

"All Thoughts Fly High!? or: Who Does Freedom Actually Belong To?"

Project report by Ella Bertsche, the Federal Volunteer Service participant responsible for implementation

Democracy and Freedom in Kindergarten - "Our Birds of Freedom"

As part of our project on the theme of "Democracy, Freedom and Participation," we welcomed a group of children to our facility.

Since the children had not visited our facility before, the initial focus was on getting to know one another and helping them settle in, so that any possible fears could be eased.

After a brief welcome, we gathered in a large circle in the hallway and first introduced ourselves to the children. By asking a few questions, we encouraged them to join the conversation. To begin, we carried out a movement game in which the children could first experience the theme of freedom physically. In the first round, we strictly instructed the children how to move. For example, they had to hop, dance, or perform more complex movements, such as hopping on one leg while touching the tip of their nose. At the end, the children were allowed to decide for themselves how they wanted to move. We then reflected together on the two situations. The children explained that they had enjoyed being able to decide for themselves more. This created an initial understanding of the concept of freedom. Together, we developed the idea that freedom also means being able to make one's own decisions and develop freely.

We built on this experience with our creative activity. Each child made an individual bird of freedom from clay. First, the children used wooden sticks to draw the outline of a bird on the clay, which we had rolled out together beforehand. They then cut out the birds with knives. Some children also decorated their birds with engraved patterns.

During a shared snack break, we read the children a picture book about freedom. In the discussion that followed, the children answered the question: "When do you feel truly free?" They mentioned different situations, for example when playing, running, climbing, or when they are allowed to decide for themselves. This made it clear that freedom is experienced differently by every person and that exercising one's own freedom should not restrict anyone else.

After the break, the children were free to design and paint their clay birds. They could decide for themselves on the colors, patterns, and design elements. A wide variety of unique birds emerged. The children learned that individuality and difference are valuable and that everyone is allowed to contribute their own ideas.

Each bird could and was allowed to be completely unique. At the end, we presented the completed birds of freedom to the other group. The children looked at the others' creations and noticed that no two birds were alike. Finally, we held a small vote about the project day. The children positioned themselves in different areas of the room to show how much they had enjoyed the day with us.

The project gave the children an age-appropriate introduction to the topics of democracy, freedom, and participation. Through movement, discussion, and creative design, they not only learned about democracy but were also able to experience and actively help shape it.

Below is another overview of the procedure we followed, approximately as outlined:
Democracy Kindergarten Project Plan

- **Welcome:**
 - Large circle downstairs in the hallway
 - Movement game with all children: first we strictly specify the movements, then the children may freely decide how they want to move
 - Reflection: What was it like when you were allowed to decide freely?
- **Transition:**
 - Free movement > free birds > making birds from clay
 - Different birds: large, small, colorful, fast, slow
- **Working with Clay:**
 - Roll the clay flat with a rolling pin
 - Draw the outline of a bird on the clay using a wooden stick
 - Cut out the clay with a knife
 - Design the surface, engrave it, add patterns
- **Break:**
 - Gather in a circle with the children's snacks
 - Read the book "Freedom"
 - Question: When do you feel truly free?
 - Freedom also means being able to determine and decide things for yourself
 - -> Now everyone can paint their bird however they wish
- **Painting:**
 - Choose colors completely freely, using different combinations and patterns
 - Every bird is unique and special; no two are alike
 - Every bird is allowed to look completely different!
- **Voting:**
 - How did you like the day today?
 - Vote using slips of paper (good/bad), followed by evaluation
 - Or: vote using colored balls placed in boxes (good/bad)

The email attachment contains photos of the completed works, which we brought to the children at the kindergarten after the drying process.

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Mirtan Teichmüller, project manager responsible to the funder