

Pedagogical Documentation: the what, why and how

Module 7

Susan Stacey 2020



Intentions for today:

- To create a shared vocabulary for aspects of pedagogical documentation
- To find our places on the journey of documentation and consider next steps
- To recognize the important role of documentation in reflection, decision-making, research, and communication



What are your experiences?

What is the difference between display and documentation?

What is **pedagogical** documentation?



Display

Documentation

The beginning... mixing solids and liquids

This project did not begin with chocolate. Rather, the children were engaged in science/history activity where they mixed several familiar solids (e.g. flour, water, vinegar, salt, cocoa) and noticed the changes.

The children and teacher later reviewed what had happened, using photographs:

Teacher: What did we put in to make bubbles? What happened when we put more in? Do you see the layers?

Child: The top is chocolate, the bottom is lemon juice.

Teacher: What did we smell?

Children: Chocolate! Vinegar!



Over the next week, it was clear that as the children mixed different items, including spices, that their favorite item was cocoa powder. Our student teacher, Ms. Terry, mentioned that chocolate is made from cocoa.



At morning meeting later in the week, the children were asked "Where does chocolate come from?" Only a few children had any ideas to offer.

'A chocolate factory'

'A store'

'A bakery'

'In the ground'

'From a tree'

...and so we asked where we could find out more ...

'We could ask Mr. Greenham. She has lots of books.'

'On the computer.'

'We can ask grown-ups!'

'A dictionary.'



Pedagogical Documentation



Making children's thinking, ideas, and learning visible: a form of 'listening' (Rinaldi)



What kinds of things might you document? Children's....



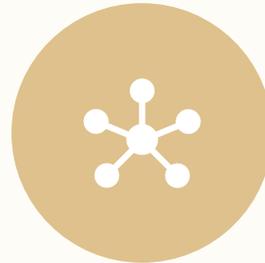
Understandings and misunderstandings



Prior Knowledge



Children's theories about the world – how do things work?



Connections and strategies

What does the Framework say? (p62 Educator's Guide)

- ...putting into words, pictures, videos, sketches and artifacts the story of the child's learning process – in collaboration with the children themselves. This deepens and transforms the learning itself, adding another layer of complexity to the work of children.
- It also serves to communicate with all who participate in the education process what is happening, what children are expressing, what is being experienced in the school.
- It serves as a way to learn more deeply and to reflect more complexly on what we do with children
- Teachers are communicating value to children, as well as to any audience of the documentation, showing that **what children do is important and worthy of recording.**

Documentation of Infants

Experimenting with Body Movement in Response to Music

December 13, 2016

Recently, Krista introduced a keyboard, which the children began to explore by pressing the keys and listening to the sounds this made. Yusuf began to press a number of buttons located at the top of the keyboard, which play different pre-recorded songs. He then stood up and began to dance to this music, as a few other children were already doing.



Yusuf took this exploration further than his peers. Heba observed that he seemed to be trying to control his body movements as he listened to the music. He moved different parts of his body slowly, pausing after each movement as if considering what he was doing. He bent and raised his arm so that the elbow pointed up and then down, shuffled his feet from side to side, nodded his head, and turned his body around, repeating each of these actions many times. Every time a song ended, Yusuf would press another button to play a different tune, and then continue his exploratory movements.

After arriving the next morning, Yusuf walked straight to the keyboard, and again began to test and study his body movements to the sound of the music.

Yusuf's obvious desire to plan and control his body movements, in time to music, was similar to the clapping of hands and tapping of feet that the children have been doing to music. In both cases, the infants are making connections between the music and its rhythm, and moving their bodies in response to this. Yusuf has taken this previous experimentation to the next level, by using his entire body to investigate this relationship between music, rhythm and movement.

- All the same facets of documentation apply...what was happening? What is this exploration about? What does the educator think about this?

Infants...cont'd

What Does This Look Like?

March 13, 2018

Some of the infants appear to be showing interest in their reflections. They seem to be investigating their own actions by moving different parts of their bodies and changing their facial expressions, while staring into a mirror.

Many of the children have also been experimenting with different types of blocks and building, and this morning Krista laid a large mirror out on the table, along with some wooden blocks. Sarah, Adam, and Angle seemed immediately curious.



They began to stack blocks on top of one another, and soon noticed the mirror. They began to lean down over it, and stare into the mirror as they tapped blocks against it, and continued to build. Angle seemed especially fascinated by this exploration and spent a long time studying these materials.

The children seem to be asking questions about their own bodies and actions, what these look

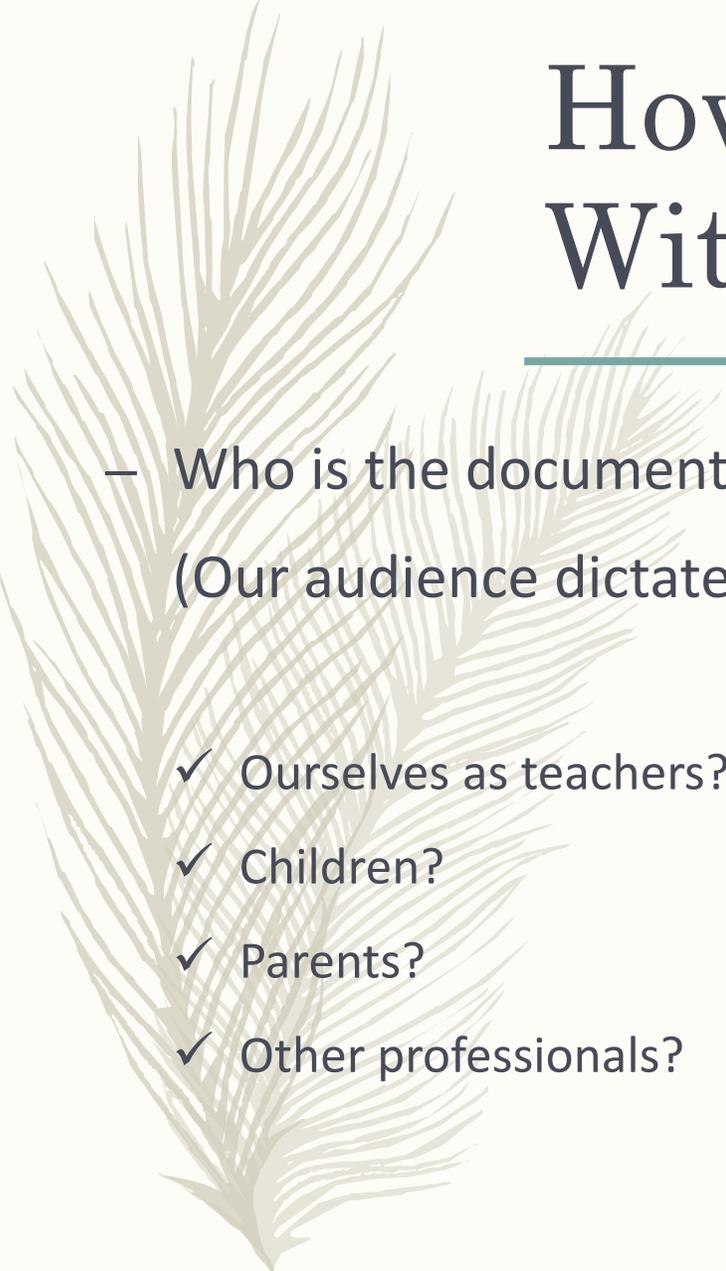
like, and their ability to manipulate and control them. This pursuit of self-awareness seems to be driving them to consider their physical movements, and their level of choice over these, in a deeper way than they may have before. Krista wonders if this wider understanding of their abilities will begin to impact their play in a noticeable way.

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- Exploration of interesting materials, and an interpretation of how the infants are exploring self-awareness.
 - Connects nicely to the Framework, such as aspects of Discovery and Invention.



The importance of documentation for families

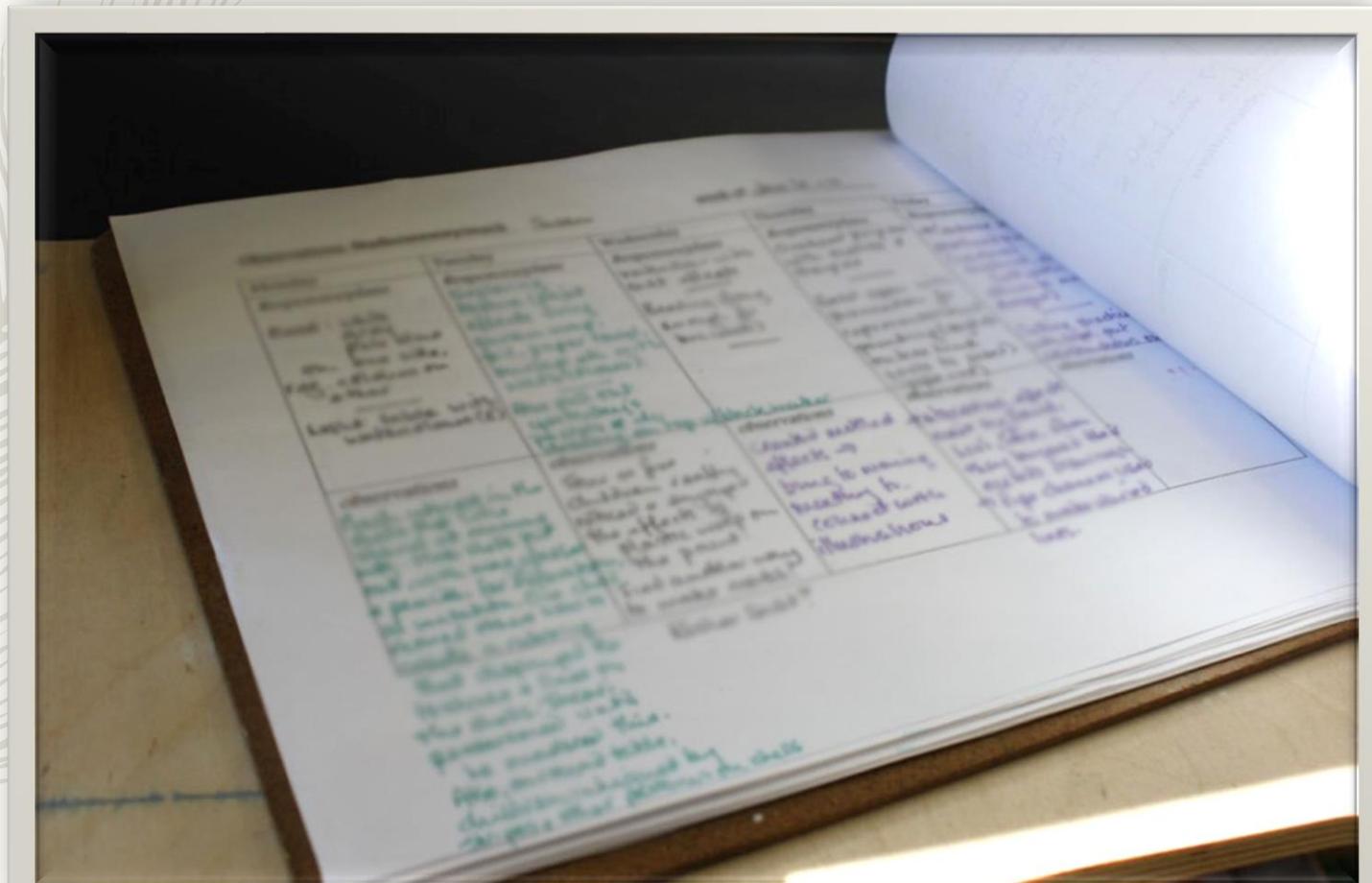
- Families are likely to better understand ‘how the program works’ when they read documentation
- It provides an avenue for families to collaborate with educators; they are invited into the process thinking about and understanding their child’s learning, ideas, and strategies.
- The uniqueness of each child’s thinking is represented through documentation
- Documentation is a useful tool in meetings – what has been going on? How are children engaging with materials and the community? How can families contribute? What are their opinions?



How to Begin? With questions....

- Who is the documentation for?
(Our audience dictates the content and the vocabulary)
 - ✓ Ourselves as teachers?
 - ✓ Children?
 - ✓ Parents?
 - ✓ Other professionals?

Keeping track of our thoughts (both children's and adults')...this is the data for documentation!





Nov 6 (Photos, artifacts)

"We were making chocolate"

"We were making powder"

(show crushed nibs"

"Is it powder yet?" (No)

"They worked hard, what do we
have to do? It's still not a powder"

(Show cocoa pdr plus nibs to see
difference)

-serial process (with some scaffolding)

How can we make it powder?

-crunch it with something bigger

-a big stick

-a machine

"they warmed it"

"What did he add, in the movie?"

(unsure)

offered samples of cocoa pdw and

ground nibs

"Don't like any of them"

"one is yuck"

-what does it taste like?

It tastes yucky

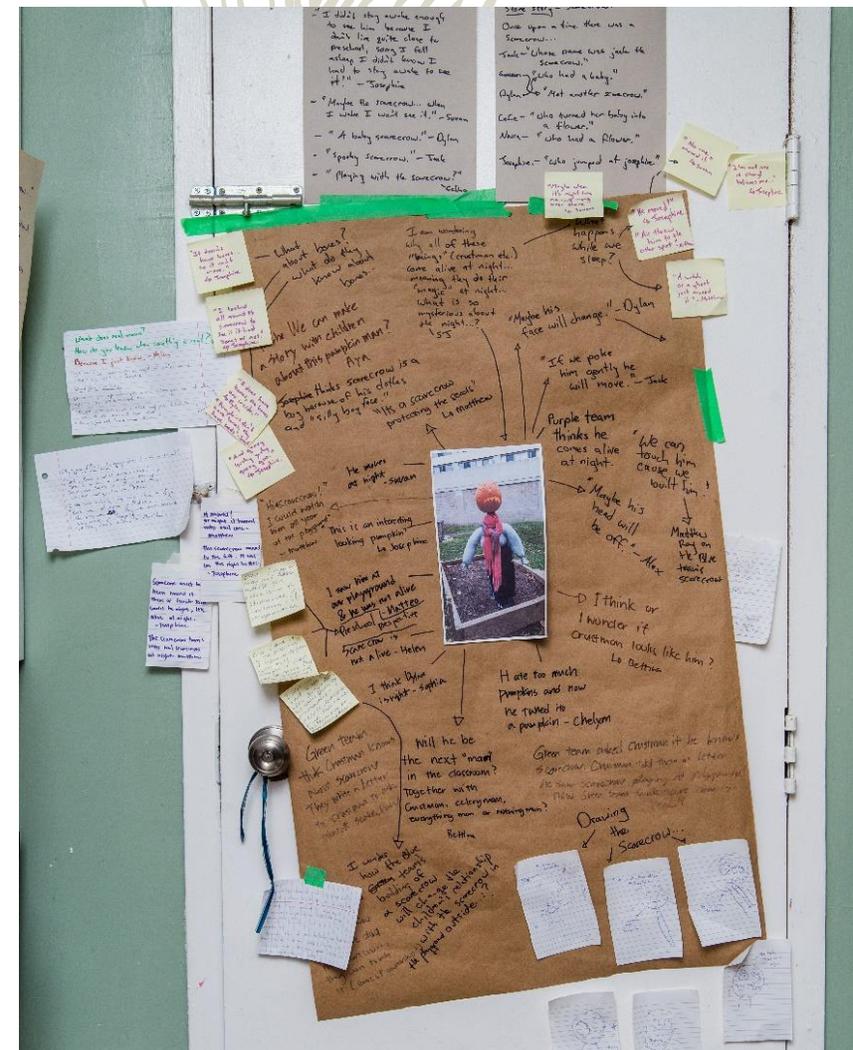
What did the boy add?

Raw documentation of children's and teachers' thinking and questions.

Child: 'It doesn't have bones so it can't move' (Adult wonders: What about bones? What do they know about bones?)

'I saw it at the playground, and he was not alive'

Adult wonders: I wonder why these 'beings' come alive at night (ie do their 'magic' at night). What is so mysterious about the night?

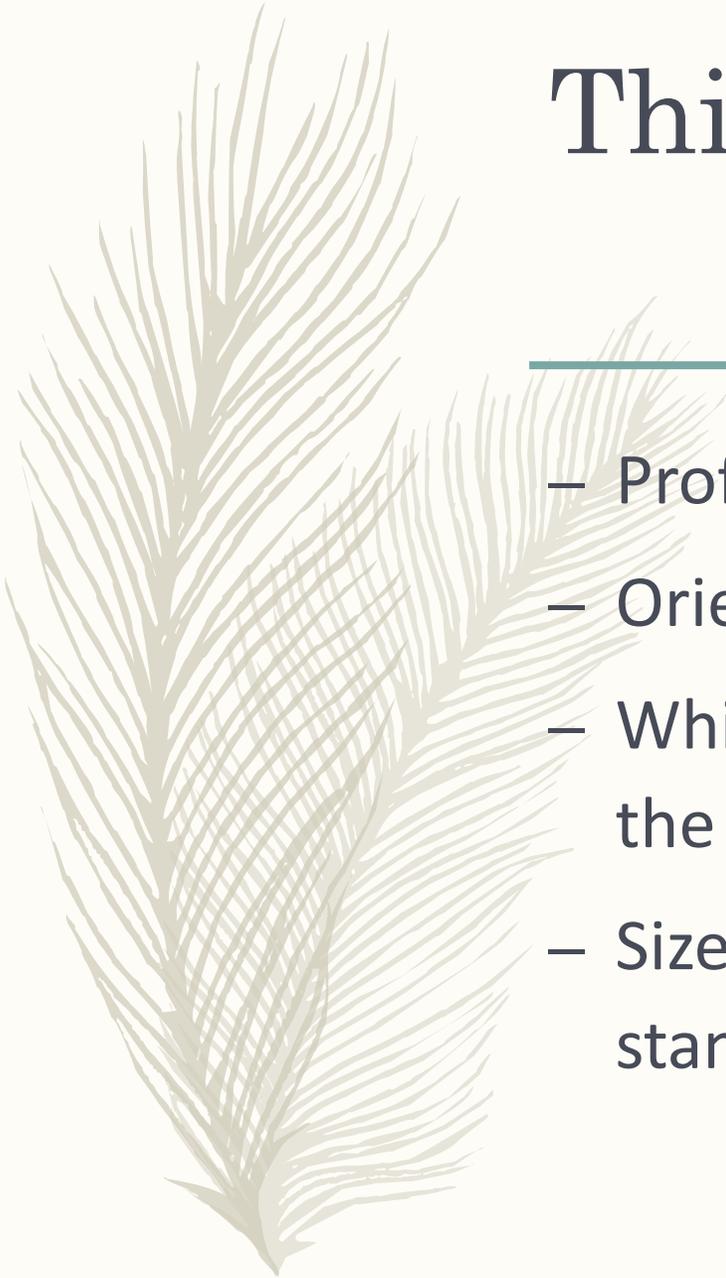


First steps

- Make the decision about **what** you want to document, and **why**
- **How** will you document? What form is best suited to this focus?
- What about design? Things to consider....
 - Layout
 - Font
 - Pathway for reader + accessibility
 - Voice of the child

Thinking about design....

- Professionalism over ‘pretty’ !!
- Orientation of print – how will the reader be following?
- White space – do not overcrowd; this makes it harder for the reader to make sense of the information
- Size and style of font – how far away will the reader be standing?



What might pedagogical documentation contain?

- Photographs of the process
- Text, which can include:
 - A description of what happened, including brief transcripts of any important conversation/words from the child (utterances and body language in the case of non-verbal children)
 - **Educator's thoughts about the meaning behind the child's actions (ie Reflection). Why is this event or play important?**
 - **Questions that arise for you as an educator; this invites others' perspectives – especially families' thoughts.**
 - Traces of the child's work, if applicable



Forms of Documentation to explore today:

- Ordinary Moments for quick, one-time events
- Learning Stories
- Panels, for longer term interests, projects, or developmental paths
- Log book, for daily updates
- Digital Documentation
- Immediate documentation for revisiting with children
- Curriculum Paths for Teachers
- **Raw Documentation**

Examples of documentation
from Nova Scotia early
learning settings

Ordinary moments...



It grows up there in a field...

When a plant seedling was placed next to the painting area, it provided a three-quarter view for the children.

As the painting developed, it was at first painting to see, then the seedling was represented, and we passed to look at the seedling from their perspective.

The children were painting the seedling as seen from the side... therefore only one vertical column of leaves was visible to them.

Other children represented the back of the seedling, including the curve of the stem.

Several children noticed the thickness of the stalk, and made a bold feature of this in their painting.

David's painting includes leaves on one side... he also has David's teacher give it a view.

After painting the stalk from including the curve and the curve below the stalk, then, he noticed he had no space left for the head of the flower. He said 'The stem is not long enough for that' also now that he mentioned the side of the plant shown in the flower, that.

David was frustrated with the thickness of the seedling stalk. This is represented in its curvature in the painting.

There seems that the stem was as well as to be at the height of the painting, but because the observation together with the small patch of white which represents the water in which the flower grew.





Earlier in the morning Kyrell had been intrigued with balancing four pumpkins on a shelf. Then, I noticed he had moved them to a corner and was concentrating hard on the same problem. It was not working – his theory of why this wasn't working was that they were 'slippery' and 'bumpy'.

After some time he tried balancing them against the side of the shelving unit. Still no success... however... there is a mirror on this side of the shelves ... and his focus changed....



He had lined them up and was counting them carefully – ‘one, two, three, four.’ Then I heard him counting to eight! Eight? How did he get to eight? As you can see he is counting the pumpkins in the mirror. He counted the pumpkins over four times – checking each time and smiling.



I asked him ‘How did the pumpkins get into the mirror?’



Kyrell had a theory – he backed up into mirror and then slipped
around behind the side of the shelving unit!

‘Like that.’

An interesting theory!



Later, Kyrell was explaining to two other children how he could count eight pumpkins.

They were having a very difficult time believing him and kept insisting there were only four!

His perseverance shows how certain he is in his information, and how he got there.

A sign of a deeply thinking human!

Levi invents a computer game



'After playing for several days with a non-working computer, pretending to type, L spontaneously created his own 'game' to play. He drew the graphic, placed it on the screen, and explained to others how to play his game. Several other children picked up on this idea, and for days created their own games'

What question(s) could we formulate about this event, to add to this documentation? What do you wonder about this kind of action by children in general? (This becomes a reflection to add to documentation)

Daily Log Books

Monday, March 12, 2007
AM



We are learning about the life cycle of an egg ... and chicks!



Linda's group read *The Rain Came Down*

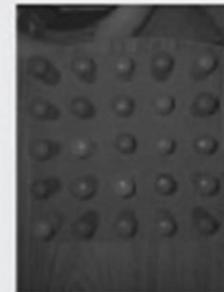
Jack brought our snack today - grapes, muffins, and milk - thank you!

Monday, Nov. 20
AM



In a few weeks the FALL will come to an end and winter will be here. We decided that our party float could have the theme "WELCOME, WINTER!" Now we will decide what it needs ... today we painted ... WHITE!

HAPPY
FRANKSGIVING
TO
EVERYONE!



PATTERNS
Peter's pattern ...
blue, orange, red

It works R to L,
too - If you start
at the bottom R

Notice To 'read' Peter's
pattern you have to
work top to bottom
and left to right
(just like reading!)



October 1st

When a new globe with 3-D effects was introduced to the children at morning meeting, it was an opportunity for them to think about yesterday's idea that the Earth is "bumpy" rather than smooth. It was hard to actually see the bumps (i.e. mountain ranges) even with a magnifying glass, but a gentle touch with fingers enabled the child to feel the raised areas.

What do you notice about the information in this text? What does it do?



Log books connecting one day to another, and revisiting with children over time

Panels

What do you notice is not here?

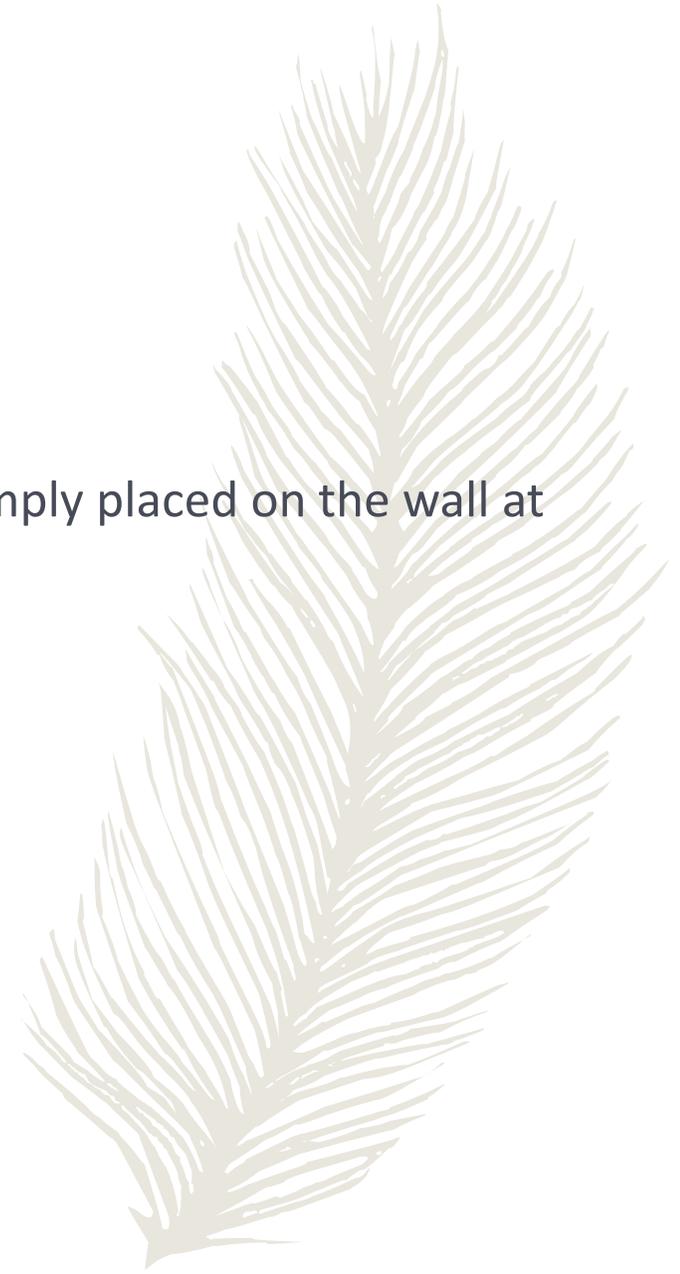




The importance of design: clarity, white space, and flow (courtesy of Aya Saito)



- A more informal arrangement, simply placed on the wall at the child's height.



Immediate Documentation for Reflection with Children







Revisiting

Revisiting



Documentation of long-term play or projects

Adding to documentation day by day....

The beginning ... mixing solids and liquids

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Teacher: What did we put in to make bubbles? What happened when we put more in? Do you see the layers?

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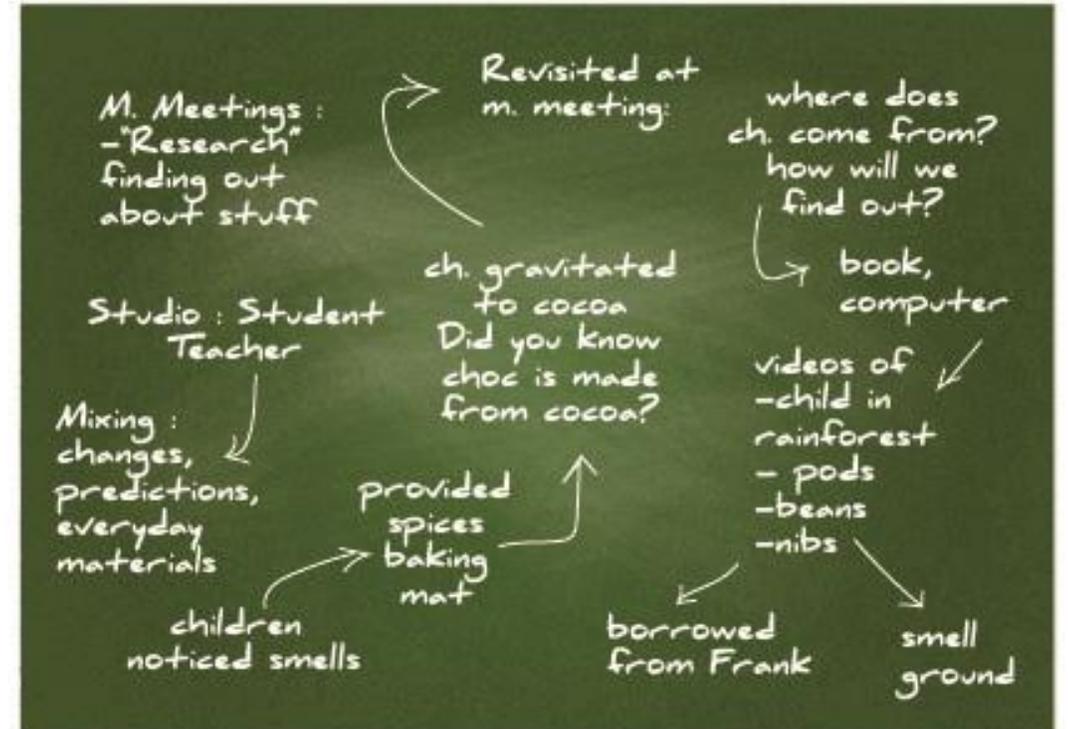


At morning meeting later in the week, the children were asked "Where does chocolate come from?" Only a few children had any ideas to offer.

'A chocolate factory'
'Astoria'
'A bakery'
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'From a tree'

...and so we asked where we could find out more ...

'We could ask Mr. Greenham. She has lots of books.'
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'We can ask grown-ups.'
'A dictionary.'



Learning Stories



Developed by Margaret Carr in New Zealand

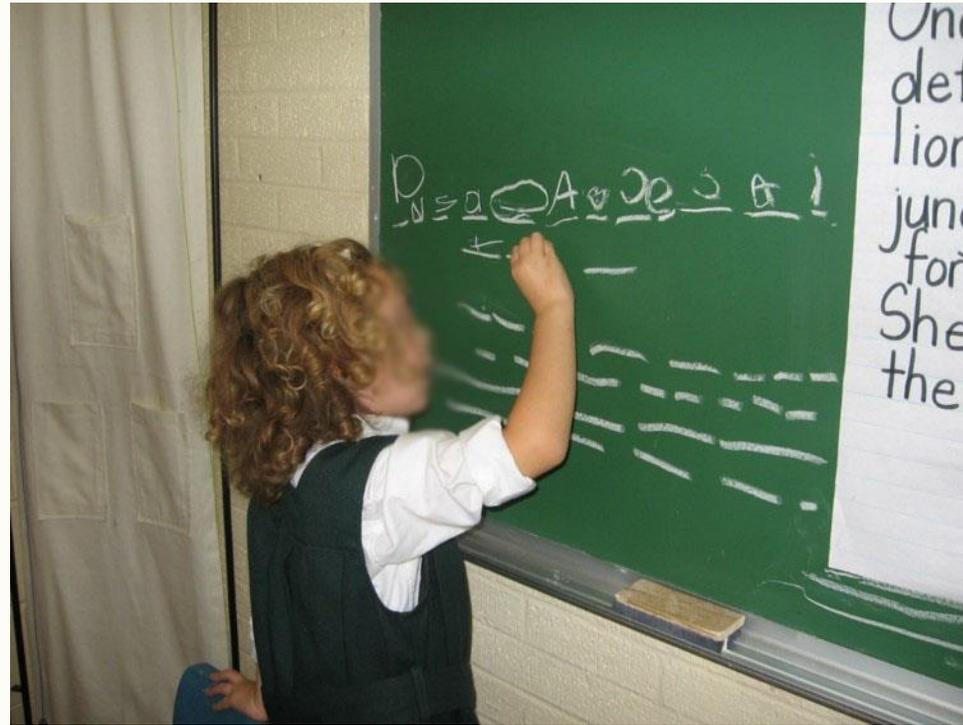
Speaks directly to the child

Invites the family to respond

An example:

Today, V, we watched as you played your version of a popular game that we play often in our classroom: Hangman.

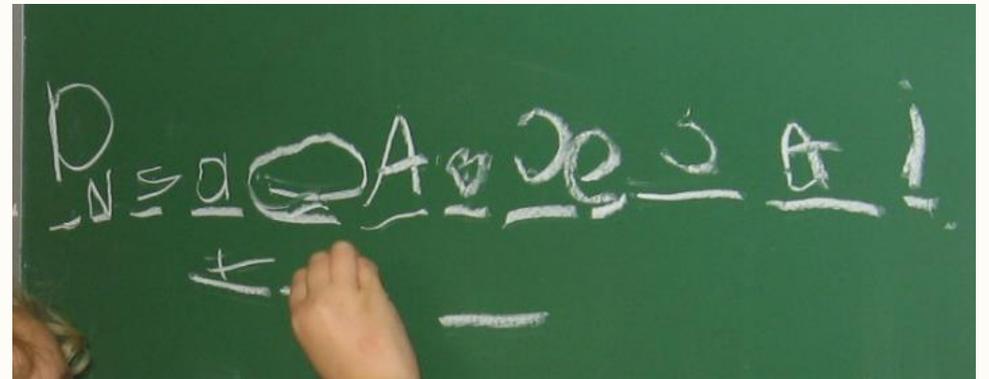
(In our classroom version, we call it Mystery Message. It's a very brief message - perhaps 3 words - with letters represented by dashes. Everyone guesses letters that might fill in the dashes, and try to solve the mystery of what the message says)



Cont'd....

- Look at all the things that you know!
 - That print goes from left to right, top to bottom
 - That sentences consist of words with spaces in between
 - That letters are symbols
 - That print sends a message

We loved how you gathered your friends to play this game; it was a tricky message and you realized they needed some clues!! You understood how this game works and what you needed to do as the leader of the game.....





What might be next?

- We wonder if you would like to do mystery messages at home for Mom and Dad? Would it be done in the same way in German?!!
- Could you do a message for us all at morning meeting?

The Family's Voice...

We were so excited to see this! You know that we worry about V's development in English. We see that she knows a lot....and she did some mystery messages for us at home, in German! We noticed that she used the same methods in both languages....dashes and spaces and symbols. We'll send them along to school so you can see!

Reflecting upon this learning story, what educator questions could we generate about V's actions?

- What kinds of classroom settings encourage this type of engagement with print?
- What do children first notice about print?
- Does printing occur naturally in the 'right' kind of environment?
- What other symbols do children use to express themselves? What other 'languages' of communication are available to them?
- **Educator's questions are a part of documentation and reflective practice!**

Digital documentation; toddlers in action

From Garden Gate Children's
Centre, Martha's Vineyard, using
PhotoShop.



Spinning offers children a sense of exuberance, of freedom. Spinning, getting dizzy, and regaining balance helps children orient themselves in space. The development of vestibular system results in balanced and coordinated movement. When the children were first asked about things that spin, their first response was, "Me! I spin!"

As children spent time engaged in these kinds of movement activities, they explored the concept of spinning with hair whorls bodies. What does everything look like when you are spinning? What do you hear? How does your body feel? These are questions will be exploring in the children's play.



Documentation of toddlers' theories



The children have spent a great deal of time investigating how our spinning objects work. Through engineering inquiry in the classroom and in the studio, the children have begun to develop their own ideas and theories about spinning.

- "It works. You spin it round!" - Jake
- "It's a track. I just put a car on it and then it spins!" - Dejana
- "Fast, so fast! Faster! Faster!" - Angus
- "My hand makes it go and my hand makes it stop." - Sitas

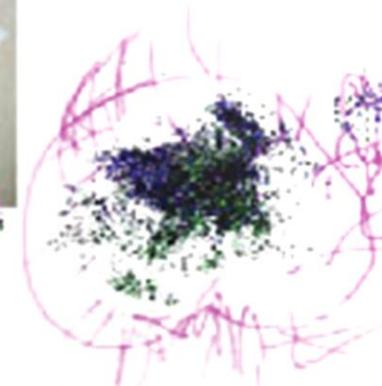
"It's a spinner. It spins (What makes it spin!) Maybe the stripes! Or maybe this part-a screw!" - Sienna

"There's a little tiny button." - Dejana "It is a button!" - Sitas



The children studied pictures and models and discussed how to represent a horse.

"I'm going to do a tail and a leg and a face and one of these - a saddle."
"I draw a tail. A big tail!"
"A head is right on the top."
"Tada! I made a horse!"



The language of documentation

- Must be clearly understood by the intended audience
- Must be grammatically correct
- Brief and to the point, but NOT captions!
- Pull out enough information to make learning and ideas visible.
- Describe why this event or series of events is important. What does it mean? Include your interpretation and your questions!

For instance.....for a parent



Cognitive development through hands-on exploration of manipulatives

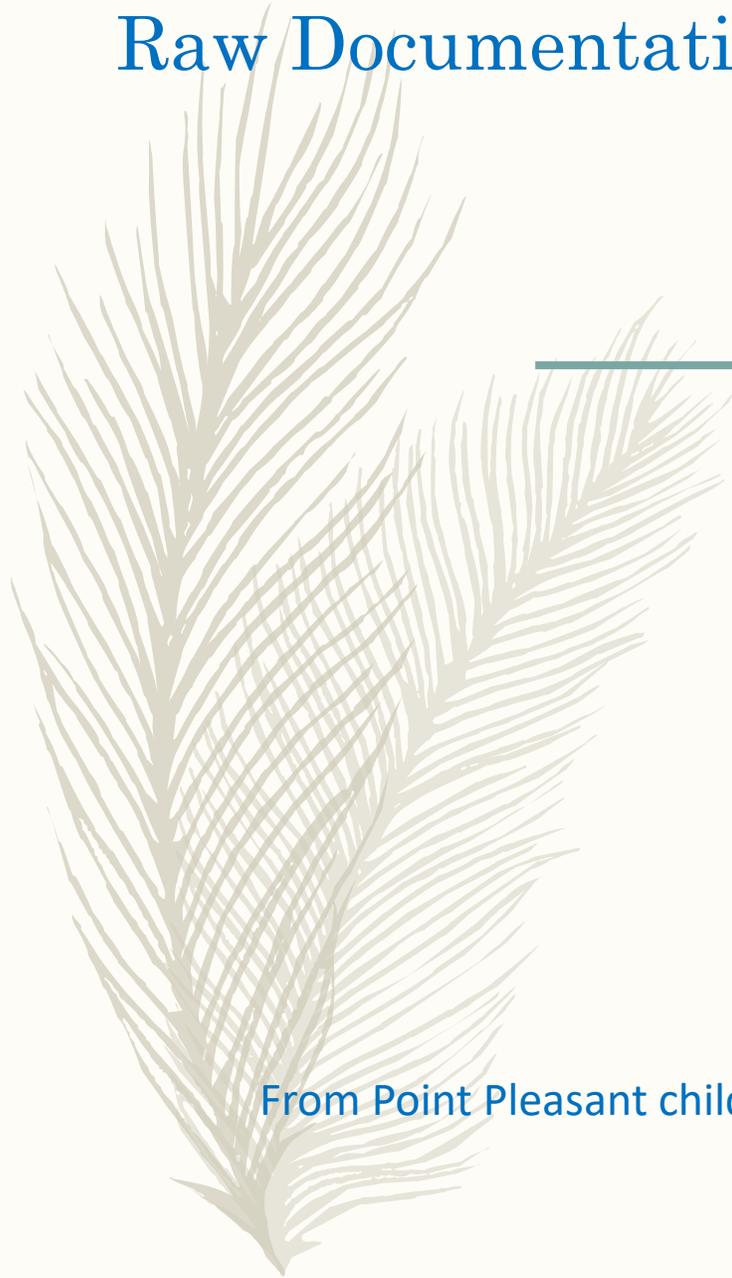
(not appropriate!)

Today, the children used Magna-tiles for the first time.

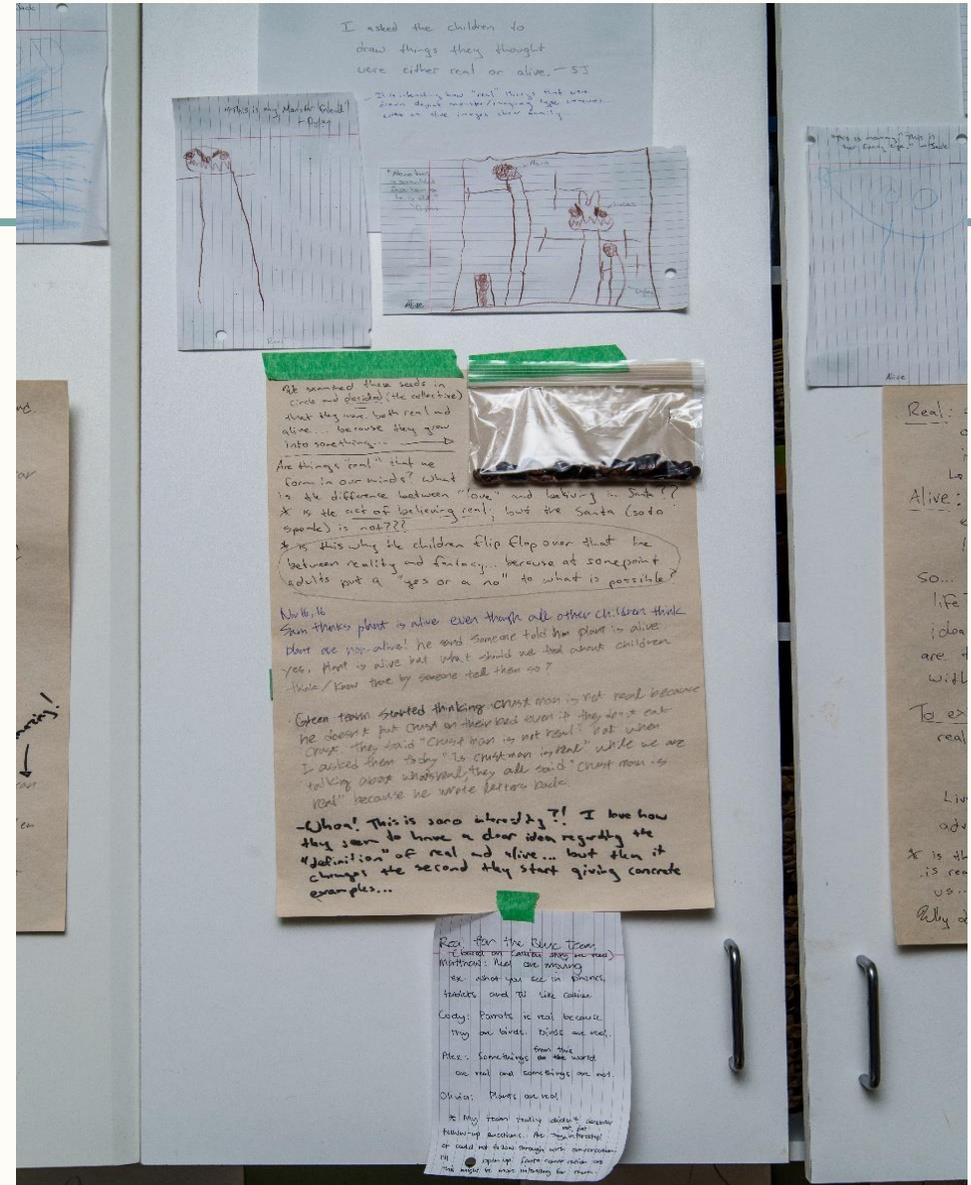
These tiles contain small magnets, which means that they can be easily formed into 3D shapes such as pyramids or cubes.

As the building became more complex, the children made connections between their previous knowledge of 2D shapes (e.g. squares) and the base of their 3D shape (e.g. pyramid)

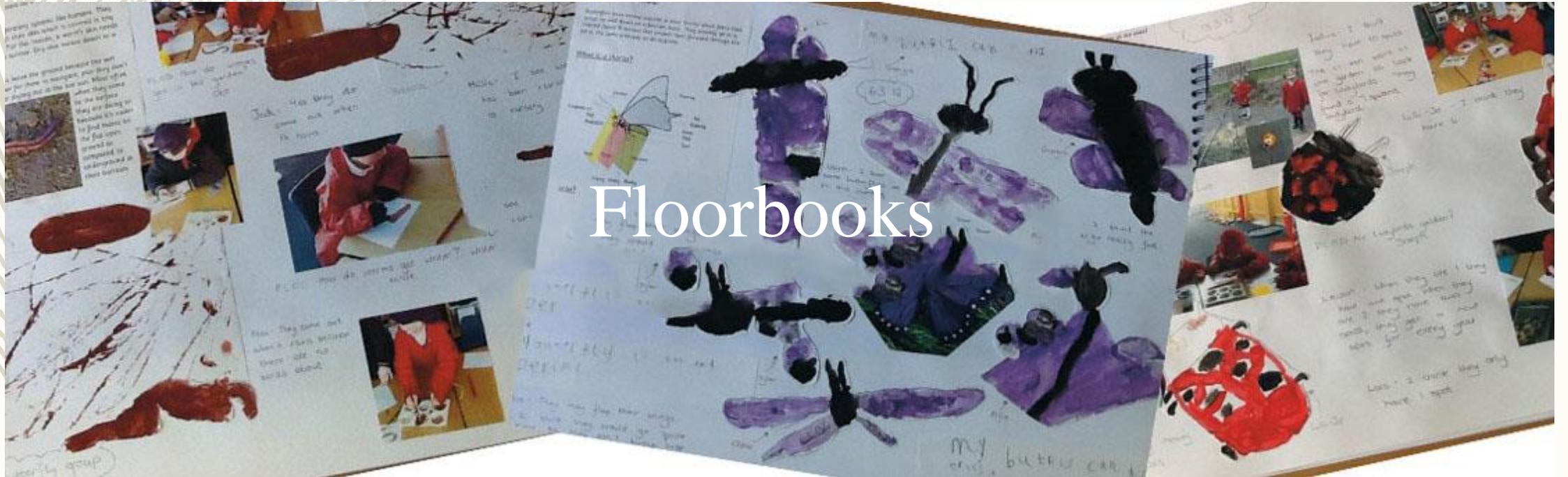
Raw Documentation, for ourselves



From Point Pleasant childcare centre, Halifax



...another form of raw documentation,
with and for children



Floorbooks



16th June - creating fairies and pixies



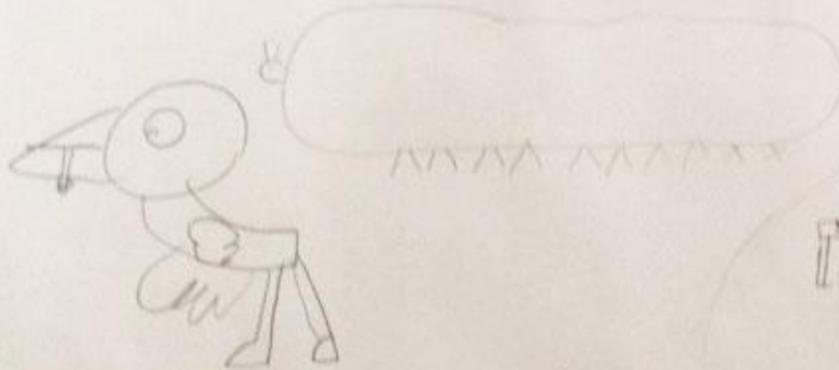
Fantastic contribution
to the floor book
Jacob and Jordan!

JACOB K

JACOB K



We saw a bunny near
our log circle



'Fun'
Jordan

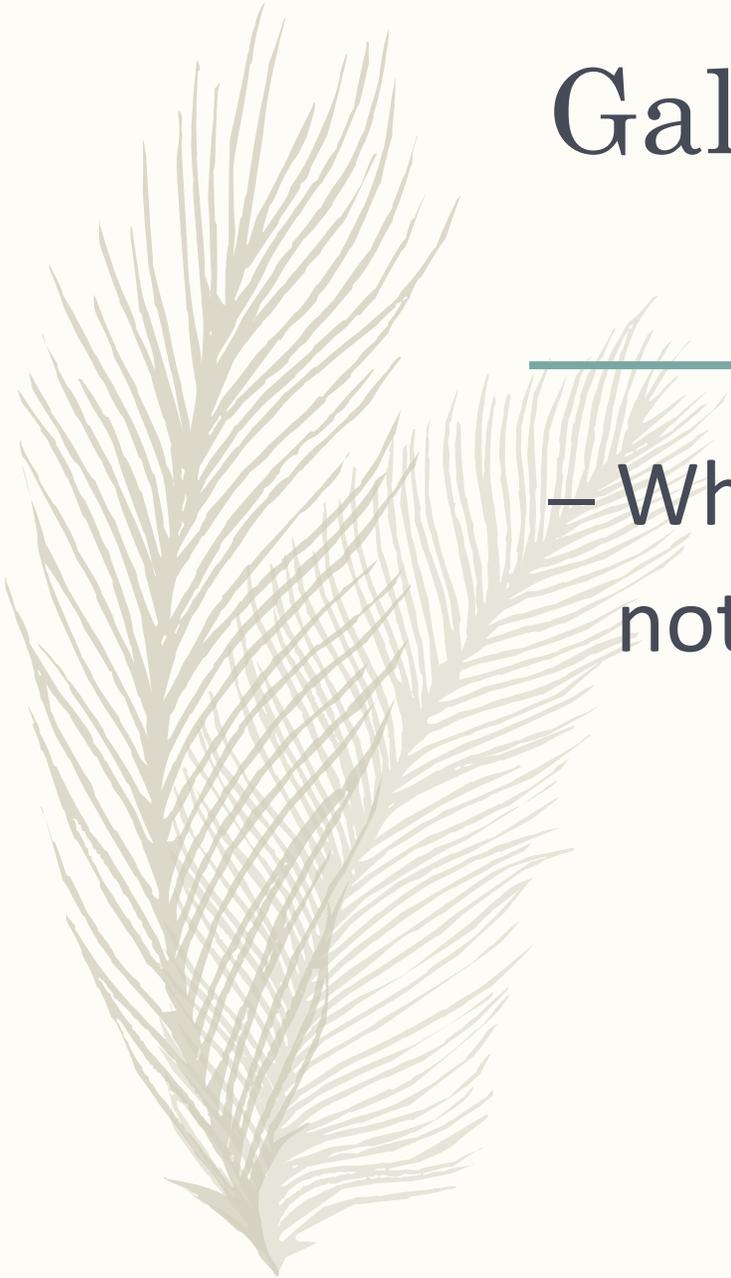


Let's try the whole process....

- Watch this short video clip **while writing little notes or sketches**
 - In groups of 3, reflect upon the video and get everyone's perspective. Refer to your notes. (10 mins)
 - Together, create a small piece of documentation on your 11 x 14 piece of paper. Write on post-its and/or cards, then paste down. Remember design points!
 - An intro (context)
 - The story of what happened (brief!!)
 - A small sketch in place of a photo
 - Your own thinking about this: why is it important?
 - What questions arise for you about what the children are doing? Include them!
 - 'mess about' with where to place pieces before committing

Gallery walk...

- What similarities and differences do you notice?





To summarize and inspire...

‘Pedagogical Documentation invites us to be curious and to wonder with others about the meaning of events to children. We become co-learners together; focusing on children’s expanding understanding of the world as we interpret that understanding with others’

Dr. Carol Anne Wien, 2013



Thoughts and
questions?
