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## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY: A LESSON WITH THE FLOWER AND FLOWER DOLL

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## INTRODUCTION

Everyday school life causes us concern and, at the same time, provokes us to think about the relationships that are established and created from a collective and inclusive education, in which we consider that this space is an agent of social transformation, constituting a space that fosters respect, cooperation, solidarity, autonomy, inclusion, the right to read, write, play, manifest and value cultural, social and ethnic plurality, achieving the promotion of the full development of children.

Given that the school has different environments, we are invited to create opportunities for children to interact, participate, investigate, create, understand, express, respect, care for and welcome the daily pulse of a school of childhood and childhoods nourished by learning and an inexhaustible human cultural repertoire.

To this end, it is in teaching with children that we find valuable clues to fulfilling our role as teachers, because we are the agents of change and active listening in the space-time of the school. We encourage children's all-round development, above all by offering them different languages and possibilities, guaranteeing experiences in the world they live in. It is in the daily life of the school that we provide children with the enchantment of reading and writing, through the different languages they practice, within a space where we find childhoods aligned with curiosity, respect, gaze, mediation and the ways in which they express themselves and narrate their lives, because it is with children that the interweaving of teaching really happens.

According to Guimarães; Ferreira; Lima (2022, p.104), it is at school that relationships open up paths to meaningful experiences that can sharpen children's potential and bring other learning perspectives that transcend curricular content.

That's why the educational reality has been changing intensely with the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream education, as well as an increase in Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) for children with various difficulties. And concomitant with this demand, we see the anguish of teachers faced with a new reality that becomes visible in classrooms due to the lack of initial or continuing training on the subject of inclusive education.

Therefore, according to Glat and Blanco (2007, p.15), inclusive education "means a new school model in which access and permanence is possible for all students", as well as the breaking down of physical, cultural and social barriers for the special education public.

According to the Educational Curriculum Parameters for Early Childhood Education at the School of Basic Education of the Federal University of Uberlândia (PCE-EI-ESEBA-U-FU), Special Education through Specialized Educational Assistance (AEE) has the "objective of complementing and/or supplementing the schooling process of special education students" and, together with the teacher in the reference room, making the children's teaching-learning process unique and authorial.

With ESA professionals and the reference teacher, it is possible to transform the inclusive school space to meet the needs of all children, because our role is to promote experiences with children, making the teaching and learning process more creative, participatory and reflective through resources, strategies and services that can meet the differences and needs of this group of students.

In his writings, Vigotsky (2010) shows the importance of the teacher in the act of teaching, saying that "Tolstoy, the teacher must necessarily be a virtuous man, capable of infecting the child with his personal experience" and that "many people have compared the work of the teacher to the work of the artist

and highlighted the issues of individual creation” (VIGOTSKY, 2010: 446). For this reason, the role of teachers in both the ESA and the reference room is to fully assume a complex daily routine that calls for organization, reflection, intention and action from an inclusive perspective “in order to promote learning opportunities in which the child can really participate effectively” (Guimarães, Ferreira; Lima, 2022, p.109).

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Thus, our proposal to create an investigative context based on the children’s interest favors the development of exploration, investigation, observation, curiosity, attentive and sensitive listening on the part of the children because all of this calls us to critical thinking and understanding of the world. It is in this direction that we analyzed the curriculum documents BNCC (MEC, 2018) and documents PCE -EI-ESEBA-UFU (2021) when addressing the work with oral language specifically for this class in Early Childhood Education. We found that listening, speaking, thinking and imagination are powerful components for developing a scenario led by the children and intentionally planned by the teacher.

The proposal for this lesson is in line with the discussions involving the following official documents: the Education Guidelines and Base Law - LDB (Brazil, 1996); the National Education Bases and BNCC - National Common Curriculum Base; the Educational Curriculum Parameters for Early Childhood Education at the Federal University of Uberlândia School of Basic Education (PCE-EI-ESEBA-UFU), Law

No. 13.146. of July 6, 2015; the Brazilian Law on the Inclusion of People with Disabilities; and Law 10.639, which establishes the compulsory teaching of “Afro-Brazilian history and culture” and bibliographies that support the theoretical choices of this class.

## **DEVELOPMENT/ METHODOLOGY**

At this point we will present, based on the reality experienced within the school space and the relationships that are constituted in them, the teaching methodology that provokes a dialogue with the children, whose potential favors us to promote reflections, changes and resumptions, based on the full exercise of teaching and the “elements of this interaction that present themselves in the figure of their peers, child/children, adult/children, child/knowledge” (PCE, 2021, p.10).

First of all, it’s worth pointing out that the classroom is the place where children build their narratives, their potential, their reflections and their relationships with the people who are closely involved in the educational process. For this reason, it needs to be organized in such a way that children can explore it. In this sense, we are thinking of an investigative context that allows children to produce their own knowledge by learning from personalized paths in their daily lives.

And inspired by Professor Dr. Luciana Soares Muniz’s Diary of Ideas methodology, where a: experience, record and share are the guiding principles of creative learning, we propose for this class the creation of an investigative context, which is a set of materials and resources previously selected and organized in such a way that the children can compose, design, play, interact, discover, investigate, get to know, appropriating the characteristics of the materials and their possible articulations and transformations. They are contexts organized in a time and space for discovery.

However, in order to design an investigative context, it is important to develop narratives with the children because, according to Barbosa (2013, p. 221), “children live in a narrative way, they think aloud, they share their thoughts and they are the protagonists of their lives”, which is why the dialogic circle is so important for sharing experiences.

This lesson is the result of a child’s story that happened when Manuella went on an outing with her parents, where she was given a rag doll with a bracelet on its arm. And very curious about this bracelet, the student had told me about this outing, explaining to me that this bracelet is only worn by people who are building themselves up. I asked Manuella a few questions: Do you know what’s on this bracelet? Does it have a design? Does it have colors? What does it have? The student said that the bracelet has some designs, like a puzzle, but there’s also one that looks like a sunflower.

So, from the student’s curiosity about the subject of the bracelet that contained a puzzle and a sunflower came the inspiration for this problem situation to plan and organize the lesson in such a way as to include everyone, because it is known that school inclusion and curricular accessibility are necessary and urgent in curricula and planning, which require, according to Dechichi and Silva (2012, p.67), “more modern pedagogical concepts and practices; changes in educators’ attitudes and in the way they assess their students’ progress”.

That’s why all our planning has included the necessary strategies for the curriculum according to the disability (low vision) that our student Lucas has, because according to Law No. 13.146, in its article 4, “every person with a disability has the right to equal opportunities with other people and will not suffer any kind of discrimination”. Our role is to start from what the student already knows so that we can make sense of what we are going to propose pedagogically, thus articulating/mediating the inclusion process.

Taking into account the issues of curricular accessibility and inclusion, we cannot rule out the importance of including the construction of an anti-racist education in our planning. It is worth emphasizing the importance of inserting bibliographical references in all curricular components, as Munanga (2005) and Santos (2022) maintain, since daily reflections and assertive interferences are necessary in order to transgress in the school context, as well as in society.

So this first moment of the lesson was based on the following question: Have any children ever seen a puzzle? What about a sunflower? What do you think a puzzle means? And a sunflower? The context of the reference room was prepared in advance by the teacher. We laid out a colorful crocheted quilt on the floor, a gift from the grandmother of a child in our class, which is used at every moment of our daily circle. We then placed a white piece of fabric in the middle of the quilt, horizontally, to lay out the following materials: strips of white fabric, paint brushes, colored paints (yellow, red, black, red, green, blue), blank rectangular card, black overhead projector pen, puzzle, sunflower flower, transparent glass, magnifying glass and a violet-scented diffuser.

After organizing the space, it was time to welcome the children so that the “pulse” of discovery was alive, in order to enable them to build their identity and autonomy, based on the relationships established with themselves, with knowledge and with others.

The smell of the violet essence exhaled by the diffuser and the teacher’s welcome at the classroom door made this moment unique, as we believe that smell is an element of connection with children and “from the moment they enter school, they must be given the keys that will allow them to understand the world in which they live, in which they will live in the future” (Bardança, 2020, p.33).

In the circle, the children were invited to

observe, in a dialogical relationship<sup>1</sup>, what we have in the center of the circle, based on the following questions: What has the teacher brought for our class today? What is that delicious smell in our classroom?

Today the teacher brought in a doll that our friend Manuella got from her parents. What's different about this doll? Clarisse said: Oh, this doll is black! Yes, she's black and we know and have studied that we are all equal, regardless of our tastes, race and ethnicity, and we need to respect differences.

Clarisse says: Oh, the doll has a bracelet! That's right, she has a bracelet and we can see it on her? Then the teacher takes the bracelet off the doll and goes over to student Lucas and says: Come on Lucas! Now it's time to look at the acerolas, the leaves and the colors with the magnifying glass. Lucas was delighted with everything he could see in front of the sensitive gaze of the teacher, who understood the needs of each student in the group.

Still in this sequence with Lucas, the teacher approached him with the magnifying glass so that he could see the colors, the design on the bracelet, and also put it in his hands so that he could explore it tactilely and recognize the texture and details of the bracelet.

During the conversation in the circle, Clarisse was curious about the colors of the bracelet and how the design comes together like a puzzle and even has sunflower designs. So, through investigation, the teacher invited the children to look at the images she had brought in the form of a poster. The investigations into the drawings of the puzzle and the sunflower were followed by the children's inquisitive and curious looks. They discovered, through conversations between their classmates and the teacher's mediation with that "Now it's the law, sunflower string!". That these elements were symbols that identified people with hidden disabilities, which are those that cannot be immediately perceived.

1. According to Muniz (2020), the dialogic relationship has the potential to develop spontaneity in children and this is a way of weaving knowledge with them.

The teacher then explains to the children that these symbols are worn on necklaces or bracelets and are actually used to identify some hidden disability and that this is a law that was sanctioned on July 17, 2023 through Law No. 14.624, which amends the Statute of People with Disabilities Law No. 13.146, of July 6, 2015.

This law states that the symbols can only be used by people with hidden disabilities, as these conditions do not have obvious physical signs, but can affect people's daily lives, such as accessibility issues in parking lots, supermarkets, queues at banks and so on.

After this work, the children were invited to look at the images of the sunflower *in natura* arranged inside the glass and the shape of the puzzle, the design of the sunflower necklaces and the puzzle. The black overhead projector pen facilitated the drawings on the strips of white fabric in order to motivate the children's creativity, imagination and playful perception of the care we should take of others. The children were also able to use the brushes and paints to creatively paint the sunflowers and jigsaw puzzles on the fabric strips.

Finally, the children were curious to know what we would do with those necklaces or bracelets. So Manuella suggested that the class organize a meeting with all the families in the school who had children with hidden disabilities so that they could give them this very important symbol as a gift to help them reflect on the issues of inclusion in our society. So that would be our next meeting of the dialogic circle with the families and children of our school, because the children's interest in what is part of their daily lives is a sign of appreciation, experience, revelation, experience and memory, because it is in the school space that this coming and going is filled with meaning and significance for both the student and the teacher.



## EVALUATION/ DAILY RECORD

It is worth noting that the evaluation / daily record are several moments glimpsed within the school space, since we try to open doors to “ruptures in the routines routines of doing - making teaching” (Filho, 2021, p.138), which allows us to bring a critical-reflective and formative look to this record.

Opening these doors to a record of daily life provides children with spaces for events in which they are the protagonists of their process and shows us that “sociocultural experiences with young children, in terms of dance, music, play, smell, sound, paintings, are decisive for their becoming thinking subjects” (Faria, 2021, p.166).

It's important to emphasize that daily evaluation/recording is not a time to measure, compare or even fail the child, but rather “contributes to learning and the teacher's work needs to be mediating and welcoming” (PEC, 2021, p.31).

2. The magic chest is inspired by the ideas diary devised by Professor Luciana Soares Muniz, where each child keeps their discoveries, materials and treasures to be shared.

The magic chest<sup>2</sup> is an instrument created by each child in previous classes where they put their ideas, records, drawings and use their creativity to provoke the exchange of ideas both in the group and in other social spaces (Muniz, 2019, p.184).

This is the moment when children develop their capacity for autonomy, recognition, reflection and, combined both in the conversation circles and in the individual moments of recording, they can be shared with other children in the school, with families and with the school institution itself.

Thus, the whole process described in this lesson is in line with Freire's (2003) “observe, record and reflect”, as we believe that the actions of everyday life and teaching are in the process in which this triple action teaches us that recording is a partnership that involves children, teachers and families, as this group is essential for transforming “routine routines into everyday life” (Filho, 2021, p.147).

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