

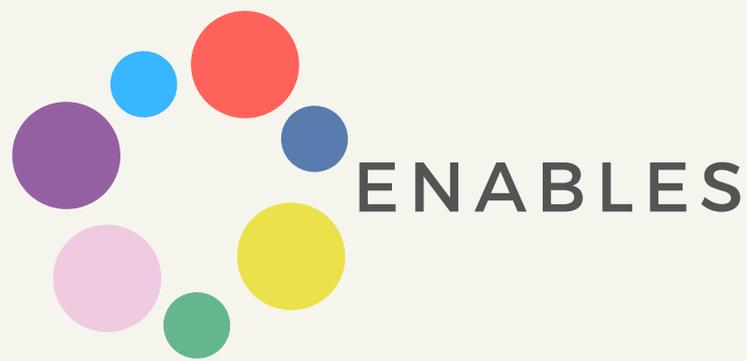
## Using Collage to develop Distributed Leadership:

A Guide

**ENABLES Erasmus + Project**

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## The ENABLES project and what this guide is about

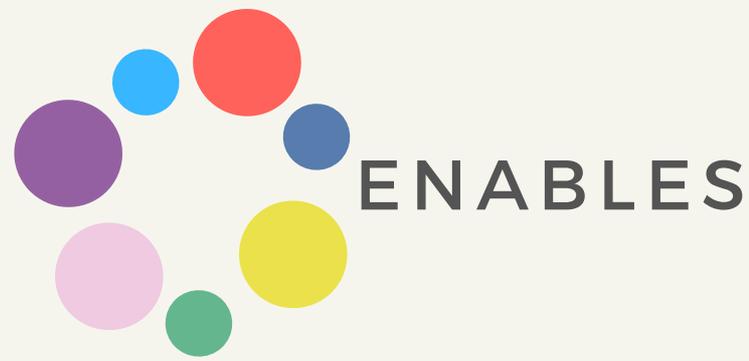
The purpose of this written guide is to introduce readers to the concept of collage and how it can be used to support distributed leadership development in educational settings. It includes examples of how it was used in our online workshops.

The ENABLES project aims to increase and strengthen distributed leadership in schools by using innovative methods of arts-based and embodied methods of leadership development which were trialled as part of the project. The UK ENABLES team used collage-creation as one of the expressive activities in our online workshops. We asked participants to express their response to the question “how do you lead change with others?” as a collage.

In this guide we introduce what collage is, why we used it and how it can be used. We share examples of collages which were created by our workshop participants. We finish by sharing a few ideas about what you might like to consider when planning to lead an activity using collage.

This guide explores:

- Distributed leadership in schools
- Innovative methods of leadership development
- Collage-creation as an arts-based approach to leadership development
- Collage-creation as a way of expressing how you lead change with others



## How might collage be used to help develop distributed leadership?

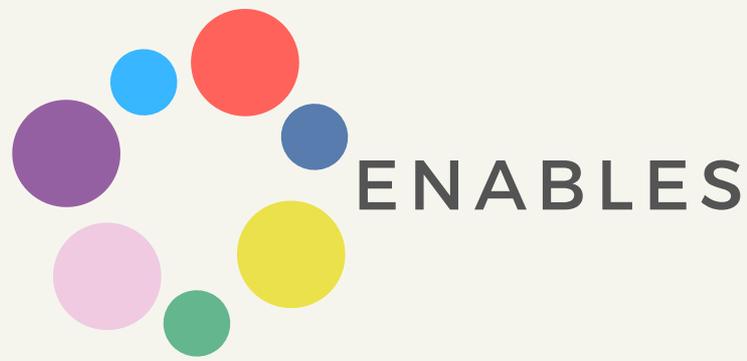
Arts-based methods like collage can help people express things about themselves, their professional roles, their values and beliefs in a way that just talking maybe cannot. Responding to a question in a creative and playful way can help people think differently, too. For some of our participants, creating a collage and sharing its meaning was a really useful way to reflect on how they lead change with others.

Like other arts-based and embodied methods, collage creation and collaborative reflection with others can help in nurturing the awareness and capabilities important for distributed leadership. For example, it can help in

- enhancing sensitivity and willingness to engage with (and be receptive to others), as well as skills in listening and noticing
- fostering openness to new ideas and to challenging pre-conceived ideas and accepted solutions
- contributing to self-review activities which support the articulation of authentic values
- enhancing the ability to be pro-active and innovative and take an active part in distributed leadership, by increasing appreciation of leadership as an emergent, relational process and self-awareness in the context of leadership practice.

In short, collage can:

- support self-expression
- enable reflection on leadership roles, values and beliefs
- offer a different form of thinking



## Before we move on, what is collage?

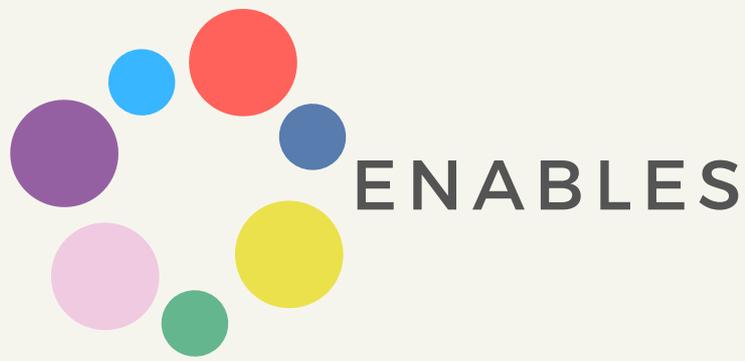
For lots of people, the word collage conjures up the idea of tearing or cutting out things from magazines and sticking those pieces in some sort of arrangement. That is one form of collage, and the word actually comes from the French verb “coller” which means to glue. We tend not to use glue as that allows participants the freedom to move things around as their thinking evolves. People have the freedom to choose and place items however they want.

For the kind of collages we use in our professional practice, we make available a range of craft or arts materials, or people can use various items which they have got lying around at home or in the workplace. So, materials might include ribbons, pipe cleaners, buttons ... or paper clips and sticky notes. Anything really which can be used to express feelings, thoughts or ideas in a visual and creative way.

And it's really not about being particularly artistic or arty – we don't see these collages as pieces of art. What they look like doesn't actually matter very much. It's more that the collage acts as a catalyst for conversation.

Collage allows you to:

- use arts and crafts materials as a creative response
- express feelings, thoughts and ideas in a visual way
- be creative without needing to be artistic or arty
- place and move items around freely (no glue)



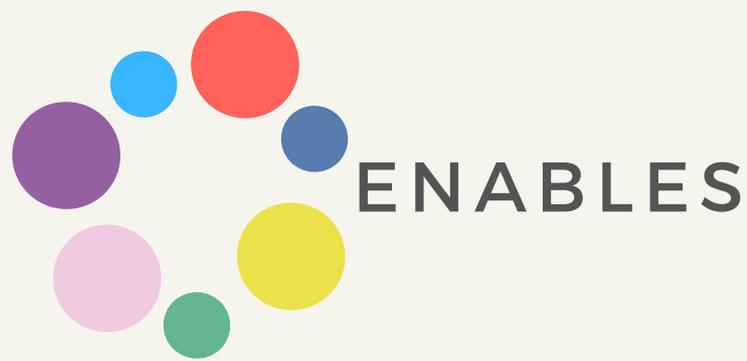
## Why did you use collage in the ENABLES workshops?

Collage can be a very powerful tool, and it can present things to you that you were perhaps not expecting. What do we mean by that? Well, collage has the potential to reveal things to you that you might have struggled to put into words. Creating a collage can help you access thoughts, feelings and ideas that you couldn't necessarily just talk about. The UK team has used collage before in a variety of settings, and we have found it can be an effective way for participants to think about their leadership practice.

You can use collage as a way of facilitating participants to think differently - visually rather than linguistically - about how they lead change with others. The ENABLES project is all about strengthening distributed leadership in schools by using innovative arts-based and embodied methods. Methods such as collage can be an opportunity for participants to express their response to a question, in the form of a collage, and to share that with others. It is also a chance for participants to see and share each other's collages. We find collaboration is a key aspect of collage working well and we mention that later on in this guide.

Collage has the potential to:

- reveal things beyond the spoken word
- help access thoughts, feelings and ideas
- be a useful visual thinking tool
- support collaborative learning

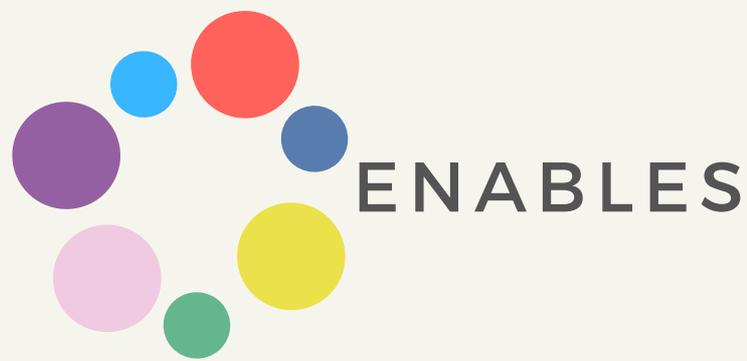


## How did you use collage in the ENABLES workshops?

This section relates to the way in which collage-creation was used in the ENABLES project. Collage can work well when it is created as a response to a question. You can invite participants to create a collage in response to a stimulus question, and in the ENABLES project that question was “how do you lead change with others?” Our workshops were held online, so we had asked participants to look around at home or in their workplace for materials to use. When we do these workshops face to face, we usually take collage boxes with us for participants to use.

Our boxes contain a range of arts and crafts materials like pipe cleaners, lolly sticks, straws, elastic bands, buttons, beads, crepe paper, shiny sequin type things, foam shapes in a range of colours, metal items such as springs and nuts and bolts. It can really help to offer a wide range of textures, and to have things that can be broken or reshaped. In the online workshops, participants used a range of their own materials such as sticky notes, paper clips, candles, buttons, pipe cleaners, beads, playing cards, fluffy balls... some used children’s toys, or words and images from magazines and others chose to draw.

It has been really interesting to see the variety of materials that participants chose to use once we were unable to pre-determine the items by providing a collage box.



## How did you use collage in the ENABLES workshops?

Whilst it went beyond the scope of our research to analyse the material differences of items used by our participants, it's useful perhaps to share here one participant's reflections as an illustration:

"I do believe that my ideas around instigating change were accurately represented in my collage. However, it'd be interesting to see what would have been represented if other objects or materials were to hand. Would this have sent my thinking in a different direction? To what extent were my thoughts actually represented? Did I make my thoughts fit or did I make the objects fit my thoughts?" (participant 1A)

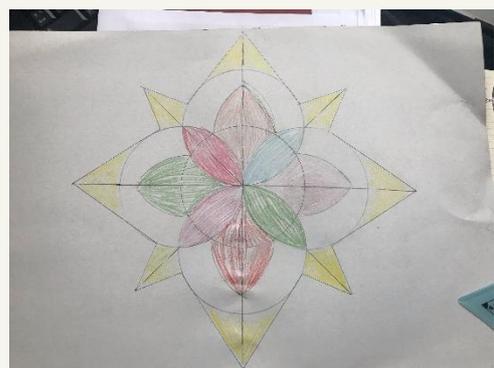
Collage creation was one of two expressive activities within an online workshop. The other was an embodied activity which we call 'gesture response', and there's a separate guide on the website about that. Group size and group dynamics are important and so we usually only had about 4 participants and the sessions lasted about 2 hours. In other projects we've facilitated collage-creation face to face with individuals, small groups and larger groups of people, most recently with nearly a hundred school staff!

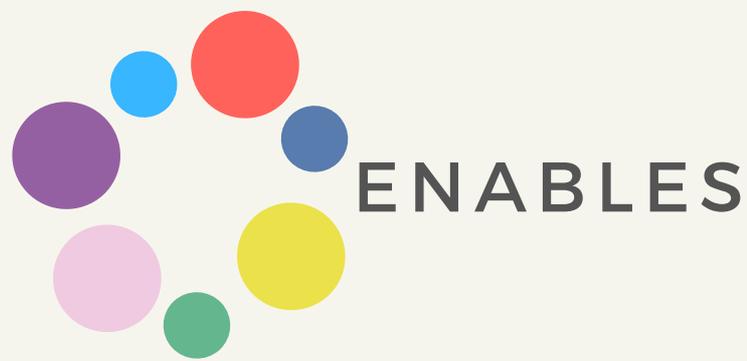
You need about 20 minutes for the actual collage-creation and then you can invite participants to share their collages. When online, this can be done using a photo of the collage which is shared on the screen. Participants are then invited to share the meaning of their collages and others are invited to respond.

## What did participants feel they might have learned from creating and sharing collages?

It can be useful to see a few photos of collages created by our participants talk and to share what people felt they were able to take away . These photos show a real diversity of expression, as some participants chose to draw rather than use a range of arts and crafts materials, some placed a range of items on a background “canvas” - with some being more arty than others - and one even created a kind of sculpture out of paper! And this is all in response to the same question: how do you lead change with others?

Here are some examples of collages which offer an insight into that diversity of expression.





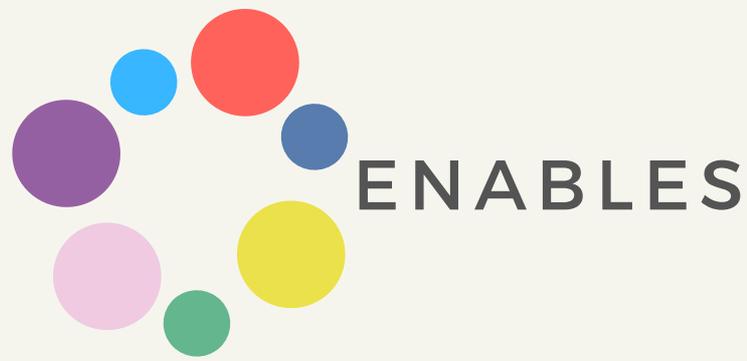
## What did participants feel they might have learned from creating and sharing collages?

In terms of learning about leadership, participants shared how the process of creating and sharing collages had helped them surface personal views about leadership and about how others see leadership. One participant shared how it helped her question assumptions, another told us how she had become more aware of her impact on others. The process can offer a different vocabulary for talking about leadership and it can be a visual demonstration of what it means to lead change.

Elsewhere on the ENABLES website there is a video called collage reflections which shows a broader range of collages created by participants in the workshops.

Collage-creation can:

- help surface views about leadership
- encourage a questioning of assumptions
- raise self-awareness and awareness of others
- provide a different vocabulary for talking about leadership
- offer a visual representation of, for example, how people lead change with others



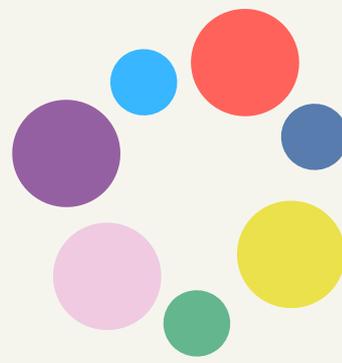
## An example of learning: Sandra's experience of collage

We'd now like to share with you Sandra's experience of creating a collage in an online workshop . Sandra isn't her real name. We are sharing this example as an illustration of how collage-creation can be used to support the development of distributed leadership. It is not being shared as an ideal kind of collage, nor is it offered as a template for others to follow.

Sandra was really enthusiastic and quite confident about creating a collage. Her collage consists of three sheets of paper positioned in a row and she used items such as coloured pipe cleaners, small soft-looking balls of differing sizes and bows.

Sandra's collage can be read from left to right. The overall impression of the collage is that it is uncluttered and quite simple.





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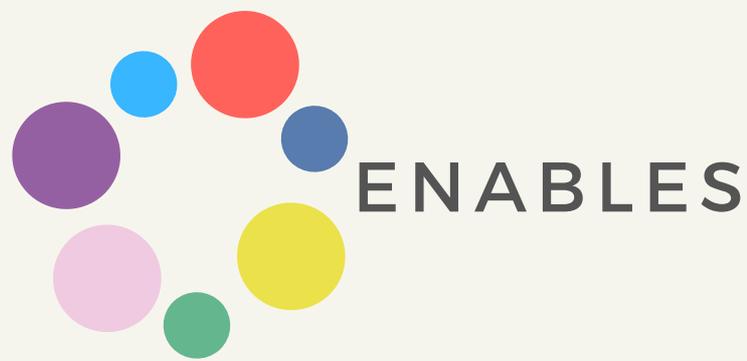
## An example of learning: Sandra's experience of collage

There are three main images on the paper each which express aspects of the process of leading change with others.

The left-hand image - what we're calling the starfish shape - is the start of the process of leading change with others. Sandra is in the centre of that image; she is the slightly larger soft yellow ball. This part of the process involves consulting and creating connections. There are unexpected aspects of the process which can be pleasant or unpleasant. The pink bow symbolizes an unexpected negative.

The image in the middle of the collage expresses how Sandra is connecting to a range of different people as part of the process of leading change with others. At this point, Sandra - the larger yellow ball - is putting in place some sort of activity to enable all those people to connect, through dialogue, through a shared goal. She is sometimes outside of that ring. The sparkly blue object symbolises what might be unexpectedly pleasing or negative about this aspect of the process. The three balls at the bottom of the image are her "sources of support" either within or outside her organisation.





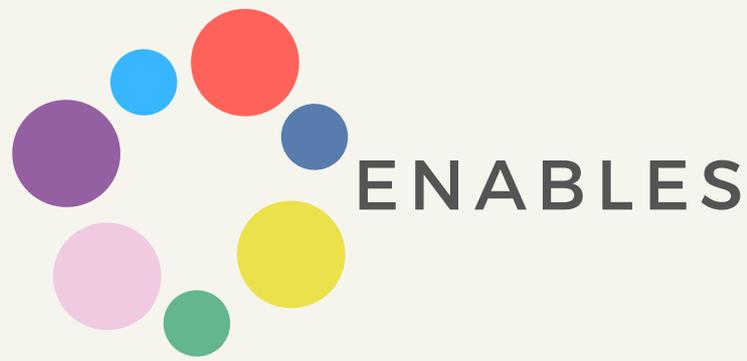
## An example of learning: Sandra's experience of collage

The image on the right-hand side is the third stage of leading change with others. There are five people in a tight circle, who are a “collaborative group;” there is no connecting line between them but they are bonded and have a shared purpose. They are “totally on board and they’re influencing others” which is expressed via the pipe cleaners which reach out to other groups of people. Her sources of support are still there.

Sandra's key reflections on leading change with others:

- being at the centre of the process
- consulting and creating connections
- unexpected aspects
- enabling others to connect
- shared dialogue, shared goal
- the need for sources of support
- getting others on board
- reaching out and influencing others.





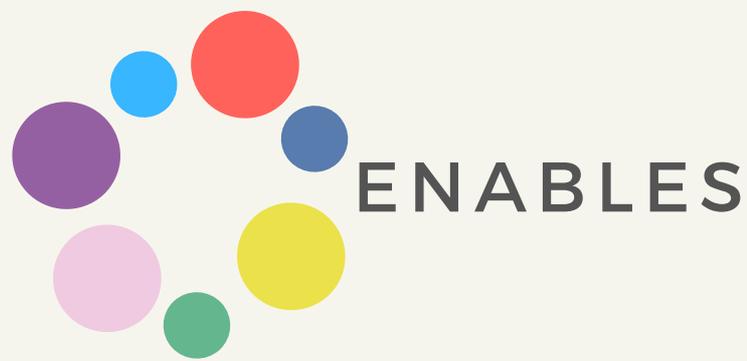
## An example of learning: Sandra's experience of collage

Sandra explained that her collage was unfinished. When reflecting, she felt that it was all rather “idealistic and beautiful” and how lovely it would be if leading change with others was always like that. With more time she would have liked to have added a spanner, to represent a “spanner in the works.” This is an idiomatic phrase in English which means there is a problem that prevents something from happening the way that it was planned.

Sandra found it really useful to articulate her experience of leading change in collage-form; she liked the visual and physical aspects of the process. She felt it was vital to be able to move things around. What she noticed was that the process had helped her to deepen her understanding of leading change with others; as she was sharing the meaning of her collage, she shifted from “the obvious to under the surface.” She wonders what she would have discovered if she had had more time.

### Summary points about collage-creation from Sandra:

- her collage might be unfinished
- perhaps an idealistic view of leading change with others
- could add other items in with more time
- useful way to articulate experience of leading change with others
- visual and physical process
- can help deepen understanding



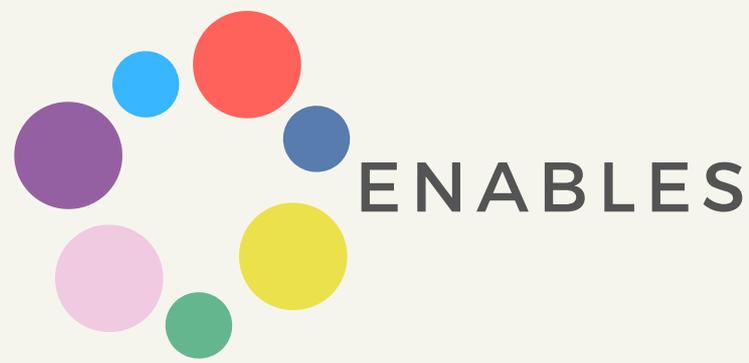
## What do we need to bear in mind when thinking about facilitating activities using collage?

Establishing a meaningful, respectful and safe space in which people feel that they can give collage a go is absolutely key! It can help to keep the group size small – we tended to have only about 4 people in a session – as that allows ample space for everyone to create, express, reflect and share.

Some people are naturally drawn to being creative and doing things like this – they understand what they need to do and require very little support. Others might be a little more unsure or unclear and it can help to talk the activity through and/or show examples of collages. There's a balance to be struck between giving complete creative freedom and being prescriptive... It can help to emphasise that it's not about being artistic – people are not creating a piece of art here, and to reinforce the message that there's no right or wrong way of doing it. And it's good to reassure people that they might feel a bit uncomfortable or awkward at first.

In online sessions, people might choose to keep cameras on, others might prefer to stay behind their cameras. Some people like to have music on in the background, others prefer silence. Others still like to chat when creating their collages which is easier when you're doing it face to face.

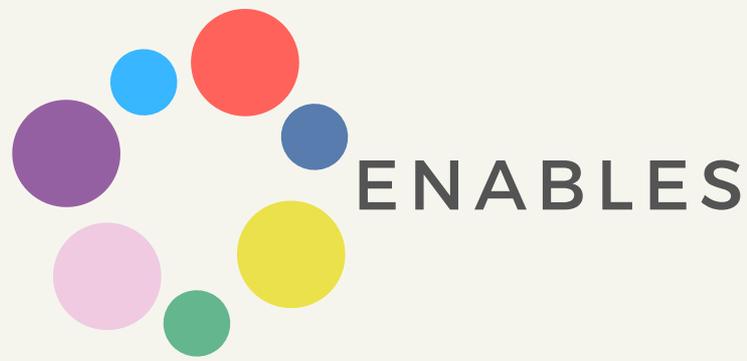
What we found doing this online was you couldn't see what other people were creating and so there was a level of privacy afforded by being in Zoom rather than in an actual room. Some people said they liked that as they weren't comparing themselves and their collages to anyone else.



## What do we need to bear in mind when thinking about facilitating activities using collage?

### Key points to consider:

- create a safe space
- keep group size fairly small
- some people are naturally more creative than others
- offer support and encouragement, if needed
- emphasise there is no right or wrong way
- it's ok to feel a bit uncomfortable
- online can offer more privacy



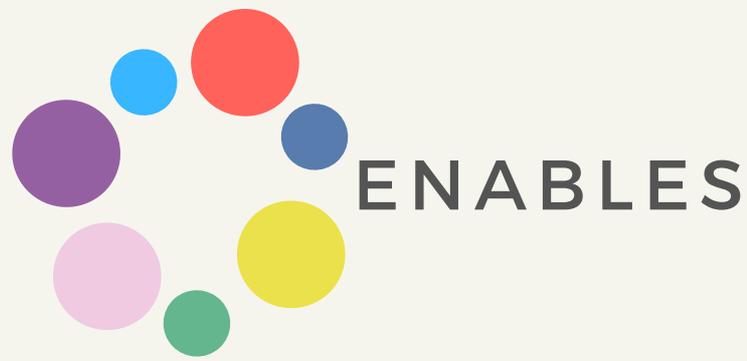
# Summary points

## **Collage-creation:**

- can be revelatory
- offers a different vocabulary for thinking about leadership
- supports self-reflection
- supports collaborative learning

## **Collage-creation helps distributed leadership by:**

- enhancing sensitivity to others and skills in listening and noticing
- fostering openness to new ideas
- supporting articulation of authentic values
- enhancing the ability to be pro-active and innovative



# Further resources relating to collage

## **The Basics**

Distributed leadership information document  
Distributed leadership information audio  
Arts-based embodied information document  
Arts-based embodied information audio

## **Resources**

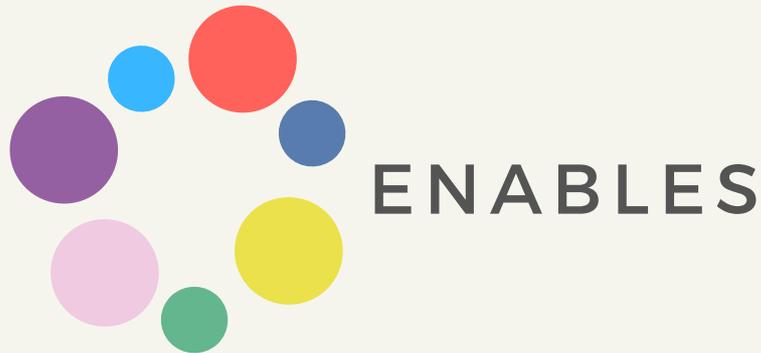
ARTs at a Glance document  
Collage activity illustrated audio guide  
Collage and participant experiences document  
Collage reflections video resource  
Collage activity written guide for sceptics

## **Research**

Collage and gesture: ARTs report

**All available via the ENABLES website:**

[www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/education/research/enables](http://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/education/research/enables)



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Further information on the project is available here:

[www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/education/research/enables](http://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/education/research/enables)

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