

The Educational Model for Early Childhood Centres in Barcelona

COMMUNITY

CONNECTIONS

INCLUSION

EQUALITY

RIGHTS

EDUCATION

RESPECT

Ajuntament de
Barcelona





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Presentation

The social, economic, and family changes of the past ten years have made their mark on the world of education, creating new challenges for designing education policies in the city, and highlighting the need to recognise the importance of the early years of a person's life. For this reason, the Municipal Institute of Education of Barcelona (IMEB) began the participative process “Enhancing education and early childhood” during the 2017-2018 school year.

The objective of this process was to share the analysis of the current situation with stakeholders working with children aged 0 to 6 in the educational, social, and health fields, and with families, providing them with a vision of a future in which opportunities that improve educational and social care continue to be created for children in early childhood and their families.

One of the most important pillars of this process was the agreement to review and update the existing educational model, both in terms of content and using language that is free from stereotypes. This analysis and debate has meant the opportunity for collective reflection and exchange between professionals working in municipal nursery schools, lending value and visibility to their shared experience. With this, the relevance of the principles underpinning the schools' educational model took the spotlight. This is a successful model based on the following:

- The clearly formative nature of the pre-school years.
- The strength in guaranteeing quality institutional attention to redress inequalities between children, especially to make up for inequalities which are a consequence of social conditions in which children grow up and develop.
- The configuration of a nursery school as a space where personal relationships based on respect and co-responsibility are the key element for emphasising inclusion and co-existence.
- Teamwork between the group of professionals as a guarantor of educational quality and as a condition favouring professional improvement.

The agreements from the debate have enabled the essence of the previous model to be maintained, while emphasising and giving greater relevance to the following factors:

- Full confidence in the capabilities of each and every child and in their possibilities for development.
- Adults that support them from a place of respect for individuality and the choice of each child, in a setting where there are clear, reasonable, and flexible rules.
- A distribution of spaces, selection of materials and organisation of time that encourage each child to play in a natural and spontaneous way.
- An organisation that offers a stable, regulated environment which, at the same time, is open and flexible enough to be adjusted when needed to meet the needs of every child and every family.
- An educational service that invites families to take part in the care and education of their sons and daughters on a daily basis, from a place of confidence in their abilities, empowering them in their roles as mothers and fathers.
- Enhancing the inclusive character of these services, from a perspective of socio-educational intervention.
- Emphasis on the autonomy of each centre to define their own educational programme based on the strengths and weaknesses of each geographic area and the consensus of each educational community.
- Greater involvement of professionals in regional networks, with a clear intention to work as a community.



This document is a publication aimed at the group of professionals and the families who are stakeholders in the nursery schools and family spaces. It is intended to generate reflection and discussion in the educational community and to advance collectively constructed, quality educational services.

Barcelona is an educating city, and the network of nursery schools and municipal family spaces are a key element in creating opportunities for the city's young children and their families.

Municipal Institute of Education
Barcelona City Council

Introduction

A child must be received with respect, educated with love, and finally, led to live in freedom.

Rudolf Steiner

One of Barcelona's identifying features is that of serving young children and their families, using this as a basis upon which to advance towards a more democratic, equal, and inclusive city that meets the needs of the cultural, economic, and social diversity that it harbours.

These features were already compiled in 2005, in the document *The Educational Model for Nursery Schools in Barcelona*, written with participation from the community of nursery school professionals.

Fourteen years later, with the aim of ensuring early childhood educational services adapt to social changes, the evolution of pedagogic debate, and emerging family needs, this educational model is to be updated.



The decision to update it was made with the intention of defining improvements that would enable us to continue guaranteeing, from the very first years of life, harmonious care and development for children and respectful support for their families.

The approach adopted has involved the collaboration of professionals from all the municipal nursery schools and has also been a process of reflection and analysis for public sector and municipal agents who are in charge of the city's young children. This review process brought together the experience, history, and knowledge gleaned from many years of work.

This document sets out the reference framework that defines the educational criteria for the municipal nursery schools of Barcelona, that share some proposals that are first discussed at each educational centre, in order to later build a common consensus of the key principles that comprise said framework. It is for this reason that we are able to talk about the educational model of municipal nursery schools.

Educational services aimed at young children are deeply rooted in each geographic area, and the educational programme of each is based on some basic pillars of the model, which are adapted according to the needs and opportunities of the particular environment.

With this document, the professionals, families, and general public are made aware of the educational offer for young children provided by Barcelona's educational services. Educational action in the first cycle of pre-school education is regulated by various laws and ordinances defined in different areas, both in general for children as a whole and also specifically for young children. Below, some of the most relevant regulations are mentioned, although we must remember that there is a much broader repertoire of legal references:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989 and ratified by the Catalan Parliament in Ruling 194/III, dated 7 March 1991, which defines the following:

The States Parties agree that education must be directed towards the development of the individual and the child's abilities in order to prepare them for an active adult life. They must also be taught respect for the fundamental human rights, respect for their parents, their language and their natural environment, and respect for cultural and national values, both their own and that of other civilizations.

- The current legislation in Catalonia, Law 12/2009, dated 10 July, regulating education (LEC), especially chapter II "General education scheme", specifically, article 56.2, in which the pre-school stage of education is defined, along with the official documents that currently regulate this stage and each of its two cycles. It also includes considerations for the first cycle of pre-school education.

- The publications Curriculum and Guidelines. Pre-school Education, first cycle (Department of Education, 2012) and Curriculum and Guidelines. Pre-school Education, second cycle (Department of Education, 2016), edited by the Generalitat [regional government] of Catalonia, which outlines the most suitable course of action and offers guidance.

Early childhood education is fundamental to safeguarding rights and opportunities for children, ensuring their well-being and enriching their personal, social, cognitive, and emotional development in this first stage of life, which will greatly influence the rest of each child's life.

Young children and their families require diversified services and initiatives from care policy that can meet the different demands, offering quality solutions that do not discriminate in any way and guarantee equity as well as education in equality and respect for diversity.

Early childhood education is fundamental to safeguarding rights and opportunities of children

To this end, services are offered through a large network of more than 100 nursery schools distributed throughout the city's districts. In addition, the family space services and "Babies in the family setting" programme are being expanded, and there will be additional offerings such as workshops, parent groups, and talks.

The family space is an educational service integrated into the community network, aimed at families with children under three. It offers a setting for the well-being and growth of children and their families, and a space to play and socialise where children can explore and interact with other children and with adults. Families thus have the possibility of seeing the children in action, and they can share their experiences amongst themselves and with the professionals.

In the city of Barcelona, the nursery school and the family space, two complementary services, are being implemented in one combined space. This increases the possible ways the spaces can be used by families, based on their needs and interests. Together, the professionals that comprise the team aim to meet the social and educational needs that arise in an open, constantly changing city.

The purpose of this document is to raise awareness of the importance of offering a quality municipal service for young children and their families. At the same time, it is also a reference, one in which the different teams will find components to continue working on those aspects that allow them to adapt the general proposals of the model to the reality of each of the centres. It will also allow them to focus on reflection and analysis, for a specific time period, in order to later implement the improvements that each situation requires.



The identity of the littlest citizens

Childhood is not merely a preparatory phase for the future, but is a stage of life with its own values and culture, shaped by both children and adults.

Helena Buri and Areta Wasilewska-Gregorowicz

The pre-school years, in which children from zero to six years old are looked after, is a period with its own identity, made up of two cycles, from 0-3 and from 3-6. This period should be given priority by the education system and the authorities in charge, since it is fundamental to the development of individuals (Ortega-Ruiz, et al., 2018; Sharma and Cockerill, 2014).

Children are born with the ability to learn and adapt to their environment, whatever that may be. Through its own action, the brain changes and the nervous system configures itself based on the experiences encountered. Richness in these experiences will influence the neuronal connections it will establish, which allows children to better interpret the world around them (Garcia-Fernández and Bueno, 2017; Carballo and Portero, 2018).



Thus, starting at birth, a child is identified as a competent being, an active protagonist in their own development, a fully-fledged citizen with abilities, curiosities, a desire to learn and their own interests, with feelings and emotions, with knowledge and experiences that facilitate harmonious growth (Corkille, 2007).

The child is identified as a competent being, an active protagonist in their own development, a fully-fledged citizen with abilities, curiosities, a desire to learn and their own interests

Keeping these aspects in mind, the school is a place where the individuality of the child and their family is respected, where the overall growth of the child and their interaction with other children and with adults are fostered; this is the source of socialisation, individualisation, and cognitive and affective development.

The Barcelona municipal nursery school, living heritage of the city

A quality education is that which gives each child what they need. Education must be of a high quality, because if not, it doesn't respect the right of the child to be who they are.

For me, the participative school is a living, breathing school, where children, parents, and teachers live and co-exist together.

Marta Mata

Barcelona City Council's commitment to early years education started more than 80 years ago, when the first centres were opened during the Second Republic to meet needs that, at that time, were mostly charity and healthcare related. Starting in the seventies, the network of municipal services took on a more educational nature and was significantly expanded. Since 2002, in response to the growing demand from citizens, a construction process was begun for new nursery schools across all the districts of the city, which brought the number of these schools from 38 to the now more than 100 in the current network. This effort to create more places at schools has been accompanied by processes of debate to define the educational and architectural model that standardises how early years educational services (for children 0 to 3 and their families) are understood.

They are services that enjoy recognised prestige in the quality of their educational assistance and in their function as advocates for a culture where early years education is given the importance it deserves.



Nursery schools offer a safe and welcoming environment which is tailored to the needs of children and their families, offering educational experiences that foster their development and learning

The municipal nursery schools, along with the Department of Early Childhood Education at the Municipal Institute of Education (IMEB), ensure that young children and their families receive an adequate service. Children aged 0 to 3 find at the nursery schools an educational setting that adequately supports the developmental stage they are going through: the construction of their identity, as well as the creation of the basis of their personalities and what makes them different from the people around them.

The nursery schools offer a safe, welcoming environment that is adapted to the needs of children and their families, with a set of educational experiences that fosters development and learning. The design of the spaces and the way in which time, both individual and collective, is organised, along with a key worker, form the framework that guarantees a good ratio between development and learning for each child.

The schools are spaces for care, attention, and prevention when factors are detected that can alter the development of the children. Their inclusive character and the educational activity they carry out allow them to encompass detection and individual action, according to the needs of each child, as well as promote healthy attitudes and actions with the children's families. The Educational Team for Special Needs (EEAEN) at the IMEB, through collaboration with nursery schools, ensures that children with special needs receive quality attention that favours their positive development, in an inclusive environment.





In fact, one of the fundamental values of the nursery schools is to meet the needs of diverse individuals in an inclusive manner. Under this framework, equal opportunities are guaranteed, with the attitude that everyone can learn and make progress if they receive the right support and help, under the principles of universality and equality (Department of Education, 2016). Each centre has their own characteristics, needs, and resources to adapt this general principal to the real situation in which this task is carried out.

The educational function of the nursery schools is inseparable from the social function they also carry out, in which inequalities between children are counteracted as much as possible, especially those that are a consequence of social conditions under which children grow up and develop. In addition, the schools help reconcile family life and work life and they create a setting for the co-existence of the entire education community, since they play a very important role in the quality of the environment and in socialisation. Nursery schools prove to be close-knit educational communities where connections and relationships featuring constant dialogue are formed.

What is more, educational activity must incorporate a gender perspective and foster an approach that advances the construction of new identity models and achieves attitudes and dynamics that are neither sexist nor androcentric. The school must foster a level playing field, equal opportunities and equal possibilities for all children, regardless of their identity. Thus, any mentions of gender must avoid portraying cultural stereotypes that encourage exclusion of any kind.

The nursery school offers educational opportunities that foment active children. Planning with regard to time and the spaces must be flexible enough to be adapted to the different occasions and situations that can arise on a daily basis at the school, as well as to the changing needs of the children. Thus, it is important to look for various strategies to guarantee as far as possible individualised attention and a group dynamic that is compatible with this.

The setting for child development: daily life at the nursery school

Respect for the child as a person, as a unique being that establishes relationships and influences what happens in their environment. And, consequently, the value of the most individualised attention possible.

Emmi Pikler

Educating implies providing a setting that enhances the abilities of children so they can undergo a balanced and harmonious development, and thus be confident in what they can achieve.

Every situation that a child encounters influences their growth and encourages specific ways of perceiving the world. Their families, their environment, and the different situations they experience create the source of their development and learning patterns.

Nursery schools operate within a constructivist conception of education and learning (Wallon, 1965; Vygotski, 1979), in which the child is the protagonist immersed in a setting seen from a systematic perspective (Von Bertalanffy, 1968; Brontferbrenner, 1987; Traveset, 2008).



From this comprehensive viewpoint, the child is considered as a whole, favouring their comprehensive development and covering their basic needs for adaptation, food, rest, hygiene, affection, and socialisation. The process from an initial dependency to progressive autonomy is facilitated, along with the acquisition of personal habits and proper relationships with their environment.

All of this, while encouraging the most individual relationships possible, in which the child and the adult can both focus their attention on the same goal.

The school offers a rich, optimal educational environment so that the child learns by playing and interacting with others, with spaces and materials that are suited to the abilities and needs that each child displays. In this context, different contributions from learning theory and other disciplines related to the concept of the child, of how they learn in the early years, the role of the adult, and the principles of independence of the child and of an environment created with quality materials, are all points of reference. This setting generates initiative, curiosity, and discovery, which allows for relationships and interactions between peers and with adults, and thus creates a suitable space for socialisation.

The educational team ensures a caring and safe atmosphere, an experience-enabling environment that provides the child with stability and security and, therefore, favours development. In this respect, the creation of an emotional bond is essential and requires time, attention, and connection (Bowlby, 1988). Thus, when the child feels safe and attended to by an adult who is respectful and who is familiar with the characteristics of children of this age, play and discovery will occur constantly and will be significant, since play is the natural way that children independently learn and develop in the world they live in.



Independent activity encourages children to become aware of themselves, of their abilities and their limitations, and therefore, it is important to respect their neuropsychological maturity, foster independence, and give them emotional security (Chokler, n.d.; Wild, 2011). In this regard, diverse spaces and materials enhance independence, the acquisition of abilities, including the ability to think, initiative, and responsibility, as well as the ability to individually manage situations.

In the same way, as mentioned by Malaguzzi, the environment is considered the third educator; therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to aesthetic aspects, with quality materials, both specific and non-specific, that allow for personal affirmation, self-discovery, and building self-esteem, fundamental pillars for the psychological and physical well-being of the child. One example of this would be the treasure basket, suggested by Elinor Goldschmied, a referent in the use of natural, day-to-day, specific, and non-specific materials to favour discovery and experimentation among young children.

Play is the natural way that children learn and develop in the world they live in

Another key aspect in the day-to-day life of the nursery school is time management: waiting and observation, to give children the time they need to learn how to independently solve the challenges they encounter either on their own or with the support that they require. For this, establishing daily habits that are repeated in a coherent manner encourages the children to adjust their actions to the time sequence followed, allowing them to anticipate what comes next.

Some everyday situations, like mealtimes, nappy changes, dressing and undressing, washing their hands, and putting them down for a nap, among others, are moments of shared attention and of a close and individualised relationship. It is important to give these daily activities educational meaning, providing times and rituals that enhance them.

Spaces within the nursery schools where the day-to-day activities occur offer security and are well suited for children to play and move about freely, according to their developmental stage. Where possible, the spaces are made to be multi-purpose, open, and interconnected to make it easier for children to find what interests them, promoting play and the discovery of their day-to-day environment. This encourages them to act and experiment, both in interior and exterior spaces, where the children have more opportunities to be in contact with nature (Bilton, 2014).



It is important to give these daily activities educational meaning, providing times and rituals that enhance them

Moreover, peer interaction has a major impact on the socialisation process and on the acquisition of social skills and abilities. This occurs as they have to learn rules and limit their own actions, adapt their own behaviour in accordance with that of other children, accept other points of view and put their own into perspective, and come to agreements and find solutions to conflicts that, from time to time, all interactions can generate. In this regard, classic authors like Wallon and Vigotski already underscored the importance of peer interaction in cognitive, emotional, and social development. Children's curiosity grows as they engage in activities and interact with the social and cultural environment that surrounds them. Moreover, children construct interpretations of the reality they perceive and where they can express their desires and worries, their interests and joys, and also their fears, in a setting where they feel cared for and protected.

In day-to-day life at the nursery school, the different languages are present: body, verbal, musical, visual, mathematical, artistic, scientific, and audiovisual. These are means of expression and communication that allow for interaction with the environment and are fundamental when constructing and organising thoughts. At the same time, they are a way to have fun, to create, to get to know one another, and to learn.



Through the different languages, children can voice their needs, feelings, emotions, desires, realities, and fantasies. These languages allow children to get to know the world, communicate, and express themselves. The interrelation of the languages enriches their experiences and advances development towards more complex abstract activities.

Children discover and use the languages using a play-based and experimental approach, and with the interaction between their experiments and how their environment responds, they find new possibilities for expression and communication, becoming more independent and competent as they do so.

In this context, even though play and free movement are children's main activities, it is important to foster conversation, especially in situations of individual attention at playtime and while being cared for, and in situations where the child seeks to communicate with adults. Anticipating that the adult will carry out the actions that are done in the group will help the child to understand them and to participate. Putting it into words and interpreting intentions will make it easier for the child to learn how to function in their environment in a well-adjusted manner.

Situations where attention is given individually or in small groups allows for both interaction between the children and individual help and attention from the teacher. Thus, they have the opportunity to observe each child and give each the support and help they need.

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The nursery school and support for families

I don't teach anything. I only support individuals in their reflection, helping them to get to know both themselves and their toddlers. It's about sharing experiences, not judging.

Carme Thió

Family is considered to not only be the first reference point in the life and education of children, but also the most relevant for each of them, as mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the European Recommendation Rec (2006)19 of the Committee of Ministers (2006). Furthermore, scientific evidence provides data on the importance of family involvement in the proper development and educational achievement of children and adolescents (Blanch, Gimeno and Careta, 2016; Blasco, 2018).

The family, then, plays the main structuring role in a child's life. This is the reason why educational services must gear their actions towards the family as a whole and try to engage them. The well-being of the child and the well-being of the adult caring for them are intrinsically interlinked (Salvador, 2009).

The schools, within the framework of their educational programme, write the plan to communicate with families, which details how reception and support will be carried out during their son or daughter's time at the school. This plan aims to determine the different actions, always ensuring that the set of relationships that it establishes are based on the trust, recognition, and respect that each party involved develops for the other, knowing that they share a common objective: the well-being and optimal development of the child. In this communication plan, moments requiring special attention are identified. One of these moments is separation during the settling-in period, in which everyone- children, families, and teachers, need time to adapt to the new setting.

Adjustment is a critically important time for the families to feel good, welcomed, and for them to trust the place where they are leaving their children. This is why it is so important to give each family the time they need to develop trust in the school (Ramis, 2016).

The family, then, plays the main structuring role in a child's life. This is the reason why educational services must gear their actions towards the family as a whole

The actions planned for incorporating families into their children's school life are defined by each school, following some common guidelines on how to carefully support each family from their first contact with the nursery school and on the first visit they make. In order to engage all of the families, the actions must be varied and adapted to the needs and characteristics of each family (Gallagher, et al., 2018).

Daily contact allows for immediate communication, and providing them with the information needed is supplemented by other, more formal and structured, methods of exchange, such as initial and follow-up group meetings and individual meetings with each family (Intxausti, 2014). In addition, a report is produced and given to families at the end of the school year; this is written from a viewpoint that generates positive expectations of the child's development and their abilities and opportunities for change. Meet-ups between families are also encouraged, to create a support network and to share doubts, unease, experiences, and joys.

Direct relationships in the form of meetings are a key element to welcome and communicate with families throughout the school year. These encounters will be held as often as deemed necessary and with enough advance notice to provide peace of mind.

Flexibility should be of the utmost importance in these contacts and in organising them, as regards timetables, places, and the individuals who receive the family. Each family represents a particular reality, sometimes coming from different cultures, and each has an individual parenting style. They are all welcomed, embracing their unique features and considering diversity as an aspect that enriches life at the school. This also enhances and places value on the work of the main teacher, who conveys confidence and security in what they do, supporting them at all times and providing them with guidance if they ask for it.



The nursery school is an open, welcoming place, and families are there to be able to share the task of raising their children. It is a space of trust, where exchange and mutual understanding is facilitated based on respect. This should all be done while the importance of their parental role is affirmed, promoting a constructive relationship between the two settings to optimise the development of the children. This requires attitudes of respect and acceptance of differences, the capacity for empathy, and knowing how to listen. Relationships and dialogue between families must be encouraged; they should know and place value on their educational work, and convey the work of the teachers at the nursery school.

Families are instilled with a sense of security and confidence in their skills and abilities as parents, guaranteeing flexibility and modulation to meet their needs and that of their sons and daughters.

The participation of families in the nursery school is crucial, both in daily, informal interactions and in their more systematic involvement in certain projects, tasks, or events at the school. Not only can they make specific contributions, they also have the opportunity to see their children in a different setting, with other adults interacting with them in various ways. The nursery schools allow families to regularly visit the spaces, which allows them to see what their children are experiencing on a daily basis at the centre.

The collective participation of families in the municipal nursery schools is channelled through the Association of Families and the School Board, made up of families, teachers, and city representatives, which studies and approves proposals related to the different areas of educational management and administration.

Empathy, respect, listening, understanding, and the acceptance of reality are the parameters which should define the relationships between families and the school, to guarantee the children's well-being.

The team of professionals at the nursery school

The team is like a pot where all of the projects designed, the goals envisioned, the guiding principals, the hopes of each person, the desires of the group, and the results obtained, are cooked together, all those things which make a school a living entity in constant motion (like a broth being cooked). You have to keep an eye on the pot. You have to take care of the team. .

Xavier Gimeno

Professionals at the nursery schools have received specific training for caring for children aged 0 to 3 years old in a caring manner and with a close, warm, contained, and thoughtful attitude. They are professionals capable of establishing bonds with the children, their families, the team, and the community, as well as with other areas of the children's lives. The term professionals refers to all the adults that comprise the nursery school's team, including the managers and the teachers, and all individuals who support each and every situation occurring in the day-to-day lives of the children and their families.

Teamwork and professional well-being require clear, shared objectives, a collective sense of responsibility, mutual respect, and the ability to face problems and foster initiatives for innovation and improvement

These connections are created based on being present, providing attention, being available, showing empathy, as well as individual solutions, affection, trust, respect, and flexibility.

Due to the particular nature of the youngest children, educators base their educational activity on observation and reflection, the analysis of the situations that arise, looking for different ways of solving issues, consensus, decision-making, active listening, and direct action.

Their educational roles are: planning and organising the educational environment, fostering the development of the children's abilities based on their pedagogical observations, actions, and reflections, supporting the children's activities, and observing and documenting the relevant educational situations (De Castro, 2013).

Another basic function they carry out is paying attention to and detecting the children's individual needs in order to meet the demands of each situation, aiming to create an environment in which the children find a solid base of confidence, approval, and support. Based on this security and confidence, children will be able to carry out their activities and, as long as the treatment received and attitudes of the adults exude confidence in their abilities, the construction of a positive and well-adjusted self-concept will be fomented.

The educational intervention of each teacher is in accordance with the educational programme drawn up by the entire team of professionals. Working as a team guarantees a quality education that is based on establishing and agreeing on the educational and organisational content. A quality educational intervention is one that is differentiated, agreed upon, governed by well-established criteria, consistent, and coordinated. Collaborative work between different professionals, each within their own area of responsibility, provides circumstances under which quality educational action is empowered. Thus, teamwork fosters professional improvement, given that the analysis and discussion undertaken are likely to provide new criteria and insights which can be applied in practice, in a shared and well-reasoned manner.

In this context, the documentation process takes on a leading role in collecting data, demonstrating information, reflection, and debate on the development of children, their interests, and the spaces and materials at their disposal, among others (Regional Network for Early Childhood Education in Catalonia, 2016). Documentation not only facilitates reflection and improvement in educational practices among the professionals at the school, it also makes the importance of the life stage and some relevant aspects of life at the educational centre visible (Alasuutari, Markström and Vallberg-Roth, 2014).



Teamwork and professional well-being require clear, shared objectives, a collective sense of responsibility, mutual respect, and the ability to tackle problems and foster initiatives for innovation and improvement. The importance of collaborative work is a value in itself, since it reinforces trust among the team at the school and helps establish foundations for communication, respect, and recognition. This allows the strengths and areas requiring improvement to be shared with everyone in the team. In order for this team dynamic to be as envisaged, there must be leadership that everyone recognises and which helps to create a good environment for human interactions in the school.

To this end, in the organisation of the nursery schools, sufficient time for the team to meet is guaranteed, so that the professionals can coordinate and have spaces available for supervision and ongoing training. These opportunities available to the nursery school professionals bring forth improvements in educational action. Ongoing training is necessary to be able to share, delve deeper, debate, and broaden perspectives on different aspects related to education and to personal growth.

This way, through common areas for the team and training carried out, the school's projects can be reviewed, since they are living, dynamic projects that are drawn up, reviewed, and updated based on everyday experiences and the team's ability to talk about and think about them.

The nursery school and the community, a network of relationships

To provide education in today's world, it is crucial to have a network between families, teachers, and the community. No one can educate in isolation. Educating today is so complex that everyone is needed in this educational network and every participant requires the help of the others.

Antoni Tort and Jordi Collet

In order to improve educational action, commitment and cooperation from all of the different social players in the city is required. The school must establish the necessary links with the surrounding area, to reinforce relationships between the school and the educational, social, and health services and centres with which it requires fluid contact to ensure adequate support for children and families, creating networks for prevention, support, monitoring, and optimisation of resources. These networks allow professionals to share knowledge, agree on joint actions, and make the actions of each service consistent.

Early childhood is a key period for detection, prevention, and guidance for the specific needs of children and their families. This task is undertaken in a coordinated manner across the different childhood services, in accordance with their individual capacities, to guarantee the maximum opportunities for educational and social success.



Conditions must be created that allow the relationships and mutual understanding to be consolidated between the school and the bodies that also play a role in early childhood. Appropriate attention —especially when dealing with populations that, for whatever reason, find themselves in situations of greater need— requires the establishment of coordinated and sustained actions that provide the necessary support to the teachers who are responsible for educating the children at the school.

The government promotes the strengthening of the relationship between the nursery schools and the EEAEN through the Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Teams (EIPI), the Centre for Child Development and Early Intervention (CDIAP), the social services (SS) in the neighbourhood, the Psycho-pedagogical Support Teams (EAP), the Educational Resource Centres for the Hearing Impaired (CREDA), and other specific services, such as the Family Guidance and Support Service (SOAF), especially to provide services to children who need specific kinds of attention for their development and who need support from every area. Coordinated work between the nursery school team, these professionals, and the families contributes to creating a school that is fully inclusive.

The government also encourages the coordination of the pre-school years (from 0 to 6) with schooling in differentiated centres (nursery schools and kindergartens), to give identity, recognition, and continuity to the development process of children of these ages. It also promotes transition processes and mutual understanding between educational institutions that serve the same children and their families.



Certain collaborative-work experiences have proven to be enriching and transformational when providing consistency in this 0-6 age period and in the natural pathways for children in some neighbourhoods. There are nursery schools and primary schools that coordinate to carry out joint activities, and sometimes they undertake joint projects. Thus, in the 21st century, it is crucial to educate while enhancing the relationships between the school, the families, and the community (Tort and Collet, 2017).

Based on this mutual understanding and joint effort, insights emerge that make us reconsider both day-to-day aspects (timetables, furniture, ways of organising the spaces, etc.), and more profound ones (the concept of learning, the child as a protagonist, the participation of families, etc.) that provoke powerful and relevant changes in educational centres for both cycles.

Early childhood is a key period for detection, prevention, and guidance for the specific needs of children and their families

Organisation and autonomy of the centre

Autonomy does not mean that each centre does what they want. It means that goals are identified, and then it is left in the hands of the centre, which will have the flexibility needed to achieve them and the support necessary to do so.

Andrea Schleicher

The IMEB regulates the organisation and operation of the municipal nursery schools and ensures the consistent implementation of the shared educational model.

Each nursery school, using their autonomy, drafts their educational programme and plans the schedule for each day's activities: playtime, mealtimes, and nap times. They also define how the spaces will be designed and make them accessible to the children, with the aim of creating an educational setting, a place to grow and interact, to discover and learn.

The nursery schools accept babies and toddlers from sixteen weeks old up to three years old, and they create groups based on age and needs according to developmental stage criteria. The educational programme can envisage offering spaces for play and co-existence between children of different ages. Within the framework of this autonomy, the consensus of the educational team for the distribution of human resources is especially important. Each group has a key worker who is a point of contact for the children and their families. At the same time, in each group there is also a support teacher who participates, on a daily basis, at meal and nap times, and also during some of the playtime. The organisation of the nursery school also has an additional teacher who does not have a group of children assigned, as well as management, who also support the children and their families to offer a better, more individualised service.

The educational team of each nursery school decides if they want to be a training centre for a university institution and/or if they want to take on trainees from institutes.

The municipal nursery schools create synergies in the region, between the different schools themselves and with other stakeholders in the educational, social, and health fields. These synergies make community work possible.

The nursery schools collaborate with each other and with individual projects linked to co-education, equality, intergenerational relationships, diversity and inclusion, sustainability and environment, as well as projects involving the families. Moreover, the nursery schools develop experiences and participate in working groups researching how children discover the different languages of expression.

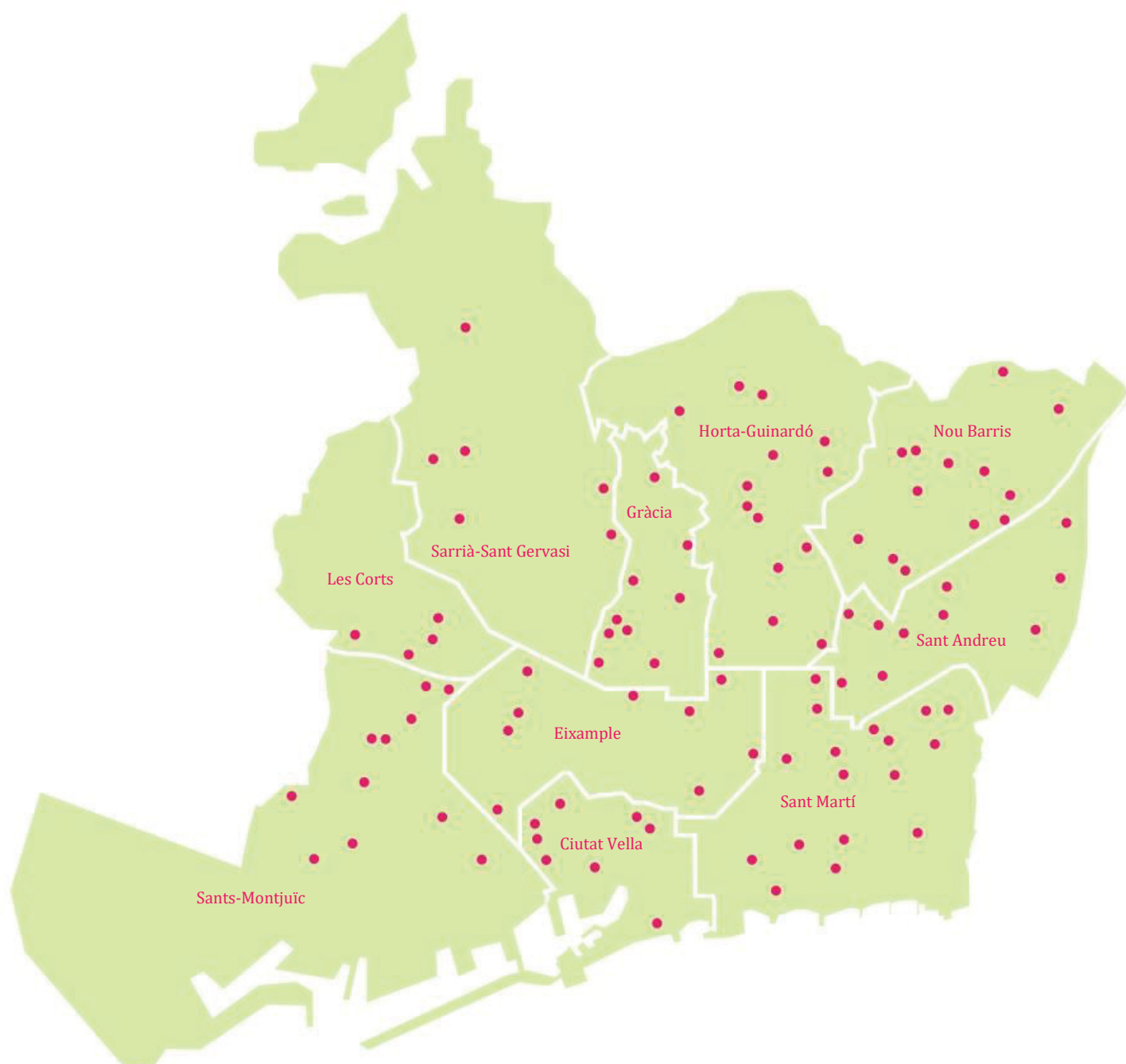
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