

INSPIRING LEARNING: INNOVATION IN A BILINGUAL AND INCLUSIVE TEACHING PRACTICE

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Abstract: Bilingual education for children presents unique challenges, as students are simultaneously developing cognitively and linguistically. Strategies that foster student agency are particularly important, enabling learners to become active participants in their own education. Integrating such strategies into bilingual settings requires careful planning and pedagogical innovation, with the teacher serving as both mediator and facilitator of interdisciplinary learning. This study presents a pedagogical practice implemented in a private school in São José dos Campos, São Paulo, inspired by Helen Keller’s “The Story of My Life”. The aim was to create meaningful and inclusive learning experiences through active methodologies. The teaching initiative focused on designing and executing an interdisciplinary project for fourth-grade students, employing strategies to increase engagement while promoting linguistic, creative, social, and emotional development. Additionally, the project sought to raise students’ awareness of diversity and different modes of communication, reinforcing the partnership between school and family. A qualitative approach guided the study, grounded in a progressively planned pedagogical practice and continuous teacher mediation. Project development occurred in structured stages, beginning with the presentation of Helen Keller’s life through guided readings, audiovisual materials, and carefully selected interactive digital activities designed to support comprehension. Throughout the process, students engaged in hands-on and creative learning experiences, including the production of textured paintings, narrative drawings, audio recordings, creation of Braille objects using 3D printing, and adaptation of educational games integrating English vocabulary and elements of American Sign Language. The project culminated in a multicultural fair, conceived as a pedagogical space for sharing learning outcomes and facilitating interaction between students and their families. Findings indicate that the intentional pedagogical design and adopted strategies fostered high levels of student engagement, autonomy, and participation. The activities enabled contextualized development of English language skills, enhanced creative and technological abilities, and nurtured a more empathetic understanding of people with disabilities. Family involvement further enriched the learning experience, strengthening emotional bonds and increasing recognition of the educational process conducted in the classroom. In conclusion, this teaching practice highlights the importance of deliberate pedagogical planning based on active methodologies in bilingual education. The teacher, as a knowledge mediator, played a critical role in creating meaningful learning experiences and guiding a progressive pedagogical trajectory that

culminated in the multicultural fair, promoting knowledge sharing and family-student interaction. Inspired by Helen Keller's journey, the project contributed to fostering students' sensitivity to diversity, reaffirming its transformative potential and commitment to an inclusive, innovative, and human-centered education.

Keywords: Bilingual education; Pedagogical innovation; Active methodologies; Inclusion; Family engagement.