?

As in any new not-for-profit social endeavor, the first challenge is finding sufficient and appropriate funding and resources.

Also, the Clubhouse program is so open and cross-disciplinary, it comes with competing priorities from important stakeholders like host organizations and partners. For instance, sometimes funders express an interest in supporting project-based or informal learning based on youth interests, but the outcomes and metrics they require to receive support show they prefer programs that provide skills development and vocational training, rather than more holistic youth leadership and job readiness skills. And yet, when employers are asked what their workforce lacks, they typically cite qualities like teamwork, initiative, communication skills, and problem-solving skills. And these are the outcomes at the heart of the Clubhouse experience for youth.

Another obstacle is that these youth development outcomes take time – sustained engagement, not quick outcomes. This sustained engagement through a multi-year learning process is challenging to evaluate using quantitative metrics and requires careful qualitative narratives to tell the real impact stories of both the youth and the programs that engage them.

Do you see Europe and European partnerships as possible future collaborators for the ICCN? In what ways?

We receive inquiries every week from organizations around the world that are interested in the Computer Clubhouse learning approach. Some of these are from European organizations. So yes, one likely collaboration is the establishment of more Clubhouses working with disengaged youth in countries within Europe.

We also see our Clubhouses in Europe serving as a source of inspiration for others – both in-school and outside. The Clubhouse in Blanchard town, Ireland, for example, has served as a role model for after-school technology programs across Foroige, for example.

In Europe we talk a lot about entrepreneurship mentality in all forms of educations… How can this from your point of view be linked to the Computer Clubhouse approaches and practice?

In Computer Clubhouses around the world, entrepreneurship is of great interest to youth. It's very empowering for young people to consider the possibility of starting their own business, being their own boss, developing their own business model. Whether it's graphic design, web development, fashion design, or music production, the Computer Clubhouse lends itself to an entrepreneurship mentality. Clubhouse youth can benefit from mentors who can talk with them not only about pursuing their

	passion but about the wherewithals of budgeting, marketing, and production, as well as the importance of working hard and sticking with it.

	Both in the US and in Europe there is a very optimistic attitude towards the empowermental potentials of serious gaming and gamification, in connection with disengaged youth in particular. How do you see this in the ICCN?
	Although there are many games with an educational purpose, in the Clubhouse we encourage young people to design and create their own games rather than play games created by others. More generally, there is a place for games and there is a lot of interest in the motivation that can come from "winning" at a game, but we prefer to depend on the intrinsic motivation of Clubhouse members pursuing their own ideas out of genuine interest, rather than that which comes from racking up points or earning another "badge" awarded by an adult authority.

	Mitch Resnick from the MIT Media Lab once stated *Access is not enough*. Could you elaborate a little bit on that?
	Technology needs to be available as broadly as possible; however, technology access is the starting point, not the end solution. When the first Clubhouse was started, we wanted to create a place where under-served youth could use technology to learn in new ways, to become self-motivated creators and designers. The Computer Clubhouse is a departure from traditional after-school programs that concentrate on homework and tutorials. The Computer Clubhouse model is based on supporting learning through design experiences; helping youth build on their own interests; cultivating an emergent community; and creating an environment of respect and trust. In this "invention workshop," Clubhouse youth, ages 10 to 18, express themselves through their own interests to become designers, not just consumers, of technology-based creations. At the Clubhouse, youth can create computer-generated art and music, design their own animations, write and illustrate interactive poetry, build kinetic sculptures and robotic constructions, and design their own Web pages. They can try out new ideas, take risks, become inspired and, ultimately, become active participants in a changing world. Over the past 20 years, the lives of thousands of youth have been deeply transformed by their experience at the Clubhouse. In a recent survey, 97% of alumni reported that the Computer Clubhouse had been THE most important source of support for setting high goals and expectations for themselves.

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Media fight: US vs. EU

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Many Europeans ask: why do you believe that media laboratories, such as the Computer Clubhouse, are especially powerful in connection with what we call disengaged youth?

There is something powerful about providing young people with free rein to explore their own ideas and interests through technology. With the support of caring adults and peers, young people discover they have a voice and the tools to express that voice. Once they realize that they then have the power to share their ideas with others, there's a transformative effect.

Another powerful aspect of a program like the Computer Clubhouse is the joy and delight that come from young people's self-discovery process. Rather than someone "teaching" you or telling you how to do something, you are invited and encouraged to take charge of your own learning experience. There's something very empowering about that, and that "Eureka!" moment is something to celebrate.

If you were to offer straightforward and simple advice to future European initiatives about media labs for disengaged youth, what kind of advice would you give?

Finding the right staff and volunteers is essential. The ideal staff person loves young people, has a creative spark, can embrace an informal learning setting that can be organic if not chaotic on any given day, is comfortable with technology, and thrives in an environment where he or she is learning shoulder-to-shoulder alongside a young person or group of youth.

Having said that it's all about the people, another piece of advice is that the physical space is also important. Creating a space with a look and feel that is creative, inspiring, and even whimsical sends a message to young people about what the space is intended for, and what is permissible or even encouraged in the space. Organizing the space for collaboration, showcasing youth work, and providing free access to high-end technology tools – all provide cues to youth participants that reinforce the learning principles of the program.

Could you briefly reveal some of the future plans or initiatives from the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network? And perhaps add a few words about how such initiatives might be of value to future European LABlearning initiatives?

Our primary charge is and will continue to be supporting the creation and sustained programs at Computer Clubhouses all over the world. Intel and our other partners have been and continue to support both new Clubhouse programs and doing the hard work of sustaining existing programs both physically through space and technology upgrades and feeding the program culture through new members, mentors, and staff.

In 2014, we plan to work with Intel and other partners to support new program innovations around adopting new tools and practice around mobile technologies, coding, and maker or personal fabrication / engineering core areas through both high and low tech activities, materials, and tools. This expansion of technology tools and learning practices will be featured at our Annual Conference gathering in April in Denver, Colorado. We are planning to also infuse these innovations into a redesign of our Teen Summit program, including new leadership and learning opportunities before, during, and after the Summit using new live online learning tools such as webinars, live chats, and broadcasts.

Through these new adaptations of our existing professional development and Network-wide youth programs, we aim to more explicitly support our youth to pursue their interests through careers in STEM and digital arts & media fields or to bring the Clubhouse learning spirit into any field they choose to enter. We also hope to expand professional development and curricular support in these areas for Clubhouse staff and mentors. Finally, we plan to respond to the call from our 2013 Alumni Survey to support career pathways and post-Clubhouse life of our alumni members.

While most of these future initiatives are inwardly focused for the licensed members of our Clubhouse Network, we will continue to engage with external partners, especially those like the LAB Learning project members, to support a more holistic experience for the youth we aim to engage. So for instance, our work infusing Maker culture into the Clubhouses will not only benefit youth on a local level, we aim to document and publish our practice in informal and formal education circles, so that ICCN is recognized as contributing to the larger maker community by educators and thought-leaders. These conversations could be both interesting and supportive of the European LABlearning partners if they decide to adopt these new technologies and practices as well.

Danielle and Gail discussing with their European colleagues in Salt Catalonia ES
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Much more on www.LABlearning.eu
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The LABlearning consortium offers

Counselling on media laboratories for disengaged youth for national and European educational policy-makers

Collaboration on the establishment of media laboratories in formal and non-formal contexts for institutions and communities

Training in managing media laboratories for disengaged youth for teachers, mentors and youth workers
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The LABlearning consortium offers its services on non-profit basis and always links the media laboratories to 21st century learning.

. . . . And, MUCH MORE about the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network on www.computerclubhouse.org
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THE INTEL COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE NETWORK
www.computerclubhouse.org

Take a look at the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network impact studies to learn more about how disengaged youth reacts to media based learning laboratories:
www.computerclubhouse.org/content/our-impact-around-world
www.computerclubhouse.org/content/success-stories

21ˢᵗ century learning in action

The 37 minutes video **Joves i Futur** is created, designed and
produced by young people in Salt-Girona Catalonia
participating in the EU LABlearning project.
Their work is much appreciated, as are their open statements
in the video.
The project wishes to thank both the youth teams and the
mentors working with them!
The video, other videos and 20 different LABlearning Guides
are openly available on

www.LABlearning.eu