

Annual Report

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2015: YEAR IN REVIEW

2015 provided important opportunities for **Laboratório de Educação** to grow as an organization, including fruitful partnerships and enhancements to the project cycle of production, research, and implementation.

One of our greatest achievements was and continues to be our support for a seemingly “invisible” cause: children’s language development.

Driven by worldwide efforts and research on language learning and acquisition, we called attention to the significance of constructive adult-child interactions.

The growing role of technology in daily life spurred us to reflect on the most effective strategies to advance language learning in the modern context. In this way, we chose to focus on promoting ways to insert language learning into everyday situations.

We also invested in adapting content for different audiences, whether inside or outside of school, and in alternative means of communication that ensure a broader impact.

Outside of school, the blog for our **All Children Can Learn** project gained renown as a space for discussion, and we are currently designing a related “app” that helps parents incorporate learning into everyday situations.

We also partnered with the Parliamentary School at the São Paulo City Council to organize a seminar on the relationship between children and cities.

Our **Learning Language** project was prominently featured in a series on Rede Globo’s Fantástico entitled “The Secret World of Babies - Learning to Speak,” reaching an audience of 40 million Brazilians.

Inside schools, we developed a **Language Learning teacher-training guide** and tested its implementation in public preschools in Greater São Paulo.

For our **Learning to Study** program, we completed the first edition of a publication for 4th-and 5th-grade elementary school teachers.

In addition, we began to train Pre-K and early elementary school educators in a municipality of Rio de Janeiro state.

Finally, we had numerous exciting developments at the institutional level. We will highlight a few in this report, but we encourage you to visit our website to find out more.

For instance, Ashoka selected us to participate in its *Grow2Impact* social business program and the Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI) included us in a case study to be used in curricula at various graduate schools within Harvard University.



Beatriz Cardoso
President

We also established a partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) MISTI program, through which we received undergraduate students interested in our line of work.

Despite the ongoing challenges to grow with autonomy and financial sustainability, we at Laboratório de Educação remain committed to tackling these obstacles head-on! I hope that this report provides you with the sense of accomplishment that pushes us to new heights with every passing year.

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The following icons indicate different aspects of project development:



Rationale



Project Overview



Developments and Achievements in 2015

WHO WE ARE

Founded in 2012, **Laboratório de Educação** is a non-governmental organization that develops pedagogical content and teacher-training methodologies for language development, in order to positively influence how adults interact on a daily basis with children from 0 to 10 years of age, both inside and outside of school.

Why Language?

While all children eventually learn to speak their native language, studies show that crucial gaps in language development can emerge by the age of two. These disparities result from the quality and quantity of interactions that children experience at home¹, meaning that they may begin school at a disadvantage.

This “invisible” gap only becomes evident after it has directly impacted a child’s learning opportunities: fewer stimuli for language development at an early age often result in lower grades and a higher risk of being held back or dropping out of school in later years².

Language is therefore fundamental for building knowledge, and children capable of using language are better able to actively and constructively think and learn³.

¹ Fernald, A., Marchman, V.A., & Weisleder, A. (2013). SES differences in language processing skill and vocabulary are evident at 18 months. *Oxford: Developmental Science* 16:2.

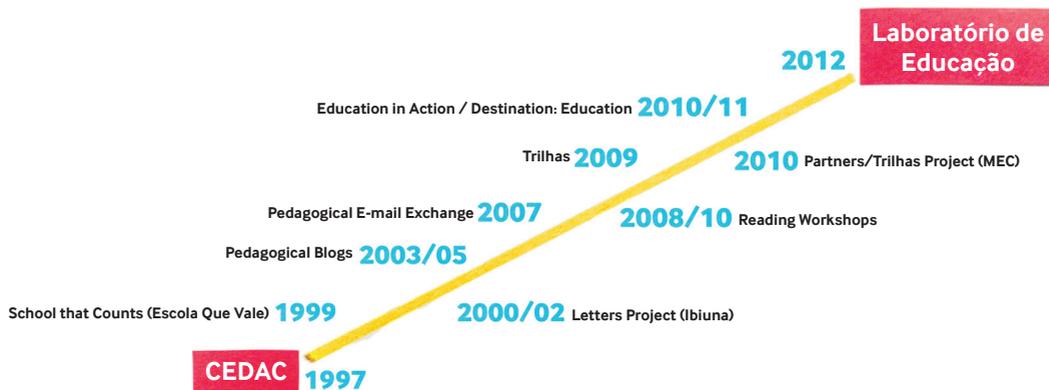
² Alexander, K., Entwisle, D., & Horsey, C. (1997). From first grade forward: early foundations of high school dropout. *Sociology of Education*, 70, 87–107.

³ Teberosky, A. et al. (2015). *A linguagem de 0 a 5 anos*.

WHERE WE COME FROM

Laboratório de Educação was born out of 15 years of experience at Comunidade Educativa – CEDAC, a respected Brazilian education nonprofit. As leaders of CEDAC, we established many successful partnerships with companies like Natura, Vale and Votorantim, as well as with 125 municipal school districts in 16 states of Brazil. In total, our teacher-training programs benefited nearly 980,000 students around the country and, in 2012, the Ministry of Education adopted our original didactic materials (entitled Trilhas) as national education policy.

The experience of creating a high-quality resource to transform pedagogical practices and enrich ongoing teacher training in over 2,800 municipalities, as well as the know-how accumulated over those years, inspired us to seek new paths to promote systemic change through the production of actionable insights. Thus, we founded **Laboratório de Educação** both to push boundaries as well as create an autonomous organizational space through which to tackle the education system's structural challenges.



What Sets Us Apart?

- We prioritize conceptual reflections on teaching and learning processes in order to facilitate the search for effective and scalable solutions, though we may not be the ones to actually implement them at scale.
- Our research and development methodology considers a wide variety of contexts, thus guaranteeing that our interventions will meet the needs of each target population.
- We believe that the complexity of Education demands multiple organizational approaches and our focus is on the production of knowledge to inform larger-scale endeavors.

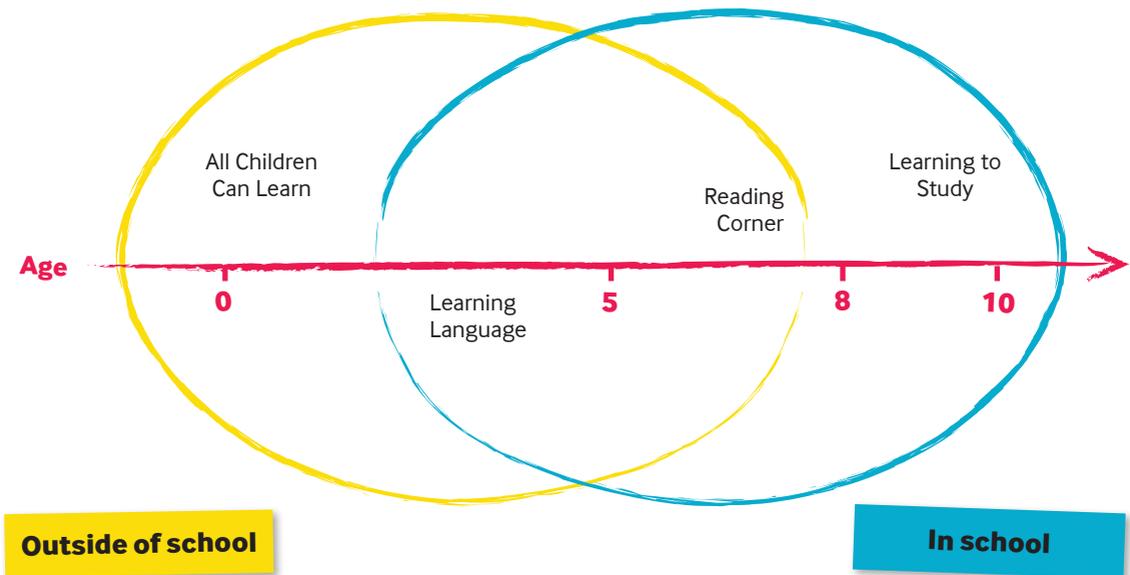
FOCUS AREAS

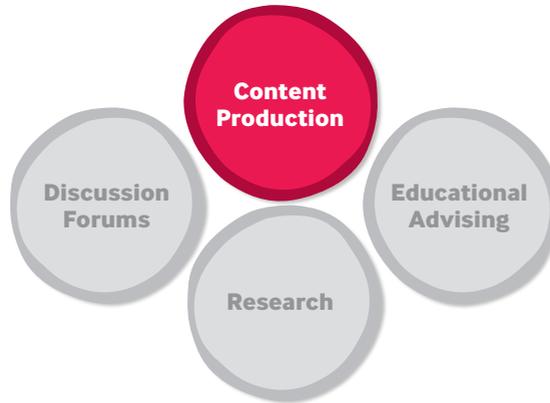
Current educational challenges are too complex to be resolved through “magical solutions”. We ought to approach them from a systemic perspective, in order to avoid creating islands of excellence that only benefit a small few and do not address deeper structural problems.

For this reason, **Laboratório** is structured around two spheres that reflect an organic and holistic vision of the educational process:

- **Learning in school**
- **Learning outside of school**

Our solutions target different stages of cognitive development for children 0 to 10 years old, since it is during this period that the quality of their environment, intellectual stimulation, and opportunities to learn is fundamental to building the skills that children will need for the rest of their lives.





All Children Can Learn



In Brazil, prejudice results in the belief that some children are less capable of learning, due to their skin color, socioeconomic status, neighborhood, or family structure. Moreover, schools and families still dispute amongst themselves who ultimately bears the responsibility for educating children, and that learning only begins at a certain age. These “myths” often turn adults into passive observers rather than active facilitators of everyday learning opportunities that can expand a child’s cognitive and intellectual universe.



All Children Can Learn offers reflections and examples of how children demonstrate on a daily basis how much they already know, and how much they still question about the world around them. Through concrete evidence, the project shows adults how learning is an ongoing process that permeates all aspects of children’s lives, and how they can facilitate learning in everyday situations by promoting meaningful interactions with their surroundings.

BLOG — ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN





Launched in August 2013 as the result of a commitment with the Clinton Global Initiative, the **All Children Can Learn** blog has reached 385,000 readers with weekly posts on issues related to modern childhood. In addition to featuring reflections and expert opinions, the blog also recommends children's literature, short-films, games, and activities that encourage child learning in everyday contexts. In 2015, our bloggers also began to write content for other publications, including *Catraqinha*, *BrasilPost*, and the *Brazilian Childhood Map* (*Mapa da Infância Brasileira*).

The blog also reaches 22,000 fans on Facebook (a total of 50,000 people through shares), where the posts are complemented by links to external content that enrich current debates on learning.

LEARNING SPACES APP



Still a work in progress, the Learning Spaces app was born out of a partnership with IBM, and fleshed out in workshops run by Ashoka's *Grow2Impact* social business program. Divided between spaces inside and outside of the home, the app provides guidance for parents on how to use meaningful interactions with their children to transform ordinary situations into learning opportunities. The app also explains how adults can explore complex issues with children so as to encourage them to reflect on, talk about, and engage with the world around them.



In July 2015, **Laboratório de Educação** was selected to participate in the second edition of Ashoka's *Grow2Impact* social business program, which seeks to promote social entrepreneurship in Brazil. In the spirit of intersectoral collaboration, Ashoka fellows and their respective teams took on the challenge of designing financially-sustainable social impact projects. The **Learning Spaces** app was a product of this collaboration.

On October 21, 2015, after four intense months, **Laboratório de Educação** and eight other nonprofits made final presentations of projects developed over the course of the workshops.

From June to August 2015, **Laboratório e Educação** hosted Jenny Sangliana, a 22-year-old senior at MIT majoring in neuroscience. Jenny contributed to **All Children Can Learn** and participated in a series of workshops with IBM Brazil on developing the **Learning Spaces** app.



Learning Language (0-5 years)



Language learning in the first five years of life is crucial for children's cognitive development. However, the knowledge produced by experts in the fields of linguistics, cognitive psychology, and pedagogy is complex and therefore largely inaccessible to adults who interact with children on a daily basis.



The **Learning Language** project translates this knowledge and connects it to everyday adult-child interactions, from first gestures and spoken words to when children learn how to write. Using four characters to represent children in different age groups, the project touches upon topics such as interaction, phonetics and phonology, vocabulary, speech, grammar, and written language.

Pedro: 0 to 18 months

Clenice: 18 months to 3 years

Nelson: 3 to 4 years

Ruth: 4 to 5 years

WEBSITE — LEARNING LANGUAGE



APRENDER LINGUAGEM (0-5 ANOS)



Developed in partnership with a research team led by Professor Ana Teberosky at the University of Barcelona, the **Learning Language** platform is a digital guide to language development in early childhood. In order to exemplify milestones in this process, depictions of everyday situations are accompanied by expert commentary on *when*, *what*, and *why* children learn to speak.



In 2015, our team conducted rigorous analysis and revision of the preliminary version of the platform, in order to enhance and adapt the language and examples to common learning environments for Brazilian children.

Officially launched on October 31, 2015, the site has already reached 32,242 users, with over 200,000 views (as of March 23, 2016). Fifteen percent of users (5,334) are recurring visitors.

Given the high number of visitors who use mobile devices (mostly smartphones), the site's layout has been redesigned to include mobile responsive technology.

Since its launch, the site has attracted attention from other educational organizations, including:



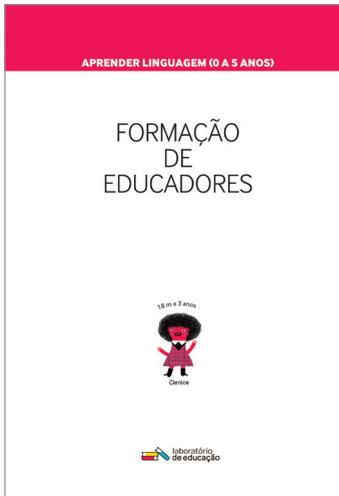
BOOK – LANGUAGE FROM 0 TO 5 YEARS



The book **Language from 0 to 5 Years** compiles content from the **Learning Language** platform in order to reach people with limited Internet access. The book provides explanations about the language learning process along with pictures that illustrate how it occurs in everyday contexts, and also features a guide for how adults should engage with children in each age group.

In 2015, we completed the book's preliminary design, and started to plan how it would be distributed.

LEARNING LANGUAGE — TEACHER TRAINING



The Learning Language – Teacher Training guide brings together content on language development and strategies for pedagogical supervisors to use when planning and analyzing in-class learning opportunities with preschool teachers. Based on the Learning Language platform, this guide provides detailed protocols for teacher-training sessions and classroom activities.

In 2015, the first edition was tested in four nurseries and preschools in a municipality in Greater São Paulo. Analysis of the results informed revisions to the guide, and provided insight into how it might be adapted for use with other age groups.

Through a partnership established in 2014 with a public nursery school in São Paulo city, we were able to videotape activities with children, most of whom were four years old. These activities were inspired by the original guide, and illustrate best practices for creating effective language learning opportunities in the classroom.

THE SECRET WORLD OF BABIES SERIES





In February 2015, Rede Globo's Fantástico program showed a three-episode series called "**The Secret World of Babies – Learning to Speak**" to an audience of over 40 million Brazilians. Expert advice from **Laboratório de Educação** and content from the Learning Language platform played essential roles in the creation of the episode script and structure.

Our involvement in such a popular program sparked a national discussion on the importance of language development, as many Brazilians discovered how this process manifests itself in various stages of early childhood.

We hired a company called APPM (Market Analysis, Research, and Planning) to evaluate our investment of time and effort, as well as the public's response to the program. APPM researchers collected data through psychometric questionnaires, brainwave patterns, eye-trackers, and in-depth interviews. Their extremely promising findings indicated that viewers trusted us as an authority on the subject, and actively made use of the information presented in the series.



This year, the Ministry of Education plans to include links to the episodes in training materials to be distributed nationwide to early childhood educators.

The Clinton Foundation's *Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing* program works to address similar language-related issues in the United States. Former Senator and current presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has praised **Laboratório's** work with Fantástico, and highlighted the connections between the two initiatives.



Reading Corner (6-8 years)



The ability to comprehend and produce narratives is central to the development of oral language skills, and also helps facilitate learning how to read and write. However, it requires that children ages 6 to 8 already possess advanced cognitive and linguistic skills. Adults can aid in this process by reading aloud and engaging children in conversation about written texts.



The **Reading Corner** platform offers a collection of digital books that adults and children can use to enrich their reading experience: alone or with an adult; reading or listening; and hearing their own voice, that of a family member, or that of a professional.

The platform also includes games and guidelines that emphasize the importance of reading and explain how to enhance interactions with children who are just beginning to read.



In 2015, we produced three books, all of which are still in preliminary stages, and made meticulous adjustments to the website to improve the user experience.



Learning to Study (9-10 years)



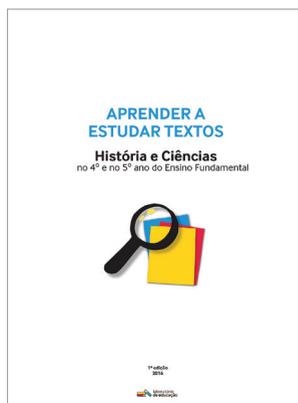
Brazilian schools face the challenge of promoting language as a tool to access knowledge. Since textbooks use dense, abstract, and unfamiliar language, learning to research and study requires exposure to academic registers in different subject areas.



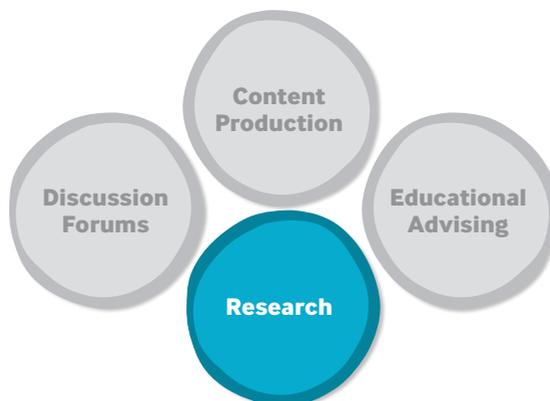
Learning to Study provides 4th- and 5th-grade teachers with guidelines for analyzing the structure and content of History and Science texts.

Through a teaching-training guide, the project calls attention to the language used in textbooks, and shows how students can further develop their language skills by engaging with these texts while acquiring knowledge about various disciplines.

LEARNING TO STUDY — TEACHER-TRAINING GUIDE



Based on results from a 2014 pilot study, we analyzed and improved the clarity of explanations regarding the linguistic and visual characteristics of 4th- and 5th-grade History textbooks. We also enhanced the guidelines for activities that prepare students for text-based study (reading aloud, vocabulary, and communication and comprehension), and detailed the planning process in order to use these didactic materials in teachers' lessons on specific subject areas.



Case Study – PNAIC



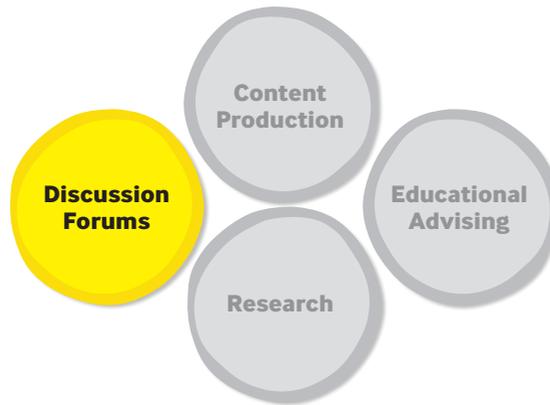
In partnership with UNESCO, we conducted interdisciplinary research on the **National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (PNAIC)** between 2013 and 2014.

Through case studies in four municipalities of São Paulo state, we analyzed variables associated with the implementation of this nationwide teacher-training program, and examined its impact on educational actors. Our work traced the program from the ongoing professional development of teacher supervisors led by local public universities, to the classroom practices of literacy instructors.

In August 2015, we held a seminar with educators from the four municipalities, including PNAIC Municipal Coordinators, Pedagogical Supervisors, and Principals. All participants received a written report with the monitoring tools developed and used throughout the research.

Learning to Study – Examining Language Used in Academic Texts

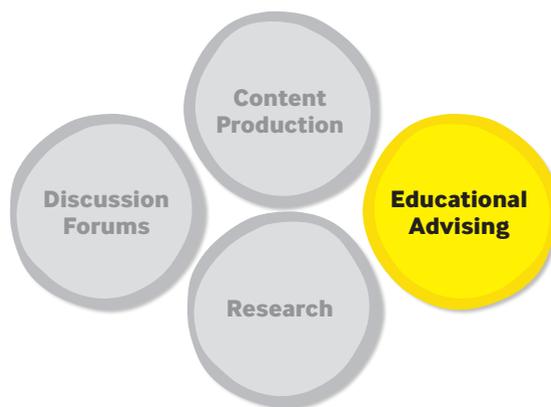
In 2015, we researched the linguistic and visual characteristics of the 57 most widely-distributed 4th- (29) and 5th-grade (28) History texts by the National Textbook Program (PNLD, 2013). Linguistic analysis focused on textual structure and complexity, as well as the categorization and quantification of discursive connectors. Visual analysis examined the type and function of images and visual resources, particularly as they pertained to schematic representations of textual information. The findings provided the foundation for our Learning to Study teacher-training guide for 4th- and 5th-grade History classrooms.



Seminar – The Child-City Relationship: A Two-Way Street



The seminar, organized by **Laboratório de Educação** in partnership with the Parliamentary School at the São Paulo City Council, discussed the role of children as thoughtful participating members of society who have opinions, needs and contributions that can help shape the urban experience in large cities like São Paulo. Moreover, it aimed to deepen our understanding of cities' potential to provide learning experiences and promote responsible and conscious citizenship.



TransFormar

PROJETO transformar



Learning should be at the heart of educational actions and policy at all levels, whether federal, state or local. In order for this to occur, we must adopt a systemic perspective in developing methodologies that strengthen ongoing training for public school teachers and district administrators.



The **TransFormar** project is the result of a collaborative effort between *Laboratório de Educação* and the Municipal Secretary of Education and Cultural Foundation of Casimiro de Abreu (RJ), in partnership with *Comunidade Educativa – CEDAC*, and with support from the João and Maria Backheuser Institute.



In 2015, we held five training sessions for different participant groups. For instance, Secretary of Education representatives discussed the implementation of ongoing professional development for educators at the municipal level, while pedagogical supervisors of nurseries and preschools talked about how classrooms could be rearranged to best promote learning. Professionals who work with students that have been held back analyzed the necessary conditions to effectively support their learning and help them reach grade-level proficiency. In addition to these groups, we also met with school librarians and those related to the municipal Cultural Foundation in order to enhance their role as mediators of both children's and adult's reading experiences.

SUPPORTERS

Funders



Partners



Pro-Bono Support



A significant portion of our financial resources comes from anonymous donors.