

Best Practices

Distribution of pencils of various skin colours

Racism often has its origins in our language. Discriminatory stereotypes and preconceived ideas are unconsciously passed on to new generations. There is still a lot to be done in terms of raising awareness in many contexts.

The problem is well illustrated by the example of the pink “Hautfaarw” pencil: for a long time, only one shade was designated as “skin colour” in our children’s coloured pencil boxes, namely a light pink. This designation is common in Luxembourgish and in many other languages (for example, “Skin Tone/Colour” in English). However, from light beige to very dark brown, there are an infinite number of skin tones and colours. So language is already setting a standard that excludes many people. Many children cannot realistically draw themselves, their friends or their parents with a single pencil declared as their skin colour. So it’s not surprising that at a certain age they ask themselves, “Am I normal?”

The distribution of pencils of various skin colours demonstrates a refusal to tolerate racism and discrimination, and seeks to actively contribute to an inclusive society where diversity is valued.

One way of getting this message across is to give primary school children a set of pencils in a variety of skin tones, along with a letter of explanation and awareness to parents. This can be done as part of a special occasion, such as Europe Day on 9 May (which carries the slogan “United in diversity” since 2000).

Objectives

Our vision is of an open society, free from prejudice, racism and discrimination. By distributing skin colours to all children at primary school, we want to enable children to discover for themselves the value of diversity and help parents, teachers and/or educators to educate the new generation in a way that takes diversity into account, without transmitting stereotypes



Methods

Distribution of coloured pencils at school, accompanied by a letter explaining the action. Ideally, the subject is also discussed at school and the accompanying letter encourages parents to talk about it at home with their children.

Budget

Depends on the number of students. Prices are available here:

<https://hautfarben.org/en/collections/buntstifte/products/schulset-buntstifte?variant=43653482545419>

The price decreases as the number of sets ordered increases.

There are also other suppliers, such as Faber-Castell:

https://www.faber-castell.ie/?_gl=1*1apzthg*_gcl_au*MTYzODAyODk1LjE3MjA1MzE4Njk.*_ga*MTA0MjcxMzE2LjE3MjA1MzE4Nj

Materials

Only one set with a variety of skin colours + an accompanying letter explaining the action.

Periodicity

Once a year. In principle, it is a good idea to launch such an action in the school once with all the classes and, in subsequent actions, to distribute skin-colour pencils only to children new to the school (i.e. preschool and cycle 1).

Practical advice - DO's

Make sure the subject is also discussed.

Contact person/Possible partners

Schools, day care centres (Maison Relais), maybe nurseries

