

The literacy process of children in the early years of schooling

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze how children build their thoughts while literacy, presenting the discussions of the works of Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky, Ana Smolka and Magda Soares. Blacksmith in his works presents us with the writing hypotheses that are constructed by children in the literacy phase. These writing hypotheses are elaborated by the children as they walk the path of reading/writing acquisition, until they reach the domain of functioning of the mother tongue. The child needs the interventions and mediation of his teacher during this initial stage of literacy of reading and writing of his language, while the child acquires knowledge and becomes a literate reader in the Brazilian Portuguese language. This article has the interest of a dissertation on how literacy teachers from the early years of schooling have understood about the elaboration of writing hypotheses of children during this school experience.

Keywords: Literacy, Writing hypotheses, Teacher mediation.

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INTRODUCTION

I write on the topic of literacy because I am excited about it. Research on children's literacy occurs because I consider it relevant to investigate how children understand and understand the process of written reading of the language. The innumerable difficulties encountered by teachers in teaching literacy is a subject that has meaning and importance in my professional life. Searching in literature for the paths that the child takes during the process of building and acquiring mastery in reading and writing enriches my work as a literacy teacher throughout my life. In the work and practice of pedagogue, we need to know how children learn to read and write, including to guide teachers who act as children's literacy teachers. In public schools, we need teachers with theoretical and technical attributes to mediate students in this literacy process during the early years of elementary schooling. When assuming the proposal to carry out this research, some reflective questions arise in thought: "*How do children in the initial phase of literacy understand writing?*"; *"How does the literacy teacher understand the role of mediator in the initial phase of literacy?"*.

The main focus of this work is to research how the child learns to read/write, and how literacy teachers have or do not have the possibility of interfering in the process of the child's acquisition of writing in this initial stage of literacy, during the first years of schooling. In this academic article, I come to investigate issues that involve the literacy process of children in the first years of schooling. To investigate how children learn at this stage, during the initial phase of reading and writing. To report on the mediating role of the literacy teacher in the initial phase of children's literacy.

The research was based on readings and descriptive activities in articles, books and periodicals, which describe specific pedagogical practices to assist the teaching-learning process of students. The article is based on the works of authors who address the process of reading and writing, with special attention to Emília Ferreiro's discussions on the constructions of writing hypotheses formulated by children during the literacy phase. Other authors, such as Magda Soares and Ana Smolka, address the process of construction of reading and writing, literacy and the intervention work of literacy teachers in public schools. This work has as its methodology the bibliographic research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HOW THE CHILD UNDERSTANDS WRITING

Children's literacy is a laborious and complex activity. I started teaching literacy to children a few years ago, later I got to know the work of the authors Ana Teberosky and Emília Ferreiro "*The Psychogenesis of Written Language*" (1985), I began to discover a way on how children learn to write. In the approach of the work, the author talks about the children in the process of initial learning of their writings, how they think and express their comprehension formats while discovering the systematic social code of alphabetic writing. The child goes through this moment in his school life



when he is at the beginning of literacy, he formulates the writing hypotheses, advancing in the process through the mediation of his teachers in the phases and hypotheses of writing until they understand the formal writing system established in society.

The invention of writing was a historical process of constructing a system of representation, not a process of codification. Once constructed, one might think that the representation system is learned by new users as a coding system. However, this is not the case. In the case of the two systems involved in the beginning of schooling (the system of representation of numbers and the system of representation of language), the difficulties that children face are conceptual difficulties similar to those of the construction of the system and therefore it can be said, in both cases, that the child reinvents these systems. (FERREIRO, 2011, p. 17)

In literacy, the teacher looks for in the child his/her learning phase, the one he/she is experiencing, which writing hypotheses she is expressing in his/her notes to identify how the pedagogical intervention with the child will be, in this way the teacher helps her students to advance in these phases, to reach the next stage, going from one writing hypothesis to another. During this transition phase, for the child there is difficulty in understanding the system and to overcome this moment of not mastering the code, the child reinvents writing as he understands it. To represent the words, the child writes in his own way, within the studies of the author Ferreiro and Teberosky, the child creates and recreates the writing in a process prior to the mastery of the socially constructed alphabetic system, which the child is learning.

While the children create their way of writing, in this process of reinvention of writing, the child in his way of writing uses quantitative and qualitative axes, following Ferreiro's speech in "*Reflections on Literacy*" (2000). In the forms of writing of a child during the initial phase of reading and writing, the author refers to the quantitative axis, in which the child in the literacy process can use the variation of the number of letters to differentiate one word from another, for example. And as for the qualitative axis, the child distinguishes his writing by changing the letters he knows, varying the position of the letters he remembers and wants to use.

The child, when writing as he understands the formalized code, although he does not yet have mastery of the writing system, offers to the literacy teacher his real identity of the moment and phase of the writing hypothesis that he is experiencing, so the teacher can follow the phases of her students to plan activities as the child can perform, adapting the subsequent classes and mediating so that their students advance in the phases and hypotheses of writing during the learning of the literacy process. According to the writings of Emília Ferreiro (2011), when the child is being taught to read and write, he writes as he believes it should be done, and it is in this way of thinking about the writing of words that we will analyze and find the interpretation, the reading of the literate world that the child is building.



Children do not use their intellectual efforts to invent new letters: they take the form of society's letters and adopt them as they are. On the other hand, the children dedicate a great deal of intellectual effort to the construction of forms of differentiation between the writings and this is what characterizes the following period." (BLACKSMITH, 2011)

The literacy teacher will be appropriating such an interpretation and evaluating in which moment of writing experience the child is. Subsequently, the teacher has the opportunity to offer lessons and activities for the children that challenge them to continue thinking and interpreting the code of social writing that we want the children to appropriate. In the literacy process, with this proposal presented by the author Emília Ferreiro, the child is a participant in the construction of his/her learning, the child is the author. She, the child acts during the process, because she thinks about the construction of writing, represents in writing her way of understanding and comprehending the system, because it will be precisely in this circumstance that the teacher makes the intervention, helping the child to reinvent writing again. Progressing gradually, the child makes new reasoning about writing, experiences his moments of reconstruction of learning to write the code of the alphabetic writing system, advancing in the phases of writing hypotheses, until reaching the stage of understanding the code of our language as it was established in society.

Smolka (2003) presents in his work a defense in which the child writes with the child does not merely memorize letters and phonemes to make copies, the child thinks about the text, about the construction of the word, creates and applies his knowledge,

It does not merely copy or repeat, but it processes, elaborates this knowledge dynamically, discursively. And this happens at every step, at every moment of writing: the child "writes" in different ways at different moments of the same text.

The construction of the child's writing needs to be the main point of the literacy process. In traditional literacy methods, the child's writing is ignored and seen as an error, because the cognitive evolution of the child's writing is not recognized, the decoding of syllables is paramount, the child is not recognized as an author in his literacy process, the teacher loses the role of acting as a mediator and intervenor in the phases experienced by the child while reinventing the writing system of the language. In the literacy of children in the first years of schooling, the writing hypotheses that Ferreiro presented to us are of immense relevance that the literacy teacher knows, studies and identifies them in the writings of her students. Identifying the stages experienced by children is essential in the pedagogical work of the literacy teacher, so that she can plan and intervene in order to favor advances in the learning of the alphabetic system of language writing by children.

In Ferreiro's speech, he clarifies that the traditional way does not value the child's writing as it is, how it is done, how it is thought about writing, all the childish construction is ignored (FERREIRO, 2011). In the book "*The Psychogenesis of Written Language*" (1985), by the authors Ana Teberosky and Emília Ferreiro, he presents the writing hypotheses that children experience



during the process of acquisition and appropriation of the language writing system. In "*Reflections on Literacy*" (2000) by Emília Ferreiro, the author discusses children's literacy, their writings elaborated within the writing hypotheses experienced by children during the acquisition of the alphabetic system of language writing. The hypotheses of writing based on the works that Emília Ferreiro presents to us are: pre-syllabic, syllabic, and alphabetic.

THE WRITING HYPOTHESES

According to Emília Ferreiro's work, we will have three periods in which there are multiple views on the construction of children in relation to the alphabetic writing system, about these periods the author refers to three moments: in the first moment, the distinction between the iconic and the non-iconic mode; in the second, the construction of ways of differentiating in qualitative and quantitative axes; and in the last, the phonetization of writing, which began in the syllabic period.

"[...] • distinguishing between iconic and non-iconic mode of representation; • the construction of forms of differentiation (progressive control of variations on the qualitative and quantitative axes);

• the phonetization of writing (which begins with a syllabic period and culminates in the alphabetic period)." (BLACKSMITH, 2011)

In Ferreiro's texts, the reader is presented with the hypotheses of writings elaborated by the children during the learning phase of the acquisition and mastery of the alphabetic system of writing. Teachers who work in the early years of schooling work with children researching these hypotheses of children's writing and investing in advances from one hypothesis to another, in order for children to become fully literate. In my classroom experience teaching literacy in public schools, I have noticed and observed some practices and understandings that I come to report here in this document. The writing hypotheses that schools work on are: pre-syllabic, syllabic and alphabetic. In the syllabic phase, children express in their writings the understanding that words are structured by syllables, representing an element for each syllable, and we will perceive the sound value with emphasis on vowels or consonants, sometimes alternating one or another, or even without the sound value. In pre-syllabic, the child does not yet make a syllabic association in his writings, he makes representative records about his written way of communicating using drawings, letters, numbers. And in the alphabetical stage, the child demonstrates that he has begun to understand the system as it was socially established. The children act out their way of understanding in writing and the literacy teacher does the reading.

Pre-syllabic





Figure 1 shows the so-called diagnosis made in February 2022 in the class where I conducted the research. This material was made by A1. Here I understand the child in pre-syllabic writing hypothesis. A1 used drawings to represent words. We made toy list and then the dictation. The words of the saying were:

1- BALL; 2- DOLL; 3- ROPE; 4- HOPS; 5 – SKATE.

Syllabic

In this activity, we have student A2 (figure 2), who was elected class representative. Activity was done in February 2022. Here, I understand the student transitioning from pre-syllabic to syllabic. We made toy list and then the dictation. The words of the diagnostic saying were:

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Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 show the writings of children A2, A3, A4 and A5, respectively, both from the same class in which I carried out the research. These activities were carried out in April 2022. Each child has their own characteristic of understanding writing, in these writings I understand that all of them are experiencing the phase of the syllabic hypothesis, but in their own circumstances. A4 (figure 5) uses vowels when writing BALA, searches for consonants and vowels in the other words demonstrating sound perception, in this case I understand that the student is in the syllabic phase starting the sound value in vowels and consonants. In my understanding of the writing hypotheses, A3 (figure 4) shows that the syllabic phase with sound value in the vowels is initiated. A5 (figure 6) indicates in its writing that it is in the syllabic-alphabetic stage. And A2 (figure 3) appears again with the words of the dictation in April, she is using a larger number of letters to write the words.

It is interesting to note the cuts that the child makes in his writing and how he uses the knowledge he already has of the conventional to mark the flow of thought. The child does not merely "record" phonemes and graphemes, does not merely copy or repeat, but he processes, elaborates this knowledge dynamically, discursively. And this happens at every step, at every moment of writing: the child "writes" in different ways at different moments of the same text. (SMOLKA, 2003)

In this context, it was evident the children's effort to write the words, how the letters are available, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, reinventing the writing code in a process that precedes the acquisition of mastery of the socially formalized alphabetic writing system. The words I used in the dictation came from stories told, and from the context lived in the classroom, the books worked on were "*ONCE UPON A TIME A CHESS CAT"* by Bia Villela and "*O TUPI QUE VOCÊ FALA"* by Claudio Fragata. The words of the saying in April were:

1-BULLET; 2-BLUE CAT; 3- BRAZIL; 4- JABUTICABA; 5- I AM HAPPY.

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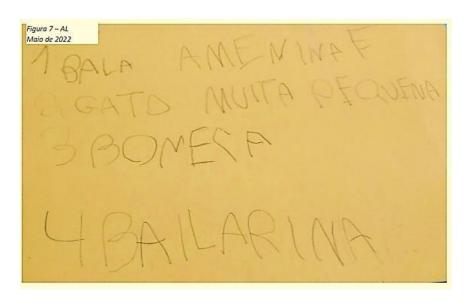
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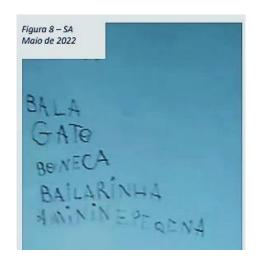
Alphabetical

I understand the alphabetic hypothesis stage as the phase in which the child begins to include vowels and consonants in his writings, linking letters and appropriate sounding, in which the child at the beginning of this phase will be able to use and exchange letters for similarities of sounds or tracing. These exchanges are variations that the child will be instigated to perceive by the pedagogical intervention in the classroom as they walk through the process of learning to read and write. In the following figures, I present two children from class 301 who I assess at this moment are experiencing the alphabetic phase due to their writings described in the activities in May 2022: A6 (figure 7) and A7 (figure 8). From the writing presented, A6 shows that it is orthographic alphabetic, with no spelling errors. A7 is writing as he speaks. I have the perception that A7 presents itself in a transition phase from syllabic-alphabetic to alphabetic. The words are in the context of the lessons held in the classroom. Among the tasks carried out, we studied the poem by Cecilia Meireles " *The Ballerina*". The words of the saying in May, were:

1-BULLET; 2- CAT; 3-DOLL; 4- BALLERINA; 5- THE GIRL IS SMALL.







In this item of the work I demonstrated some of the tasks that all literacy teachers have done in the classroom, searching for information, investigating their students, identifying their writings in order to create opportunities in which children can acquire and appropriate the socially conventionalized alphabetic writing system.

LITERACY AND LITERACY

Literacy comprises the practice of reading and writing, in these circumstances the literacy teacher provides opportunities for situations in which writing has meaning for the child. And reading needs to be practiced by the child, who needs access to different types of texts with varying textual genres. And in this regard, the practice of reading has relevance as it occurs in school and outside of it. For the child of a family who has the financial conditions and the awareness to allow literacy at home, the practices lived in this context must be a facilitator in the work of the literacy teacher in the classroom and at school. The social and economic issue evidences in the children's school life the possibility of a positive or non-positive contribution to the children's initial literacy process. Literacy



accompanies the literacy process at all times, and the social issue reflects from the first steps of our children's school life. In Magda Soares' work "*Literacy and Literacy" (2018)*, the author recognizes the social difficulties that students experience and how these portray in their lives since literacy. It clarifies that literacy dedicates to accesses that are not always allowed to those included in low income, because they do not have the conditions, and it occurs that these groups maintain themselves in levels of literacy of inequality due to different social issues among children of literacy age.

However, it can be inferred from all that has been said that the level of literacy of social groups is fundamentally related to their social, cultural and economic conditions. There must therefore be conditions for literacy. A first condition is that there is real and effective schooling of the population (...)." (SOARES, 2018)

However, in the (public) school, the literacy teacher in a public school will not wait for a fair and egalitarian society so that all children are in full socioeconomic conditions to practice literacy and literacy. The literacy teacher in the public school works for the student with what she has, and thus provides her students with activities that involve literacy with literacy through the possible and accessible collection. All children are capable of learning. Literacy will be achieved with the material we have, with accessible conditions through the search, to be presented and used in the public school classroom, in order to teach literacy with literacy. And literacy will be practiced with what we are able to seek and bring to class in public schools. This has been the case in public school classrooms in underserved communities.

The fact that we have awakened to the phenomenon of literacy - that we are incorporating this word into our educational vocabulary - means that we already understand that our problem is not only to teach reading and writing, but also, and above all, to lead individuals – children and adults – to make use of reading and writing, to engage in social practices of reading and writing. (SOARES, 2003)

In the studies of the author SMOLKA (2003) in "*The child in the initial phase of writing: Literacy as a discursive process*" we find the work of literacy and literacy in which children's writing has been encouraged and used with relevance. The functionality of writing being used by the child in the classroom, at school, valuing the child's authorship at this moment when they are learning to read and write. The literacy teacher analyzes the child's writing for the purpose of current cognitive assessment of the child who is in the process of learning to master and acquire the social alphabetic writing system. In SMOLKA's work, the child is not being the recipient of school content in order to be literate at the time determined by an adult. The child is a being who thinks, who develops his ideas about the world and about writing, and the literacy teacher has the property of interceding, interfering in order to provide the opportunity for the child to walk the path of literacy and literacy in his school life during the present moment of the process of acquiring the social code of writing. While the child



is writing, inventing, asking, imitating, copying, combining, learning is built, and the child is appropriating the alphabetic system of social writing.

EXPERIENCE REPORTS

The child learns to read and write by engaging in literacy activities, that is, reading and producing real texts and social practices of reading and writing. (SOARES, 2021)

My name is Auriceli, I have been a teacher for a few years, today I am 47 years old and I am teaching in a third year class of Elementary School I of Basic Education, class 301 at the Municipal School Professor Carmen Corrêa de Carvalho Reis Bráz which is located in the Santa Lúcia neighborhood, in Imbariê, third district of the city of Duque de Caxias, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. I am a teacher and I joined the municipal network of Duque de Caxias in 1998, I have been working at this school since 2019, but I met the school in 2014. I have been following the 301 class since the first year of schooling, they were my students in 2020, the year of the covid-19 pandemic, and during this period the service was entirely through facebook. In October 2020, we had an irreparable loss, one of our class students died in a train accident in Saracuruna, at the age of six he was one of the little ones. During the pandemic, very few students had access to the internet to follow up with their parents through the social network, so very few students were able to participate in classes. When we started distributing printed handouts with activities for everyone, the children were finally able to have access to the study material.

In 2021, the school returned to face-to-face activities, but teachers who still had a vulnerable health situation remained in remote work, and so I remained until September when I was able to take the third dose of vaccine against covid-19, due to the diabetes that has been accompanying me for a few years. By a misfortune or negligence of rulers, our school had an accident, the plaster of the ceiling and walls of the school began to fall and it was very scary, during the incident there was no one inside the school. Due to what happened in 2021, the school suspended classes for all students and began to attend remotely until the necessary works on the building were completed so that we could return to the building safely. When I returned in September, the school was still under construction and my class, which at the time was the second year of schooling, remained with remote classes. In February 2022, I was able to return to the classes and being vaccinated against covid-19. I was starting the not easy task of teaching literacy to the class that had been without face-to-face activities for two years.

We have many difficulties, mishaps and confrontations that still need to be overcome. Class 301 has 22 students enrolled and attending assiduously, among these children we have a p.c.d. girl,



she is a wheelchair user with multiple physical and cognitive difficulties. My primary concern is to keep the focus on teaching literacy to the children of class 301, I have been looking for alternative texts that have affinity with the children's universe, stories that are from the children's world so that children are interested in reading and writing. During the month of February we did some work to socialize again in this return to face-to-face, and among the activities that I have presented I have included the first name where they cut letters and paste them assembling their name, the name of their colleague, to build the word, presenting the letters of the alphabet in their own name and in the name of their colleagues. The activity is interested in finding letter by letter of each word that is being written and transcribed by means of cut-out collage. In March and April 2022 I have been doing self-dictations with them where I present figures and images whose names are words of interest to them, to their children. The cut-and-paste tasks continued, in these proposals they need to find the letters they are looking for and associate them in the position they expect, a challenge for them.

In their writing activities I try to select some for diagnosis, I periodically perform the dictation diagnosis where I use some words that we are working on in class, I look for writings that have contextualization with the situations and stories that we are experiencing in the classroom. I always work on stories, I read children's storybooks to the class, we transcribe in notebooks excerpts from poems, passages from stories that belong to the children's world. I'm noticing that children are building their hypotheses, their ways of understanding and writing the word they're being provoked to write. We arrived in May 2022, today there are in the class of 22 children, 10 who are alphabetical and alphabetical syllakhs, 9 who are syllabic with sound value, of these most have sound value in vowels, 2 syllabic without sound value and 1 pre-syllabic. In this group of students we have reading children who are reading any text fluently, there are students that the family has put in an explainer and the child arrives in the classroom syllabaging the words without identifying and interpreting what the syllable. For these cases, I have been working literacy, constantly. One of the activities I do is to read the word together with the child, because reading is interpreting, reading is understanding the name of who and what is written. I always read with them, until I identify which word we are reading, and what reading actually is, because the word is something that exists, a word is the name of someone or something, a word is not "singing" a repetition of 'little pieces' (letters and syllables). These tasks carried out in the classroom have experienced positive results with the children.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used is bibliographic research whose theoretical survey was based on books, scientific articles and materials available on the *internet*. This type of research provides the necessary support for any type of study.

According to Fonseca (2002, p. 32), the bibliographic research:



It is based on the survey of theoretical references already analyzed, and published by written and electronic means, such as books, scientific articles, web site pages. Any scientific work begins with a bibliographic search, which allows the researcher to know what has already been studied on the subject. There are, however, scientific researches that are based solely on bibliographic research, looking for published theoretical references in order to collect information or prior knowledge about the problem to which the answer is sought.

Thus, the methodology used aims to collect relevant information that collaborates with reflections and discussions on "the literacy process of children in the early years of schooling". Along with the bibliographic research, a brief report of experiences was made to complement the studies carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research carried out that I present in this document is interested in demonstrating the initial literacy of children in the first years of schooling, how the child understands writing, how he creates, invents and reinvents the structure of the alphabetic code while learning, demonstrating his writing hypotheses within the studies of the authors Emília Ferreiro, Ana Smolka and Magda Soares. In this process, the literacy teacher of the public school works with perception, observes, records, analyzes, evaluates, uses previous knowledge analyzing and evaluating the written material that is produced by the children, inserts with the intervention providing possible ways for children to become literate and have access to literacy. In the text, I argue that the child is the author of his learning, because he constantly resorts with his knowledge, which he is proceeding from knowledge that he builds in the investigation of thinking and creating the writing of the words that are provoked to write. The children's knowledge is being analyzed at every glance of the teacher. And in this context, the teacher plays a valuable role in evaluation and planning, verifying and looking for opportunities for growth and discoveries during this journey during the learning process in acquiring the apprehension of the mastery of the alphabetic code of writing historically conventionalized in society.

The authors I sought to substantiate the research, Ferreiro, Soares and Smolka, tell us how much the social and economic issue of the children's families are factors of inference and conditioning in the students' school life. And I also include public schools in this problem that involves socioeconomic issues. How to work and study in a school that for years still has problems with running water? When there is a lack of water, the circumstances are inappropriate. Either there is no class or the class is half the time without water. Imagine learning and teaching without water at school. Not having water for drinking, washing hands, or for sanitary use. The school has finally been renovated, but the works are not yet finished. The school court, which is the space loved by all the students of the school, still has no deadline for the works to be completed. A social aggravating factor



has been urban violence, episodes of gunfire in the vicinity of the school leave everyone at risk of death, they affect the people who live and those who work in the place to fall ill due to depression, panic and other diseases, and in the occurrences of shootings they promote the emptying of classrooms in the school until the conflicts are resolved. This description is a brief account of the consequences of a society belonging to such an unequal and contradictory socio-economic context.

Through this research in education, I want to affirm that literacy teachers in public schools can teach literacy and that children can learn, that children are capable of being literate and learning with literacy as long as they have access to reading materials that are broad and enriching, whether in the classroom, at school, or at home, with their families. Children are interested in novelties and in literacy we can instigate them through curiosity despite all the adversities we experience in today's society.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This research allowed us to report and better understand the process of child literacy in the first years of schooling in public schools. It offered the possibility of reflecting on the mediating role of the literacy teacher. And to confirm that teachers can indeed provide opportunities for literacy with literacy for public school children. The constructions of the writing hypotheses were approached with the demonstration of writing productions of children in the literacy phase. The approach was contextualized based on the studies of Emília Ferreiro, Ana Smolka and Magda Soares. The need to exercise literacy together with literacy was made explicit during all the reflections in this document. The social issues experienced in poor communities were highlighted, and lead us to reflect on the social inequalities of human life and their consequences in the early days of the population's schooling since childhood.

In conclusion, the task of teaching literacy in public schools is not easy, the mishaps and confrontations are extreme, and hinder the teaching-learning progress of the children, the school and the teacher in their pedagogical role. The pedagogical work of analyzing, evaluating and planning will be of importance in literacy, the literacy teacher will be in constant training, updating herself on the ways of studying how the child understands the writing of the socially and historically conventionalized alphabetic system. With these studies, the teacher will look for possibilities to offer paths of success to her literacy students.

In conclusion, every child is capable of being literate, every teacher is able to teach literacy in public schools. And society as a whole has the property of facilitating possible and accessible paths in favor of public education, guaranteeing literacy with literacy to every Brazilian child.



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