

ARTE PARA LA MOTIVACIÓN

Presentation of Best practices in MUS-E PORTUGAL – Creative Writing

13 years of MUS-E brought me in 2003 to a school in Algés and afterword to Escola Pedro Álvares Cabral (PAC), in Oeiras, where I have been lecturing Creative Writing for five years with primary school students.



The school is situated in an area of social housing where most of the population face various social and economic difficulties. The majority of the children are from either gypsy ethnic communities or first, second, or third generation families that have emigrated from ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa – Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe.

We work closely with the teachers, planning activities that will complement their regular classes and help the students to develop fundamental socio-personal skills such as self-confidence, concentration, self-expression and creativity. The school community is living in very challenging situations, where many of the children need specialized learning support, and many have serious behavior issues. We also promote activities that enhance integration, deal with conflict management and lead to a better understanding between the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the children and their families.

For some years we have been working together with the school community on themes that can be applied across the curriculum. This year we intend to explore the theme of Navigation, both in music, dance and creative writing, so that the children can understand why the streets of

their neighborhood are named after Portuguese navigators, and thus developing creative and exploratory activities that enable them to express their own views and ideas on the subject.

We also organize every year open MUS-E sessions, where the parents are invited to take place. The aim of these sessions is to enable the community where the school is to see what kind of work we do and, at the same time, develop a closer relationship of trust and friendship with them and with the school community.





While there have been recent changes in the teaching staff, we have been able to offer a sense of constancy and continuation. This is extremely beneficial for the children, giving them a sense of continuity and security.

The MUS-E project in Oeiras has built a solid foundation in this school and the local community, serving as an example on how this kind of work can make a profound and essential contribution to the overall well-being, development and education of these young children.

During the Creative Writing sessions I work as a mediator for the first years. I either read to them or tell them stories. And I may either write what the children say in different activities or I even get them to build characters out of crinkled papers, and also help them draw using the letters that make up their names.





With the last years students I try to overcome their numbness and to awake them to the words that are inside them, sometimes harsh and disenchanted as the reality they live in; other times, fragile and limp, but so surprising, even for themselves.

Most of these children has a very flimsy reading and writing experience, so getting them to produce texts and exercise their imagination is seen with distrust.

Throughout the time, I actually see a break in the students resistance, almost always more prone to drawing than writing. The trust in writing comes slowly, aided by the curiosity of learning new words, even if spelling is not a major concern.

By playing writing games, with set rules and timing, students are also overcoming their fear of making up stories, which in turn, reveal their own opinions and feelings.

By having Arts and Performing as strong allies, Creative Writing sessions work as a space to experiment and clean any mind blocks. The stories created in smaller work groups are useful to potentiate team work.

The shared reading of their texts is important as it serves to dilute any embarrassment and is also useful so that the students learn to know their voices and rhythms; this teaches them they have more things uniting them than separating them.

The “Our writers” honor board was created as a way to recognize and award their efforts.

It makes so much sense to create and make ways that will lead to helping these children express themselves artistically. I believe that the more they know themselves and each other, the more they will be interested and the more tolerant and active they will be in the future.

