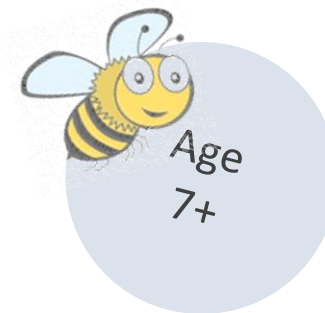


The story of Louis Braille – a reading project



Context:

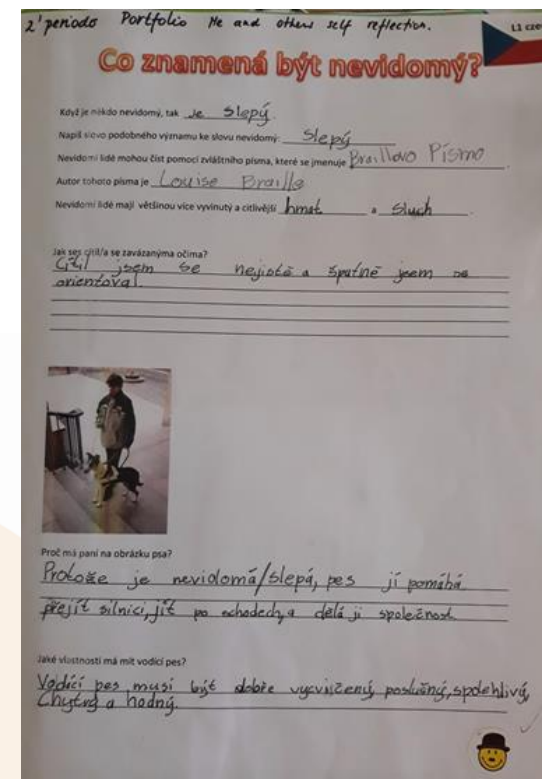
- The activity takes place in a European School (ES) in Varese (Lombardy, Northern Italy, www.eurscva.eu). The ES are multicultural and multilingual institutions providing children from different EU countries with education in their mother tongue, in addition to the language of schooling and other foreign languages. Most of the Czech children study in the Italian language section and their language of schooling is Italian. Every week they have some lessons of the Czech language, which is supported as much as possible by relying on the linguistic potential of each child.

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- Children's vocabulary and communication skills need to be supported because they do not live in the Czech-speaking environment. This cross-curricular project is the spontaneous result of discussing synonyms of the word 'blind'. The aim of this activity is to make children empathise with the situation of people who are visually impaired; to understand that with this disability it is possible to read and write; and to familiarise them with Braille writing. **Children are exposed to the idea that there are many different ways to communicate.** The project not only supports reading, development of vocabulary and communication skills, but also makes children sensitive to different ways of communication.

Description (1):

- The teacher motivates the children by reading the true-life story of the little boy and the man who invented the method of writing used by visually impaired people. The discussion that follows focusses on the five senses and everyday situations that visually impaired people have to face. Children discuss possibilities of how to help visually impaired people live normal lives and be valued members of the community. They speak about dogs trained to accompany visually impaired people and read a passage of the book *The Dog Rescuers*.

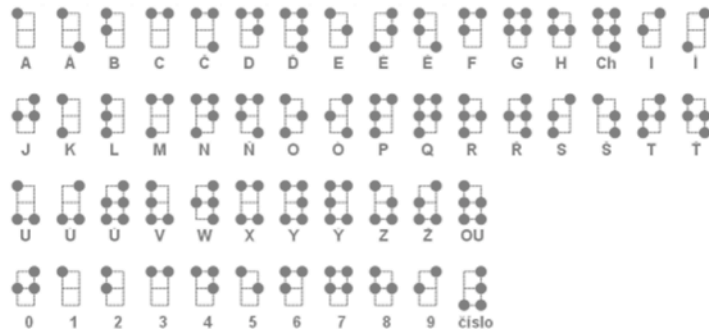


Description (2):

- Children try to walk around the class with closed eyes, work together to lead their 'visually impaired' peers and discover a route together. They are asked to look for packages with the Braille Alphabet that can usually be found on cardboard medicine boxes (→ active and holistic language learning). Back in class, they try to read the Braille Alphabet from packages and compare the font with the alphabet card in class. They try to print the font by making holes according to the template.

Comment:

- What is inspiring about this activity? Choosing a topic that is interesting for children while also supporting cross-curricular activities and holistic language learning.



References:

- Anthony Joynes (2018): The Dog Rescuers. Heartwarming true 'tails' of rescue, recovery and re-homing. Bantam Press. ISBN 978-0593080405

