

# elt NOTES!



## CCA Teachers' Newsletter UPDATES, TIPS AND RESOURCES

September 2023

### Teacher Voice

## Embracing Diversity and Fostering Inclusion: Supporting Students with Tourette Syndrome

Inspired by Laydy Bernal's testimony

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity is paramount. The Centro Colombo Americano is committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of their unique challenges, is provided with the tools and environment to thrive. In this spirit, the experience of one of our CCA teachers, Laydy Bernal, in supporting a student with Tourette syndrome exemplifies the institution's dedication to meaningful inclusion.

Laydy's journey began with a realization while taking a module on staff development, which was part of one of the Oxford Academy courses. The significance of motivation in the classroom led her to align with the Colombo's vision and its relevance to the diverse challenges faced by teachers. Students encountering difficulties in meeting their learning goals can sometimes lead to a decline in both their own motivation and that of their educators. For her, one particular student with Tourette syndrome became the focal point of her commitment to innovation and support.



## From theory to Practice

# TOURETTE SYNDROME

SIMPLE TICS

### MOTOR TICS

- Eye blinking
- Head jerking
- Shoulder shrugging
- Eye darting
- Finger flexing
- Sticking the tongue out

### VOCAL TICS

- Touching the nose
- Touching other people
- Smelling objects
- Obscene gestures
- Flapping the arms
- Hopping

COMPLEX TICS

- Hiccupping
- Yelling
- Throat clearing
- Barking

- Using different voice intonations
- Repeating one's own words or phrases
- Repeating others' words or phrases
- Obscene language



The teacher's pedagogical approach began to take shape as she applied her newfound insights. The creation of an inclusive classroom environment required education and empathy among the student's peers. An open and candid conversation with the class about Tourette syndrome promoted awareness and empathy, fostering an atmosphere of acceptance. Additionally, specific instructions were shared with students, enabling them to interact respectfully and inclusively. Practical adjustments, like seating the student away from windows and offering direct communication, became standard practice.

As Laydy implemented these strategies, a transformation became evident. The student's classroom interactions improved, with peers exhibiting acceptance and understanding. The teacher's individualized approach yielded positive results as the student's participation and language skills flourished. Despite the occasional linguistic errors, his performance exemplified the success of the support system.

In the end, this journey serves as a testament to the power of inclusion and tailored support. In this case, Laydy's dedication to research, collaboration, and direct communication fostered an environment where a student with Tourette syndrome could thrive. The success stories born from such an approach can make a powerful impact on our inclusive teaching practices, inspiring educators to embrace diversity and tailor their methods for the benefit of all students. The transformation of challenges into opportunities for growth remains at the heart of the CCA's mission to create a truly inclusive learning community and to continue to empower Colombians with the transformational force of culture and bilingualism.

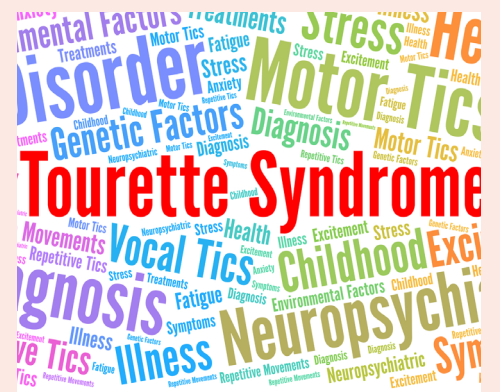
Taken from Better Me Healthcare, <https://twitter.com/BetterMeHealth1/status/1526885665061089281>  
Adapted by Centro Colombo Americano.

Tourette syndrome, a neurological condition characterized by involuntary tics and associated challenges, presents a unique set of cognitive and social hurdles for students. Recognizing this, Laydy embarked on a thoughtful and comprehensive action plan. She understood that success depended on a multi-faceted approach that included collaboration with various stakeholders and careful consideration of the student's needs.

The initial step involved immersing herself in the student's background, tapping into the collective wisdom of fellow teachers. This collaborative approach not only provided insights into the student's strengths and challenges but also encouraged a community of support. Communication with the student's mother proved invaluable, as it yielded expert advice from therapists and psychologists who understood the

nuances of his condition. Armed with this knowledge, the teacher delved into research to gain a deeper understanding of Tourette syndrome, cementing her commitment to evidence-based strategies.

One might think that the journey would end here, but the teacher's dedication to inclusion prompted her to seek the student's own perspective. Engaging the student in a dialogue about his experiences and insights revealed a valuable layer of understanding. It became evident that despite his challenges, he possessed an exemplary attitude towards learning. The teacher's conversations with former teachers echoed this sentiment while highlighting specific areas of difficulty, such as following instructions and written tasks. Interestingly, his linguistic abilities remained a strong suit, a detail that would later play a significant role in his progress.



## Teacher Voice

# Teacher Development Training Sessions to Make a Difference in Acknowledging and Celebrating Diversity

By Angie Fonseca, Supervisor

As leaders of academic processes and teacher development at the CCA, we have reached a clear understanding of our mission in helping create a truly inclusive mindset at the CCA: even a small shift in our practices, behaviors, and attitudes can unlock boundless opportunities for individuals striving for inclusion and success, despite the challenges of diversity.

Our final TDTS of the year centered around the theme of diversity and inclusion, marking the initial stride in our institution's quest for having truly inclusive classes and spaces. During this event, we had the privilege of exchanging perspectives on inclusion across various departments at the Colombo. Accompanied by leaders and administrators in charge of different areas and processes, the initial segment of the session delved into understanding the new inclusion policy as well as into exploring how each area approaches inclusion.

Undoubtedly, the highlight of the TDTS was the "meet-up" session, which saw the participation of 42 students from our social responsibility programs as special guests. The purpose of this get-together was to engage teachers and guests in conversations that were primarily focused on their unique backgrounds, motivations for learning English, and their experiences as Colombo students. Throughout the session, each of our teachers posed targeted inquiries, seeking strategies and tips to effectively facilitate an inclusive learning process.

We had 42 students from: MLK scholarship, Access Program, CHOP, English to Fly, and Nancy Kotal De Cortés Foundation.



## “ General perceptions: our teachers' voices ”

“Inclusion is not only about understanding that our students have learning difficulties, but being aware of the scope of diversity we have in our classes.”

“It would be great to have a direct access to comments from previous teachers on specific cases of students who start their learning process at the Colombo, some sort of data base where we can share both strategies and ideas on what has worked with students we've had in class.”

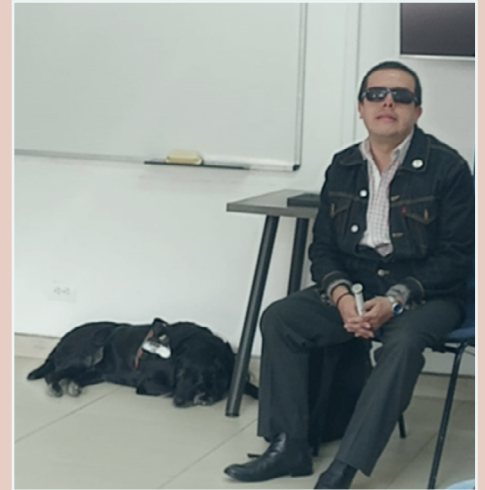
“How could we make sure there is progress of both learning and content without neglecting our learners' process and ensuring they are fully supported and assisted to reach learning goals?”

“In our session, we came to the conclusion that inclusion demands flexibility from all the stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, and even program leaders) taking into consideration the aforementioned, we consider that the curriculum and pace schedules must be flexible as well.”

## Conclusions

- In general, the teachers expressed their genuine enjoyment of the sessions and conveyed the significance of the experience in meeting with students. They found immense value in firsthand insights, gaining strategies and ideas directly from the source to implement within their classrooms in order to foster a more inclusive environment.
- Based on the teachers' comments and reactions at the end of our TDTS, there seems to be a notably high expectation on the ongoing availability of more training and professional back up. It's clear that this initial step toward inclusion, which many teachers had long awaited, is just the beginning.

We have embarked on an exciting and remarkable journey toward inclusion. The insights shared, the connections made, and the dedication of our teachers and students have illuminated the path ahead. Although we have acknowledged the importance of fostering a diverse, inclusive, and safe learning environment for some time now, we also know this is just the beginning, and we're excited to continue this transformative journey together.



# Leadership in Inclusion and Diversity: Voices from educators who make memorable learning journeys possible for all

By Pilar Bravo - Video edition by Astrid Cruz



In the heart of the Colombo's mission to provide quality education for all, we proudly share an enlightening video interview that sheds light on the contributions and views of just a few of all our EduCCAtors who are at the forefront of promoting inclusion and awareness for diversity in our social responsibility programs, mediations, and English Language classes in general. Let's listen to **Yennifer Lombana**, alumni mediator; **Gissel Espitia**, social responsibility and student welfare coordinator; **Laura Esquivel**, English to Fly teacher; and **Julieth Florido**, teacher for the Nancy Kotal de Cortés scholarship program for professional young sportspeople.



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**Graphic Design and photography**  
Colombo M&C

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## What else is News?

### We Have a New Cultural Mediator!



**Óscar Pardo**

Ever since I was in high school, I knew that I would be doing something related to either education or the arts and culture. That's why I'm truly excited to be your new mediator, allowing me to combine my passions while assisting both teachers and our students in their classes.

I am passionate about languages and culture, which is why I am studying French and English Philology at the National University. As part of my pursuit of my second passion, the arts, I enrolled in a Mediation and Museology course at the National Museum. During this course, I developed pedagogical manuals and conducted guided tours for visitors of all ages, including those with visual impairments. This experience led me to work at ArtBo as a mediator at Casas Reigner, a renowned Colombian gallery with international recognition. Since then, I have consistently sought ways to incorporate the concepts of arts and culture into my classes at Colombo, where I began as a practitioner in 2022. Now, I'm thrilled to share my knowledge and experience with all of you!

For the time being, my primary role will involve coordinating guided visits in Downtown for the upcoming exhibition 'Índigo'. Soon enough, I will unveil a new series of cultural mediations, which will further enrich both the learning journey of our students and the teaching experience of our educators.

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## Discover the Enchanting World of Índigo

By Oscar Pardo, Cultural Mediator

# Índigo

Angela Jiménez Pérez

Hasta septiembre 30

Have you ever experienced art using nothing else than natural materials? Well, this is your chance. Índigo is the result of two years of research with artisans from Barichara, Santander, where Ángela Jiménez reflects upon nature, our lost traditions and how to create art with organic resources. Come and explore with your class the art of the añil plant, clay, wood, seed, and even pineapple, that have given life to this exhibition. Create your own masterpiece and enjoy a journey through hues and mystique!

