



INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULAR PROJECTS AND TEACHING CONCEPTION AND CHILDHOOD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS - MUNICIPAL NURSERY SCHOOL PRÓ-INFÂNCIA -
APRIL 6, 2024

Written by Luca Vernalha (translated by ChatGPT)

Conducting training for educators at the Municipal Nursery School Pró Infancia, in Passo do Camaragibe, AL, required the establishment of concrete knowledge and perceptions about the classroom practices of the teachers, the management team that coordinates the school, and the physical space it comprises.

For this purpose, it was necessary to carry out a week-long immersion involving cohabitation, meetings, observations, and brief, yet subtle and careful actions with the team. This diagnosis was fundamental to more accurately identify the main needs of the school: the need for training for the teachers and, consequently, improvements in the learning process of the students; rethinking the use and handling of teaching materials, complaints about hot and stuffy classrooms, neglected outdoor areas (tall weeds, possible presence of snakes and scorpions), lack of water, among others.



Cashew tree and white wall located at the entrance of the nursery



Tall grass near the playground



Activities carried out with the trainer in partnership with Teacher Mariana from the 2-year-old class and Teacher Tânia from the 4 and 5-year-old class.

After aligning in continuous meetings with the coordination, with professionals from SEMED (Municipal Education Department), including the Early Childhood Education teaching technician and Natália, the local professional responsible for the project, it was decided that the training at Pró Infância school would mainly focus on redefining the conception of teaching and childhood by presenting the possibility of implementing a curricular project aimed at creating gardens in the school's physical spaces.

The training was attended by all the school's teachers (19 teachers) and was divided into seven stages: Reading aloud by the trainer excerpts from the book “Menino do Mato” by Manoel de Barros; presentation of the video Pills: Play Time: Child and Nature by Alana Institute; experiencing our open-air studio; coffee break; development of a collective lesson plan and evaluation.

The first two stages aimed to offer possibilities for reflection on the teachers' own routines, and also, to reflect on how children deal with and learn from them. Collectively, questions were shared: How can spaces outside the classroom, in contact with nature, promote various forms of teaching? What materials can be used? In what way? What benefits does implementing a garden offer to the school community and beyond?



Playground and corridor with materials for collecting leaves, flowers, and bark for the Workshop.
Cashew tree and tables set up to hang typical birds of Alagoas on the tree.

We then reached the third stage, in which the educators had the opportunity to step out of their roles as teachers and assume the position of trainees.



This shift was based on the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, in which he himself states:

"The act of educating cannot be an adaptation to pre-established models or standards: it implies a constant revision of practices, based on a critical reflection of the everyday."

After the coffee break and shared reading of the above quote, the trainees moved into action. They developed, in subgroups, lesson plans focused on creating a garden with their respective classes in an interdisciplinary manner, aided by the Chat GPT program installed on the tablets already provided to each educator. On this occasion, the IT technician hired by the project was present to address any questions and provide assistance as needed.



Pró-Infância Educators Developing Lesson Plans

At this point, the importance of the IT technician's presence was evident, as he was able to clarify doubts while the educators were using the system. The constant fluctuation of the internet network was an issue; we noticed that reducing the number of simultaneous accesses partially helped the connectivity.

Finally, the teachers responded to the proposed evaluation, sharing their respective impressions of the day's experience.



"Incredible, I loved this new experience. We gained new knowledge and new ways of working with the students." (report from the nursery teacher)

"My experience was quite enriching, I learned to see things differently concerning the children. It's completely different from the way I was usually accustomed. I am happy for the opportunity to learn... I hope to use more



outdoor spaces allowing for free play, in a way that they learn new experiences." (report from the nursery teacher)

"It was formative in the social aspects where we bring to the children a bit more of social experience. And in the environmental aspect, when we as human beings find ourselves in the midst of nature and introduce ourselves into it as parts of it." (report from the nursery teacher)

The majority of teachers provided positive feedback. Generally, the participants reported that the experience helped them to reconsider their own practices, see the open and airy space as an option for teaching, rethink the choice of materials, and recognize accessible materials as a possibility for use during class time beyond recess as teaching resources.

Regarding the possibility of implementing the garden, it is necessary to consider curriculum modifications and changes. After the training, there was a discussion with the nursery coordinators and also with the Early Childhood Education technician, both showed openness to restructuring the current "weekly class schedule" for interdisciplinary projects. It is important to consider that a change of this magnitude requires months of action. According to them, the idea would be to start at the Pró Infância nursery and assess this process to then consider future modifications in the following years.

One suggestion was to consider the school professional, Nê, who has years of experience running and caring for gardens, to be responsible for constant monitoring and mediation with the teachers in their respective classroom projects. For this, it is necessary to consider the resources to finance her possible hiring and the practical alignment of labor (shovels, fences, etc.) to preserve and maintain the care of the gardens.



After the training, there was an initiative to cut the tall grass around, clean, and organize parts of the school spaces.



Moreover, other relevant issues were highlighted as daily challenges faced by the school:

- Problem of water shortage;
- Classrooms with damaged fans;
- Lack of investment and financial support for basic classroom materials: colored pens, colored pencils, watercolors, brushes, dice, games, and toys (chessboards, dominoes, Jenga, Uno, building and dismantling blocks, etc.), as well as materials for the garden project;
- Lack of internet.

In summary, it can be considered that this first training opened new paths and perspectives for the coordinators of the Municipal Nursery School Pró Infância, the Early Childhood Education technician, and especially for the teachers, who initially showed resistance and little effective participation, to demonstrate greater interest and positive understanding regarding the project and its objectives.

Some significant challenges were perceived and will need to be considered for the next training. The next session, which will have a much larger attendance (around 60 teachers), aims to present, captivate, and invite the teachers to again get hands-on, reflect on their respective practices and realities of action, and apply their classroom and extracurricular knowledge in teaching practices in a shared manner, with the aim of finding possible solutions for some of the mentioned problems in a collective and co-participative way through the use of Chat GPT on their respective tablets provided by the project.