



EDER  
CHIODETTO  
**SER**  
**DIRETOR**



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DIRETOR**

A journey  
around 30  
Brazilian  
Public Schools

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**PEDRO MOREIRA  
SALLES**  
**CHAIRPERSON OF  
THE ADMINISTRATIVE  
COUNCIL OF THE  
INSTITUTO UNIBANCO**

As the Instituto Unibanco commemorates 35 years since its founding, it is with great pleasure that we present the book *Ser Diretor - A Journey Through 30 Brazilian Public Schools*. During this time, we have been guided by a belief in the transformative power that education can have in society. This is why we center our investments and efforts on improving the quality of the public education offered to our young people. With this as our focus, when we created the Programa Jovem de Futuro ('Young Person of the Future Program') in 2008, we were working with the ongoing upgrading of school management, since we believe that this is a powerful tool for improving the learning results of High School students.

Nothing could be better timed, therefore, than the launch of *Ser Diretor*. This project is our way of paying tribute to these professionals who perform such an essential role in guaranteeing the right to education. This is a leadership role that deals with the daily challenges and difficulties that are present in our schools, without losing sight of the fact that procedures and resources need to be directed to the students' learning.

The application of good management conditions us to seek answers to vital questions. As a means of shedding light on the issue, we can systematically learn which practices work best in our reality, encourage them, and disseminate them. The things we have learned guide our decision-making processes that, in turn, become more effective and feed the virtuous cycle.

The complexity of the challenges that need to be overcome in the Brazilian educational context means that the efforts made by society as a whole need to be made as one and our actions must be assertive. In its search for results that will effectively create a positive social impact, the Instituto Unibanco is highly exacting in the evaluation of its actions, which allows us to be certain that we are on the right track.

Good management is a decisive instrument for us to overcome the wall that separates today's society from the one we wish to build, in which the right to education is guaranteed and valued. By encouraging a culture of efficiency and effectiveness in the management of public education, our intention is to contribute to young people having the educational opportunities that allow them to develop and implement their plans for life.

Stimulating an individual's power of transformation is at the heart of Itaú Unibanco's intentions. *Ser Diretor* is our tribute and way of saying thanks to those professionals who have been our partners on this journey for the construction of a more just and democratic country. ■





**RICARDO  
HENRIQUES**  
**EXECUTIVE  
SUPERINTENDENT  
OF THE INSTITUTO  
UNIBANCO**

*Ser Diretor – a journey through 30 Brazilian public schools* outlines the day-to-day experiences of school administrators. These are education professionals who are recognized for their commitment and dedication, just like many others throughout the country who, even in challenging environments, manage to establish ties with the school community and take decisions that have a positive impact on their students' learning. The individuals in this book represent the transformative power of school management.

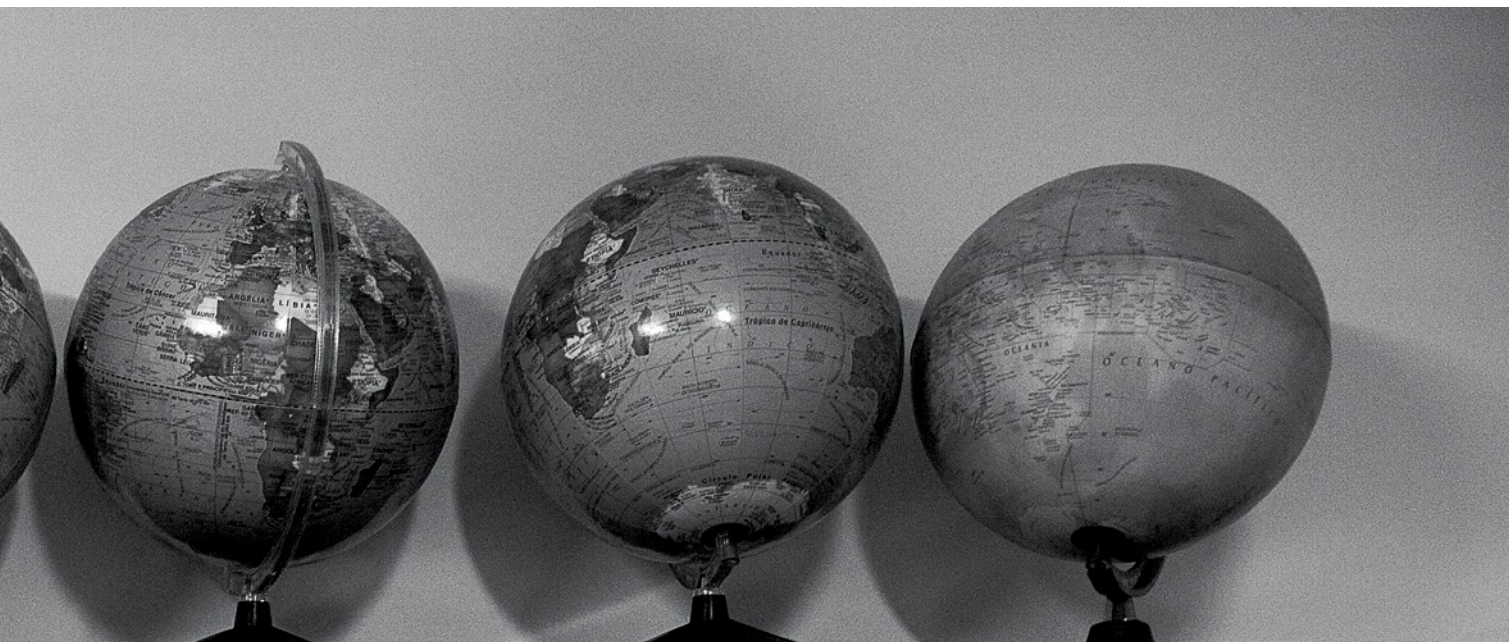
The school principals work in the six state systems in which the Programa Jovem de Futuro operates: Ceará, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Pará, Piauí and Rio Grande do Norte. The Instituto Unibanco's most important program, the Jovem de Futuro works in partnership with the State Education Departments. Within the school management model adopted by the program, the school principal performs a central role in ensuring that every young person enters, remains in and finishes high school at the right age whilst having learned the necessary skills.

In this book, we hope to highlight the importance of the school principal and contribute to the appreciation of these professionals. By capturing the scenes depicting the administrators and the day-to-day activities of their schools, we hope to show the challenges and joy experienced by those in this line of work. The images look into the different contexts in which our school principals work, and use this person as a basis upon which to build a panorama of the educational scenario in each state in which the Programa Jovem de Futuro operates.

It is in the school that the public education policy ultimately guarantees the right to learning for every child and young person in the country. As well as intelligence, stringency, method, structure and evaluation, the public policy needs one asset that is non-negotiable: people. Public policy only has the power to transform with the engagement of the players. Changes are made with strategy, tactics, operations and people. The school principals are pivotal to this process. Without their leadership, it would be very difficult to transform the reality of education in Brazil.

Despite the structural problems that affect the schools, we need to overcome immobility so that we can move towards uncovering the power of change in Brazilian education. The administrators portrayed here are resilient, professional and dedicated. We, at the Instituto Unibanco, are proud to support the work of the Principals taking care of our public schools. The stories told through the brief texts and images demonstrate that real changes that come about through simple everyday acts. And it is with this spirit that we have produced this publication: to inspire others working in education. ■





ESPANHOL    2ª SÉRIE    ESPANHOL    3ª SÉRIE    ESPANHOL    SOCIOLOGIA















































































TERCEIRO

BONS TEMPOS  
2017  
\$ M3

NÓS FAREMOS CADA  
DIA O MELHOR QUE  
PUDEERMOS

Handicapped, English, Spanish, etc.  
College Job Present!

TERCEIRO

OLD TIME  
2017  
\$ M3

EVERY DAY WE  
MAKE IT, WE'LL  
MAKE IT THE BEST  
WE CAN

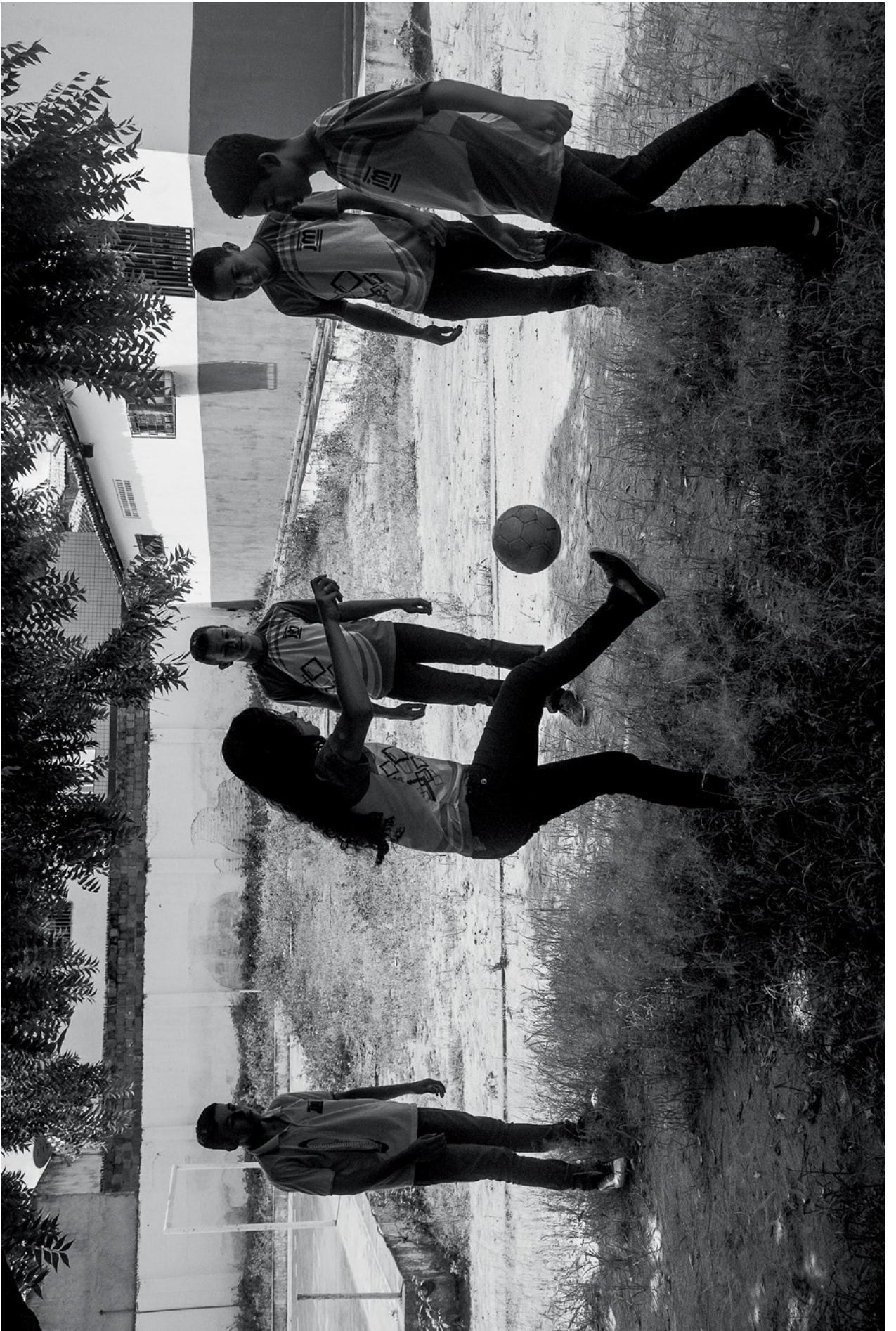
Handicapped, English, Spanish, etc.  
College Job Present!























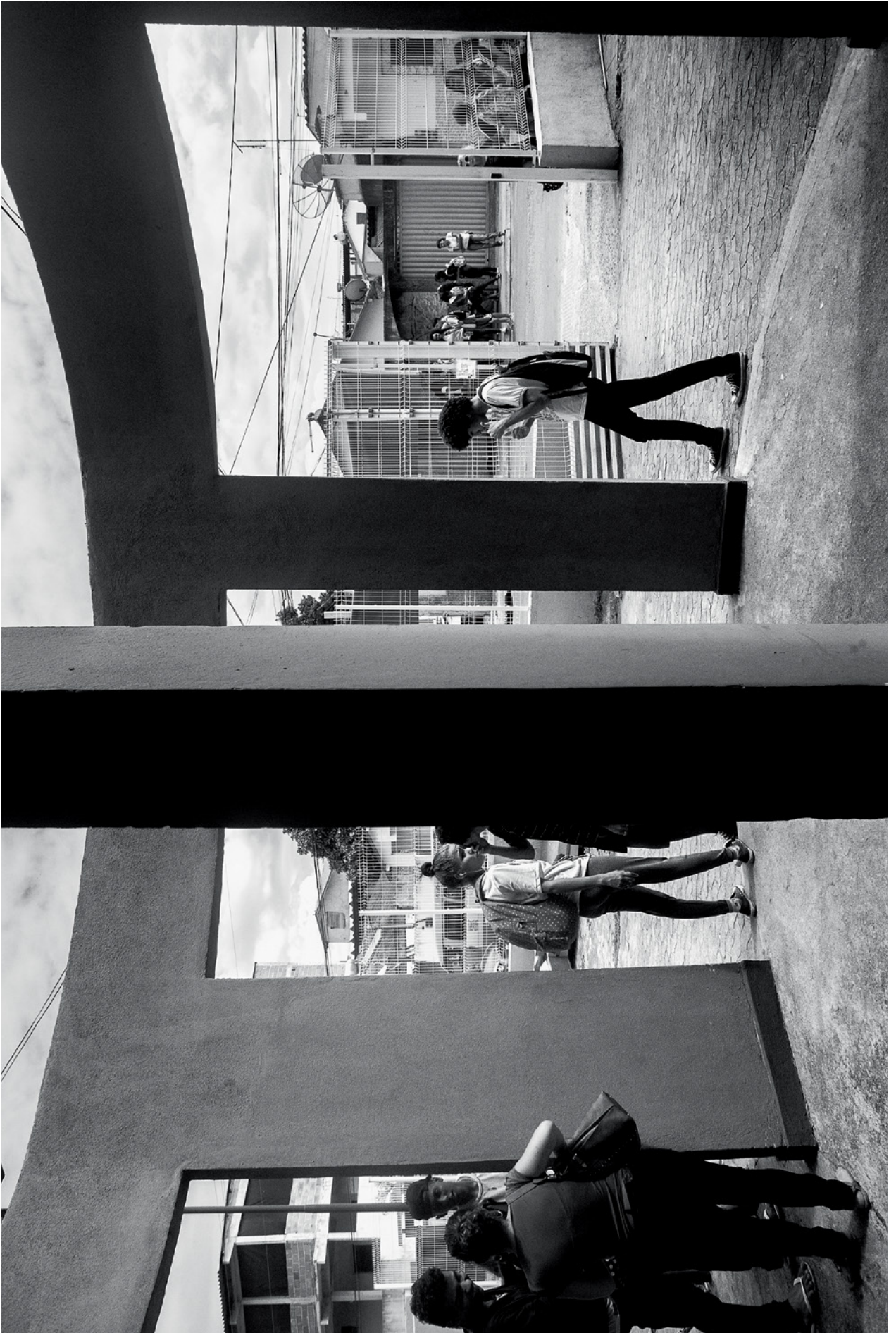






























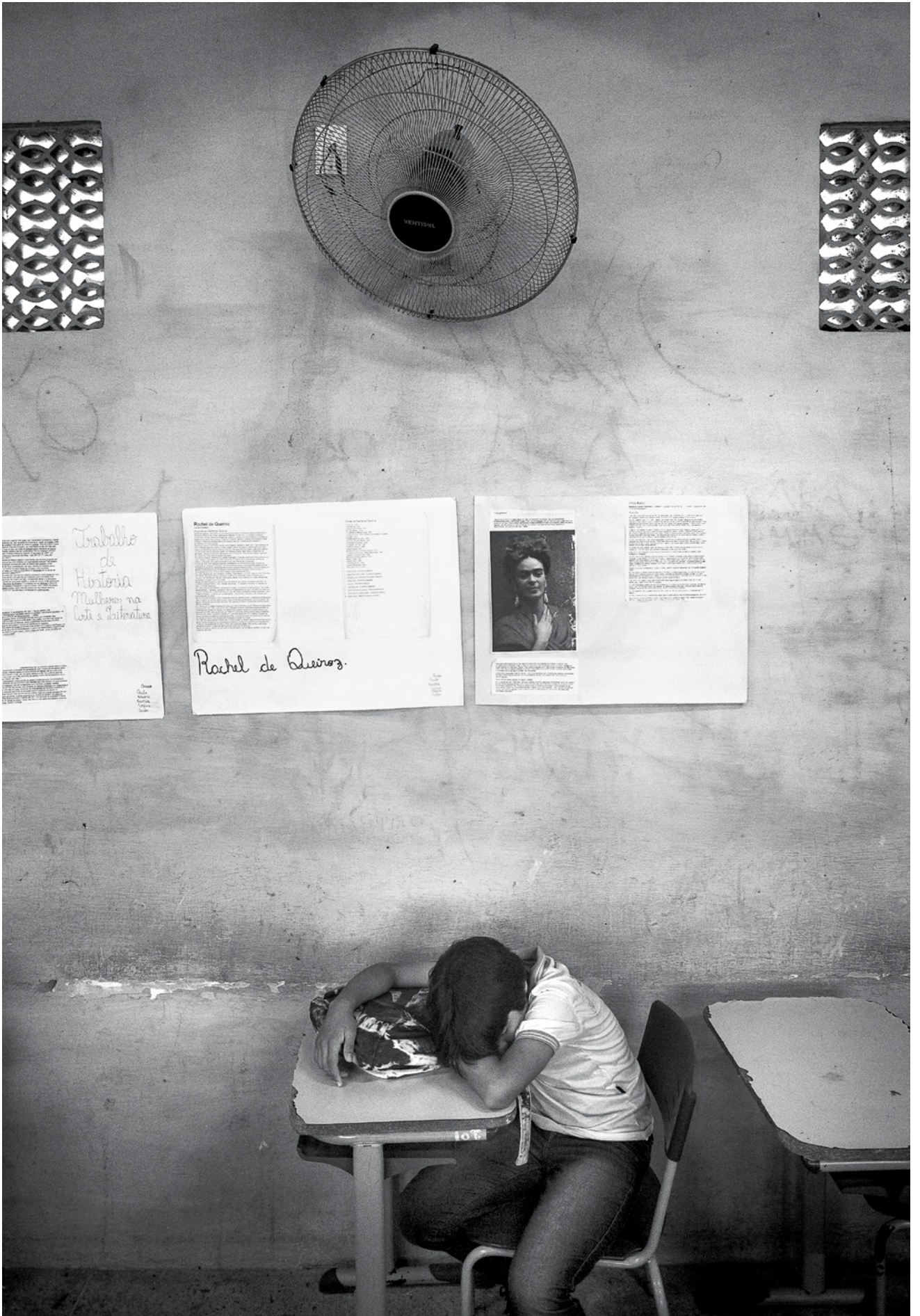


SALA DE  
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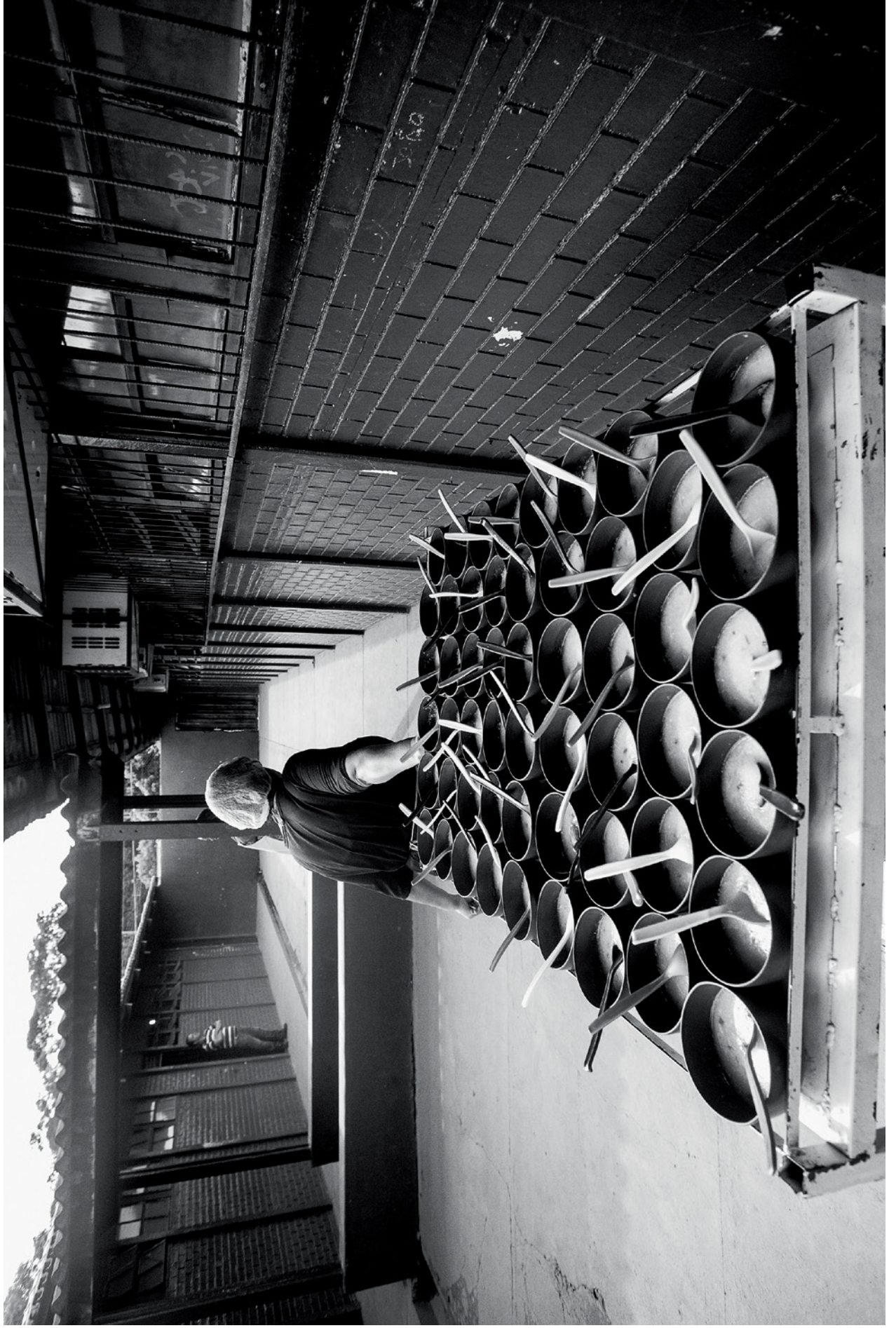












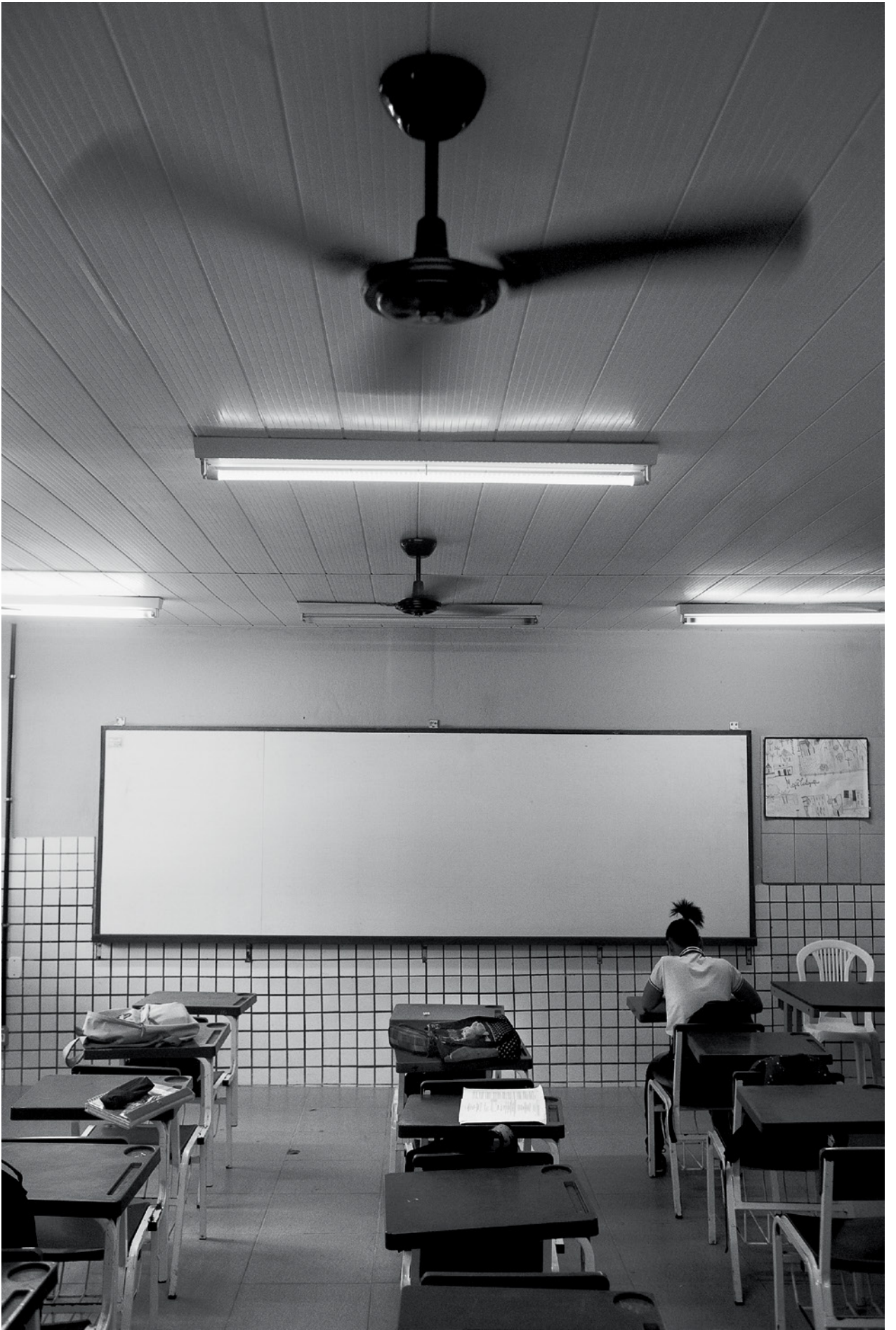




















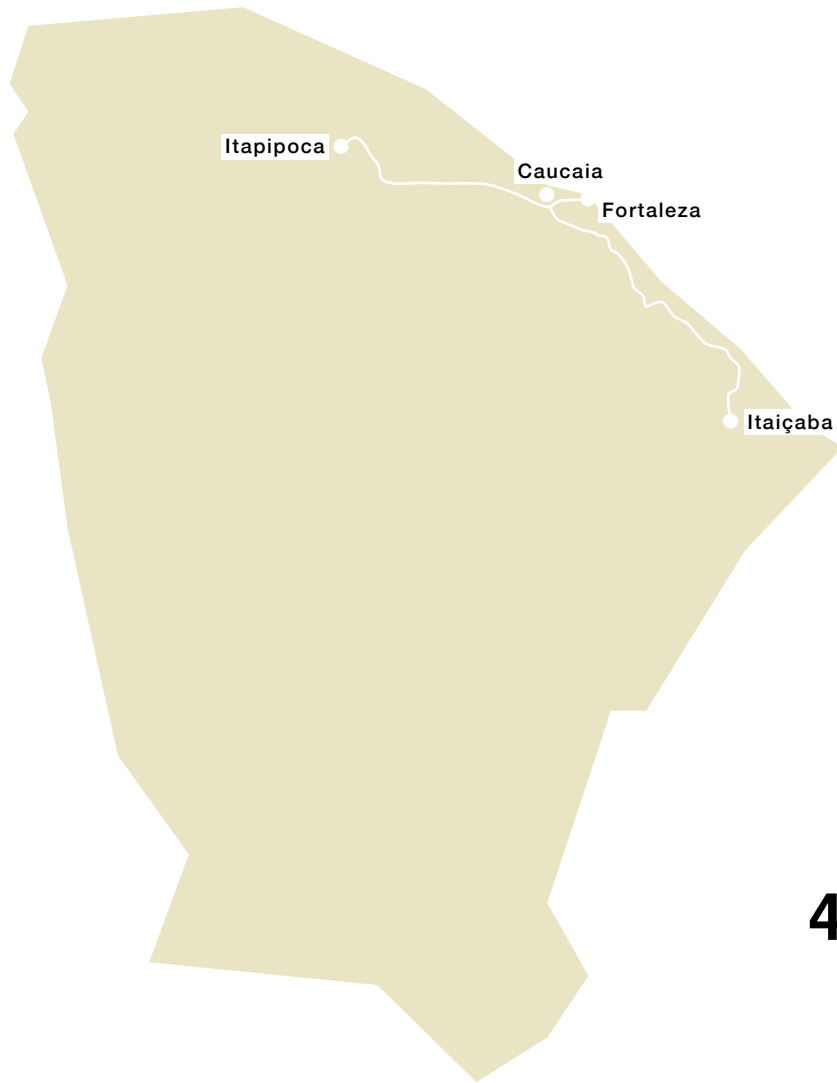












Between April 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, we traveled 454 kilometers along the highways of Ceará state, on a journey that started in two schools in Fortaleza. On the first day, we covered 135 kilometers along the BR-222 highway to the town of Itaipoca. The next day, after a brief stop to enjoy a delicious brown sugar and coconut

cookie, we returned to Fortaleza so that on the morning of April 19<sup>th</sup> we could be in Caucaia, a town near the capital. After a coastal journey of 173 kilometers along state highway CE-040, we arrived in Itaiçaba, where we met craftsmen putting carnauba palm leaves out along the sides of the roads to dry in the sun.



**EACH STUDENT  
DESERVES  
INDIVIDUAL  
ATTENTION**

*Make your dreams your goal: Study! You are here to win; The secret is believing; focus, effort and faith.* Motivational phrases like this one are the second thing that attracts our attention when we visit the large and spacious Joaquim Magalhães High School in Itapipoca, 138 kilometers from the state capital, Fortaleza. It is the second thing because, when you enter the school, your eyes are immediately drawn to the beautiful garden and the unusually clean environment which is visited by more than 1,900 adolescents every day.

Motivation, organization and enthusiasm about the infrastructure all form part of the strategies of José Itamar Marques Araújo, who has been the school principal here since 2009. A Mathematics graduate, the school administrator says that planning as a team, with a view to setting out the priorities for investment of the state and federal budgets, makes the difference.

José Itamar was the seventh of eight children and his parents were a housewife and a security guard. Six of his siblings are trained as teachers and five now work in the profession. When he was 18, José Itamar passed the entrance exam to train in Pedagogy and soon afterwards started giving classes as a substitute teacher at the school where he is now the Principal. **Since then I haven't stopped. The years passed and, despite**

**not having an official employment relationship with the state, because I was at university, I always had opportunities because of the work I was doing. After that I passed the exam to be a state teacher and I've been here throughout my career. I've worked in school management for almost eight years.** After proudly showing off the school facilities, such as the computer room, the air-conditioned classrooms, the well-organized library and the white-boards, we reach the kitchens, where the cooks prepare mouth-watering beans with 'farofa' (a Brazilian dish made with manioc flour, meat and spices), and cut up delicious 'Itapipoca' brown sugar and





coconut cookies for dessert. In half an hour, there will be a race between the students for a good place in the lunch line to make sure they do not miss out on this wonderful food. The girls line up on one side and the boys on the other, then they all sit down together to eat under the generous shade of the trees in the patio, while one of the students sings and plays the guitar, although others even forgo their lunch

so they won't miss a minute of the heated game of soccer that's going on in the playground.

The students are all from very different socioeconomic realities. There are students from high-income families and others whose parents depend upon what they receive from the federal '*Bolsa Família*' ('Family Allowance') program, for example. When he became school principal, José Itamar realized that these different realities led, above all amongst those graduating from Primary School, to a difference in skills.

One of the actions adopted by the school has been a form of sponsorship, which involves examining the realities of the students at the beginning of the year, and separating them into four groups: sufficient, intermediate, critical and highly critical. **The focus of this action is those students who are in the critical and highly critical groups. We know that if we manage to get them moving ahead, then our proficiency will automatically improve. Each teacher has five students who they work together with to improve the situation.**

Another way of tackling the problem has been the implementation of the '*Projeto Professor Diretor de Turma*' ('Class Director Teacher Project'), that has been the gateway for the state educational policy to move into high schools since 2010. **The '*Diretor de Turma*' is a project that aims to reduce dropout rates and monitor learning. It involves teachers who are caring and dedicated to the group. The teacher notes the students who are absent from class, visits the families and tries to discover the reasons for leaving, whilst also monitoring the individual school achievement.**

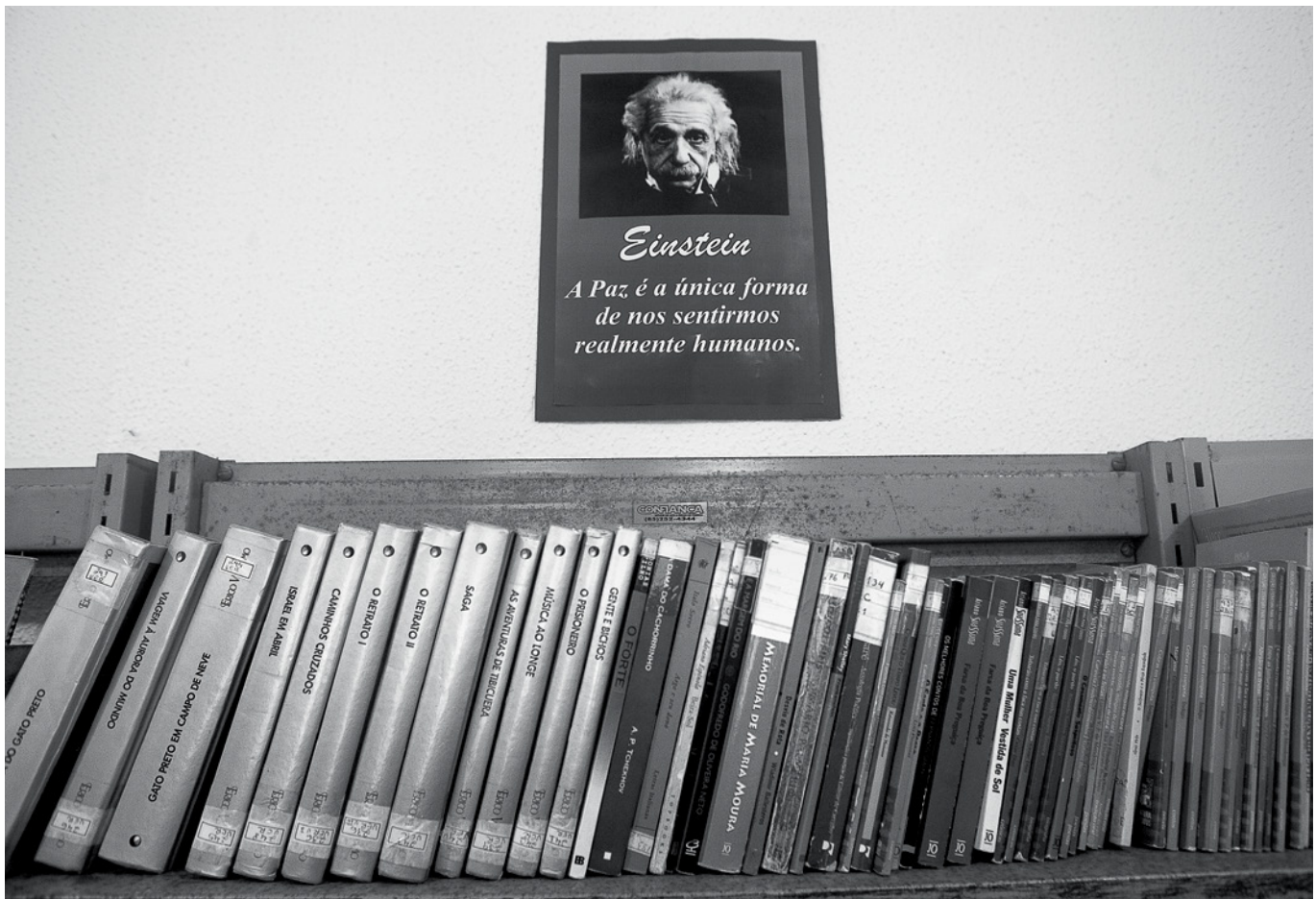
The personal attention paid to each student, as well as being effective in tackling early leaving and quickly detecting any difficulties relating to the understanding of specific lessons, often ends up revealing other problems. **We find out about students who are not well but whose families have not noticed the illnesses. Some are depressed and in need of specialist care.**

For the school principal, the teacher also needs to know how to analyze the quality of the lesson they are giving today in relation to that which they gave a few years ago, so that the student has a desire to learn. **They cannot just be the same. The coordinating body always suggests more creative classes and the school tries to acquire new materials.**

After the interview, the principal gets ready for a special event. He congratulates each of the five students celebrating their birthdays that day, and presents them with candy and a card. These little acts of kindness transform the world. ■

EEEM EDSON CORRÊA  
ANTÔNIO ROBÉRIO TEIXEIRA RODRIGUES

**THE PARENTS  
NEED TO BE  
CONVINCED  
OF THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF EDUCATION**





To quench their thirst and get some relief from the heat, the students at the Edson Corrêa State High School, in the town of Caucaia, near Fortaleza, in Ceará, take a detour to the water fountain, and make a sort of bow to the poster which has a quote from the ex-President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela: Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Belief in this statement lies deep at the heart of the actions of the school principal Antônio Robério Teixeira Rodrigues, a Geography graduate. When he took over as principal in 2013, he was faced with reducing dropout rates that stood at around 20%. The school currently about 1,200 students in its three sessions.

A study of the students who dropped out showed that it was largely caused by the need to work, usually in conditions of underemployment, due to the low family income. This is a vicious circle that

leads to low levels of schooling and continuing poverty. But how can this circle be broken?

**We started regularly calling the parents and inviting them to look at this issue. We managed to completely change the perspectives of some of them. We need to convince them of the importance of education. Many are illiterate, meaning they cannot understand that their child's education will help them in the future, with training that will provide them with a better paid profession.**

Aware that to break this series of problems the system needs to be coordinated to operate as a whole, Robério outlines the reasoning behind it as a summer rainstorm falls on Caucaia. **As well as creating good citizens, we urgently need to prepare these students to enter university and the work market, which is increasingly competitive. To manage this, they need to have access to quality education, with committed teachers, and to ongoing training that the Education Department should make available.**

With the help of the municipal Child Protection Agency, which, by visiting families, tries to prevent students from dropping out of school, dropout rates have dropped to 12% per year. One unexpected result of this action is that some families start to see school as a possible means of resolving various other problems. **Parents often now bring along family issues. It's a tough role. The school ends up being a refuge for them. The**



one professional who ought to be in all the schools is the psychologist, because there are a lot of problems that interfere in school performance.

Just as in the majority of areas near large metropolises, violence is always present. In 2014, the school was robbed. **We were in the middle of an evening class and three guys came in through the back. They robbed the students who were in the playground, then came into the classroom and the administration department. They took everyone's cell phones; it was all very dramatic.** This event caused a lot of trauma throughout the school community. Robério took measures, and the school now has permanent security guards and a closed-circuit surveillance system.

Believing that only education is capable of changing this state of things in the long-run is what allows Robério to remain firm in his convictions. This is why he has sought to get closer to his students, and this is what makes the difference in his management. While he is discussing this

relationship, the rain stops and the sun suddenly comes out, causing steam to start rising from the puddles between the trees in the courtyard. **Sometimes I put my agenda aside so I can listen to the students. They feel comfortable coming to talk. They don't always hear what they want to, but after a conversation they leave with a better understanding of the situation. With the implementation of the 'Diretor de Turno' project, in which each teacher is responsible for a class, it started getting easier to recognize the difficulties and needs of each student. Once they felt they were being listened to, their performance levels rose considerably.**

Aware that these changes don't come about quickly, the principal has been transforming things at the school a little at a time. This is what led him, for example, to look for a way of encouraging the students to take up the habit of reading. **We have a project called 'Campeões da Leitura' ('Reading Champions'), in which the students are encouraged to read at least four books a year.**

In the limited library space, next to a picture of the scientist Albert Einstein, is a poster listing five reasons for reading a book: increased vocabulary; personal growth; discovery of new worlds; joy and enchantment; travel without leaving where you are. Mandela would have approved. ■



**THE ONLY  
REASON  
BRAZIL ONLY  
HASN'T  
EXPLODED YET  
IS BECAUSE OF  
THE SCHOOLS**

Clarice Lispector, Frida Kahlo and Rachel de Queiroz find relief from the Ceará heat under the fan of one of the high school classrooms at the Maria Menezes de Serpa School. The three women were the focus of a study, presented on postcards, of Women in Art and Literature.

Raising tolerance between people, and the role of women in society, are issues which Rosângela Nascimento, the school principal, makes a point of prioritizing. **Being a woman and black, I like to talk to the students to show that we can [achieve] more, despite gender and racial prejudices. I ran for the post of principal with one other candidate. Soon afterwards, one of our teachers was in a district where a lot of our students live, and they asked him if the black woman had won. I became famous as the strong black woman. I find it interesting that they associate the issue of race, strength and a commanding voice, because when I arrived here there was a lot of violence.**

In Rosângela's commanding voice there is also the echo of the voices of students and their parents. **The door is always open to my office, a student can come in at any time,**

**to talk, complain, make suggestions. And the parents all have my personal telephone number.**

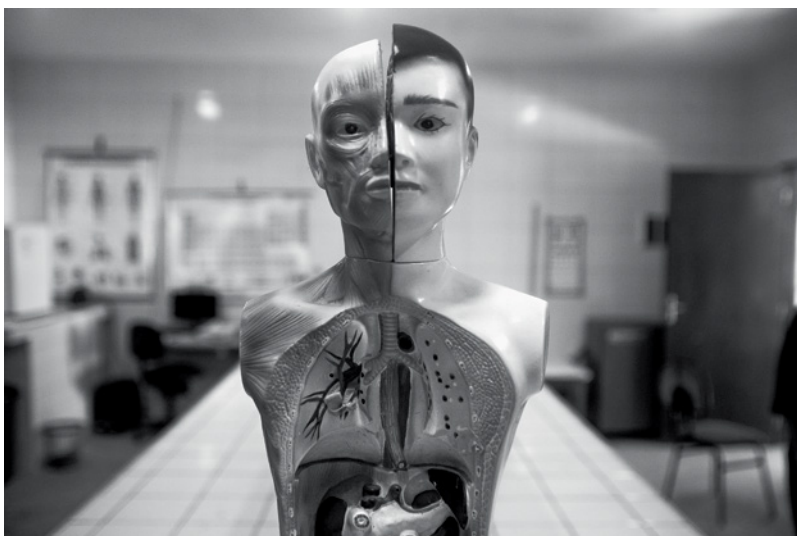
When she took over here, the first thing to do was to put an end to the fights and threats amongst the students. **We started working towards a culture of peace, but it took a long time. It took three years, with the help of the teachers and employees who embraced the cause. Everything that we did over these three years had this aim that we could live in peace, and that women need to be appreciated.**

Homosexual students also deserve special attention from the administration. **We have been working so that they feel comfortable at the school.**

**When prejudice shows itself, we call in the parents of the student who is doing this sort of thing and we talk. Because they were**







frightened of some sort of violence, [some students] were avoiding using the boy's bathroom and using the girl's. But the girls didn't like this much. After having a talk with them, we authorized the use of the special-needs students' bathroom and the staff bathroom. One of these boys is the deputy-principal of his class. It all went smoothly. I'm happy about how willing, protected and respected they feel.

Rosângela felt a vocation to be the teacher since she was a child. I loved being in the staffroom. She always studied in state schools, graduated in Letters and did a post-graduate degree in Literature. The idea of becoming a school principal became clear

after her experience at the Fire Department's military school, where she worked for eight years, three of them in the coordination department. **I had ideas and wasn't afraid of facing situations. I felt it would all work out... It's not for the salary. Money certainly isn't the motivation for being a school principal.**

After having worked her way through this maze of difficulties, Rosângela understands that the school directly reflects the ethical problems and the social fractures afflicting the country. **Many people say that the only reason Brazil hasn't exploded yet is because of the schools. They are a ray of hope. I see families that have nothing, but the parents want their children to come to school. The family believes that it will improve their children's lives, and the young people see the place as somewhere that is safe.**

At the same time, she recognizes that this new generation needs a school that understands them in the wider sense: **I'd like to do a master's degree connected to young people. The vision we have today is outdated. Schools need to improve. We have to understand what students want and what they are thinking, because if we don't, we run the risk of having a school that holds absolutely no interest, that doesn't meet the new demands of technologies or changes in behavior, and that doesn't understand a new perception of young people and the rights they have. I think it is interesting to see a student who is aware of his rights. Before, you said no and that was that! Nowadays, you say no and have to justify it, argue your point, because they have very strong counter-arguments. You have to be prepared,** Rosângela concludes, as she puts up posters of the biographies of Joan of Arc and Dercy Gonçalves, and reorganizes those that the wind has blown off the walls. ■

## **THE DIALOG WAS REVOLUTIONARY!**

School has already started, but four students arrive late and find the gates closed. They are sent to the office of the school principal, Ana Lúcia Vieira de Lima, to explain why they are late. I had to take care of my grandfather who wasn't feeling well last night - says one student. My cell phone broke, and I didn't have an alarm - says another. I didn't have any money for the bus, and I had to walk - the principal hears as another excuse.

Ana Lúcia, who has been in school management for almost eight years, takes note of those who are late and their reasons on a chart and lets them go off to

their classrooms. This type of control, amongst other measures implemented by the principal, has been fundamental to establishing an environment with discipline in the school.

**During the first two years of management, we made a great effort to change the school environment. It was hard work. It took some time to just establish some peace so that the teacher could give a class. There was a student who caused an explosion in the playground during break time and others who jumped over the wall; it was a complete mess. Students didn't want to stay in the classroom. One of the problems was the age**





distortion. We had students who were 16 years old in the sixth grade along with others in the region of 11 years of age. Age groups that are so different studying together creates a certain amount of discomfort, because they have different ways of learning. I told the teachers to shift the focus between the groups a little, and to work differently. We started to talk to the students more and, bit by bit, they started to open up.

Along the corridors we see campaign posters for the student union elections. The first board bears the name of 'Voz Ativa' ('Active Voice'), a sign that negotiation

through dialog seems to have been brought into the school's practices. **I didn't do anything else but talk with the teachers and students. It was very tiring. Little by little, the students started to trust us and to open up. They felt privileged to have the attention we were giving them. I always said: I have a child at home and I want you all to treat him the way I treat him. I asked the students for their help and partnership, for them to help reduce the lack of discipline, because if this couldn't be achieved, I would have to transfer them to another school. I didn't want that. The dialog was revolutionary! You need to have patience, but it's worth it. I'm much happier seeing their improvement.**

The Senador Fernandes Távora School, in the Demócrito Rocha district on the outskirts of Fortaleza, lies amongst five low-income communities, which arose out of land occupations by homeless people and where drug dealing has taken a hold. The



rivalry between the dealers for control of the area means that students from one community cannot study in another.

On the other hand, the school environment is very relaxed between the high school students, during the morning session. During the break, while some students compete in a hotly disputed table tennis competition, others throw together a game of soccer in the playground, talk about the

weekend's party or sit under the trees around the patio to read a little.

With the school operating in a more integrated way, the principal focused on the more practical problems. The first action involved the infrastructure. **I managed to install air conditioning in the majority of classrooms but there are still two more to go. And I realized that keeping the school clean directly affects the students' self-esteem. It means that they like to stay here in this environment and, in return, they themselves don't make any more mess. The school started to gain more credibility in the community. In order to achieve the greater objective, which is teaching and learning, all these problems need to be cleared out of the way. The support we received from the Child Protection Agency was important as well. We held a meeting with the parents once a month.**

With so many changes, the results started to appear. Dropout levels dropped and the 'Ideb' average rose from 3.4 in 2011 and 2013, to 3.9 in 2015. With the implementation of the full-time high school system, it was possible to create elective subjects. In addition to the writing laboratory, that came about with the Programa Jovem de Futuro, the students themselves suggested other sources of learning, and they now take part in activities that would appear impossible considering the context that existed in 2009: a music festival, a choir, robotics, theater and dance are some of the elective activities that make up the syllabus, helping to create a more peaceful environment and awaken creative learning. ■

## THE EDUCATIONAL PART IS THE SOUL OF THE SCHOOL

Under the leafy canopy of a juazeiro tree, on the patio of the João Barbosa Lima school, students gather to perform dramatized readings of Brazilian literary classics. Called the 'Reading Tree' by the students, the beautiful tree transmits the energy of a wise old lady. Meanwhile, in one of the classrooms, preparations for the first class of the day are under way beneath the shadows cast by the breeze block walls which, by filtering the sun's rays, draw a beautiful and unlikely arabesque over the scene. In one of the air-conditioned classrooms, an English teacher discusses the authors they will be studying this semester. It is an impressive list: Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde and James Joyce, amongst others.

Focused exclusively on high school teaching, the João Barbosa Lima school is located in Itaíçaba, in upstate Ceará. Its isolation and distance from the large urban centers make the town seem to be suspended in time, emphasized by both the colonial architecture and the residents' habit of setting chairs out in front of their houses at the end of the day so they can have endless conversations with the neighbors.

Whilst walking along the streets, we come across a rather curious scene: hundreds of carnaúba palm leaves laid out along the side of the road to dry in the sun. Once they are dry, the palm fronds will be transformed into beautiful bags and baskets by the skillful hands of local craftsmen.

Proud to talk about the town's traditional culture, Maria Edvanise Oliveira de Carvalho, principal of the school since 2011, believes that the educational plans should extend outside the classroom to give the students a range of perspectives of conscientious citizens in relation to the world they live in. One example: the banks of the river that supplies water to the town

have been transformed into a place for dumping used tires, which has caused a dengue epidemic. The school ran a competition to collect the most tires possible. **This initiative grew out of the SuperAção project. We collected used batteries and got R\$ 13,000 from the recycling. We proposed a creative use for the tires, transforming them into poufs and flowerbeds for the vegetable patch.**

Edvanise was born in Itaíçaba and studied at this very school, where she is now the principal, until the eighth grade. She returned as a Mathematics teacher in 2000, and was faced with the aversion that many people have to the subject. It









was creativity that proved to be the gateway to winning the students over. **I always liked taking a playful approach to my work. To explain analytical geometry, I had them construct a board showing the Cartesian plane. By doing so, they were able to visualize the coordinates and understand the patterns. I wanted them to understand the meaning of what they were constructing. Knowing where the formulas come from makes things easier in the future.** In another class, musical meter was her ally. **We formed a band called 'The Pythagoreans'. The students created parodies of songs using the things they were learning about.** In this way, Pythagoras' Theory turned into rock music and Edvanise's approaches to teaching engaged the students to the point that, in 2008, they took first place at the national Science Fair.

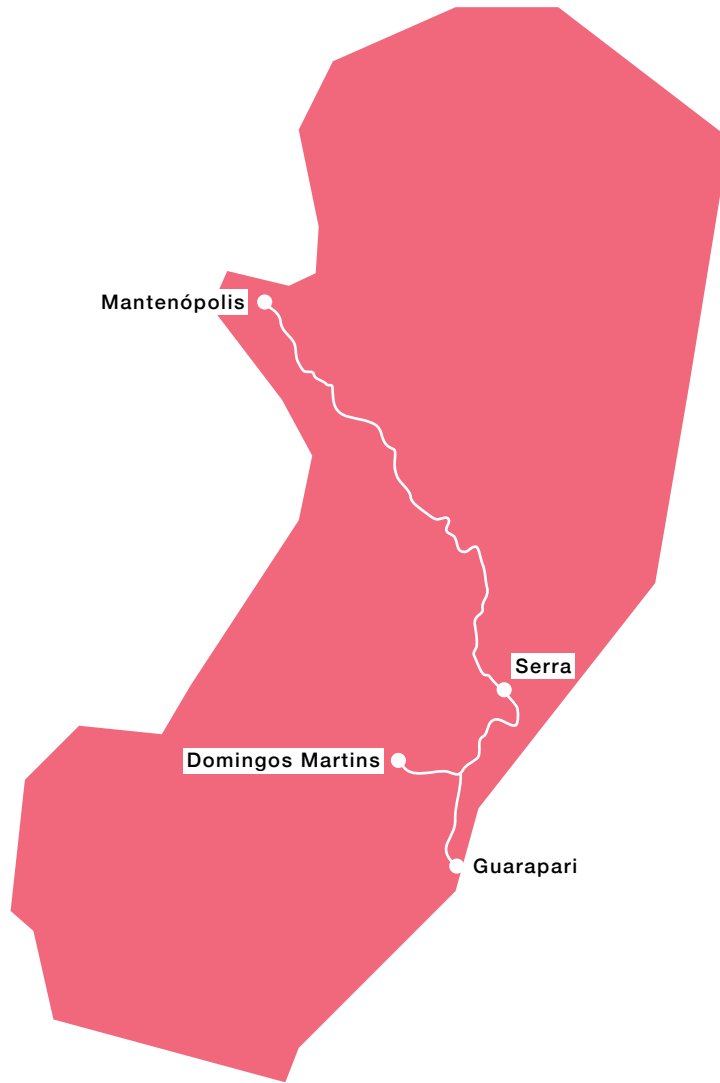
Using this experience as a basis, when she took over the role of school principal, Edvanise made an arrangement. **I agreed with the Physics, Chemistry and Biology teachers that at least 20% of classes would be practical. Reading circles are also used a great deal, as are videos and projections, all designed so that the student can truly experience the subjects. I believe that this makes learning**

**easier. The educational part is the soul of the school. If this isn't our focus, we won't get results.**

Another of the school's projects is sponsorship. **We make a great effort to enroll 100% of the students in the 'Enem' (high school graduation exam). When the exam date is approaching, we allocate seven students to each teacher. During the 15 days before the exam, we work on motivation. The teacher responsible talks with the student, helping them with their difficulties and treating them as though they were one of their own children. On the day of the exam, the teachers bring in chocolate and water. They really do sort of adopt the student. Just by receiving this attention, their self-esteem gets a great boost.**

Is it possible for students in the third grade of the school to get places on the most highly disputed courses at public universities? **In 2013, one student from the community, with nothing special about him, who came in every day on the local bus, but was extremely determined, got onto the Medicine course. He was always here outside his regular hours to study, and he took part in theater and other school activities. From then on, the doors have been opening and we now have students getting onto the most highly disputed courses every year.** While Edvanise continues talking about many other students who have been successful at university, I notice a quote from the author Monteiro Lobato on the library wall: A country is made of men and books. ■





692 km

From the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017, we traveled 692 kilometers along the highways of Espírito Santo, covering the coastal routes, mountain regions and the countryside. We started our journey in the town of Serra, very near the state capital Vitória. Our second destination was the coastal town of Guarapari, which we reached after a 60 kilometer drive along the beautiful '*Rodovia do Sol*' highway. Finding the Rio Claro school, deep in the rural countryside, was something that was quite beyond our GPS. After getting directions from the locals, we traveled through acres of banana plantations until we finally found the road that would take us to our next

stop. That same afternoon, we continued on to Domingos Martins. Over the course of 65 kilometers, everything changed. The heat of the coast gave way to the clouds and welcome coolness of the mountains. German restaurants started to become more and more common along the highway. From there to Mantenópolis, there was another five hours of driving through countryside in which immense and beautiful rock formations rose out of the landscape like nothing else we had seen. Another 226 kilometers along the ES-164 state highway the next day, and we were back in the mountains, where we finished our trip of unforgettable stories and landscapes.



**WE HAVE TO  
BE A BIT OF A  
MOTHER TO  
EVERYONE**

Vast, and strangely red, banana plantations precede our first view of the Rio Claro school, in the rural region of Guarapari, in Espírito Santo. The color of the dust tints the landscape, the fruit and the leaves of the banana trees, the result not only of the daily traffic of tractors and horses, but also that of the school buses and vans along the numerous dirt roads that wind through the region's 28 communities. The rain that sometimes restores green to the trees, is the same rain that swells the streams and hinders the school buses from reaching their destinations in the majority of these communities, often preventing the 306 students from reaching the Rio Clara school.

The logistics of the school transport is one of the many challenges that the school principal Wanda Silva de Souza Mombrini has taken on. **The state provides the transport and I create the routes. I know where all my students live. The other day, some people from the state education department came here with a computer and a GPS, wanting to work out the best route to reduce the distances and costs. They wanted me to approve the route. I said: look, I'll only approve the route if you come with me and take the journey to see that it won't work. By GPS it's very easy, but the reality along the roads is another thing altogether. At the end of the day, the route that I took was the one that was chosen. Their GPS was sending us through a cattle enclosure.**

When she was younger, Wanda thought about becoming an air stewardess. But living together with her grandmother, a retired school teacher, sowed in her a desire to go into teaching. When she was just 16, she was already assistant to a kindergarten teacher who, when she became pregnant, gave her the job. When she was 18, she was hired by the state and sent to work at a public school in Cariacica where she got a reality shock. **I left the private school where I had been used to discipline and organization, and, when I arrived, I looked around at the chipboard buildings... There was one enormous corridor, lots of students, and improvised classrooms all completely disorganized. That was in 1987. I took a deep breath and started work.**





In 1989, Wanda was transferred to the Rio Claro School where she has been for 28 years, the last 16 as principal. In the beginning, there was no school transport. To get to school, the students needed to find a ride. With time and determination, Wanda graduated university in Pedagogy and got a post-graduate degree in Teaching Planning. When she took over at the school, she committed herself to resolving the internal conflicts

both amongst the staff and in the relationship with the community. **I decided to hold a competition to retrieve the teaching values, involving all the sessions and teachers. It involved a number of different actions. Little by little, the school started getting back to what it had been before, because it lacked respect. I managed to bring everyone together. I really like things to be organized. When I arrived, there wasn't a pedagogy specialist or a coordinator. There was just a principal and 646 students. Later on, the town council built a school near to the Elementary I and we were able to move forward.**

The expectation for the students at the Rio Branco school, the majority of whom are the children of agricultural workers, in terms of a university degree, is low. **Many of them don't manage to move on due to financial difficulties. For them, getting into the UFES [Espírito Santo Federal University] is difficult. We have had children here who have studied there, but they were those whose financial conditions were a little better. The majority of the courses are full-time which doesn't give them any time to work. We have managed to raise their awareness. It's no use them feeling anxious about getting a job without a qualification.**

On a break between classes, Wanda talks to a 16-year-old student who is pregnant. Teenage pregnancy, which is common in the region, forces a lot of girls to drop out of school. **We have another who is also pregnant. She's a girl who didn't receive any guidance at all. She's 17 now. I talked to her and persuaded her not to leave school. We have to give them some guidance because very often the parents don't. Many parents are embarrassed to speak to their children about sexuality. We have to be a bit of a mother to everyone. What is lacking for these young people is attention.**

Without being able to rely very much on the parents, Wanda always asks the community to help out so she will be able to get a gymnasium so that the students can have Physical Education classes. She uses the same tactic to guarantee a water supply for the school, pumped up from a spring on the land belonging to a neighbor. The difficulties do not put her off though. **I always wake up at 5am. What motivates me to come here every day are the students. Every day holds something different; no two days are the same. There's always something new. We have a routine that can be pleasant or can be difficult. But I'm an optimist. Everything has a solution. I try to pass this determination on to others. I believe in education very much, despite all the problems. ■**

EEEFM GISELA SALLOKER FAYET  
**JOSILENE WERNECK MACHADO FALK**

**EDUCATION  
ISN'T AN  
EXPENSE,  
IT'S AN  
INVESTMENT**





A thick fog serves to break up the first rays of morning sunlight and they accompany us to Paraju, a small rural district of Domingos Martins, located in a valley in the mountainous region of Espírito Santo. The route from the highway to the town center consists of a road that cuts through enormous plantations of arabica coffee, the crop that fuels the local economy.

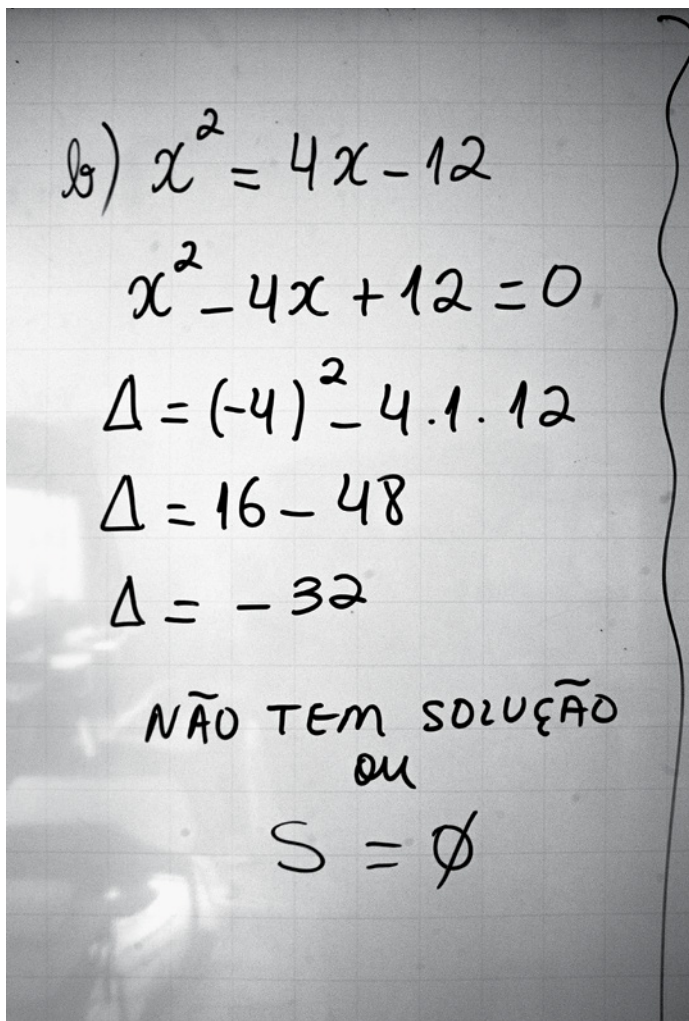
When we arrive on the main road, the Gisela Salloker Fayet School is still wrapped in a fog that starts to clear as the school buses

full of students start to arrive. The blond hair and blue eyes of the majority of them leave no doubt as to their German and Pomeranian heritage, the fruit of the migratory influx that took place in the region. Receiving the students, who total 427 across the three sessions, is school principal Josilene Werneck Machado Falk, who makes a point of welcoming them all by name. In single files, they organize themselves in the tight space of the school's common area until the principal authorizes them, one class at a time, to go to their classrooms. The discipline is evident, as is the obvious respect they have for Joseline's commanding voice. **Our school has a strong sense of discipline, the students know that. It can seem to be rather too traditionalist, but that is how our culture is.**

When talking about her personal History, the principal shows all her determination. **I was born here and I was born to be a teacher. I could read and write by the age of three, and at the age of five I started Primary School, going straight into the second grade. I used to play 'school' and knew that I would be a teacher. I went to Primary School here at this school. Afterwards I went to high school with teaching elsewhere. When I was 15, I started university studying Geography. By the time I was 20 I had already graduated.** After that, she attended the Pharmacy and Chemistry faculties and gained a Master's Degree in Sciences and Mathematics. Between 2010 and 2016, she gave Geography classes at the school where she is now the principal.

**I also belong to the residents' association. A number of people asked for me to be hired as the principal, because they wanted someone from the community to run the school so that it could start growing again.**

This same community is directly responsible for improvements to the small building that houses the school, on a piece of land shared with a private residence. Even though federal and state resources have been scarce over recent years, the Gisela Salloker Fayet School has been making structural improvements.



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I believe that education isn't an expense, it's an investment. But generally, governments always treat it as an expense. To balance out this problem, the community helps a lot. This is a German community. We have a culture of expanding and building on a place. There are families that don't even have children here, but even so they help out, holding events where the financial gains go to the school, with the ways they should be spent being defined by the Board.

Teacher training courses have been developed by Josilene and her team, with the costs also being covered by the community. She believes that this led to the good performances of the students in the Enem exam, which, in 2015 saw the Gisela Salloker Fayet school being ranked second best public school in the state. The resources raised by the community also helped to refurbish the library, construct the Biology lab, the pedagogy coordination office, the gymnasium and two more classrooms.

One of the reasons behind the local residents' active participation in the school was the realization that the region was becoming less appealing for young people. **Small farmers find it difficult to survive, and subsidies are lacking. The young people started to leave and the town started to get old. The school needed to work on this, to show that it is possible to study and build a good future here. Those who work on the land can also get an education, and can establish opportunities and improvements for their families' work.**

As a strategy to get students to study and create solutions for local farming, for example, Josilene established the Science Fair with a 'PBL' [Problem Based Learning] format. **This is a teaching methodology that was originally applied to Medicine courses. It creates an investigative scenario and, based upon this, the students research a problem, trying to find solutions. PBL is based in reality. The student puts their own experiences into practice.**

Following these lines, encouraged by their research, a group of girls from the school developed an experiment in which condensed smoke, collected from burning coal, was transformed into cattle feed. They won three awards, one of which was international.

Another school day for the morning session draws to a close. With the noonday sun now uninhibited by clouds, the majority of the students climb aboard the school buses that will take them back to the rural areas. Some set off home on foot whilst others choose to stay at the library to study and a small group sings with one student playing a guitar. ■



## THE DREAM OF GOING TO THE US OVERSHADOWS STUDIES

*Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.* This quote from the North-American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson [1803-1882] appears in numerous messages posted on social networks by the teachers at the Job Pimentel school, located in the town of Mantenópolis, in the extreme west of Espírito Santo, near the border with Minas Gerais.

Encouraging the 440 or so students, the majority of whom live in rural areas, to continue their studies after high school is one of the great management challenges faced by Rodrigo Vilela Lucas Martins, who has been the school principal since 2013. **Many of our students work on the farms of the region. They help their families with the coffee crops. We see our students at the local market on Saturdays selling and delivering products at the stalls. Another issue that we have here in Mantenópolis is the desire to migrate to the United States. Many parents are going there and this influences the students. This dream ends up overshadowing that of studying and staying in the region. Some enroll at school to get the declaration that they are studying and then try to get a visa. There still exists that way of thinking: I have to leave my hometown to do well. It's a cultural question in this town.**

Speeches by ex-students who have graduated from university and visits to universities are amongst the methods used to try to stop students from dropping out of school. **We do some research in the third year to find out who is interested in healthcare, for example, and we organize visits to the Anatomy laboratories at universities and the open day at Nova Venécia. There is still very little interest though. I don't have the dropping out figures, but we lose a lot.**



As well as creating strategies to raise students' awareness about the importance of the educational process, Rodrigo also had to deal with his own limitations when he stopped giving History classes and became an administrator. **When we are on the outside, we imagine that being a school principal is easier. When I took over as principal, I had no experience of administration. I started to talk to various different principals within our regional network. I tried to understand what it means to be a principal through their experience. We had a day-long training session, but it was really superficial.**

"Lugar de MU-  
LHER é onde  
ela QUISER."  
3ºMOA





I went home more frightened than motivated. The superintendent turned me around saying that they just showed what it was to be an administrative principal, but what they really wanted was a more pedagogic principal.

When he realized that dealing with spreadsheets and administrating budgets was something that was more difficult at the start, Rodrigo found that the business of integrating educational coordination, teachers, students and the community would be easier to adjust to. **I'm more of a pedagogic principal than an administrative one. I think this is probably due to the fact that I have come from the humanities area.**

**So I started listening to the teachers more, because I realized that this approach had been missing in the previous administration. Now we talk, listen and try to find a consensus. But even today, it's still difficult to put together a school board. There are very few teachers and parents who are ready to collaborate. So I go to the teachers who are leaders and ask for help. Little by little, we've been able to put together a more participative group.**

Even though it covers quite a large area, the Job Pimentel School is in need of urgent structural work. The space set aside for the gymnasium is a rectangle of broken cement beneath a skeleton of a roof that has been waiting to be finished for years now. **This sports area has been ready on the drawing board since the 1980s, but has never been put into effect. The infrastructure is extremely fragile. I have air conditioning units to put into the classrooms, but the electrical system can't handle it. The roof has been deemed unsafe. We have a large area, but it is unsuitable for teaching. We called everyone together and collectively painted the walls. We have filed many requests for maintenance work and have received many promises that the school will be refurbished one day.**

While continuing to wait for the refurbishments, it is necessary to continue stimulating the teachers and students' dreams. Whilst we are talking on the playground, a high school student goes by wearing a t-shirt bearing the message: 'My teachers appear in my dreams!' **It's part of a motivation campaign that we have started on social media. We started working on understanding the student and we created the idea that 'We believe in the dreams of our students'. We started using Facebook. The Programa Jovem de Futuro has given a voice to the work that the teachers have done. Everything is now presented, posted on the Internet and disseminated.**

Having been the school principal for five years, Rodrigo is now planning to leave. **As far as I can see, six years as principal is the maximum. More than this and you start losing the understanding of what is public and what is private, and you start belonging to the school too much.** Watching hundreds of young people getting into lines to get a snack, Rodrigo adds: **I'd like to be a speaker. I like working on the emotional aspects with young people. ■**

**I ALWAYS  
THINK  
THAT THE  
STUDENT  
IS  
CAPABLE**

When he was 17 years old, Ramon Sant'Ana Barcellos, totally in love with his History classes, decided that this would be his tool for changing the world. **At that time, I understood that studying History at university could be a way of studying my own reality and understanding the past, arming myself with information. I wanted to be a thinker able to make a difference in the world. During the course, I opted for teacher training. With a bachelor's degree, I would be restricted to university, but as a History teacher, I would be working with young people, and by doing so, I could pass on a little of my hope of changing the world for the better. I always had political aspirations, and a very critical perspective on things, but I was never a member of a political party.**

During his third year at university, Ramon was already giving classes at private schools.

When he started working in the public system, he became even more sure of his ideas. **The private schools were fundamental for my belief that top quality teaching was possible. I could not accept that the same thing could not exist in public schools as well. I can't see any difference in a student simply because their parents are in a better financial situation. In my subject, I always had high expectations of my students. I never accepted poor results, even when I understood that the family didn't provide any support, that the socioeconomic conditions didn't allow it, that the opportunities were**





not conducive. I always think that the student is capable.

This idealism naturally led Ramon into school administration. **I realized that when these seeds are planted, watered, watched and guided, they generate results.** This vision I have of looking optimistically at what I can see in front of me led me to take over the running of a school.

But how did he come by such a clear perspective? **The students who gave me the most work in the classroom were the ones who didn't learn anything and were lazy, and were excluded from the process.** They were the ones I got closer to so that I could listen to their problems. So I arranged the classes so as to reduce the amount of content at the beginning, in order to awaken their interest in learning. When they learned at least a little bit, they took a step

forward. Of course, there has to be some love. This is the key word in managing to rescue these kids. They have to feel wanted. You can't provide education if there is no love. You have to understand the student, the human being that he is. From thereon, things change. The transformation is impressive.

Having been the head at the Vila Nova de Colares school, that has around 1,600 students in 46 classrooms, for ten



months now, Ramon has taken on his greatest challenge as an educator so far. The town of Serra has social problems that have serious repercussions on the school environment. **This is one of the most violent municipalities in Brazil and the school lies in one of Serra's most violent areas. There is a very complex social vulnerability, with high levels of violence, drug dealing and**

**youth mortality. I work around the idea that I can save at least one young person a day from these problems, trying to get him more interested in school and understand that it is possible to change this path through life.**

On the graffitied walls and doors near the gymnasium, amongst the names of various students, the words grief and remembrance stand out.

Even though Ramon is an educator who is passionate about his job and very aware of the educative process' power to change, he recognizes that there are enormous barriers to be overcome to make learning one of the driving forces with the ability to create social transformation. **The educator Mario Sergio Cortella says that 'the role of the school is to teach, and the role of the family to educate.'** This is a very interesting phrase, but it only applies to part of the population. In those families where the parents have a low level of schooling, one cannot expect education and this aphorism does not apply. Very often, the school, in order not to descend into total chaos, needs to perform the role of the family, that is to educate. **And this is a very difficult and complex task. In the times in which we live, of economic, political and ethical crisis, it is even more difficult to achieve this because of the enormous lack of belief. These students that are on the edges, think that Brazil is a country where things simply don't go right. Recovering these values is extremely complex.**

As an historian, however, Ramon knows that the circumstances can change at any time. Until then, it is necessary to act with the belief that we can change the world around us for the better. **It does not matter which government is in power, and it does not matter what sort of corruption is afflicting the country. We have to make things different. It is possible to change the path these students take. It is possible to create a high quality education. ■**

## **THE STUDENT NEEDS INTERACTION, SOCIALIZATION AND FUN**

The teachers have fixed classrooms and the students go to them when the alarm bell sounds for them to change classes. Because of this, the atmosphere at the Francisca Peixoto Miguel school, in Serra, Espírito Santo, is particularly lively. With each bell, the students crowd along the corridors. Some have a quick chat, others make plans for what to do after school, boyfriends and girlfriends exchange brief kisses, others quickly check their messages on their cell phones. In five minutes, they are all sat at their desks, usually in the same position, regardless of the classroom.

If these almost choreographed changes seem to be the work of a trainer, then this

would be Hilário Massariol Junior, who has been the principal at the Francisca Peixoto Miguel School for a year. An ex-handball player, he has adopted the discipline and strategy of sport as the basis for his management concepts. **There is a lot that life can take from sport. You have to remember that you are part of a whole. When you do something that goes against the rest of the group, you may be damaging the teamwork.**

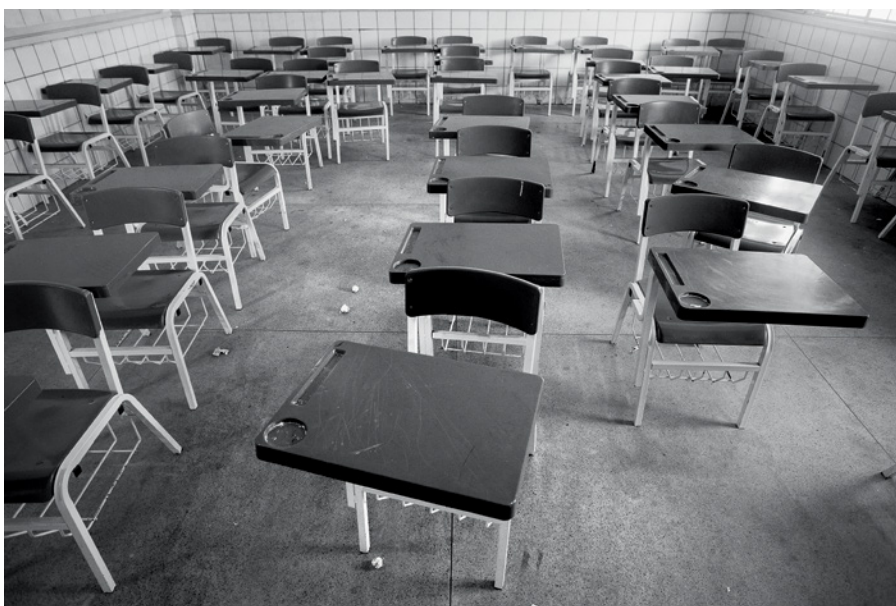
Building a good relationship between the employees, students and parents was the first challenge that Hilário faced when he started as principal: **When a student is going through a rebellious phase, the last thing he wants is a teacher shouting at him. Sometimes the relations are built with fire and steel. I try to talk everything through. I treat the cleaning and kitchen staff, the teachers and the students all the same. I think there is a chain reaction that unfolds throughout the hierarchy. If the teacher is willing, then the student will be too.**

Just as in sport, if the whole team isn't working towards a common objective, there is no way of winning, explains Hilário. **When I took over as principal, I saw that the educational management was very good. The pedagogues made demands and the teachers really worked. The financial management was very organized as well. But I realized that I had to do something about the personnel management. There wasn't a good atmosphere in the school because of the inter-personal relations. And if a school doesn't have a good atmosphere, then when your alarm**









**goes off in the morning, you don't have any desire to go to work.**

Despite Serra being a region with high levels of crime, Hilário believes that the previous administrators managed to balance these issues in the school. **When I took over, we were already in a more comfortable situation. The district has these issues with violence, but not inside the school. We might have students who mess with the wrong things, but that's not what the school's about. Here, the most important things are teaching and good practices. I think this is owed to the previous**

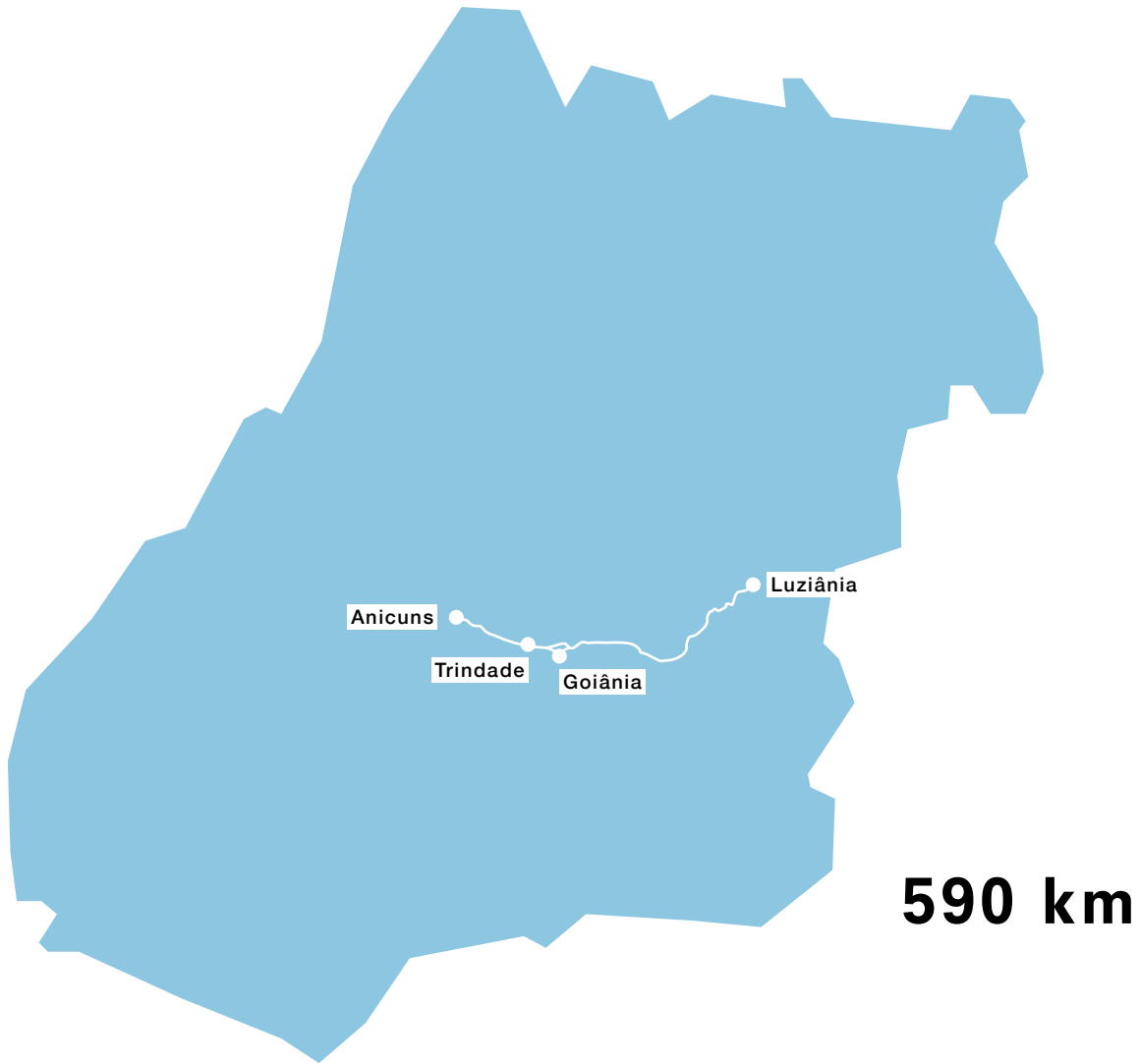
**administration, because this problem existed in the school before. It's thanks to every teacher and pedagogue who fought to take the school back for them. The Education Department made the presence of a police unit focused on the school possible. They are uniformed police who take a different approach to that of conventional police. They talk to the students, they don't use violence, and don't raise their voices.**

While we are talking, a lively game of volleyball starts, with mixed teams. The Physical Education teacher sometimes acts as a strict referee. The loud whistle and his expressive movements remind one of a game between professional teams. The fans of both the teams excitedly support the players.

**The ideal public school does not exist. There is always so much that can be improved in every way, says Hilário, on the way back to his office. When you take over a school like this, you have two options: either you sit down and watch the show, watch the band go by, which would be more comfortable, or you decide to make things better. Amongst the public schools in the municipality of Serra, we lie in second place in the Enem exam ratings. That's very good, but we want to be first. Those students who repeat the first year stay on to try to pass the next year, whilst some go to another school. We have talked about the strategies with the teachers, because they think it's normal to take the first year again. I believe that things should be done in the ninth year of Primary School.**

The principal gets excited when he mentions what he calls a magical moment at the school: the cultural exhibition that takes place every year. **The students dedicate themselves and create wonderful things that involve fun educational and sporting activities. The student needs to interact, socialize and have fun.** In the playground, the game is over and the winners and losers get together with smiles and hugs. ■





We visited the five schools in Goiás between March 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. We started in the state capital Goiânia where, after visiting the Irmã Gabriela School, we stocked up on delicious 'baru' nuts. Very early the next day, we arrived in Trindade, a town that lies just 30 kilometers from the capital. The next town on our schedule was Anicuns, accessed by state highways flanked by the vast green fields of plantations that, at the beginning of October in the Central-West region, provide a beautiful

contrast with the blue sky. The 300 kilometers to Luziânia, near Brasília, were the most complicated of the whole tour. Stretches of bumpy roads, maintenance work, lots of trucks, and heavy traffic as we drew near the town, made the journey stretch out over seven hours. We found relief in the stalls at the side of the road that sold delicious sweetcorn pasties filled with melted cheese. At another stop, the delicacy was an enormous and delicious fried tapioca cookie.



COLÉGIO ESTADUAL PROFESSOR ANTÔNIO MARCO DE ARAÚJO  
**ELIANE LARA DE RIBEIRO MORAES**

**THE SCHOOL  
WAS CALLED  
CARANDIRU.  
ACCEPT THE  
CHALLENGE**





During the morning period, four girls, aged around 16, ask to be able to come into the administration office of the Professor Antônio Marco de Araújo State High School to talk to the principal Eliane Lara de Ribeiro Moraes. She sees them immediately.

The four girls explain how, over the last few weeks, when they have been leaving school, they have been followed by men in cars or on motorcycles. After hearing threats of violence and assault, they ran away crying to hide in the first open door they find.

Having been in the job for two years, Eliane has made every effort to implement a way of working that improves the atmosphere in the school. It is hard work. With a population of almost 200,000, Luziânia is located near the Federal District of Brasília. In January 2017, there was a record number of 24 murders. On the 'Map of Violence in Brazil', the municipality appears amongst the 85 towns with the highest number of gun-related deaths in the country.

With 1,287 students, the Professor Antônio Marco de Araújo high school is a direct reflection of this situation. **A very firm hand is needed to deal with the violence in the region. Here in the district, the school was called 'Carandiru' (after the famously violent São Paulo prison). My family was against it when I decided to accept the position of principal because of this. But I accepted the challenge.**

From her desk, Eliane keeps watch on the monitors that show images of all the classrooms, the outside areas and the street. **I installed 32 cameras. Since then, the students have been getting on with each other more peacefully and the teachers have managed to be able to teach their lessons better. If it hadn't been for the cameras, the situation wouldn't have improved.**

Eliane is the daughter of an ex-kitchen worker at the school. Her father never finished Primary School. **I come from a very humble family, without any resources. I use my own personal History to show the students that they can change their reality. I try to show them that I am the same. By doing so, I have gotten closer to them.** When she arrives home, the subject continues to be the school and the possible



ways that exist to improve students' learning. **My husband is a Mathematics teacher and he works in Brasília with visually handicapped people. At home, we live and breathe school.**

The implementation of an on line system, that Eliane brought from another school that she worked at, aims to get the families to participate more in the students' school lives. Through this system, the parents can access information about their child's performance, what time they arrive at school, if they are up-to-date with the activities, and whether they have received any warnings. **This system allows me to have a better bond with the families.**

On the other hand, the Programa Jovem de Futuro management system has been her ally in winning over the teachers who were discouraged due to the students' lack of interest. **We have broken down the resistance. We have a lot of teachers who are approaching retirement age, and who are from a very different time**

in terms of innovation and technology. They don't realize that the students are not the same as they were ten years ago. I lost a lot of sleep thinking about whether I was on the right track, but new things excite me, and challenges excite me even more. I don't like routine.

Of the 670 Jovem de Futuro partner schools, we were number 498. In 2017, we jumped to 258. We got focused and moved up to 3.9 rating in the state evaluations after years of our rates dropping, but the average is 4.9. Our proficiency in the subjects started improving enormously after I managed to involve some of the teachers and students, who took on a certain leadership in the classes.

After the interview, we walked out to the school patio. Students from the third year of high school talk to Eliane without any ceremony, chatting about their weekends and their dreams for the future. Suddenly, the sun comes out and the rays slant across the school patio, with the movement against the back-lighting creating an unexpected and beautiful theater of shadows. ■

**IT IS  
NECESSARY  
TO MANAGE  
THE SCHOOL  
AND THE  
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH THE  
COMMUNITY  
AS WELL**

Dawn in the streets around the Professor José Reis Mendes High School, in Trindade, about 16 kilometers from the capital, Goiânia, is peaceful and quiet. One by one, the students on their way to the morning session start to appear with their school bags, notepads and books. Some are accompanied by their dogs who a little forlornly watch their owners going through the school gates. One mother, who always takes her daughter to school, arrives 10 minutes late and looks for the supervisor to explain: *Last night, two guys were killed in our road.*

The school is located in a region on the outskirts of the town that is controlled by drug dealers.

The violence in the region is something that Wannessa Cardoso e Silva, principal of the school since 2011, is used to dealing with as a matter of routine. **This mother's story is normal. Even death seems to have been trivialized. We have ex-students who**

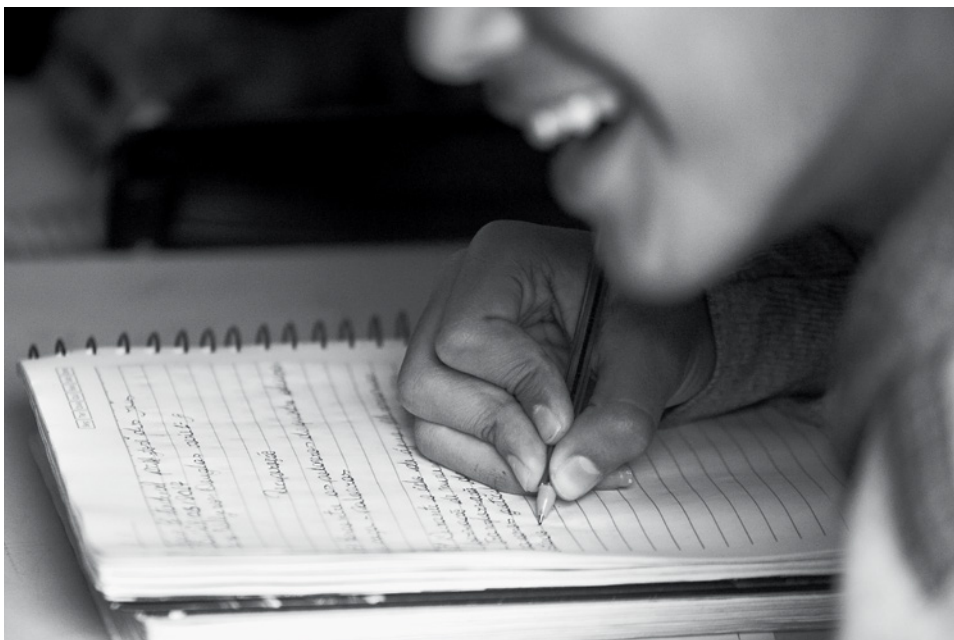
**have been killed, a student who took part in a graffiti project on the walls of the school but who is now in prison for the murder of another ex-student. We have cases of teachers who come to us intending to give classes, but when they see the area, they change their minds, especially if the vacancy is for the nighttime classes.**

Wannessa started her career as an educator 23 years ago in this same school in Trindade, when she was just 17 years old. **I was starting to study philosophy at university. I took on a first grade class. Afterwards I went on to study Letters. As I was the only staff member who was at university, they appointed me as coordinator. I'd never set foot in a school and I was made coordinator after five days in the classroom. After that I was made vice-principal and took over the position of principal in 2011. I was willing to be principal because I wanted to change things. I managed to do a bit, but not all that I had hoped to. When you're in the**









classroom as a teacher, you don't know what's on the other side of the wall. You have to manage the school and its relationship with the community as well.

The low level of participation by the families is a painful point. **We can't count on the families here very much. Sometimes, the student is absent and the parents don't know where they are. They don't really care that their children don't want to study. Some of them come in aggressively, saying that we're making their lives difficult.**

Even though Wannessa understands that, within the context of the school, the seriousness of the social problems very often overshadows the teaching, she and her staff are aware that the educative process is the only way of helping to change this state of affairs. **Previously no one spoke about external evaluations here in the school. But in 2009, we started to reinforce the content of the lessons and get the students to answer the questions set in the Enem exam. At that time, there was a group of new teachers who had recently left university and who were more committed. We tried to change the kids' mentality, to get them to think about the future, about graduating.**

Little by little, the reality has been transformed. Wannessa talks about the changes with a little hope. **Nowadays we have ex-students who are studying at the Federal University and who come to visit us. Others have managed to obtain scholarships, good marks on the Enem and who come in to tell us and to thank us. There is a Jovem de Futuro project that includes motivational talks to the students. We call in someone with a profile that is the same as that of the students and who, by studying, has managed to overcome the difficulties. The high school kids are completely silent, paying attention to the talk. We can hardly hold back our emotions,** says Wannessa, her eyes filling with tears.

Amongst some of the projects developed at the school are the Literary Coffee Group, Soiree, Mathematics Day and Chemistry Day. These are simple events, but when we see a student presenting their work, talking, articulating their thoughts, you can see that they have really learned something. An evaluation of the last three years shows that, in terms of dropping out, the rates have fallen by half: from 13.8% in 2014, to 7% in 2016. We created the 'Red Card' project to tackle dropping out of school. The students who attended school more frequently earned extra points in a subject that they themselves could choose.

At the end of the interview, Wannessa proudly shows us some photos of when the school wall was graffitied by the students. According to her, since then, the community has come to respect the school and the walls have never been graffitied again. It was a simple, but efficient, way of getting everyone to think about building a new place and environment with the school as its epicenter. ■

## **I'M PROUD OF IMPLEMENTING A MORE HUMANE AND FUN ADMINISTRATION**

All together in the video room, the second year high school students watch the adventures of Chicó and João Grilo. *Auto da Compadecida*, by Ariano Suassuna, provides the Portuguese teacher with a way into talking about regional cultural aspects and idiomatic expressions.

Expression, moreover, is a big thing at the Irmã Gabriela State School, located in the Conjunto Riviera district of Goiânia. The walls of the school are covered in graffiti and phrases written by the students. 'More Love', 'No Bullying' and 'Value Your Teacher', stand out in colorful paint. The school principal himself, Weberson de Oliveira Moraes, who holds a Master's in Chemistry, took up the spray cans and painted a mural about the 'Cesium-137' tragedy, the worst radiological accident ever to have occurred in Brazil. In 1987, two young scrap

paper collectors found and opened a device containing the radioactive material. Hundreds of people were contaminated and 6,000 tons of radioactive was collected in the Goiás state capital after the accident.

In his office, Weberson is working on a portrait of Irmã Gabriela, who died in 1979, and after whom the school was named. In opposition to the wishes of her father, she became a nun. In addition to her nun's habit, she also had the habit of writing poetry. Ariano Suassuna, the poetic nun and the graffiti-painting chemist form a strange group of educators who encourage the young people to discover their vocations through creativity.

Weberson's story also serves as a positive reference for how to alter your reality through persistence and the focus on education. The Goianian smiles when asked about his origins and, without hiding a certain pride, says **You are talking to someone who cut sugar cane and milked cows. I lived on a farm until I**





was 17 years old, in Itapuranga, in the countryside of Goiás. I cycled 12 kilometers to school every day. With the rural exodus, in the mid-1990s, my family and I found ourselves obliged to try our luck in Goiânia. I saw study as an opportunity to change my life. When we arrived, I worked as an office boy and studied at a public school in the evenings. One day I realized that I should go to university. The PUC university had started a Chemistry teaching course. I liked Chemistry very much and I thought that there would never be a shortage of jobs for teachers, even though the salary was low. When I was in my second year

**of university, I had the opportunity to teach. My passion for teaching grew even more.**

Since the beginning of his career as an educator, Weberson realized that the educative process needed a breath of fresh air: he started providing extra-curricular activities to improve relations between teachers and students, and these activities also stimulated their self-esteem and creativity.

**In one school where I worked, they put me together with a Geography teacher and we developed science and culture fairs. I didn't like the administrative side much as they were projects that took the students out of the classroom. Students outside the classroom is hard work. They want to show off, assert themselves. And if the teacher doesn't have a young mind, if he doesn't know how to talk with teenagers, he's not going to be able to handle the situation. A school principal isn't someone who talks all the time, but rather someone who listens all the time.**

In the classroom, the strategy for improving the students' proficiency was to find attractive ways of teaching subjects that were



rather dry. I worked with a Chemistry teacher at the Federal University who was famous for educating young people. With him, I learned to develop activities that were playful but educational. I presented a project to the Brazilian Chemistry Society that involved an electronegative card game. I included Chemistry concepts and created a deck of cards to play the game, driven by the students. When they started to lose interest in the lesson, they started playing the game in the classroom. We created a championship and I taught Chemistry using games. And it worked.

When he took over as principal of the school, Weberson started the fairs and

encouraged the teachers to develop creative ways of teaching. **There were parents who would complain, saying that it was just a big party here. People don't always understand that this is part of the process of constructing a citizen, and this way the student learns to live in a community, with collaboration, participation and resilience. People want a student sat down in the classroom with their head in a book, like this was such an easy thing these days. They've got the world in the palm of their hand with a cell phone! I'm proud to renew the concept of management with teachers and students who are more in tune with each other. It's a more human and enjoyable model. Those who understand the concept of democratic management can administrate a school well.**

A poster on the wall of the principal's office highlights that the Irmã Gabriela State High School figured in 11<sup>th</sup> place in its performance in the most recent Enem exam amongst all the schools of Goiás, proving that stimulating the creativity and leadership skills of the students has provided results. ■

**DIALOG AND  
AFFECTION  
ARE THE  
BASIS OF  
EVERYTHING**

Punctually at 6.50am a security guard opens the gates of the Rosa Turisco de Araújo State High School, in Anicuns, in the countryside of Goiás. By nighttime, 660 students will have passed through the gates, and crossed the large playground between the gymnasium and the garden with its leafy trees, to get to the classrooms located in a large, two-story, brickwork building.

During the first class, shiny curtains shade the students from the sunbeams that shine into the classrooms, providing the environment with an unlikely golden tone. The recently acquired air-conditioning units soften the heat and the Mathematics class starts in one of the high school's second-year sessions.

This is a week for revision of the lessons since it precedes the annual evaluations. A dozen boys, with some free time on their hands, decide to have a game of volleyball. The Spanish teacher corrects the exercises without speaking Portuguese. The History teacher recalls the inventions of Santos Dumont. The cooks in the kitchen are hard at work. In two hours, a line of almost 300 students will be eagerly awaiting a dish of rice with meat and beans. The smell of the seasoning makes you forget that each portion served has to fit into the budget of 44 cents per student.

The school principal Vanuza Bizerra dos Santos holds a meeting with her staff to go

over some details relating to the revision and evaluations. Attentive to the teachers' suggestions, she says **The secret is to always listen and offer support. Being together, everyone taking part. Delegating, but being at there too, taking part as well. You have to be at their side, not on top.** During her second term as school principal, she is proud to have managed to unite the team of teachers, students and parents to radically change the school's image and results.

**Last year I was very pleased. After a lot of effort, we are improving the level of teaching and encouraging the students to keep on with their studies after high school. Of the**







180 who graduated, 83 went on to do further education courses. Dialog and affection are the basis of everything. The students didn't have any respect for us or give us any credibility. They didn't get involved in the activities, they came in whenever they wanted.

Vanuza does not hide her fascination for teaching. **My dream was always to be a teacher and give classes to my family and my community.** When she was 12 years old she moved with her uncle, who brought her up, to the town of Anicuns, 74 kilometers from the capital Goiânia. The girl's dream became a reality when she turned 21 and started giving classes at the same school where she is now the principal.

For some time, this was also where Vanuza went to primary and high school. After graduating, she taught Physics and Chemistry for three years, as a contracted teacher. **There is a lot lacking in these areas here. As I always liked Mathematics, the teachers suggested that I give classes.** After that she applied to work for the state and was accepted. Following this she graduated in Mathematics and took a post-graduate course in University Teaching. In 2017, Vanuza celebrated working 28 years at Turisco de Araújo. **When I took over as principal, in 2009, we didn't even have a printer. Our communications were printed on a mimeograph. Can you believe it? A mimeograph in 2009! Little by little, I managed to provide the school with computers, a projector, Internet, etc. Improving the school infrastructure is essential for getting the students and teachers to like being here.**

Vanuza notes that the *Agente Jovem* has been an important tool in changing the school's reality. **We managed to organize a group of students who took responsibility for keeping the classrooms clean, graffiti-free, and without garbage being thrown on the floor. And in addition to this, they are responsible for talking to their classmates and raising their awareness of these things. It's much more effective when they talk amongst themselves than when an adult tries to get these ideas across. They are sort of spokespeople for the coordination. The school is much more well-kept these days than it was before this project. The change in behavior is incredible when the young people feel included and listened to, when they are protagonists with shared responsibility.**

When the bell rings for break time, the silence is replaced by the hubbub of teenagers getting into line for lunch. ■

**A TEACHER  
HAS TO HAVE  
THE AMBITION  
TO CHANGE A  
REALITY**

It is just a few minutes before 7am. A group of high school students gather on the sidewalk in front of the Dona Torinha State High School, whilst others meet in the small entrance hall in front of the school entrance gate. All of them are watched by a security guard wary of any unknown person who comes near. **Luziânia is a violent town. We can't mess around,** says the school principal Rosana Mara de Paiva Marins Campos.

Born in Patrocínio [MG], the land of coffee, Rosana Mara moved to Luziânia with her father in 1968. At that time, the whole country seemed to move to the outskirts of Brasília in search of work opportunities. **My father was a trucker. He transported a lot of sand to build the country's capital. We had very little. We moved everything in a pickup.**

Rosana Mara has worked at Dona Torinha since 2004, when the school opened. **I never thought about being a teacher. But my father said I could only study if it was in the morning. And in the morning there was only a technical teaching course. I didn't have a choice. I arrived at a school as a trainee, but the principal got rid of the regular teacher and put me in to teach class. I didn't know anything. I spent the day testing the children's reading and times tables. I stayed there a month. Then I returned to Patrocínio and studied History at university. I finished in 1988 and was already working as a teacher at a multi-grade school in the countryside. I gave classes to the first four grades in the same classroom. I**

**moved the first and second grades over to one side, split the blackboard in two and set them exercises. The third and fourth grades faced the other direction and had another blackboard on the opposite wall. All together. I worked like that for seven and a half years. I took the test to work for the state and I've been here since 2004. I've never worked in any other state school.**

Dona Torinha, after whom the school is named, was an educator famous for her energy and dedication. She was also the principal of a public school. **I'm full of energy like her. But she lived in the time of corporal punishment. I**







just talk to them, she laughs.

**We had a problem: when a new school opens, it's common for the more problematic students from across the region to move to it. We needed to work very hard to institute discipline. It seems like this is a dumping ground for people, it's so crowded. We had to be very strict, we set out a list of internal rules and had to make sure they are followed. It was very tough. Those who couldn't handle it, left.**

The principal spends her whole day at the school to make sure everything works properly. I get here at 7am. Twice a week I leave at 8pm. The other days I leave at 11pm. If I didn't, it wouldn't work.

Rosana Mara remembers her time as a History teacher, and talks about the social role that she believes is the responsibility of an educator. **Almost no one likes History. In the sixth grade, it's very difficult to**

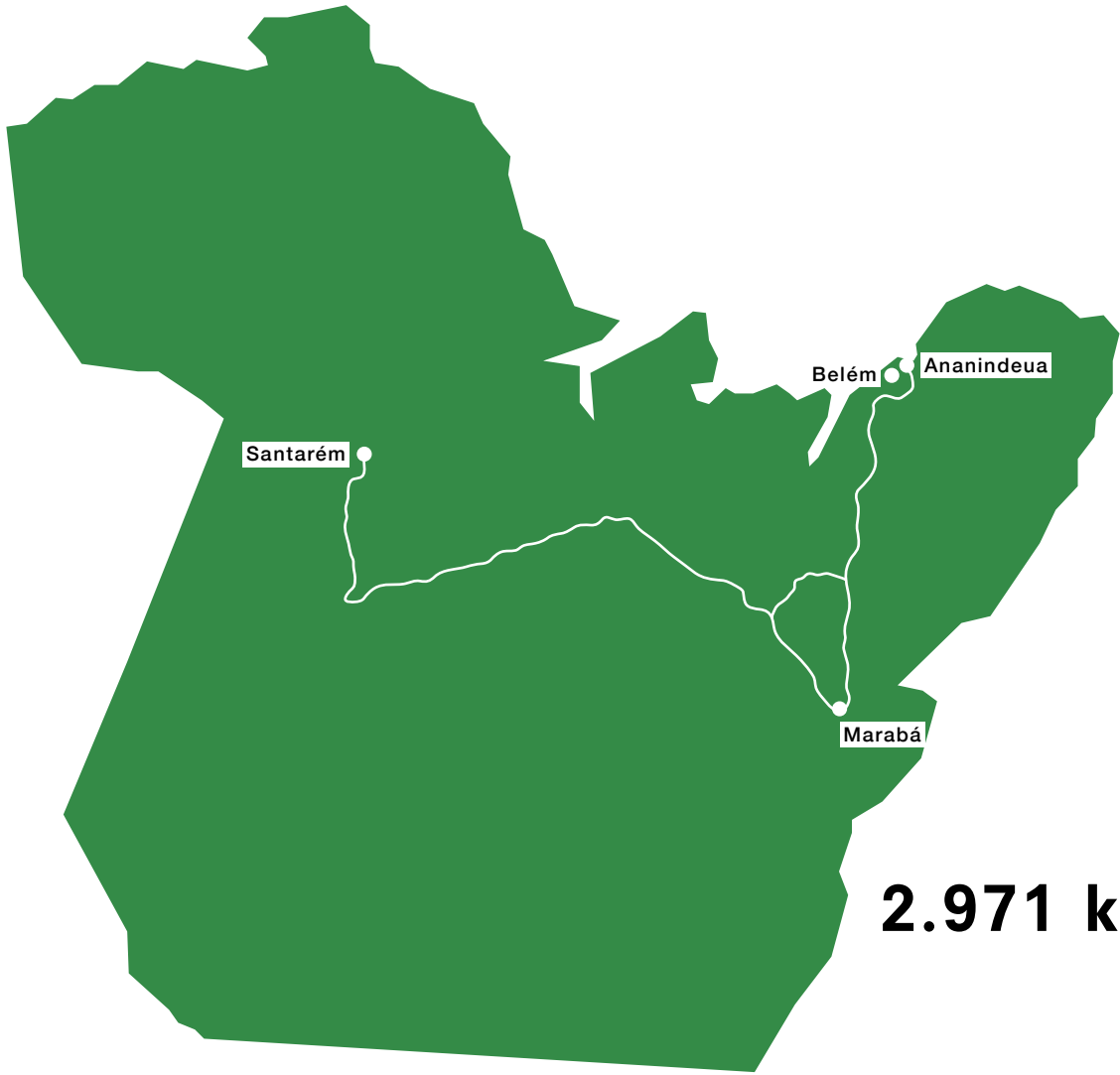
**get them interested, because they need to read, analyze conjunctures, develop a critical perspective. They have great difficulty organizing their ideas and expressing what they think. Getting a student to realize that he can have a voice in society is a challenge that every teacher has to have as their goal. I always went to the limit to get the student to at least say something showing they'd thought about the issue and then That's how it is Miss. It was a sign that they had thought about it. A teacher has to have the ambition to change a reality. A true teacher has to overcome the obstacles and realize that his greatest currency is the ability to transform the student.**

Rosana Mara gets quite emotional remembering students who attended university and then went on to become good professionals. **There are a lot of students who we encourage and they become true diamonds. Sometimes, I go into the town and I see ex-students and they say: Look, this was my History teacher. She got angry, but she was great... she laughs.**

But she realizes that these stories, so that they are not exceptions, require investment in the educational project. **The Primary School students arrive with little preparation for what we will demand of them. They don't get much help at home. But we can't keep tapping this button. We understand that the family already works very hard, and there isn't the time to give the necessary attention to the children. They end up transferring this responsibility to the school. They bring the children here and they're in God's hands. If the students aren't reaching the targets, I bring in the pedagogic coordinator to stay close to the teacher and find solutions. The results always get better.**

In the school entrance hall, the School Board has put up a display showing photos of all the students who have graduated in the previous two years. The contagious smile of each one of them, each dressed in their graduation gown, is a light to guide the new students on their journey. ■





The state of Pará was the starting point for this book and the only state where we needed to travel by plane, due to the great distances between the towns. On November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016, we started the interviews and photo shoots at the Visconde de Souza Franco school in Belém. Perked up by the smell of 'tucupi', a local dish, emanating from the food stalls, the next day we traveled to the district of Jaderlândia, in Ananindeua,

a town not far from the state capital. In December, we visited Marabá. Before visiting the Pequeno Príncipe School, we were pleasantly surprised by the strong flavor of the tucunaré fish, served on the river banks. After the school vacations, we started the school year, in February, with a trip to Santarém. We finished our tour of the five schools that participate in this project in this state, in the district of Coqueiro, in Ananindeua, in March.



EEEFM JADERLÂNDIA  
ELIZABETE AGUIAR

**IF I ONLY  
THOUGHT  
ABOUT THE  
DIFFICULTIES,  
I'D NEVER LEAVE  
THE HOUSE**



In a classroom of the Jaderlândia school, the Portuguese Language teacher projects a film onto the wall. Behind some threadbare cloth, put up as improvised curtains, the morning light filters into the classroom diluting and dimming the image. But the students pay attention in this fun-focused lesson. Meanwhile, in the principal's office, Elizabete Aguiar proudly shows us a folder containing reports and photographs of the achievements of some of the 760 students.

The district of Jaderlândia is located in the town of Ananindeua, in Pará, close to the state capital, Belém, beside the BR-316 state highway. Previously an area dedicated to the extraction of white sand, it was occupied by low income families who built their improvised houses there.

Despite the unstable infrastructure of the district also being found in the school, it is lucky to have a highly motivated, communicative and enterprising administrator. Having worked at the school for 16 years, the last 10 as principal, Elizabete Aguiar uses her dynamism and contagious smile to get everything around her moving. A teacher by



vocation, she finds the energy to dedicate herself to top-quality public education in her own life story. **I studied at a public school my whole life. I had wonderful teachers, who believed in the possibility of transforming others. They made me believe that this is possible. I decided to become a teacher during a difficult time in my life, since my father died and I was entering adolescence. My mother and my older brothers and sisters looked after us.**

Recognizing the importance of the family nucleus to support the learning process, she seeks to maintain links with everyone including ex-students. **What I know about is education. I wake up early every day because I believe in it. If I were to administrate the school only thinking about the difficulties, it'd be better to stay at home. I have students who have left here and are graduating. The didactic work and the education that our teachers have shown them mean that they have found a good path through life. Students come here and say to me: 'I'm graduating now, I'm**



going to take the state exam and come back here to give classes.' Overcome with emotion, Elizabete pauses, takes a deep breath and continues: **What makes me leave the house and come to work is believing that every student has the right to a top-quality public school and the best projects.**

Communication and partnership are the key-words in Elizabete's administration. Through the Programa Jovem de Futuro, she has implemented projects connected to proficiency in Portuguese Language and Mathematics, as well as the integration of parents with the school.

**Every two months we have a meeting with the parents that we call a Pedagogic Call. This is when we show them how their children are doing at school, what's going right and what isn't. We also have an interaction day, when the parents can come and talk directly to me. I'm here in the morning, afternoon and evening. I put out 300 chairs and they're all filled. There are even parents standing. Generally, the meeting is structured by blocks, and the parents can give their opinions, suggestions and criticisms. We have realized that some families find it difficult to understand the world of education, the technical vision of the educator, so we have to explain it. This means that the parents are much more present in the school. Many of them contribute, helping with the repairs to the building that are needed, for example.**

But the partnerships do not stop there. In 2012, the school took part in a September 7<sup>th</sup> parade. Elizabete noticed that a navy officer was closely watching her students' presentation. She struck up a conversation and left with an agreement. **We've had this partnership with the Brazilian Navy for four years now, with an average of 80 children in the project. They offer a number of services and workshops. One of the projects is a writing competition. Each year there is a different theme. Six students receive prizes. The student comes to school in the morning and, when their classes are over, they are taken to the naval base, have lunch there, and during the afternoon do different activities: revision classes, gardening, judo, painting workshops and photography.**

In one of the classrooms, a teacher uses geometrically-shaped blocks to make Mathematics more attractive to the primary school students. In another, a dentist is giving a fun talk about brushing our teeth. The bell goes and bikes emerge from every corner, ridden by children with backpacks on. It's time to go home. ■

**THE PRINCIPAL  
IS THE  
CONDUCTOR.  
THE MUSIC  
CANNOT SLIP  
OUT OF TUNE**

In an art education class at the Antônio Batista Belo de Carvalho School, the teacher showed works of Brazilian modernist art, with special emphasis on the painting *Abaporu* [1928], by Tarsila do Amaral. As an exercise, she asked the students to draw a version of the piece relating it to their daily lives. One of them made a surprising change: in place of the cactus, there was a machine gun. Where Tarsila had painted the wilderness sun, there was a bomb with the fuse lit.

Located in a district on the outskirts of Santarém, in Pará, the school has operated without any walls after they collapsed ten years ago. This situation means that the school is frequently entered and burgled. Recently, the light bulbs in the classrooms have regularly been stolen. Some classrooms cannot be used due to the lack of electricity and the imminent danger of the ceiling collapsing.

The school principal Luciana de Sousa, who has studied music since she was 9 years old and graduated in this area, started conducting this school by assuming an important

political role in the community, for which she needed sensitiveness and creativity to find the right tone for the dialog, to fine tune the relations, balance the treble and bass and, above all, improvise.

The previous school principal left the position after having received death threats from drug dealers, and the school was then just run by an educational board. Luciana found herself taking over as principal at a very difficult moment, but has, through dialog, managed to restore a good atmosphere to the school. By doing so, each day she learned a little more about how to run a school, even though her training meant she had no intention of becoming an educator.

**I only discovered that my graduate**





1º ANO  
M1MR01

1º ANO  
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course was focused on teaching once I got to university and I panicked. I wanted to move to a Bachelor degree, but at that time, the only option for this was in Belém. I finished the Artistic Education course and started to enjoy giving music classes to pensioners. My first school, as art teacher, was the Belo de Carvalho school. I took a post-graduation course in Psycho-pedagogy, but continued in the arts. In 2014, I was invited to assemble a group for election and took over as principal.

Highlighting social inequality and violence is at the basis of the orchestration of Luciana's administration. With the implementation of the Programa Jovem de Futuro, she and her team have managed to turn the high levels of dropping out of school around. The school hadn't managed to get everyone through to the next year since 2014. The dialog with the parents and students helped get them to understand the future importance of remaining in school. In 2016, she finally managed to graduate a class and the school increased the number of students enrolled from a little over 200 to 300 in one year.

**We have a group on social media involving students who have graduated. They send in the grades they got in the Enem and further education college entrance exams. They don't have the resources to take the university prep courses. All they know they learn here. Quite a few go on to university. This is very satisfying for us.**

The Belo de Carvalho school was second to last in the rankings of the schools in the state, with a 1.3 index rate on the 'Idepa' ratings [Pará Educational Development Institute]. The changes implemented contributed to helping the school establish a target, that it achieved in 2016, when it raised its index rate to 2.1. The school had not made any advances on the 'Ideb' [Basic Education Development Index] since 2009, but then, in 2016, it gained four points.

As we talk, the students start to arrive for the year's first week of classes, all dressed in beautiful, impeccably clean uniforms, whilst other students finish their homework beneath the enormous mango trees that provide a generous and welcome shade over the school patio. Luciana calls everyone over for a chat in the playground, and talks about the educational rights and disciplinary measures at the school.

**I'm in a place that I never imagined I would be. I had to stop studying the violin, an instrument that I always liked. But I'm here because I like it. I ended up finding myself. When I think about the violin I miss it, but I don't have time to go back to it. I always say that a school principal is a conductor. He has to create harmony between the different parts of the school, because if he doesn't, it goes out of tune. ■**

## **I WORK TO WIPE OUT DESPAIR**

On one of the walls of the Luiz Nunes Direito School, a piece of graffiti attracts the visitor's attention. It is of the students and includes a black woman with an afro hairstyle. Beside her, is the famous phrase from preacher and activist Martin Luther King Jr.: *I have a dream that my children will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.* The graffiti illustrates the spirit of mobilization and awareness that guides the administration of the school principal Maria de Belém.

There are no doors or windows in the classrooms. The forest is dense and on the land behind the school, over the wall surrounding which thieves have jumped to steal computers and school materials, three small rooms, that could be used for recreational activities, lie in ruins.

Rebuilding work started a long time ago was abandoned half way through. Since

then, unfulfilled promises have left the school in the state it is in now.

**The school's buildings are not in good shape. There is a lot to be done. In the summer it becomes a furnace and the teachers and students stop using the classrooms. In 2009, we asked for refurbishment work to be done. The contract bidding process was performed and the work started. But three months later, the owner of the company died and the work stopped. Doors and windows that had been taken out for repair never returned.**

The interview takes place in the teachers' room where the air

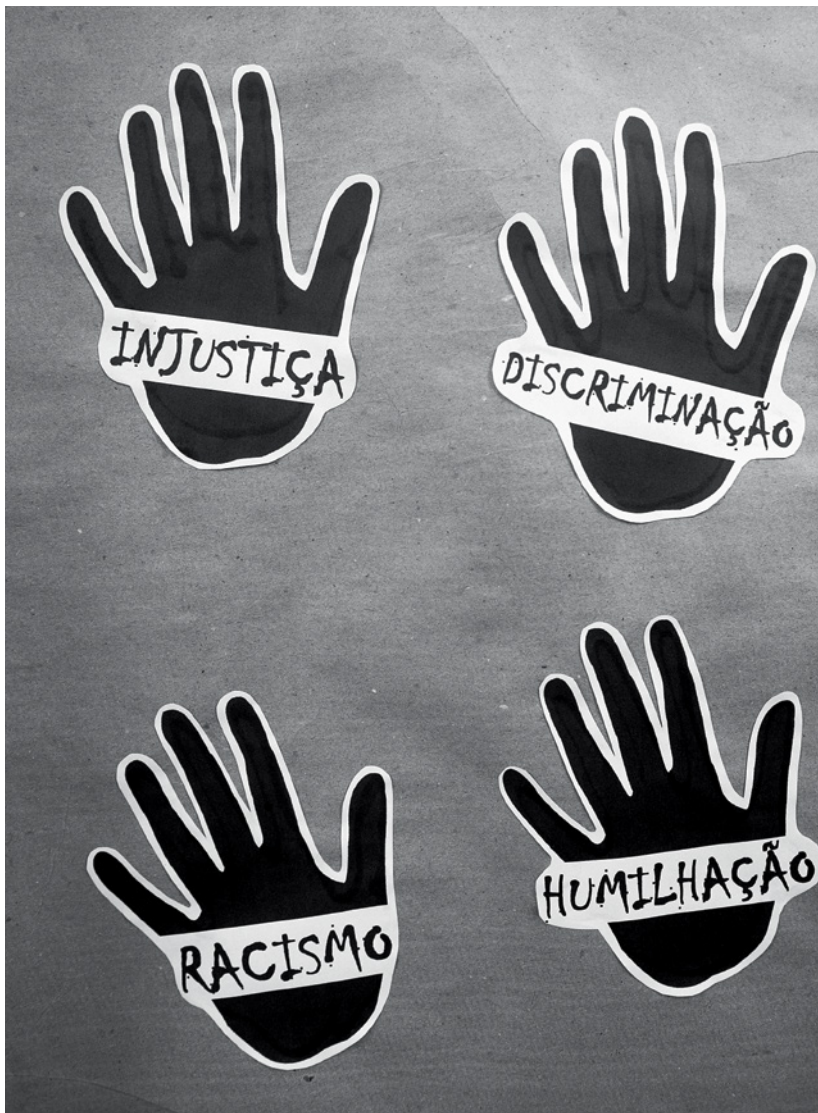




conditioning makes a lot of noise. **The school is 35 years old and the electrical system is no worse than it is only because the school board, made up of teachers and parents, takes care of some repairs. The government has promised to restart the work this year. Every year we make a cake to celebrate the unfinished work, take photos and send them to the government to show our dissatisfaction. In 2016, the students occupied the 'USE' [State Education Department] buildings for a month. They said that they would not leave until the government had promised to perform the refurbishment work on the school. The teachers were surprised. The administration supported the movement. Snacks were served there, and the teachers made themselves available to give classes there. Finally, this got the Seduc to promise to perform the work.**

Maria de Belém has worked in the state education system for 30 years, half of this time being spent as a Sociology teacher. She has a History of political and union activism and this led her to devise a

model of participative management. When the political duty inherent in the role of an educator is mentioned, Maria de Belém lowers her voice and speaks with conviction. We do everything to get the staff and employees involved. The school isn't just the board. Everyone involved needs to discuss the problems together, including the students, parents and the community. The class council is now a permanent educational practice, that didn't exist before. It's not easy getting people to change their attitude. Our shared administrative work isn't 100%. There are weaknesses. We have great difficulty convincing some of the school's 100 or



so teachers to take part. Many of them don't get involved in anything because they have become so discouraged by the low salaries and the lack of structure and government support.

The majority of the school's students live in Icuí, a district that appeared because of the occupation of the area by people who moved there from Belém and nearby towns. **The parents work and their children spend a lot of time on their own. This means that there is a great lack of emotional support and guidance. Many of them end up being drawn into crime.**

Maria de Belém and her team created a pedagogic rota for the parents, meaning there was always someone available to talk to them with the intention of raising their awareness about the importance of dialog and paying attention to their children. **We know that we can't control this problem, but the teachers said 'We have to help; we have to do something!' We called the parents in to explain things to them, to show them that the incentive**

**they can provide for their children improves their performance at school. Instead of feeling independent, they feel abandoned. And we want the students to progress, to be successful.**

The legacy that Maria de Belém hopes her administration will leave is of the belief in collective and participative work, involving everyone who takes part in the school in whatever way. **I always have to believe that we can make positive changes and believe in tomorrow. I work to wipe out despair.** The conviction that Maria conveys in her words is the same conviction that we feel when we see the graffiti on the school walls of a black woman proudly displaying her afro hair. ■

**DEMOCRACY  
REQUIRES  
METHODICAL  
RIGOR**

The heat in Marabá seems to appear in the morning before the students. Upon entering the O Pequeno Príncipe School, lots of children line up to quench their thirst at the water fountain near the front door. The building has many problems that we see whilst walking about: clogged up bathroom plumbing, classroom windows without any glass, and broken desks.

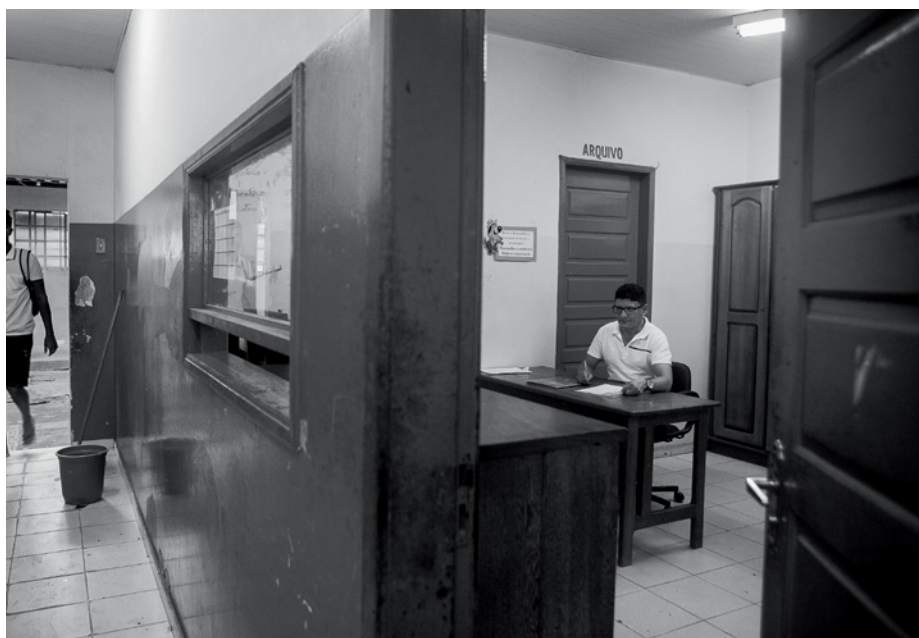
Changing this situation is not the foremost priority on the to-do list of school principal Antonio Luiz Silva Soares. We focus much more on the education than on the infrastructure.

**We have to have attractive lessons. This is where we spend the most energy.**

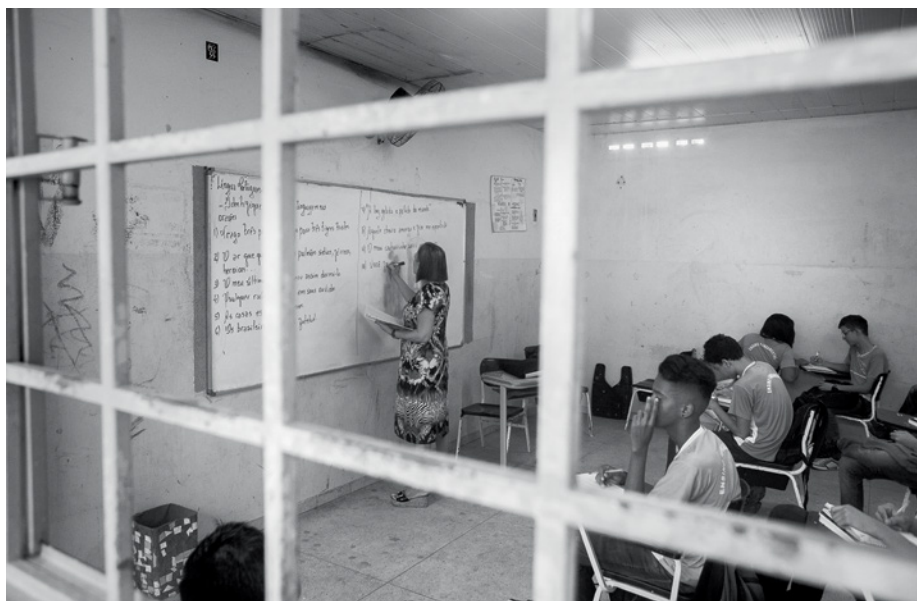
In fact, the good results of the students in the external exams, such as the Enem, shows

the quality of the educational project. In 2014, 54 students from the O Pequeno Príncipe School were accepted at state universities. **The focus of our school is on training the person, to make sure that they are successful in both their personal and professional lives.** The results are driven by Antonio Luiz, who has been at the school since 1992 and believes in the rigor and consistency of the work. **Our profile here is rather strict. Paulo Freire said that a school, even though it may be democratic, has to be strict. He called it methodical rigor and, under our system, we ensure this.**

One example of the way in which discipline and consistency are implemented







is the O Pequeno Príncipe School's policy regarding the use of cell phones. **They are forbidden, except for teachers needing to use them in the classroom for research purposes. We therefore resolved two problems: that of bullying and that of the phones being stolen within the school. Attention levels drop drastically when cell phones are being used. Grades were**

**dropping, mostly amongst primary school students. This decision resulted in better performance amongst them.**

The response to day-to-day difficulties is rigorous, but also with commitment to high-quality public education. A new form of administration, with control over attendance and greater proximity to the students, has contributed to precisely detecting the problems that exist in the school, organize them in terms of importance, and address them one by one.

Whilst showing us the records of the students' grades, Antonio Luiz highlights a surprising feature: the school board decided to raise the minimum pass grade in subjects from 5, as it is in the rest of the state education system, to 6. **I don't think it is enough for a student to learn just 50% of the content. We should teach better so that they can learn better. The parents approved of this measure and it has led to the school receiving a lot of applications for enrollment. We can always improve, which is why dissatisfaction pushes us forward.** And looking at the light that streams in through the window, he concludes his thoughts. **I dream of a school where the students are happy being in the classroom.**

The persistence and rigor of Antônio Luiz's work does not forget the ideals that sustain him. **We long for a society that is more equal, where a student can have a fairer and more equal education, because the current system doesn't allow us to do this much. There is so much holding us back, and we work within a system that is very deeply cast.**

Between two blocks of classrooms, in an unlikely place, a tree seems to have suddenly sprouted, tearing up the little ground that exists around it, obstinately pushing its way up towards the sky. This symbol of power and determination, that ignores adversity, seems to be the same as that which Antonio Luiz strongly transmits to his '*pequenos príncipes*' or 'little princes'. ■

## **WHY DON'T YOU SAY GOOD MORNING?**

In the Chemistry and Physics laboratory, the teacher gives a practical demonstration of static electricity to the few students present. Two students show some interest, but the majority are distant, talking or looking at their cell phones. Marilena Guimarães Lima, principal of the school for 22 years, walks down the corridor and catches a student lying on the ground, talking to her friends: **Get up, there are germs on the floor.** She then turns and says: **The floor is cooler, so they do this because of the heat.** Indeed, by 8am the sun is streaming into the classrooms and the heat seems to want to drive everyone out. **The unbearable heat in the classrooms is one of our greatest enemies. The students say to me: Miss, how can I stay in the classroom in this heat?** Marilena knows that this isn't just about the discomfort. **If we had air conditioning, the performance would certainly be much better.**

The students of the Visconde de Souza Franco, school in Belém, Pará, are welcomed each morning by Marilena. At the school gate, all of them, without exception, receive a Good Morning greeting. Marilena and a school employee stand behind the open gate to welcome the students one by one. The students are only allowed to enter if they have their school ID with them. Those who have perhaps forgotten it, are called in to have a talk with the principal. **I know all the students. Perhaps I don't know all their names, but I know their faces. I make a point of being there, to welcome them and say Good Morning. This**



**is very important. I know that many of them have difficult relations and little affection at home. They don't all receive a hug from their mother and father. I say to all of them: Good Morning, sunshine! Good Morning, princess! At the start, if I got five greetings in return, that was a lot. They'd walk straight past as though I didn't exist. I've done this since 2010. To some of the more serious ones, I'd ask: Why didn't you wish me Good Morning? These days, everything has changed. They all greet me and quite a lot want to give me a hug. This**





hug is very important for me. It helps me start my day right. This is what makes me stay here at the school every day, without worrying about the time. They need this. It's my contribution.

Marilene is overcome by emotion talking about this and can't hold back her tears.

Bars, padlocks, ID cards, a lot of affection and care are the strategies that she uses to try to curb the violence that is on the rise in the city of Belém from entering the school. **The school was completely vandalized when I first arrived. A lot of**

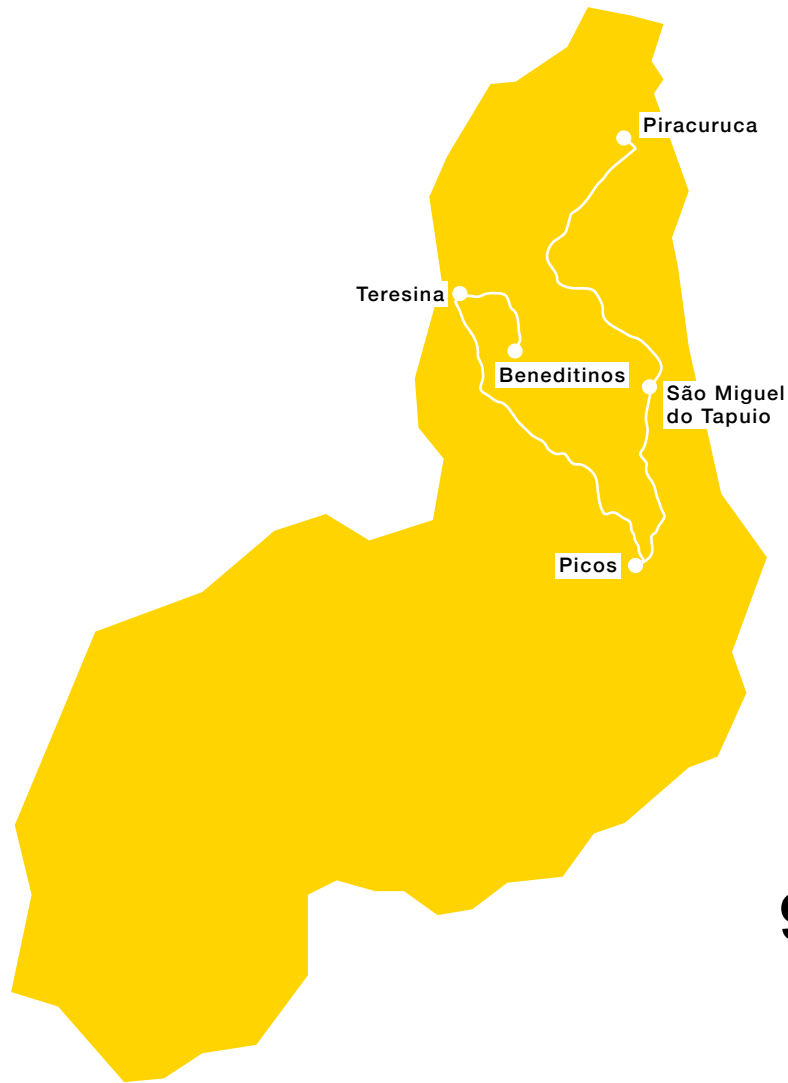
**students were enrolled, but they didn't intend to study, rather to spread this culture of violence. There were rival gangs that arranged fights when leaving classes. There would be one gang on the outside wanting to get in to fight with another that was inside. We had guns aimed into the school, and people throwing rocks. There were always injuries.**

The years 2010 to 2012 were difficult for the principal. A group of board members got together to meet with the public security authorities and the Public Prosecutor's Office to develop actions designed to combat the violence. Once the students who weren't studying had been identified, a process was started to attend to those who had repeated the same grade three or four times and who were really too old for that age group. These students were sent to adult groups.

Since the implementation of new administration methodologies, that allowed for better control of the performance of the students, Marilena and her group of educators have had a more advanced evaluation system. **The management circuit starts with the planning and moves on to the execution, monitoring and evaluation of everything that happens in the school. The systematization and organization are often not considered to be priorities in the day-to-day running of the school. There are so many tasks and so many urgent things to be done, that we ended up not being able to sit down to plan and organize the actions.**

Marilena, who is a pedagogue, is a specialist in evaluation and management, and has a Master's degree in Motricity, the function of movement. With natural limitations, she works her way through the infrastructure problems - despite the school building being enormous and repairs always necessary, she receives just R\$ 2,000 per semester to spend on maintenance work. She has to deal with the fragility of the system and the lack of support. This school is a place I love being in. I even have to control this passion that I have for public schooling and specifically for this school. Here I have experienced both the worst and the best moments of my life. ■





**955 km**

We traveled through the state of Piauí between March 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017, starting with a visit to the Didácio Silva School, surrounded by communal vegetable patches, in the Dirceu Arcoverde district of the town of Teresinha. That same day, after traveling along the BR-343 federal highway for four hours, we reached Piracuruca. The next morning, after spending time at the Presidente Castelo Branco School, we passed by the imposing central church of *Nossa Senhora do Carmo* (Our Lady of Mount Carmel), built in 1718, and moved on to our next stop along the PI-115 state highway. Led astray by

our GPS, we took a shortcut along a dirt road crisscrossed by streams that have to be traversed by car. We got stuck. As we had blocked the way for a bus trying to get past, 15 men who were on board helped us out of the bog and we finally managed to get to São Miguel do Tapuio after a seven-hour journey. The next afternoon, we traveled four hours along the BR-407 federal highway to Picos, a town famed for its honey. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, after visiting the Marcos Parente School, we continued, in mid-afternoon, to our last school in the state, in the simple town of Beneditinos, which we reached after a journey of almost 300 kilometers along the BR-316 state highway.



CENTI DIDÁCIO SILVA  
ALBERTO MACHADO VIEIRA

**THIS IS A  
SCHOOL OF  
POSSIBILITIES**





Party! This was the revolutionary word that managed to drastically alter the scenario of a lack of stimulus for teaching and studying, of infrastructure failings and the violent surroundings, which shifted from the streets to inside the Didácio Silva School on the outskirts of Teresina. The master of ceremonies, responsible for this initiative, is Alberto Machado Vieira, who has been school principal for 12 years. **This is a school of possibilities. The good thing has been the democratic management of the school, the participation of the students and the community. What we have here is an open**

**school project: the school teaches the student to take care of what is theirs.**

In 2005, Alberto stopped teaching Philosophy to start administrating the school. Known for his good humor and his closeness to the students, he put himself forward for the job of principal. The employees started to doubt his ability to administrate the school. **None of the employees wanted me as the principal, because I'm a bit of a joker. They thought that the school would become a mess. It was the students who carried my campaign. I was elected with almost 95% of their votes. My focus was always the young people. I think they are the most unassisted people in our society. Everyone thinks that this time of life is wonderful and everything is great for them. But they need specific public policies that will help them.**

In the mid-2000s, the Didácio Silva School suffered damaging attacks, thefts and students being threatened with violence on their way to school. The quality of the classes and the proficiency of the students were directly affected by these problems.

Alberto realized that he would, above all else, have to change the school environment, so that the students and teachers would find it pleasurable to be there. **There was a social problem that had to be overcome: that of the violence, the lack of projects and the low self-esteem that these students were feeling. I thought about keeping them in school for longer. On commemorative dates, I'd invite them to think of**



events. Outside they started to say that here there were just parties. Those who don't do anything to improve things, love criticizing those who do things. We moved forward. These events ended up becoming moments that unified people. Everyone started working together, outside the classrooms, towards a common objective. Afterwards we invented 'cultural recreation'. And soon after that, the students started thinking about choreography, composing songs and creating a radio station here in the playground, with freedom and creativity.

The involvement of the students, added to the encouragement given by the school board and by the staff of the school, led to the 'Didácio Arte' event that is now in its tenth year. Dance, singing, visual arts and theater all form part of the program, that the students develop over the course of the year, so that they can ultimately be presented to the parents and the community in general.

In parallel to this, the results in the classroom also started to improve significantly. **We started with an Ideb of 2.6 and rose to 5.2. In the first world of schools, the grade is 7, but the average in this state does not even reach three. We are always out ahead.** In 2016, 85% of the students passed the Enem, with almost 100 of them being accepted by universities without taking preparatory courses. This fact, together with the visibility of the events that the school promotes, bringing the community together, has led to an exponential rise in applications for places.

**Today, we have 500 places, but if we had 2,000 they'd all be filled. It's sad that we can't meet this demand, because I think that public school should be available to everyone. We had one student who arrived here totally unprepared, but with our encouragement and his own personal willpower, he is now studying Electrical Engineering and was been accepted to study in Physics at the Federal University. Previously, teachers didn't want to give classes here because of the violence and the distance. Now, teachers from other states want to come here.**

When asked about where he intends taking his career, Alberto doesn't hesitate. **I want to hold a post in the Executive body. I'm going to be State Governor or, at least, Education Secretary. I intend to be party affiliated politician, with a focus on education, which is the world's salvation.**

Alberto talks about his ambitions with the same conviction that led him to completely change the perspective of this school, believing in joy, encouraging the children's creativity and living together in harmony. ■

**A HUG,  
A ONE-ON-  
ONE CHAT,  
INTIMACY**

The students get together in the school playground to meet the new members of the class, forming a large circle. Many hold hands or embrace each other, showing affection and creating an interesting mirror image of the mural of a beehive on the wall, providing an analogy of collective work and sweetness.

As well as being a great honey producer, Picos is seen as the capital of Piauí state's southern region since it has brought together an impressive range of commercial traders, who attract around 12,000 visitors from the neighboring towns and villages every day. All this has led many people from many different places to come and live here, creating a highly diverse population.

The Marcos Parente State Education Center welcomes the younger generations of this diversity. The school principal, Geferson Francisco de Souza, was born in the town of Santo Antônio de Lisboa, 43 kilometers from Picos. He decided to live here when he went to study for a Bachelor of Education in Physics at the State University, and Letters at the Federal University. It was in the Physics Department at this very school that he started his career as a public school teacher. **I have always loved teaching. Ever since high school, I have been teaching my colleagues. I fell in love with the profession.**



In 2011, the period of election for school principal started approaching, but the responsibility that the post requires, together with the benefit of just R\$ 200 for the job, meant that candidates were not forthcoming. Souza led a group standing for election and faced the challenge. **From the moment you become an administrator, you see the school from a different angle, you see it as a whole: the students, who are the main focus, the teachers, the employees, and all the problems that involve the school. I realized that I had to bring all of this together, the whole community, and bring the**







**family into the school.**

For Souza, who is 33 years old, what is needed is a sense of family to establish an environment that is conducive to teaching. **For me, it's important to get to know the student's family. These days we live in a deconstructed society. We need to know the family to understand this student's behavior. Sometimes, this student responds this way because he is aggressive, because he needs more attention. Sometimes he needs a hug, a frank, face-to-face conversation, somebody to share things with.**

When they arrive at the school gates, the majority of the students wait outside until the last minute, so they can urgently send their last text messages. As soon as they pass through the gates, they are required to leave their phones in baskets identified by class. Inside the school, it is forbidden to use cell phones. **The students sat in the class with headphones on, and wouldn't take them off for anything.**

**The teacher spent more time complaining and asking the students to take their headphones off than they did actually giving class. We called the parents and a group of students in and, after a discussion, we all decided to prohibit their use in school. It is clear to see that the students' performance has improved and that the teachers are less stressed.**

Dialog, tenderness and discipline seem to have created a favorable environment, as the pass rates that Souza proudly shows demonstrate. **Our Ideb figures have been rising a great deal. In 2011, when I took over, we averaged three. We thought up strategies for improving the result, such as the *Pedagogia da Presença* (Pedagogy in Person) project that focuses on getting closer to the families. We gradually started rising and, in 2016, we hit 4.5. The state of Piauí has an educational evaluation gage called 'Saepi'. Our rate was 2.9 and the target was 3.1. We rose to 3.6.**

The good results show how management policy based upon dialog not only provides the school with a more agreeable environment, but also has a direct effect on the education. To achieve this, Geferson is firm in his position regarding leadership amongst the students. **We open up space for youth leadership. The students are free to develop projects in school. They sing, dance and we throw a party on all the holidays. They write, draw, take photos, publish things, put on shows... Each student who wants to take part chooses an area that they most identify with.**

**Before the implementation of the Programa Jovem de Futuro, we did projects, but we couldn't understand why we weren't reaching the target grades. With the management program, we learned to analyze the data and clearly identify where the problems lay. The actions then started to become much more effective in improving performance in Portuguese and Mathematics and reducing the dropout rates.**

During the break between classes, without cell phones, the students play a variety of different games. Some play football, some hopscotch, whilst others play table tennis using their sandals as improvised bats. ■

**I WANT 100% OF  
THE STUDENTS  
TO PASS THE  
COLLEGE  
ENTRANCE  
EXAM**

At exactly 7.20am, the high school students of the Presidente Castelo Branco School in Piracuruca, in the north of Piauí, almost 200 kilometers from the capital, line up between the trees on the playground to sing the National Anthem. The school principal, Gilvan Fontenelle dos Santos, looks closely at the positions of the students and adjusts a couple of them before authorizing the start of the ceremony. Having their hands behind their backs helps them breathe more deeply so they can sing the verses written by Joaquim Osório Duque Estrada with more gusto. Just as they finish, the beautiful sky, smiling and clear, as the National Anthem describes it, of Piracuruca, opens up for the sun, heralding another day of intense heat.

This scene takes place every week and forms part of the administration's strategies to encourage discipline.

**I'm very hardline. Either the student fits into the school, or the school doesn't fit for them. We've never had to expel anyone. The students themselves ask to be transferred when they can't handle the pace. They're here to study. If some sort of problem arises, we call the parents and they collect their child, or I sometimes take them home by car. I'm a teacher who is well-known in the town for being strict. A lot**





**of mothers and fathers were my students, and they know how things work.**

Piracuruca has a rich heritage of colonial architecture, the remains of its economic heyday when the exportation of the wax from the carnauba palm tree to Europe provided high dividends. The Presidente Castelo Branco school is one of the beautiful buildings in the town center. Its

registration as a heritage site by Iphan guarantees that it remains standing, but it also creates a number of obstacles. A large part of the land, for example, that would be ideal for the construction of a gymnasium, cannot be altered. **Before coming here, I believed that Iphan was our partner, but I've changed my mind. I also believed that education and Iphan were interconnected, but there are a lot of barriers. They blocked the gymnasium. On top of this, we have a very serious problem, not only in the school, but in the town as a whole, which concerns the poor quality of the electricity network. We have only one air-conditioning unit, and this can't be used in the afternoon because if it is the energy cuts out.**

For Gilvan, who graduated in Mathematics and Agronomic Engineering, and has worked in the area of education for 29 years, the full-time education mode of operating that the Presidente Castelo Branco School has adopted is what has turned the school onto a positive track, since it provides more time for both the student and the teacher. **Until last year, our teachers worked in two or three schools. Now they only work here. This means they are dedicated exclusively to this school. He student profile is also much better. Those who come to school full-time, really want to study.**

The majority of the teachers at the Presidente Castelo Branco School are quite young and they studied as students at the school itself, and this, for Gilvan, has allowed the atmosphere of working together, dedication and respect for the school to



develop. **One of the things that I say to the teachers that I help to train is that, in the classroom, they need to have at least 80% control and 20% knowledge. Control not in the sense of training, but in the sense of making the student pay attention.**

According to the principal, the encouragement of discipline has resulted in the students having more empathy for the school. **When we have to let them go home early for some reason, we have to keep asking them to leave.**

Without a doubt, the cheerful kitchen staff help keep everyone from wanting to leave the school. It's 11am when a delicious smell of the local dish '*baião de dois*' and roast chicken wafts across the playground, with its beautiful trees casting shadows that many students meet under during the lovingly prepared lunch.

Since it began operating full-time, the school also started working with educational projects that include different extracurricular activities, such as, for example, cultural festivals. The Festival do Castelo Branco is a cultural event that has a different theme every year. We take the festival to the beach. The first year, the theme was 'Proud to be a Northeasterner', and last year it was 'Piracuruca'. We look at History, culture, finance, education and politics.

When thinking about the future of the school, Gilvan knows very well where he wants to get to and has mapped out the goals. This year, I want 100% of our students to pass the college entrance exam. Last year, we had a class of 18 students and 12 of them passed. ■

## **IT'S ABOUT STUDENTS HELPING EACH OTHER**

The first rays of sun shine through the tall carnaubeira trees creating patterns with the shadows on the dirt road where the Dona Rosaura Muniz Barreto school is located. If in the past they provided the source for the resin that went to make furniture wax, and the basis of the economy of the town of São Miguel do Tapuio, in the central-northern region of the state of Piauí, nowadays, with the decline of the business, they are spreading their branches and beauty across the town, their leaves suggesting balls suspended in the air.

The town of around 18,000 inhabitants, still relies upon cattle breeding and agriculture as the basis of its economy. A lot of the students travel in from the outlying rural areas on the back of trucks that sometimes serve as school transport.

The name of the school is in remembrance of Rosaura Muniz Barreto [1823-1908], a rich landowner who donated a piece of land for the building of a chapel in honor of Saint Micheal Archangel, thus marking the foundation of the town that she herself baptized São Miguel do Tapuio.

Dona Rosaura's determination is also a strong trait in Maria Deusilene Max Gomes who has been the school principal since 2008. **Our state decided to have elections for the position of school principal, and this is a democratic way of making the decision. At the time, we had just a small group of active teachers. There weren't many to stand for the position. We reached an agreement, amongst the teachers, that we**

**wouldn't accept a recommendation from a politician, because the school ends up losing a lot when that happens. So I stood as a candidate.**

Deusilene is a Mathematics teacher and has worked for the state since 2000, specializing in School Administration and Supervision. Getting closer to the families has been the standout feature of her administration. **When I started there wasn't much of a vision in terms of management. It was all rather loose. Now we have managed to systematize all of the school's actions, and everything is organized. We take special**







care of those students who miss class. The state itself has improved in certain aspects. We now have an online attendance record. If a student is absent, the parents receive a message. They quickly call us to explain. When I started, the parents were much more distant. Now, at least one mother or father comes to the school. When they realize that we are concerned about their children, they start paying more attention and giving more importance to education.

Dona Rosaura is the only school in the region focused on secondary

education. Since the content is focused from the first year on the students attaining the desired targets, it has become clearer how much the students who have graduated from primary school are unprepared. **In our action plan from last year, we realized that the students arrive with little understanding of Portuguese Language and Mathematics.**

As well as engaging the teachers to change this panorama, Deusilene has also engaged some of the best students to help others who have more difficulty with certain subjects. **We select those students who have a sense of leadership and divide them into groups. The teachers provide individual guidance so that, afterwards, they can help the students with difficulties. It's about students helping students. In 2015, we had teachers who gave up their Saturdays, which is not a school day, to give extra lessons. This involvement on the part of the teachers took place so they could understand our reality, and see that it's not just about arriving at the classroom, giving a lesson and going home. It's a matter of co-responsibility, of understanding that the student isn't alone in this process. If they don't hit the targets, if this problem exists, then we have to find a solution.**

On a poster in the shape of a cloud, attached to the window in the teachers' room, is written *'Being a teacher means having the ability to know how to cultivate dreams.'* Deusilene becomes quite emotional when she recalls how the ability to help someone else dream isn't a wasted effort. **We have one student from very humble origins, who has come here from another public school. He stumbled a lot over his reading. He lagged far behind in his learning and in his goal to study Medicine. We supported him. He stayed in the revision classes for the Enem exam every morning and every afternoon. By the time he finished the third grade, he was one of our best students, and made it to the advanced level in the external exam. Today, he is in his fifth year of Nursing college and has won a scholarship from Proni. This year he came first in the Federal University exam for Law, but he doesn't want that, he wants to study Medicine. And I believe he'll do it. ■**

## **THE STUDENT IS THE LEADER**

It's a few minutes before 7am when the high school students at the Pedro Mendes Pessoa school, located in Beneditinos, in upstate Piauí, start to gather under the enormous cashew trees at the front gates of the school that was founded in 2002.

It is March. The air is only warm at this time of day, suggesting that the heat will rise to 34 degrees by midday, at this time of year that here they call 'winter', since it is more likely to rain. **After seven years, we finally have a good winter. Thank God it rains almost every day**, says the school principal Rosimar Silva, as she remembers how the severe drought left the vegetation and the reservoir virtually lifeless.

By motorcycle, rarely by car, and usually by foot, the 200 or so morning students start arriving and, when the bell goes, move off, still a bit sleepy, to their classes. The only third-grade classroom the school has holds 50 students. A virus, that has hit the town, and dengue, cause a number of students to miss school. There are also students in the rural region who are prevented from coming in by the flooding that causes vehicles to get stuck in the muddy dirt roads.

Beneditinos has around 14,000 inhabitants, little commercial enterprise and no companies capable of offering jobs to those adolescents preparing to leave school. Attending university necessarily means moving town, generally to Teresina, around 100km away. Leaving one's family, relying on the kindness of a relative for somewhere to stay, or working informally, is the fate that awaits the most determined of the students.

Just as in the majority of towns in Piauí, the electrical system is a problem. On top of the

frequent blackouts, its fragility prevents the school from using its air conditioning units. **If two are turned on at the same time, the building's entire electrical system shuts down. We asked the Education Department for a generator. The technicians came here and verified that the system cannot handle these sorts of devices. The only thing to do is suffer the heat, which is at its worst from September to December. On top of this, the Internet doesn't work, which stops the students from doing their research. The employees take work home to make the necessary entries using the Internet.**







Confronting these structural problems is already something very common for this education professional who has been working in the area for 23 years, is the mother of two girls, and who became the breadwinner of the family when she became a widow at an early age. **My personal History required me to take on a great sense of responsibility, organization and planning. It was this, without a doubt, that led me from being**

**a teacher to being a manager, she says, with her eyes gazing at the horizon from her small office, as though a film of her life story were being projected.**

**When we were asked to take part in the Programa Jovem de Futuro, I adjusted myself quickly to the proposed management model. We managed to get the majority of the teachers involved and we take part in the meetings in Teresinha. It was a special moment for exchanging experiences, and realizing that many of our problems are shared by other school principals and that it is always possible to find creative solutions. Today, teachers and students understand the school and its problems. The students take on leadership roles. We have worked as a team and everyone takes part in the educational planning. Previously it was just a teacher on their own with their course plan for the coordinator. With the Jovem de Futuro there is always a discussion, with everything being considered and decisions being made together.**

At 9.25am the bell rings again. The noise rises steadily in the playground, which is dominated by an enormous graffitied image of Jesus Christ, under the words 'Sejam bem-vindos' ('Welcome'). The students line up for lunch. It's fruit salad day. Caio, who, at 18 years old and is in the third year, gets up on stage with his guitar, amplifier and microphone which his friend Geovane holds for him. The students sit or lie down on the concrete ground - with the guarantee of a little relief from the heat that is already quite intense. Songs by Nando Reis and O Rappa fill the air that is now perfumed by the smell of the water-melon and banana that are left in the plastic cups on the tables. Excited, the students sing verses of Relicário, by the ex-member of the pop group Titãs:

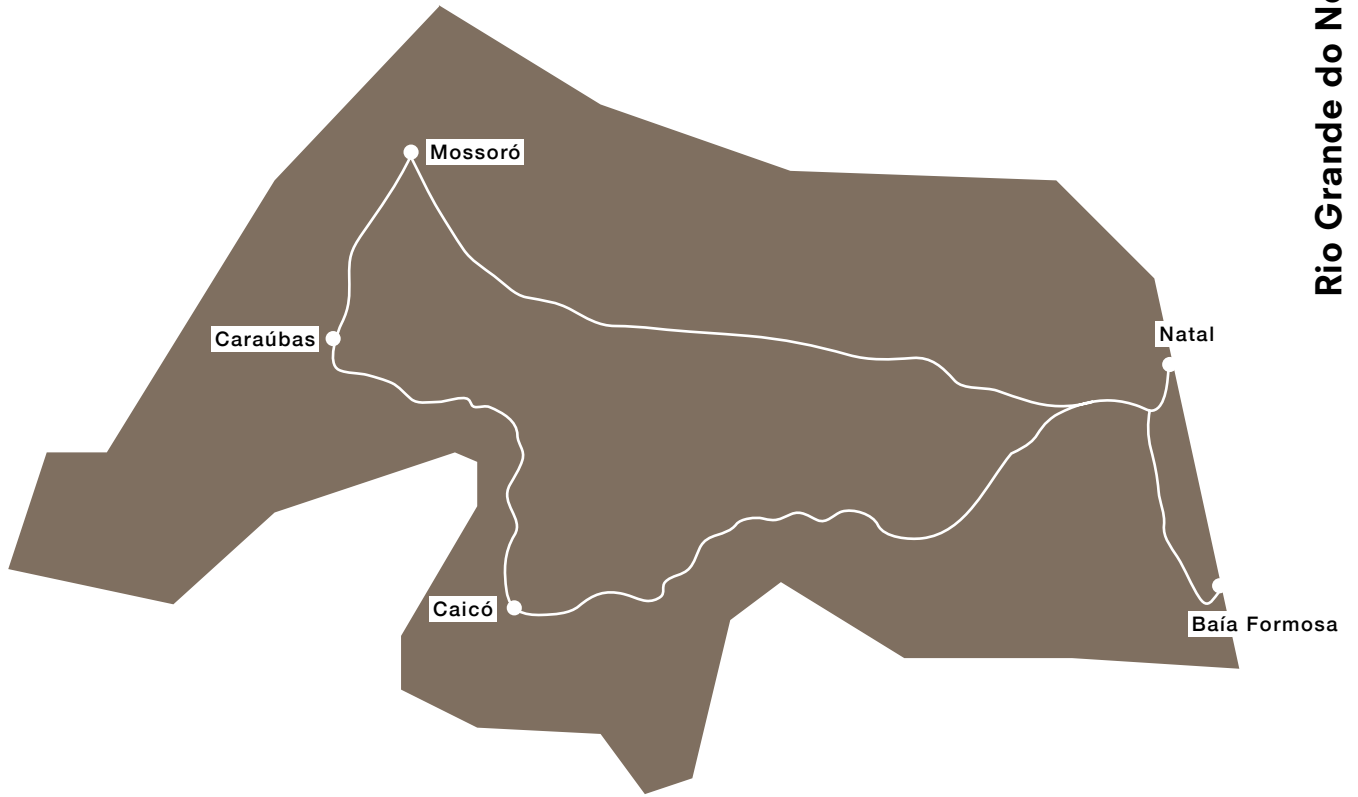
*O que está acontecendo? (What's happening?)*

*O mundo está ao contrário e ninguém reparou O que está acontecendo? (The world's upside down and no one has noticed. What's happening?)*

*Eu estava em paz quando você chegou... (I was OK when you arrived...)*

Another bell sounds and they all go back to their classrooms along the pillar-lined corridor, a beautiful geometric structure amongst the vegetation that the rains encourage to grow out of control. I called a company to cut it back. They charged R\$ 1,500. I'll pay when some money comes in. I'm afraid that dengue will spread. ■





**928 km**

We traveled 928 kilometers through Rio Grande do Norte between June 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. Our trip started in the coastal town of Baía Formosa in the south of the state and, after visiting the Professor Paulo Freire School, we drove for five hours, that same day, covering 346 kilometers along the BR-304 to Mossoró. Our GPS failed to locate the Gilberto Rola School, located in the countryside on the border with Ceará, which we eventually found after getting directions from some locals. Afterwards, we traveled another 70 kilometers along the

RN-117 until we reached Caraúbas. The next day, after a breakfast of tapioca and fried egg eaten beside the Parish Church of São Sebastião, we drove for just over two hours to Caicó where the annual São João parties were in full swing. To get to the last school we visited, and to finalize the research for this book, we traveled another 273 kilometers, a trip that took four hours, to Natal. The Padre Miguelinho School was being decorated for its annual June Party, that was to take place that day, just before the mid-year school vacation.



## **I'M ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR INNOVATIONS**

Near the busy 'Pipa' beach, on the south coast of the state of Rio Grande do Norte, the small town of Baía Formosa, that according to the 2016 IBGE census has 9,247 inhabitants, is a haven of peace, home to beaches with mighty waves and warm waters, that seems to be waiting for the tourists so it can open its doors for the region's only type of business.

The Paulo Freire School, with 385 students attending its three sessions, is the only one in the region catering specifically for Secondary Education. Giving it the name of the highly-respected educator was a sign of respect to the teachers at the time of its foundation.

When they arrive in the first year, the students are welcomed by the school principal Ismênia Alexandre Ribeiro and soon get to know the school's namesake. **We have quotes from Paulo Freire up on the walls of the classrooms and corridors. For the students who are arriving in the first year, we hold a mini-project with discussions, studies and exhibitions so they can get to know him.**

If discovering these concepts about education is often new for the students at the school, for Ismênia this knowledge was an integral part of her childhood. **I say that I was born in the school environment, because my mother was the principal of a private school. Whilst still a girl, I would sit with her in the classrooms and help with the lessons and games. I started my own career as a teacher when I was just 17. Before finishing my teacher training, I started to study Letters at university. After that I worked with child and adult literacy, primary and secondary education, and also teacher training.**

In 2000, after taking specialist courses in Literature and School Management, Ismênia

started giving classes in Portuguese Language at the Paulo Freire school. In 2017, she took over as principal, a position that had once also been held by her mother. **She has been the person who has guided me the most. We always talk about our work with each other. At the moment, she is the head at a school in the countryside.**

Always observant of teacher training courses, Ismênia started adding spice to the teaching of her specialist subject in the classroom. **I like working with seminars a great deal. I ask the students to read a book, then I get them to choose part of it to present in the form of a literary style: news**





item, ‘chapbook’, poem or dramatization. They love theater and bringing the characters to life. I’m always on the lookout for innovations. Some teachers find it difficult or don’t feel comfortable working with these tools. But we have to be as seductive as possible to reach these students.

As she recalls these classes, Ismênia becomes visibly excited. When she realizes how excited she is, she explains: **If you were to ask me if I prefer being the principal or being a teacher, I’d say that I prefer being in the classroom.**

The fact that there are very few effective teachers with conditions to assume the role of school principal led the group to create a sort of rotation system for the management of the school, which aims to always adopt a single platform with the support of everyone involved during the election period. This unified approach helps in the development of solutions for the school’s structural problems.

**We don’t have enough teachers and we don’t have any coordinators. This makes things very difficult for the management. We only had a pedagogic coordinator for two years. As the hiring processes take a long**

**time, we have been waiting for more teachers to complete the staff since the beginning of the year. We still don’t have Spanish, Biology or Art teachers. For Portuguese and Mathematics, we are arranging things from amongst the teachers we already have, but this means that in the end it’s the students who suffer. They should have four Portuguese lessons and four Mathematics lessons each week. So that none of the sessions have less than the minimum amount of content, we have to reduce the length of the classes. But this has a negative effect on the Enem results.**

With the implementation of the semi-comprehensive system, which the school was chosen to adopt, Ismênia, along with others in the profession, hopes to see improvements in the infrastructure. We are asking for a new gymnasium to be built. The Physical Education teacher gives both theoretical and practical classes in the fields and on the beach. There is no refectory and, as no maintenance work was performed on the IT Lab, it now operates with just three computers.

The rural areas surrounding Baía Formosa produce sugarcane. The mill that grinds the cane employs a lot of students over the age of 18 at harvest time. To prevent truancy amongst these students, we let them study at alternative times of day, but many can’t manage to both work at the mill and study, and they often end up dropping out of school. On the other hand, the number of fishermen is dropping. This is a profession that is suffering a lot. The parents don’t want their children to follow them along that path, and encourage them to look for other ways through life and dedicate themselves to their studies.

On the school playground, a group of students chat during a period when there is no class because they don’t have a teacher. On a noticeboard near them, there is a photo and quote from Paulo Freire: *‘Education doesn’t change the world. Education changes people. People change the world.’* ■

EE PROFESSORA CALPÚRNIA CALDAS DE AMORIM  
**REGINALDO SANTOS XAVIER**

**WORKING  
WITH  
EDUCATION  
MEANS  
CLIMBING A  
MOUNTAIN  
EVERY DAY**





A series of posters with dramatic portraits of young women who have been beaten and injured is the first image we see upon entering the Professora Calpúrnia Caldas de Amorim School, in Caicó, Rio Grande do Norte. *'No permitas que tu silencio sea tu cadena'* and *'Ante el maltratador tolerancia cero'* are the phrases adorning some of the posters, which use girls from the school as models. The campaign, about violence against women, was a project undertaken by students in their Spanish class. With the help of one of the teachers, they assumed responsibility for the makeup, photography, design and texts.

**Our school accompanies the country in all of its experiences. It is important to help the students develop a critical awareness from a very early age,** says Reginaldo Santos Xavier, who has taught Mathematics at the school since 1995 and has been the principal for six months. **Last year, we had an extensive debate about the impeachment [of the President]. All the students knew how to explain the removal of [ex-President] Collor, and the processes that were being discussed in relation to the Dilma government. We had teachers who were in favor of the impeachment and teachers who were against it. It was very democratic.**

Reginaldo, who was born in 1965, was one of four children born to a construction worker who strove for a better life by working on the construction of Brasília. Things didn't go well and the family returned to Caicó where, later on, the mother became Vice-Principal of the same school where Reginaldo is now the Principal.

Between the long-cherished desire to run the school, and the day-to-day management, there is a reality that is far from easy. **The previous administrator left everything very organized, with no debts, but managing a school without resources, as is the situation right now, presents tremendous difficulties. For example, we have 1,059 students and 16 computers, but the Internet has just 1 MB, or in other words, it doesn't work. That is what the education is like. In order for us to be able to pass on some sort of knowledge to our students, we have to climb a mountain every day. Education in Brazil is not a priority for the governments' policies.**

Some apparent inconsistencies in the system seem inexplicable to the recently-inaugurated principal. **Caicó has everything that the school needs for the canteen, but we**



have to buy fruit and vegetables in other towns far away, due to the public bidding regulations. Sometimes we place an order and, when it arrives, it has gone off and we have to send it all back. The amount budgeted for each student's meal is 36 cents. How much does this transport cost?

We go out for a walk around the large playground and are warmly greeted by Hebinha, the school mascot, a dog whose name is a tribute to the TV personality Hebe Camargo. **She knows every student at the school. If a stranger tries to enter the school at night, she goes for them.**

According to the principal, the school has the best Ideb in the region and 11<sup>th</sup> best in the state, from amongst 640 schools, at the last evaluation. To increase the students' proficiency rate, however, he sees the lack of ongoing training for teachers as a barrier. **In the public system, they are quite old here in Rio Grande do Norte. At our school, 80% of the teaching staff have been giving classes for more than 20 years. If we were to do some research, few of the young people would want to be teachers because of the poor pay conditions and lack of career perspectives. To encourage them, an ongoing training program would be needed. I, for example, am only specialized in Education and Mathematics. To take a Master's Degree, I would have to pay for it with my own money, and divide my time with my work at the school. And when I finish, there wouldn't be a significant salary increase. This is why the majority [of teachers] spend 30 years as a graduate teacher, just repeating the same words.**

The same teaching method as 30 years ago being applied today to a generation of students who have been affected by the new communication technologies is something that Reginaldo wants to avoid in his management. The principal tries to encourage the teachers to develop more creative classes, such as that which he created relating Mathematics to Art and Fashion, and proposing actions that make the students take a critical look at the world today. **I'm from 1965. I was taught by teachers from the 1950s. I pass on to my students today what I learned in the 1980s and so it goes. Future students will have classes with teachers trained in these times of new technologies, but when they get there, the world will already be different. If there isn't an urgent, ongoing teacher training program, the students won't have any motivation to come to school.**

We arrive at the gymnasium. It is full of students who are having great fun practicing the square dance that they will be presenting at the June Party. Reginaldo watches them with a smile on his face and says that the mountain he has to climb on days like this is not quite so daunting. Hebinha barks and, wagging her tail, stations herself right in the middle of the practice, as though she too were part of the happy group of dancers. ■



**WITHOUT  
THE SUPPORT  
OF THE  
COMMUNITY,  
THE SCHOOL  
WOULD NOT  
BE ABLE TO  
OPERATE**

The literature of 'chapbooks' was the creative style that the Sebastião Gurgel school, in Caraúbas, in the heartland of Rio Grande do Norte, found to create a love of reading amongst its high school students. In a very short time, with the 'Cordelteca' (the name the school gave to its chapbook library), many of them were writing their own verses, with stories that were peculiar to the region, such as that which tells the story of the day that Lampião (a local historical bandit) and his gang decided against attacking the town as it was the territory of the fearless Gato Vermelho, the nickname of Colonel Quincas Saldanha. The stanzas of the Caraúbas story-teller Ilton Gurgel tell the story:



One particular day  
Quincas sent a message  
To the brave and famous  
Lampião Cangaceiro  
Not to come to Caraúbas  
He dreaded the outcome.

Quincas was well respected  
With arms and ammunition  
And sharp-shooting men  
All with guns in hand  
He awaited the arrival  
Of the famous Lampião.

Dreading the reaction  
And very afraid of dying  
Thanks to Quincas Saldanha  
Caraúbas could see  
Lampião and his weapons  
Running down the road.

The road that leads to the capital Natal is 300 kilometers long. The name of Caraúbas, which at the last census registered just over 20,000 inhabitants, derives from the abundance of carabeiras, trees with a wide canopy which, as well as decorating the town with yellow flowers, guarantee shade from the intense heat of the region.

The 550 high school students at the Sebastião Gurgel School occupy just seven classrooms across the three sessions. Until just a short time ago, there were just six classrooms. Pressured by the parents, who wished to enroll their children, the school principal Maria Joelma de Oliveira was obliged to turn the small old staff room into another teaching space

# Cordeloteca





to increase the number of places on offer at the school. The teachers moved to an extension built onto the administration offices.

**Our dream is to completely refurbish the school. We don't have the proper physical structure to see our actions through. The school was founded in 1960 and this is still the original structure. We don't have any space for meetings or talks, there is no auditorium or even a canteen, and our gymnasium was built using resources coming from a collaborative action in the**

**environmental area. But it doesn't have a roof so it can't be used for any activities during the day because it's too hot.**

Without the refurbishment, the school could not adopt the semi-comprehensive system, for which it was chosen, and had to return the sum of R\$ 70,000 that it had been assigned to be invested in improvements for this form of teaching.

The air-conditioning in the classrooms, without which it is impossible to study due to the heat, was obtained during the previous principal's time in charge, with the help of the community. **Four years were spent developing the town's participation with campaigns, bingo nights and letters addressed to ex-students, ex-employees and professionals who had spent time at the school. By doing so, we managed to raise the funds necessary to install air-conditioning at the school. Without the support of the community, the school would not be able to operate.**

A native of the town of Catolé da Rocha in the state of Paraíba, and the daughter of a truck driver, Joelma was a high school student at this very school. **In the beginning, I never thought about being a teacher. I wanted to be a researcher focusing on Ancient History. I'm fascinated by Egypt and Greece!** Fate, however, placed a Bachelor of Education in her path and, in 2003, she became a History teacher and, ten years later, school principal.

Joelma's time in charge has been notable for its search for partnerships. **Nowadays we have agreements with a number of federal institutions, and students have internships at the Universidade Federal Rural do Semi-Árido and at the INSS, for example.**

Accepted on the 'PIP' [Pedagogic Innovation Project], a partnership between the state government and the World Bank, the school hopes to receive a sum of R\$ 45,000 for the acquisition of educational materials. The priority will be to invest in online resources. **Our information technology room simply doesn't work. The computers arrived, but the Internet cannot provide support sufficient for the lab to function effectively. This is one of our worries as well. One of the PIP actions involves buying equipment for the laboratory so that the Internet signal can be distributed and the number of megabytes can be increased. When we switch five computers on, the Internet stops working.**

Some loud music can be heard playing in the playground. In one of the first year classrooms, a group of students are happily rehearsing a play that will be presented during the June Parties. This will be another one of the attractions in the program that also includes the square dancing and a parade of carts through the town. ■

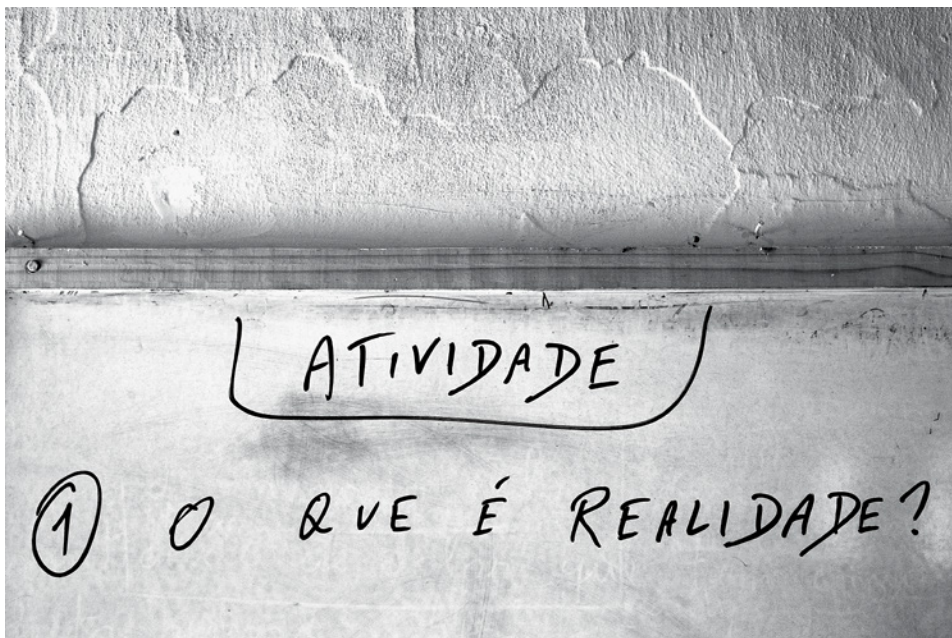
**A SCHOOL  
SHOULD  
STIMULATE  
THE  
STUDENTS'  
POLITICAL  
AWARENESS**

In an unlikely location, on the border between Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará, miles from any sort of housing and a long way from the center of the town of Mossoró, we find the 'Vila Ângelo Calmon de Sá', at the side of a highway, with no paved roads, and with simple houses and chickens searching for something to eat on the red earth that has cracked under the intense heat. It is here too that we find the Gilberto Rola School, after confusing it with the local medical center, but we get there in the end, following the directions of a group of men playing pool in a bar, as our GPS does not work here.

The village is also known as the '*Conjunto Habitacional Maísa*' ('Maísa Housing Project'), after the fruit juice and pulp company that once operated here and was responsible, in the 1970s, for attracting and settling workers in this region that had previously been uninhabited. Gilberto Rola was the father of one of the company's partners and it was he who had the initiative to create a teaching institution here in 1978. Later on, it was incorporated into the state system, being classified as a rural school.

**When the company went bankrupt, many workers started to fight over**

**labor issues and, as a result, social groups such as the MST (Homeless People's Movement) and the MTST (Landless People's Movement) started to arrive. A nucleus of settlements ended up being established here, this nucleus - the second largest in the country - being called *Eldorado dos Carajás II*, explains Jandilma Ferreira da Costa Silva, the school principal, now in her second mandate. We currently have 14 classrooms for 1,100 students coming in from 23 communities, including settlements, rural regions and the outskirts of urban areas.**



The distances between the rural



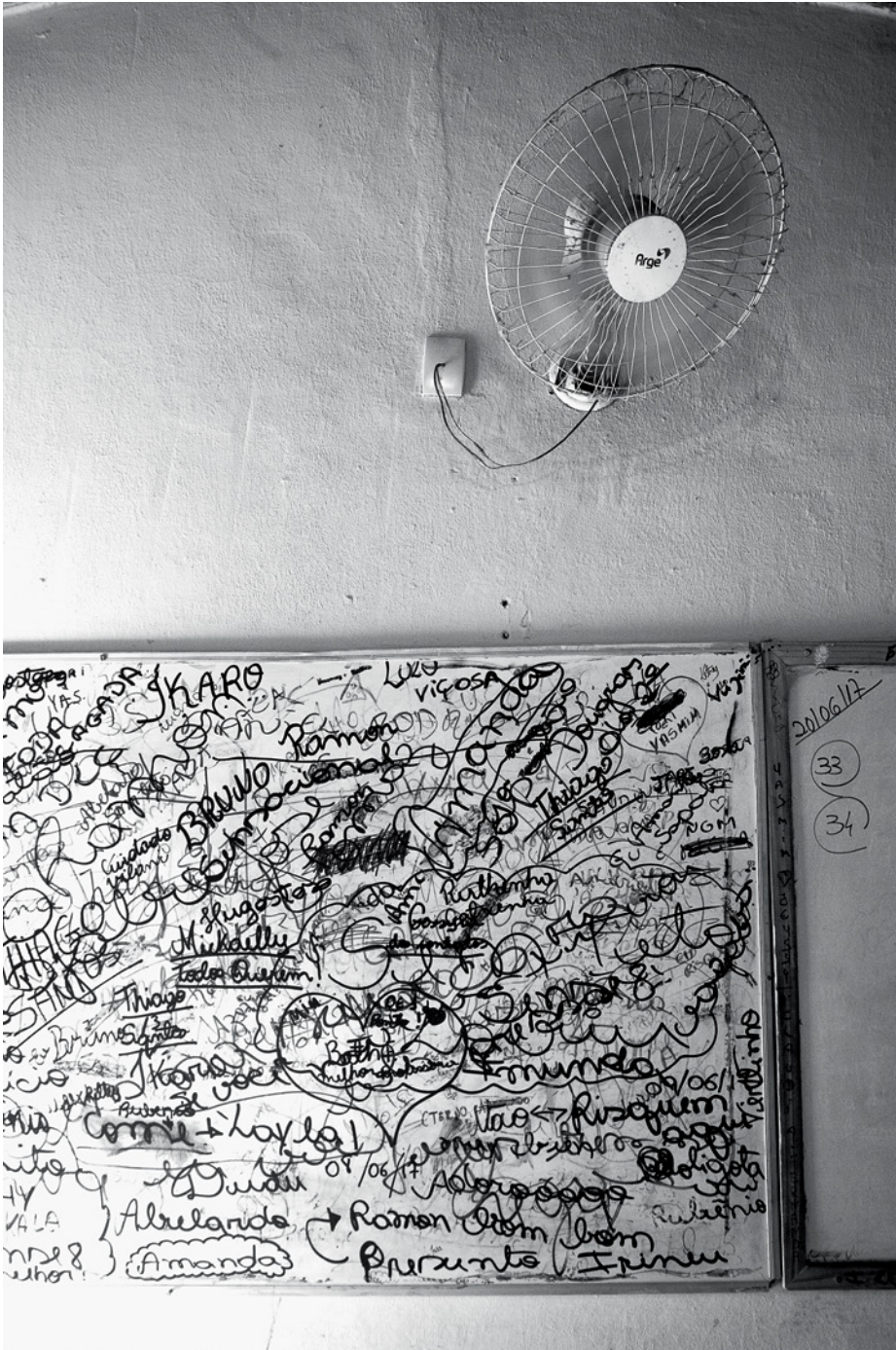
locations, added to the low incomes of those who live there, mean that the school transportation offered by the state is the only way for the students and teachers to get to the school. The poor state of repair of the school buses, makes Jandilma's daily routine very difficult. **To transport the students from the communities, we have two buses, but if one of them breaks down, we put a rotation system into place: for three days we serve certain communities, and on the other two days we serve the others. This upsets the study routine and the commitment of the students.**

Dealing with adversity, however, is something that does not faze the principal who always has a contagious smile, especially when a student comes to simply tell her about something that has happened or ask her advice. The daughter of a builder and a cleaner, who encouraged their five children to study from an early age, Jandilma is proud to have attended state schools. **My parents always said the inheritance they could leave for their children was their education.**

Her desire to be a teacher came to her early on. **I always dreamed of being a teacher.**

**Even when I was a child I wanted to be the teacher in games, using the walls and doors as my blackboard... As I was the eldest child in the family, my sisters were the pupils. I finished high school when I was 17, took a teaching course and took the state teaching exam. I passed but had to wait until I was 18 before I could start working in the classroom.** After studying Pedagogy at university, Jandilma started teaching at the school that she now runs. **I've been here for 27 years. I love this school.**

Jandilma's love is directly related to the struggle of the communities and social movements of the region. **We are surrounded by people with strong political beliefs, who fight for the space that they have a right to occupy. It is gratifying, but also challenging,**



to understand the role of the school in a place like this. I always work with partners, trying to bring the community into the school, to help the people understand that their children's education plays a vital role in this game.

As a way of finding a parallel between the problems that the region faces and the content of the classes, the school created a project that combined various subjects and focused on water: where it comes from and where it goes. The project was incorporated into the curriculum when the lack of drinking water led to a crisis and struggle between the local people and the government. **We are showing the students the importance of water and who is responsible for supplying it to our homes. A school should stimulate the students' political awareness.**

In one of the classrooms, empty during the lunch break, a philosophical question has been written up on the blackboard by one of the teachers as an activity: 'What is reality?'

The reality of a rural school means that included in its statute is the stipulation that it should offer courses focused on agro-economic activities. **We have offered a course in Environmental Culture in the past, but this year it wasn't possible.**

As she approaches 30 years of working in the same school, Jandilma hopes to continue contributing to the improvement of public education in the area of research. I dream of retiring and studying for a Master's Degree in the area of Public Administration of rural schools. And I want this focus of study to be performed here. ■

**AT A LIVING  
SCHOOL,  
FROM THE  
JANITOR TO  
THE PRINCIPAL,  
WE ARE ALL  
EDUCATORS**

*Those who are rich live at the beach,  
But those who work don't have anywhere to live,  
Those who don't cry go to bed hungry,  
But those with a name throw their plates in the air*

It is just 8am when the 'forró' music by the popular musicians Dominginhos and Fausto Nilo booms out of the speakers in the corridors, perking up the students, teachers and employees of the Instituto Padre Miguelinho School, in Natal. The last week of classes of the first semester ends with the traditional June Party that is prepared by the entire school community. Students, employees and teachers decorate the school with crepe paper, card, colorful textiles, smiles and dance steps that later on will be the high point of the square dance.

Events like this are one of the foundations of this concept of a living school, created and implemented by Edna de Araújo Cunha, a Mathematics teacher who has been the school principal for a year.

**When I was in the classroom, I missed the 'living school', and events in which the students were involved. I thought the school was kind of dead. These events create a strong sense of coexistence outside the classroom, improve the students' cultural repertoire, engage their creativity, and contribute to their self-esteem. At a 'living school' there are cultural events, competitions and other approaches to learning. The relations between students and teachers are strengthened. This leads the students to enjoying school more and wanting to stay there. It creates a sense**

**of belonging. Mobilizing people is hard work, but it is worth it.**

Uniting teachers, pedagogy specialists and employees around a clear and extensive educational project for all the school sessions was the change that Edna made. Her experience as vice-principal to the previous principal helped her a great deal in developing this macro-vision in relation to teaching. **Each session of the school was different; it didn't have a clear educational directive. I arranged meetings involving the whole group around a single language. Having a committed pedagogic staff means everything works as a**









**whole. The pedagogues are the link between the teacher, the administration and the student.**

Edna understands that the gap that exists between 'technological students and analogical teachers' is a very real problem that needs tackling. **We can't have the mentality that we had before or we won't hold the students' attention. I won't lie. The teachers are very tempted to teach in the way they were taught. It's difficult being a teacher, because every day you have to accompany the students. It's a challenge. The teachers arriving now, who are younger, already use technology, but there is a resistance amongst the older teachers. Many young people use cell phones without even realizing they can be an incredible learning tool. We have to guide them.**

With around 1,400 students enrolled at the beginning of the year, the Instituto Padre Miguelinho School recorded a dropout rate of around 100 students in the first semester. **During this transition from primary school to high school, many lose interest and decide to start working rather than continuing their studies. With the actions being implemented with the Programa Jovem de Futuro that is now arriving here in the state, I hope that we manage to reduce this dropout rate.**

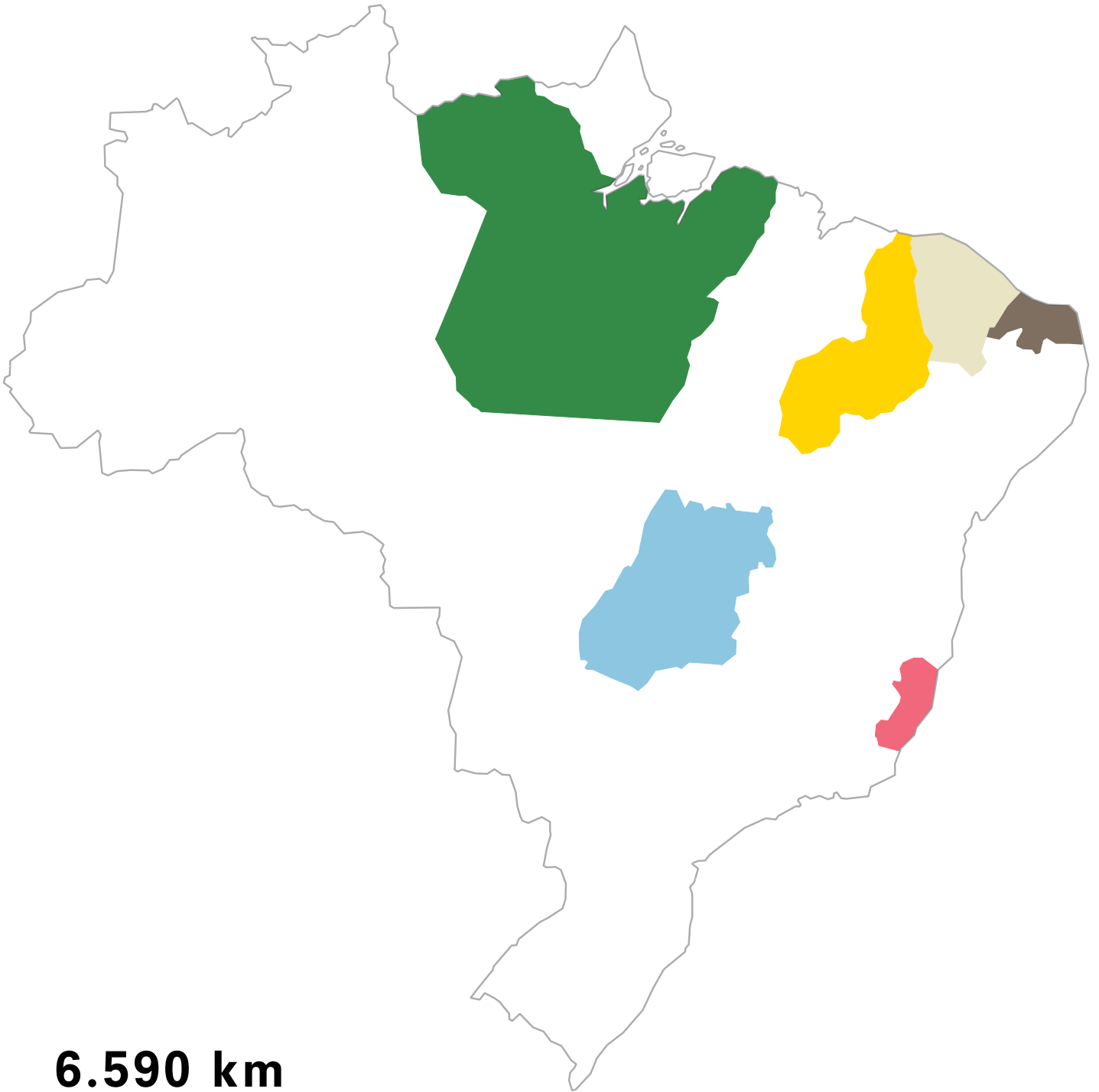
In principle, with the recent adoption of the semi-comprehensive modality of high school, in which the students spend two entire days of the week at school, with extracurricular lessons, Edna thought the dropout rate would increase, but in fact the measure resulted

in more enrollments. Amongst the new subjects introduced were Youth Leadership, Dance and Movement, Theater and Scientific Initiatives. Without a doubt, these are subjects that will help reinforce the ideal of a living school. Even though these changes were very well received by the school's students, parents and professionals, the counterpart that was hoped for from the state has still not been forthcoming, leading to structural problems for the Padre Miguelinho School.

With more students, as well as not having enough employees to take care of the catering and cleaning, or to bolster the pedagogy team, the biggest problem has been that of teachers leaving for different reasons and the inability to replace them. **Sometimes, we spend the whole year without a teacher in one or more subjects. If the teacher goes on sick leave, no one comes to replace them. And this creates a hole that discourages the school and the students. Very often, we aren't able to provide these classes again and the students fall behind by six months in this subject. Then a teacher arrives in November and tries to work a miracle, but we know that the student will suffer.**

When we finish the interview, Edna is called over by one of the students who wants to show her some cardboard cutouts of the folk heroes Lampião and Maria Bonita. Watching the students, teachers and employees involved in the decoration of the school, Edna smiles and goes over to them, saying **This is a 'loving school'. From the janitor to the principal, we are all educators. We can't drop the ball; we have to believe in education. ■**





# 6.590 km

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30 public schools

6 states

27 towns

37 days

3.686 photographs

25 hours of interviews

**EDER  
CHIODETTO**

As soon as the people at the Instituto Unibanco invited me to undertake this challenging project that would involve traveling across 6 states and visiting 26 towns to report on the daily lives of 30 public schools, I started envisioning how this book would turn out. How would the photographer, who had been asleep inside me for 15 years (since I started focusing more on curating, teaching and editing), envision this complex and delicate world that is the education of young Brazilians?

The first thing to do was to delve into my memory and go back to my time as a student at public school. I went to primary and junior school at the EE República do Paraguay School, in the district of Vila Prudente, in the capital of São Paulo state, and high school at the EE Professor Américo de Moura School in the same district. At both schools I always chose to sit at the back of the class, next to the window. From there, I could see everyone in the classroom and have a privileged view of the outside world, which was always backlit for me. At certain times of the year, during the first few hours of the day, the sunlight shining into the classroom cast the shadows of those near the window onto the floor. As the lessons passed, the shade crept slowly out.

The memory of the child or adolescent who liked to look directly into the light when they sat at their school desk, was most intense when I visited the first school in this project, in Belém do Pará, and I saw the morning sunbeams streaming across the classrooms, sometimes delicately intercut by the breeze blocks used in the building design to provide ventilation.

The photographer, now an adult, made an analogy with Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The classroom was therefore the cave where the students meet to find the strength to free themselves from the chains that imprison them, meaning they had to look only at the wall - a metaphor for common sense for the philosopher. Once freed, they can finally stop seeing the world as an illusion of shadows and look at the light, experiencing the outside world with an independent and critical eye. The light is the knowledge.

The conceptual and aesthetic path for the creation of the photographic essay, and also

the written texts based upon the interviews with the school principals, arose from the negotiation between what the child and the adolescent feel intuitively as students and that which the adult can now reflect upon. I would therefore like to thank all the teachers I had at those schools, because they provided me with the tools to break my own personal chains.

Since my point of view would be more subjective than assertive, I felt that the option to take and present black and white images rather than color ones seemed right. The possibility of adjusting the contrast, reducing and increasing the range of grays [half tones] between light and shade, very often caught in the backlight, gave me the necessary freedom to create rhythms in the photographic essay, with moments that were more dramatic countering others that were more enlightening. Color, as well as presenting an exaggerated realism, would not have allowed such adjustments in contrast. Between me and the light, there was always the movement of the students around the school. It was a form of choreography that sometimes resembled an inventive theater of shadows. Because of this I always intended to catch them moving towards the platonic light of knowledge.

If, on the one hand, the photographs ought to create a narrative that is non-linear and more sensory-based rather than one that simply describes the environment of the public schools, then on the other, I imagined that the texts should form part of the photographic essay if I could manage to create verbal images. It was therefore necessary to describe scenes that I had witnessed from the bias of a photographic eye cast over the details of the surroundings, thus creating a scenario that would involve the voices of the school principals. In a crossed operation therefore, the photographs aimed to provide a narrative chronicle whilst the texts would allude to being images.

Whilst the photographs were being taken and the texts were developing, it became clear that the book should contain two moments: the photographic essay, to introduce the reader to the atmospheres I had captured, followed by what I designated the 'report', with the texts of the interviews and other photographs of the schools that would finally include the portraits of the principals.

When I left the last school that I photographed, in Natal, in Rio Grande do Norte, I was overcome by a kind of nostalgia. In some way, for these six months, the routine of waking up early and traveling to the schools had unexpectedly brought me back into contact with that shy boy who preferred to sit at the back of the class, looking at the backlit world from the window, listening to the teachers and dreaming of a future that was still uncertain and unlikely.

I would like to thank the Instituto Unibanco and its inspiring team of professionals immensely for believing in me to undertake this project and for supporting me unconditionally at every stage. My thanks also go out to the principals of the schools, who taught me so much about how we grow as individuals when we are able to work for the development of others, with care and dedication. ■



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