



PERSONA-DOLL METHODOLOGY Handbook



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29/06/2021

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PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



INDEX

Chapter 1 – Introduction.....page 3

1.1 Introduction.....page 3

1.2 General information about the school Alice Sturiale.....page 4

Chapter 2 - Prevention of bullying.....page 8

2.1 Teaching tolerance and equality.....page 8

2.2 Bullying and groups.....page 9

2.3 Ready to face bullying.....page 10

Chapter 3 – Methodology.....page 12

3.1 The birth of dollspage 12

3.2 Methodological focus: dolls or people?page 12

3.3 Personality development and profilespage 14

3.4 A story for each person-dollpage 20

Chapter 4 - Working on differencespage 23

4.1 Introductionpage 23

4.2 Working on personal differencespage 25

Appendix.....page 28

Some images of the various activities conducted in the classroom.....page 28

Conclusionspage47

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PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This manual is the result of the participation of Alice Sturiale Kindergarten in the Erasmus+ Project K229 entitled "FOR A RESPECTFUL AND TOLERANT SCHOOL" to which the school has joined during the school years 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21. Through this project the teachers learned the project "Persona Doll Methodology" in collaboration with other European schools, partners of the project. Our school, led by the leading school Ginés Morata in Almeria (Spain) and together with a French school, a Latvian school and a Lithuanian school participated in this project and carried out training in this methodology.

The funds received by the Erasmus project were used to develop this methodology, and to create new materials through the work of all partners. Materials are available at both the Alice Sturiale school and other partner schools.

The objectives of this project are:

- Prevention of bullying and violence in schools.
- Development and improvement of social skills.
- Greater respect for people with diversity.
- Awareness and respect for pupils with special needs.
- Development of the Persona doll methodology
- Creation of material and dissemination of the project.

Chapter 1 will illustrate the project, history and methodological principles of Person-dolls (dolls person).

Then, in Chapter 2, an analysis of the main aspects of education to values and problems that are found in schools related to bullying, prevarication, violence, bad behavior, etc.

In Chapter 3 the detailed procedure for the elaboration of profiles and stories will be presented. Both allow then to introduce the dolls in the sections to work with them in the daily routines.

Chapter 4 focuses on the differences that can be found in classes and how to deal with them, helping pupils to deal with them. We will try to explain operationally how to work on tolerance and respect.

The appendix contains the profiles and stories of some of the dolls used during the project, the details of the activities carried out with the students, the photographic documentation of the work carried out by the children in the classroom.

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PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



1.2 General information on the school Alice Sturiale

The Scuola dell'Infanzia "Alice Sturiale" (kindergarten) is a state school that belongs to the Istituto Comprensivo in Certaldo, in the province of Florence, Italy.

This comprehensive institution consists of two kindergartens, three primary schools and one secondary school.

It is located in Tuscany, in a central region of Italy. Certaldo is a medieval village between Florence and Siena and is considered a high migratory area. The school staff at the beginning of the project consisted of sixteen section teachers, four teachers for children with disabilities, one religion teacher, three custodians. The staff, however, may vary from year to year depending on the needs of users. Therefore, with a smaller number of participants, the number of teachers will also decrease.

There are seven classes divided by age: two for children of 3 years, two for children of 4 and three for children of 5. There is only one class with children of three different ages (3, 4 and 5 years). Children with disabilities are included in sections with children of the same age. At the moment there are 208 children. The majority is Italian and 15% comes from abroad.

Most of the pupils' families belong to the middle class, where both parents work, but there are also low-level socio-economic and economic families.

There are some volunteers from local sports organizations working with the school to improve sports activities. In addition, our school collaborates with local organizations such as the municipal library and the music school. There is also a parent association that helps the school to purchase materials and organize the festival.

Some students of the University of Florence are allowed to take an internship at our school or to follow our activities for their final thesis.

The Kindergarten "Alice Sturiale" is a welcoming place for every single child and pays attention to the value of each pupil considering the differences as an enrichment. In particular, the school is engaged in intercultural projects based on cooperative games and musical activities. In this regard, our teachers have attended several training courses in intercultural matters in recent years.

The school won the European label for languages award in 2016 thanks to a project called "The suitcase tree" focused on the development of the different languages present in our classes: each suitcase was a symbol of each language but all fruit of the same tree.

The school has received national and European awards for etwinning projects in which it has participated in several years and the national award in 2014 and 2018.



PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



The school is open to European horizons in order to promote open and democratic education and to stimulate personal curiosity towards lifelong learning (long life learning).

Following the philosophy of the school joined this Erasmus project to acquire this new methodology for teachers and joined the daily routines to support and strengthen the good practices already in place in intercultural matters, of inclusion and recognition of the dignity of every child and child. It was felt that the Persona Doll methodology could become an important new competence for the staff and for the school and that it will be able to support the educational and methodological skills already present to help give dignity to every peculiarity present in the sections. This resource was also presented to the other kindergarten that is part of our comprehensive institution with curiosity, success and interest.

We had 8 dolls available that could represent some specific characteristics in reference to the peculiarities that we had also found in the past years in our school. In fact, that because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the dolls used were 3 and were presented in seven sections of our school of which in four sections for three consecutive years (three to six years) in four other sections (four and five years) for two consecutive years.

The use of dolls has encouraged a reflection on personal feelings and emotions, recognizing in the doll itself the relational problems that are found in boys and girls of this age group. This has therefore helped to pursue the goals set by the National Guidelines for the curriculum, such as the recognition of various cultural identities, cooperation in the group, the management of conflicts due to socialization and a rapprochement with the competences of European citizenship, as well as the promotion of key European competences including functional alphabetical competence, multilingualism competence, digital competence and personal, social and learning skills.



PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



The recognition of every child within a community, in its own specificity and uniqueness was the inspiring principle of the work carried out inside the classrooms. It is worth remembering that in the years of childhood school, awareness of one's own body, personality, being with others and exploring the world begins. These are the years in which reciprocity begins in speaking and listening; in which one learns by discussing. So the PDM introduced a small step to talk and discuss some social conflicts but also inner conflicts of boys and girls and in the group try to find solutions. The group is an important aspect of the method, because it becomes a place to welcome words, to bring one's own vision and express it in equality. It is in the group where ideas and creativity can confront and grow. The group can help even the most shy and introverted to speak and express themselves.

The role of teachers has been that of directors of the various paths, within which each child can implement their own strategies to get to the knowledge.

Initiating this methodology throughout the school was not easy and several training meetings were needed so that all the teachers concerned were able to use the dolls independently and consciously.

Cooperation with our partners in Europe has been excellent. We shared a lot of information and activities and the leading school, an expert in this method, has always helped us with information and suggestions to adopt. The organized meetings have increased our knowledge of school orders and facilities in Europe and have opened our community to exchanges and meetings. When it was the turn of Italy to host the partner schools, the entire comprehensive school, the families and the municipal administration supported and helped the school Alice Sturiale opening the meeting that enriched the whole community.



PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



The exchanges in presence have been flanked by a virtual exchange happened through the etwinning platform. In fact, a project has been launched that has allowed to share educational practices, games, films, holidays, music and songs and that has brought children from different schools, cultures and languages, where English has taken on the role of lingua franca. The Twinspace then became also an archive of good practices of the PDM, where each school partner was able to share with others their own experiences and draw from those of others.

Finally, a result not to be underestimated, was the creation of products born from the cooperation and collaboration of all, such as e-books, presentations and a multilingual glossary. The results of the project F.R.A.T.S, acronym of the English «For a respectful and tolerant school» (For a more tolerant and respectful school) have been positively evaluated by both the teachers who worked on the project, by the families and by the boys and girls who participated.

The PDM is now considered a tool that has entered is part of the methodologies acquired by the teaching staff of the school Alice Sturiale and that in the years to come will be implemented and spread, for its educational value.

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Chapter 2 – Prevention of bullying

2.1 Teaching tolerance and equality

The Persona-Doll method provides for the introduction of the doll in the sections through story-telling and role-playing games that allow children to get in touch with diversity in a simple and direct way.

The work is based on an approach against prejudice and stereotype, bringing the doll into section and making it interact with the children themselves significantly. It highlights the aspects that are in common and not those that differentiate them. The attention of the child and his natural ability to empathize with others, in this case with the doll, helps to move towards the respect of others in all aspects of their diversity.

It is precisely the empathy-based approach that makes this methodology unique.

This approach aims to offer every child and every child

growth according to one's own cognitive style and abilities; promoting equality and inclusion, challenging discrimination; promoting respect for the rights of each and his or her freedoms; respect for cultural identities; the formation of future citizens in globalised societies in a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples.

For this reason, the teachers propose to:

- To help children develop positive relationships, to understand the feelings of others and to explore ideas about friendship.
- Develop self-confidence and self-awareness.
- Encourage them to listen and listen to others.
- Help them to predict, order events, draw conclusions.
- Deepening knowledge and understanding of anti-discrimination practices.
- Use dolls and their stories as tools to promote children's development and well-being.

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2.2 Bullying and the groups

The project Erasmus + "FRATS" offered an innovative and successful working methodology to prevent bullying at an early age. An innovative approach of the project is to consider that bullying and aggressive behavior in children is not a problem of an individual, but of the whole group. In the section or class group where there is little acceptance, bullying or prevarication may occur. Therefore, it is a matter of raising and talking with pupils about problematic situations that occur daily with the whole group. By addressing these problems on a daily basis, it was decided to create a more serene and welcoming educational environment.

All problems are raised collectively with the entire group. When a bullying situation occurs in a group, it affects not only children who are directly involved, but also those who see the situation from afar. It is very important that these children are also involved in the process of solving the problem in a positive way. During the activities of the project all children have the opportunity to express their opinion and say what affected them.

Children analyse the problem and try to solve it by providing their opinions and solutions.

In this way, boys and girls acquire the ability to solve problems in daily life and also acquire an understanding of correct and incorrect behavior.

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2.3 Ready to face bullying

Bullying and school violence are faced from a different perspective. Individuality is valued and children are not forced to accept proper behavior or a correct opinion because an adult says so, but they are able to draw their own conclusions and contribute with their own opinion, training through different activities. In a practical way, it promotes the ability of children to solve problems, to defend themselves and to help others.

The activities carried out follow these principles:

- No child should feel left out or disadvantaged by racial, cultural, religious, social differences, linguistic background, gender, skills;
- Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that all children feel included, safe and valuable;
- Teachers should develop positive relationships with families so that they can cooperate in the interests of the child/a;
- Students, families and teachers must be treated with mutual respect. The example of adults for children is very important.

Thanks to the activities proposed by the project methodology:

- Discriminatory behaviour and prejudice are controlled.
- Children's sense of justice develops with feelings of empathy, so children learn that certain behaviors, prejudices and discrimination harm others. Children acquire through project activities the ability to act for themselves and to intervene for others in the face of unfair behavior.

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-The ability of children to value their individuality improves, children learn to accept themselves and are stimulated to have a positive view of themselves and their self-esteem increases. At the same time, children learn to appreciate others and to act positively towards others, considering differences as mere peculiarities.

-Children's appreciation of difference develops by noticing, appreciating, and speaking of differences and similarities between them.

-A large number of problems are treated with children, peculiarities, differences between people, tolerance, different cultures, languages and children with different physical abilities.

The interest of pupils in the knowledge of other languages and cultures is promoted; the need and usefulness of learning English is perceived in order to promote communication with schools in other countries and therefore English is appreciated as a lingua franca.

As a result of the project's activities, tolerance and empathy increase, diminishing intimidation and violent behavior. Social skills improve and, therefore, school management benefits, as children acquire the skills to create social relationships and find new friends, to solve problems and also to help create a positive environment.

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Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 The birth of dolls

The Persona dolls (person dolls) were first used in the United States of America. In 1950 it was not easy to find resources that reflected the enormous ethnic diversity of American society.

Teacher Kay Taus who worked with early childhood students, worried about situations of discrimination and injustice, He sought a way to make his students aware of the differences between people to promote tolerance and equality in their classes.

To this end, together with his collaborators, he created colored cardboard dolls combining the dolls with the color of the skin and other physical characteristics that made them resemble the physical appearance of his students. He assigned each doll his own personality, and created stories for each of the dolls based on the experiences of his students. Using the dolls in class and telling the stories in which they were protagonists, the students immediately managed to identify themselves and tried to solve the problems that arose from time to time from the stories of the dolls.

3.2 Methodological focus: dolls or people?

The Persona Doll approach offers an effective, challenging, accessible and enjoyable way to combat discrimination, promote emotional intelligence and empower children from the early stages of their early childhood education. Dolls and their stories stimulate the ability of children to feel empathy, and to be able to recognize what behaviors can cause other pain and misery such as kicking, beating, or other physical abuse. In short, making them aware that acts such as insulting, teasing, and excluding from the game are unfair treatment and can become a form of abuse.

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PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



Children are encouraged to approach these attitudes both when they experience them for themselves and when they witness injustices and prejudices towards other peers. It is a difficult task for which the use of dolls has been conceived.

The dolls-people (Persona Dolls) are neither ordinary dolls, nor puppets, but they become real people endowed with their own personality, the teachers transform them from inanimate objects to real people with their name, their profile, their history and their family, their cultural background, age, language and issues. To ensure that the profiles and personalities created for dolls are detailed and resemble real ones, several important aspects are included in the life of each person, such as where and with whom they live, the type of family, the age, the languages they speak. Then they tell their tastes and their hobbies, their fears and their problems. Next to this, the doll will describe what are the activities in which she is good and which activities instead create difficulties, the things that make her happy, that make her sad, that scare or worry her.

It is recommended that people-dolls be of an adequate size to be embraced. They must be unique, special and different from the dolls that are usually used in class for games. Dolls-people must reflect the differences existing in students in the class group or neighboring groups. However, when all children belong to the same ethnic or cultural group with a dominant language, and have no obvious disabilities, it is important to present dolls that reflect other situations (different races, religions or languages, special educational needs, etc.) to make children aware of differences. Particular attention should be paid not to reinforce stereotypes when selecting the profiles and personalities of dolls-people and in character development or story creation.

It is a good idea to introduce a male doll-person first, so the attention of children will be captured, since the doll is often identified as a child's play avoiding the stereotype that all dolls are female.

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PERSONA DOLL METHODOLOGY PDM



The male person-doll gives us the opportunity to break the stereotypes that all (boys and girls) may have acquired on sex and work on gender equality. For example, saying that pink is the preferred color of a male doll will be easy to elicit reactions both in boys and girls.

Stories can help children to respect and appreciate those who are different from them and appreciate the many things they have in common. Everyone has different eyes, skin, hair, color and shape. One of the Dolls could tell the kids how happy he is now that he has a hearing aid and can hear what people are saying. Next, he will tell a story in which he was previously teased about his disability because he could not feel well and was excluded from some games.

3.3 Personality development and profiles

Before developing the personalities and profiles of doll people, the team of teachers who will work with them must reach an agreement on gender, ethnicity, class, family structure, type of home, religion, cultural background, spoken languages, physical characteristics, skin color, special abilities and disabilities, sympathies and antipathy of each of the dolls. Especially to create dolls- people from cultures with whom the school staff is unfamiliar, it may require some preparation to make sure you give correct names and pronounce them correctly and to create consistent profiles and stories.

The names must conform to the personalities and cultural background of the dolls, and it is advisable to gather information on customs and rituals related to the culture of the doll-person.

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a) Creating the personality of dolls

Dolls' personalities are created in groups.

Some data are fixed, but others can be changed (house, brothers). Fixed data will be for example age and name.

The dolls must reflect the children of each school (interests, home, family, nationality, social, origin).

All doll profiles will be collected in the doll book, in which all doll stories will be added.

b) Creating the profile of dolls

How old is the doll?

Is it a boy or a girl?

What is your name?

What language do you speak?

What makes you happy and sad and in a bad mood?

Are you afraid of something?

Where does the doll live?

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Who does he/she live with?

Do you share your room with anyone?

What do your parents do?

What do you like to do at home?

What do you like? / what is difficult?

Is there anything the doll can't do?

What's your favorite food and what foods you don't like or can't eat?

Has something happened in your life that's relevant or is it going to happen soon?

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These basic details remain constant and do not change over the years, although the circumstances of the doll can change and adapt to new situations that arise in the classroom or at school, for example if a little brother is born, if his parents divorce, if he changes home, etc.

The personality and profile of each doll will be recorded in her book where all the stories created in relation to her will be added. It may be the case that in a school there is an extensive range of dolls-people, both with peculiarities that occur in class and other groups that do not belong to the class group (i.e., a school may have a doll-person of Hindu origin (although there is no Hindu student in the center) In this way, the group presents itself with a wide range of lifestyles, cultures, languages and skills which are equally valued and respected.

In the first working session with the doll in class, the students are solicited, intrigued, creating expectation while waiting for an important visit they are about to receive, a special partner who has a lot to tell. We will try to create an atmosphere of mystery and curiosity for the first meeting, in order to capture interest and attention. Once in class, the doll will be presented to the whole group and will be told its name, its age (it is convenient to adapt its age to that of the group with which you are working at that time) and everyone is allowed to welcome it with affection with a hug, a meeting of hands, a small touch, leaving children the freedom to feel at ease in his presence.

We train with children to solve the difficult situations they face every day. A doll tells in the classroom through the teacher a story that happened in relation to a problem previously agreed with the teacher. In the classroom the children receive the doll, listen to it and analyze the problem that poses them and try to solve with their contribution its difficulties, in an environment free of prejudice and accusations.

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The doll-person always communicates through the teacher, who will explain with a credible story (that she is very shy or does not know how to speak Italian, for example) that the doll-person just wants to talk to you in your ear and that you will transmit everything you say. So he's going to walk through his profile and explain his personality to the class.

Children generally willingly accept that dolls "talk" to teachers about their thoughts and feelings and "tell" the things that happened to them. They care about dolls and want to help them and try to solve all the problems that can happen to them.

Although not all problems are solvable, we think that proposing some topics through the problems of dolls is a way to introduce complex and difficult topics to deal with.

Stories help children to feel that they are not alone, that others are in an identical or similar situation, and that they feel the same or similar feelings.

Through activities with dolls, central project activities, we make sure that children are capable of distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, between good and bad behaviour. This strategy allows us to face and manage the same problems that can arise in our classrooms, and will help us to avoid prejudices and problems in the future. We can do prevention work on differences that are currently unknown to children but that can arise at any time. In addition, talking about the doll and the doll, in a continuous confrontation with their emotions, feelings and situations favors dialogue, confrontation, communication and stimulates children to express their problems imitating the doll.

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Children are encouraged to participate as much as possible, but some may be reluctant to talk about their family and lifestyle. The emotional involvement of children in stories is crucial.

It helps to capture and deepen their interest, arouse their curiosity, and challenges them intellectually. All this encourages children to think critically and increase self-esteem.

The next sessions will always begin by remembering the characteristics of the doll, always trying to recreate the expectation of the first meeting so that the motivation is always active.

In a second session it is suggested to face some fears or to tell an event or a problem, in order to guide the section towards empathy towards the doll.

Teachers can present a wide variety of situations and think of various possibilities to encourage children to speak. It is not said that the proposed situations have already been experienced by the children themselves, it is possible to propose also new problems. This mode develops emotional intelligence and promotes the breaking down of prejudices, because finding the solution to a difficulty means suspending the immediate judgment, means preparing to listen and decentralize to see a situation from another point of view.

The story is told in a circle so as to allow one to listen and express one's ideas in the group, increasing the communicative capacity.

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3.4 A story for each person-doll

Once the students have had a contact with the doll, you can start the story.

The teacher, with the person-doll sitting on his neck, tells the story. Then the teacher will start talking to the children in a dialogue where the children themselves will be stimulated to answer and ask questions. Questions like: «How do you think he feels?» «Have you ever felt this way?» and so on until proposing solutions to help the doll.

In this process, children assume the role of «problem solvers», a role that helps reasoning, reflection, self-esteem, and trust.

Through identification with the person-dolls, children are guided to see the injustice of the situations that the stories describe and are motivated to think of solutions to the problems being told. Seeing each other in person-dolls encourages boys and girls to autonomy, to defend others and themselves in discriminating or unjust situations.

It is important that stories tell both happy and sad, right and unjust events and situations. Students will show their concern for dolls-people and their desire to help, especially when stories highlight situations or experiences they consider unfair.

During sessions with dolls-people in the classroom, teachers allow all pupils to express what they feel, offer support to those who suffer physical or verbal abuse from other children or adults. They listen to the contribution of every child, support the children when necessary, and encourage them. Encourage everyone to talk about history and how it made them feel.

Children's abilities to observe and understand the world around them are often underestimated and can surprise us.

Teachers must put themselves at stake, accepting and recognizing that the ideas of some children on the correct way to act and interact do not coincide with their or their peers. It may happen that most teachers find out that they unconsciously respond more positively to children who have thoughts similar to their own.

Putting yourself at stake means, for example, being ready to accept that body language can be different between cultures and cultures and therefore they should try to get out of their cultural frames and have an attitude of waiting and listening. For example, in some cultures it is taught that looking at an elderly person directly in the eye is disrespectful and rude, while in others it is taught to look directly at an adult when speaking as a sign of attention and honesty.

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In the relaxed, informal and listening atmosphere of the storytelling session, the students have many opportunities to say what they think and feel about the problems presented through the Persona Dolls. Narrators guide the session by asking questions that in addition to capturing children's interest encourages them to critically reflect on what they and their peers said. Through the different stories also develops their understanding of social problems. Their questions and all the topics that have captured their interest can be explored in more detail in other areas.

Presenting a series of scenarios and issues to evaluate, explore and solve,

Persona Dolls open up to wide and varied possibilities of imagining and talking about what it would be like to live situations that you have not personally experienced. By sharing cultural traditions and approaching those of their friends, recognizing and challenging stereotypes, their intellectual horizons widen and their general knowledge expands. Being part of a creative and challenging group activity can be a pleasant self-affirming experience. If they feel safe, confident, and welcome by both adults and their peers, they will be more likely to contribute their ideas, their feelings, and their experiences.

The Persona dolls and their stories increase confidence, self-esteem, recognition of their identity and stimulate motivation to learn. They provide a valuable tool to improve communication and language, and to foster social, personal and emotional development to feel good in your environment, while respecting, appreciating, and

knowing the cultural and family context of the rest of the group. Talking about differences means to begin to know them. Recognizing them is the first step to accepting them, to promoting a multicultural society where cultures are not closed within national borders, but rather flexible and constantly changing cultures.

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Ask open questions like:

«Ugo is angry»

«Ulla is sad»

Discussion is encouraged and identification with the doll and her emotions is stimulated. Again, we are in a listening situation.

By asking appropriate open questions, storytellers provoke discussion and encourage children to give a name to feelings and to identify with what the doll feels, to listen to each other, to think critically, and to express their ideas. Discussing feelings, ideas and solutions is more important than finding perfect solutions to the problem presented by Persona-dolls in their stories.

For example:

How do you think Ugo feels?

What makes him angry? Is it the same for you?

Have you ever been disappointed?

What do you do when you're sad? And when you're surprised?

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Chapter 4 – Working on differences

4.1 Introduction

Countries Differences: language, religion, race, culture, etc.

All adults who interact with the sections and therefore are reference models, must try to maintain behaviors free from prejudices.

The Persona Dolls methodology is a good opportunity to positively approach other nations and cultures, working intensively on multiculturalism.

When children are more aware of the differences between culture and nations, they feel more Tolerant even towards peers or close companions of other cultures.

Even when there are no great cultural differences in our classes, we can do a preventive work and approach to multiculturalism, which already animates our global society.

For example, work on skin, hair and eye color.

Weight, sex and other physical differences.

Overweight students, as well as different sexual tendencies, present a high risk of Closing towards others and perhaps introversion.

Social exclusion can exacerbate these problems and cause suffering. The person-dolls methodology is a good opportunity to talk about sometimes sensitive issues. If we talk about overweight, for example, we can introduce the subject of food education by reflecting on unhealthy eating habits which, together with insufficient physical activity, can lead to overweight. To this can be added diseases and genetic reasons.

Pupils then realize what a healthy lifestyle is.

It is emphasized that people have different physical abilities, focusing on what children are able to do, minimizing aspects for which they are not so gifted.

For this reason, the activities "I am special" and the talent show are of great help, as they recognize the individual realization of each student. But even teachers can identify their best characteristics, skills and qualities.

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Wear glasses

Some students feel reluctant to wear glasses or lenses, because they feel uncomfortable, so often they take them off and forget about them.

Through Persona Dolls activities, pupils can understand why some people should wear glasses. The empathy of pupils towards children who have to wear glasses increases and can become a good opportunity to manage and create playful situations.

Language and communication problems

Adaptation problems due to language comprehension.

Social problems due to language comprehension.

Difficulties of expression and communication.

Distancing from games due to difficult problems of understanding.

Through the activities of the person-doll method, children understand how difficult it is to understand and express themselves in different languages.

Socio-economic disparity

This is a very sensitive and difficult subject, but very necessary to handle. In addition, it may happen that disadvantaged pupils come to school disordered (little cleaning of themselves or their clothes). Sometimes even with significant nutritional or medical needs.

Differences and inequalities can be seen in outward aspects such as clothes or toys and in post-childhood classes even in the lack of materials. Sometimes these pupils do not participate in extracurricular activities such as parties, guided tours, etc.

The families of these students sometimes feel marginalized and tend to avoid school-family relationships.

It will be the care of teachers to involve both children and families in order to create the conditions for a good placement in the school and in the section, in short, in the community. Kindness and affection in dealing with others can help minimize inappropriate attitudes.

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Special educational needs

Autism, hyperactivity, allergy, asthma, diabetes, physical disability, mental disability, hearing loss, and many more may be some of the educational needs present in Classroom.

The Persona Dolls methodology helps children understand special needs and increases empathy and tolerance towards them, as it offers a good opportunity to develop acceptance and acceptance actively with direct involvement.

Through doll activities, children will become aware that children with special needs can participate in many daily activities.

4.2 Working on differences

Alice Sturiale has been talking about the issue of acceptance, acceptance and respect for differences for many years now. The Persona Doll method has highlighted the work done over the years and has joined this. Thanks to this methodology unknown to the school until now, the teaching staff has equipped itself with an additional tool to promote the recognition of the other, promote listening, empathy, socialization, respect.

Various activities have been carried out in this regard.

Starting from the recognition by the qualities of each one we have sought the qualities in all the components of the class. Important characteristics have been found for everyone that make it peculiar and important. Hence the activity «I am special». Sometimes children struggle to recognize their skills or qualities. Then the comrades come to the aid and generally identify qualities that make each other unique.

Recognizing the qualities and abilities that make each of us special is not easy, but with practical examples teachers can be able to conduct conversations in a circle in which boys and girls participate with curiosity and interest.

As an example, in the next page there is a conversation held in a section of four-year-olds

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I'M SPECIAL

- M. is special because it always helps other children to dress and G. is special because she can write her name alone and helps Asia to play with lego.
- E. is special because he gives many kisses to Niccolò and N. is special because he always tidies up the games and because he always brings roses to school
- D.: I am special because I help my mother to prepare the apple pie; I cook with mom, pasta, pasta with pesto and mushrooms
- J.: I'm special because I can dress myself and put my backpack on myself
- E.: I'm special because I can do puzzles
- G.: I'm special because I helped my mother to make the cake with hazelnuts; I know how to make drawings with markers and even horses
- N.: because I help mom to put napkins, forks and plates and glasses and I can do the gormiti puzzle and I can ride a bike without wheels
- V: I'm special because I attached the balls to the Christmas tree. I make the cake; we put eggs, sugar, oil, water and put it in the oven. Then we tasted it with mom... it was good!
- N.: I'm special because I made gingerbread man with grandma
- F.: I am special when I help my mother to cook the roast chicken; I love Mario.... I drink all the milk
- A.: I'm special because I help mom set the table; I wash the dishes with mom and when I do the drawings I don't go outside
- N. I'm special because I can swim and I take dives from the high wall.
- M.: I am special because I love everyone
- M.: I'm special because I always pick flowers for mom and dad
- E.: I put my own toys in the box
- N.: I like to come to school
- G.: I can do Elsa's puzzle on my own and I can go skating.

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The school also recalled the day of disability, with specific activities, although it is the daily work done by routines, the words used to redeem quarrels, the sharing of material that day after day helps knowledge, socialization, the respect of others.

Among the stories read and used for debate and reflection, we can recall «The ugly duckling» which gave rise to a dramatization. The story of «Elmer» on which various sections have worked in subsequent years with debate activities and various graphic realizations. The story «The most important thing» where the leading animals realize that the specific characteristics of each make them different from each other and at the same time special and unique. «Gisella pipistrella», whose protagonist sees the world upside down because observed from a particular point of view. «The pink monster» where the protagonist is considered different and therefore marginalized until he finds a place inhabited by particular characters ready to welcome him.

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Anexes

Some pictures on the activities in class



First meeting with Ugo. Children like to touch him

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Ugo after summer holidays

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Activity on Ugo's profile

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Ugo is going to visit a new school

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Ugo

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Someone prepared a present for Ugo

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Activity on the Ugo's story

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After the meeting with a Persona-doll

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After the story of a persona-doll: anger

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After the story of a persona-doll: frustration

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After the story of a persona-doll: fear

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Person-doll with a child with special needs

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The doll arrives in the classroom

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A drawing for Philippe

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Activity after the meeting with Philippe

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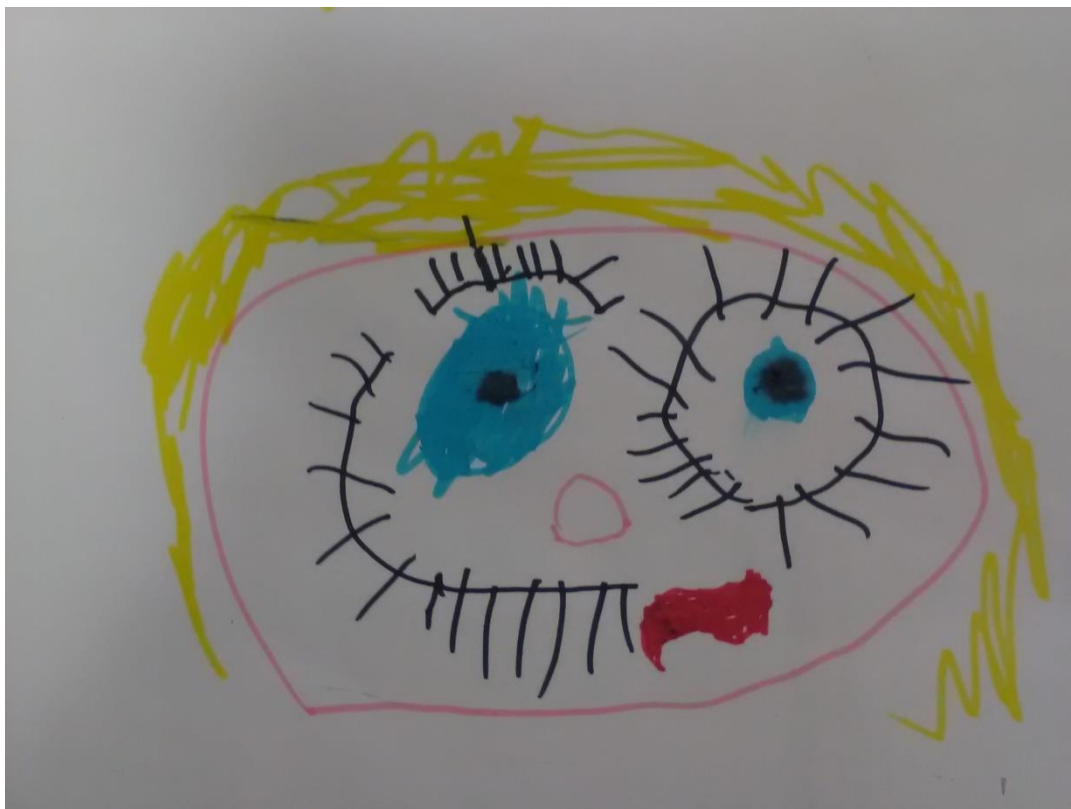


Activity with Ulla

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Ulla

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Ulla in the classroom

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Activity with Ulla

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CONCLUSION

The application of the methodology we describe in this manual has given very good results in our center, allowing us to work with our students from their arrival at school to avoid the proliferation of inappropriate behaviors and attitudes. This project was adapted to our school because its objectives are shared by the curricular philosophy and the center project.

200 students from 3 to 7 years old and 11 teachers have participated.

After three years of working with Persona Dolls we noticed that the students have become more aware of the differences between people. They are more tolerant of their peers and respect the fact when someone is different from them. There are fewer problems with their behavior and relationships between them have improved. The students are now more attentive and better companions.

The families and the educational community in general are very happy with the results of the project, the parents are of great help in teaching tolerance and they have indicated that they see a difference in the behavior of their children.

The staff considers that the implementation of this methodology has been successful, they have decided to continue working in the same way and share everything we learn with more schools in our country and in Europe.

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