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INCLUSIVE KINDERGARTEN DRAMA UNIT AS A MEANS OF ACTIVIZATION OF COMPENSATORY MECHANISMS IN CHILDREN WITH SEVERE SPEECH DISORDERS

Abstract. The article is devoted to the issue of creation of a complex of psycho-pedagogical conditions for the provision of inclusive educational space at a general-purpose preschool education institution. The solution of the problem of inadequate efficiency of logopedic rehabilitation measures which are limited, as a rule, to correction of external manifestations of speech disorders (pronunciation of sounds), becomes especially urgent in the context of reorganization of the structure of the system of preschool education and equipment of logopedic facilities in kindergartens. An inclusive kindergarten drama unit is one of the most efficient forms of work towards organization of inclusive educational space at an education institution. The given article contains a brief description of the work aimed at creation of an inclusive kindergarten drama unit in Revda, Sverdlovsk Oblast. A well-organized process of pre-school educational inclusion allows the educators to markedly reduce the number of junior school age children with severe speech disorders, and creates the conditions necessary for the prevention of written speech disorders and difficulties with school adaptation. The article materials have theoretical and practical significance for practicing specialists (teachers-logopedists, music teachers, pedagogues-psychologists, tutors, PT instructors, etc.) in terms of realization of the Federal State Educational Standard of preschool education.

Keywords: dysarthria; speech disorder; preschool logopedics; preschoolers; children with speech disorders; logopedic work; inclusive education; inclusive educational space; integrated logopedic intervention; inclusive kindergarten drama units.

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The processes of reformation in the political, economic, cultural and social sphere in our country have stimulated activation of the measures aimed at reorganization of the educational system on the whole, including its initial level – preschool education. The modern educational space should create the conditions for maximum development of children taking into account their individually personal and psycho-physical developmental specificity. In view of this, the problem of inclusive education of preschoolers under the conditions of general-purpose preschool education institutions deserves special attention.

In accordance with the Federal State Educational Standards, inclusive education should focus on “the acquisition by the children with disabilities of the Program, and their all-round development taking into account their developmental and individual peculiarities and special educational needs and social adaptation” [10].

In order to organize inclusive education at a preschool education

institution, it is necessary to ensure the special conditions: to create a developing educational environment, a proper psycho-pedagogical support for the children, and to guarantee the participation of qualified specialists (logopedists, defectologists, PT instructor, music teacher, psychologist, etc.) in the complex rehabilitation of the child with disabilities.

The problem of inclusive education of preschool children with severe speech disorders remains to be urgent and does not allow generalized interpretations in the modern socio-cultural situation, which is associated, on the one hand, with optimization of the network of preschool education institutions with the aim of creating additional places for children via refusal to create special (rehabilitation) groups for children with speech disorders, and, on the other hand, with realization of the necessity of optimal inclusion of the children with disabilities in the process of education. Preschool age is the best period for psycholog-

ical functions rehabilitation. That is why preschool inclusive education is the first important stage in the development of children and in rehabilitation of, and compensation for speech disorders. In this connection, the solution of the problem of creation of inclusive educational space in preschool education institutions becomes part of the professional activity of the specialists who take part in the organization of integrated educational environment.

In general-purpose preschool education institutions, a broader approach to inclusion is practiced, according to which the integrated educational environment, in which each child feels comfortable, includes all children, but not only those with severe speech disorders. Such inclusion is called upon to help each learner to reveal and develop their individual properties and to compensate for speech development disorders. It is this interpretation of inclusion that is the most productive under the conditions of the general-purpose kindergarten groups uniting children with speech disorders with their peers without such impairments.

Practical work and statistical research show that 20-40% of children of general-purpose groups in the city borough of Revda have speech disorders of various degrees of severity, and about 90% of them suffer from dysarthria of various degrees of severity. Dysarthria is a

disorder of the articulatory aspect of speech caused by organic lesions of the central region of the verbal-motor analyzer and the consequent impairment of articulatory muscles innervations [7].

E. N. Vinarskaya, L. S. Volkova, E. F. Sobotovich and other specialists have investigated dysarthria manifestations. Dysarthria may involve sound articulation disorders (distortions, replacement of sounds, connected with deviations in the articulation motor skills development; mixing up acoustically similar phonemes associated with immaturity of the phonemic perception processes), phonation disorders, as well as speech tempo, rhythm and intonation impairments [2; 7; 12].

Depending on the lesion localization in the central or peripheral nervous system, on the time of defect onset and its degree of severity, disorders are manifested in various degrees and combinations. Articulation and phonation disorders leading to specific impairments of oral articulate speech constitute the primary defect, which may later cause the emergence of secondary disorders finally complicating the total structure of defect.

A deeper study shows that apart from speech defects proper, the children of the given category demonstrate impairments of the nonverbal functions preventing them from real communication both

with peers and adults in various communication situations. Alongside phonetico-phonemic problems, children with speech disorders often have violations of the emotional-volitional sphere manifested in emotional lability, reduced stress resistance, and fear of communication in an unfamiliar situation [6].

As long as these children attend general-purpose groups, it is naturally believed that they have been involved in the process of inclusive education. But this mechanical inclusion is not enough to achieve optimal results of speech disorders rehabilitation and compensatory reserves activation of this category of children. The work with each child should be purposive and facilitating their further self-realization. In this case, the search for more efficient forms of realization of the inclusive approach becomes especially urgent.

The following forms of activity with children can be used for the realization of the given approach in the light of the suggested interpretation of inclusion at a preschool education institution: integrated festivals, developing classes, game-based rehabilitation-educational exercises, communicative game-based situations of various kinds, an inclusive drama unit, etc.

A well-organized process of preschool educational inclusion allows the educators to markedly reduce the number of junior school age

children with severe speech disorders, and creates the conditions necessary for the prevention of written speech disorders and difficulties with school adaptation. The experience of the city borough of Revda in the organization of inclusive education at preschool education institutions testifies to this fact.

The city borough of Revda is a center of a wide and effective project of festival movement for children with speech disorders and the specialists who organize support for this category of children named "Music. Speech. Movement". The festival movement was organized by the Department of socio-psychological practices and support of the Territorial psycho-medico-pedagogical commission of the municipal state institution "Center for Speech Development".

The **tasks** of the festival movement are:

- to facilitate the development of the process of social adaptation and creative self-realization of children with disabilities (speech development disorders) by means of music therapy, logorhythmics, kinesiotherapy, fairytale therapy, and rhythmic movement therapy under the conditions of inclusive educational space of a general-purpose preschool institution;
- to provide the children of the given category with a chance to realize their creative and intellectual potential;
- to attract the children with disa-

bilities to various arts with the purpose of social adaptation and integration in society;

- to involve the children with speech disorders in scenic arts facilitating the harmonious development of the personality;

- to reveal the most creative families and the pedagogues working with the children of the given category.

The festival participants are 5-7 year old children of senior and preparatory groups of the preschool education institution, parents (legal representatives), and specialists (teachers-logopedists, PT instructors, music teachers, caregivers). The festival is held on the base of preschool education institutions that have logopedic facilities in their structure.

An inclusive kindergarten drama unit is one of the areas of the festival activity. An inclusive kindergarten drama unit at a general-purpose preschool education institution is a comparatively new and progressive form of work towards organization of a comfortable inclusive educational space for all-round communicative, speech and emotional development of children facilitating activation of compensatory reserves of children with disabilities. The inclusive drama unit makes it possible to consolidate the efforts of all specialists (music teacher, teacher-logopedist, pedagogue-psychologist, PT instructor, caregiver), and

in each inclusive performance, the nature of such interaction may be different depending on the goals and tasks set [1].

The inclusive drama unit also presupposes more effective cooperation with the parents. The parents take part in the dramatic performance as active participants. It is very useful for the children because it creates, on the one hand, an unusual new educational environment for activation of different communicative processes in the children (they learn to adapt to the changes of the communicative situation), and, on the other hand, the variable communicative situation due to the parents' participation becomes comfortable for the children and is no longer fearful to them, which stimulates increase of the verbal activity.

It is also interesting for the parents, because they can see their child in various communicative situations and get a really "active" piece of advice from the specialist how to behave themselves in a certain situation with the child, how to react to their speech errors without damaging the child's self-esteem. All this allows the parents not only to look at their child from a different angle but also to better understand their real achievements and results and to evaluate potential problems and, together with the specialists, to figure out the ways for overcoming them.

The Municipal preschool education institution “Kindergarten No 2” has interesting experience of creation of a children’s inclusive drama unit. The idea of realization of this form of activity emerged in connection with reorganization of the network of preschool institutions and creation of logopedic facilities at general-purpose preschool education institutions. The project devoted to realization of the ideas of inclusive theatre at this education institution has been in progress for 5 years.

The unique nature of theatrical activity consists in the fact that it integrates the person’s behavior, and, being properly organized, it can be targeted at the development of the reflexive type of behavior. In the process of cultural-historical development, theatre emerged as a social institute of reflexivity. Theatre facilitates the development of the processes of reflexivity of all members of the integrated group, providing deep foundations for their interaction. In theatrical activity, the solution of particular problems of development, correction of psychological and motor functions and speech development can take place in the process of solution of a more significant problem of working out a reflexive type of behavior in a child. This problem is urgent for any child [14].

Theatrical activity is rather useful for children with speech disor-

ders. It helps them lift emotional tension and relax; it forms various communicative skills, raises self-esteem, allows them to form correct phonation in different communicative situations and to develop non-verbal means of communication (facial expressions, gestures, body movements, intonation, etc.).

The aim of realization of the given form of activity was to create an inclusive educational space for activation of compensatory reserves and rehabilitation of speech disorders in preschool children via their involvement in various communicative interactions within the children’s inclusive drama unit activity.

To reach this aim, the following **tasks** have been set:

- to study special theoretical and methodological literature on organization of interaction between specialists within the framework of the children’s inclusive theatre activity;
- to work out the content of complex interaction between specialists on overcoming verbal and nonverbal disorders in the children of the category under study under the conditions of inclusive educational space created with the help of children’s inclusive drama unit;
- to assess the effectiveness and to reveal the dynamics of verbal and nonverbal processes while using the children’s inclusive drama unit as a means of activation of compensa-

tory mechanisms in children with severe speech disorders.

The specialists worked along **the following lines**:

1) development of reflexive forms of behavior (acquisition of bodily-affective and emotional self-regulation);

2) development of various kinds of perception;

3) development of nonverbal forms of communication (movements, facial expressions, gestures, intonation, etc.);

4) reinforcement of correct pronunciation of sounds and usage of lexico-grammatical constructions in various communicative situations;

5) development of dialogic and monologic forms of speech;

6) development of assurance and active speech; formation of adequate self-esteem;

7) development of the skill to take active part in various communicative situations, to adapt to them using adequate situations and verbal and nonverbal means of communication and information translation;

8) development of the skill to interact with peers and adults;

9) development of creative abilities, and specifically in terms of verbal communication activating the processes of verbal creativity, word form derivation and word formation.

The above-mentioned lines of activity we realized stage-by-stage.

Stage 1 – preparatory, including the study of special literature on organization of inclusive theatre activity at a preschool education institution; preparatory talks with children, parents and specialists; organization of diagnostic tests of verbal and nonverbal functions in children with speech disorders.

Stage 2 – basic, presupposing integrated activity on the project realization by the specialists and the parents:

– *caregivers* (viewing children’s performances, organization of a permanent information corner for the parents “Playing together with Children”, “Young Actors”; holding plot-driven role games with children “We Go to the Theater”, “We Are Actors”; equipment of a common room of various kinds of theatres and theatre property (finger theatre, shadow theatre, puppet theater, etc.) in the developing environment, inclusion of developing games on expression of emotions, development of facial expression, rhythmic movements, reading children’s books, learning poems, funny verses, watching videos about the history of the theatre and theatrical costume in educational activity;

– *parents* (visiting the theatre together with the children, participation in the staging of a fairy tale; preparation of stage props, costumes; personal participation in performances);

- *teacher-logopedist* (breathing gymnastics, articulation gymnastics, finger gymnastics, gymnastics for development of fine and gross motor skills, staging poems, exercises aimed at development of speech intonation, correction of sound pronunciation, development of lexicogrammatical aspect of speech);
- *music teacher* (rehearsing holidays, performances, stage presentations, games with children aimed at development of movements, facial expressions, etc.);
- *pedagogue-psychologist* (developing exercises on rehabilitation of the emotional-volitional sphere, formation of adequate self-esteem, creation of the situation of success, etc.);
- *PT instructor* (development of general motor skills, movements, movement coordination).

Stage 3 – final, including control testing of verbal and nonverbal processes and a public performance.

Dramatization is well enough described by special psychologists, psychotherapists and defectologists as an effective means of rehabilitation of psycho-emotional, speech and motor disorders. The realization of the project “Children’s Inclusive Theatre” allows achieving the following **results** designated by the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard of preschool education in the development of preschool children:

- formation of a spiritually rich personality of the child;
- formation of creative potential, of the active, independent, emotionally open, and socially competent personality of the preschooler;
- formation of the skill to express one’s own vision of the plot and the essence of the character (in movement while playing);
- formation of morally-communicative and volitional properties (communicability, politeness, kindness);
- development of initiative, wit, and independence;
- development of a spiritually rich personality of the child as an active participant of the project;
- development of the positive motivation towards participation in communication in various situations [10].

Thus, preparation and execution of joint participation of specialists and parents in the creation of the children’s inclusive theatre at a general-purpose preschool education institution makes it possible to realize the inclusive approach in the form interesting both for the children and adults. This form allows the pedagogues to take into account age-related and personal peculiarities of the children, and to create a psychologically comfortable environment, in which each child has a chance both to overcome the existing issues in speech development and to realize the potential compensatory reserves.

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