


A photograph of a classroom wall displaying two rows of children's drawings. The drawings are mounted in white frames and show various depictions of faces and figures. The top row includes several simple faces, a drawing of a figure with a large head, a drawing of a figure with a large head and a small body, and a drawing of a figure with a large head and a small body. The bottom row includes several simple faces, a drawing of a figure with a large head, a drawing of a figure with a large head and a small body, and a drawing of a figure with a large head and a small body. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Pedagogical Documentation

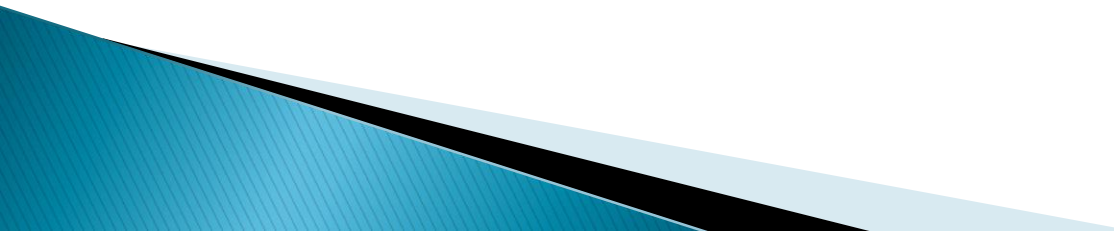
Susan Stacey

January 2015

# What is pedagogical documentation?

- ▶ Inspired by the practices of Reggio Emilia, Italy
  - ▶ In everyday life, we document in many ways...diaries, social media, keeping records
- BUT
- ▶ In early years education, pedagogical documentation refers to ‘making thinking and learning visible’ in many ways...using text, transcripts of children’s words (ideas, thoughts), photos of the process, and traces of children’s work.
  - ▶ We document in order to share, to understand, and to be understood.
- 

# What do we document?

- ▶ Interesting or puzzling events during play
  - ▶ Project – short or long term
  - ▶ The process of learning (series of small or large panels)
  - ▶ Small, significant moments
  - ▶ Developmental milestones
  - ▶ Our questions....what do we wonder?
- 

# Making children's thinking visible:





# 'Thinking in Action'

The water is leveled....using stones



Thinking....



There was also some confusion about the idea of 'level' and how different things that often drain away or sink down in water would behave. I had to make 'level' more concrete for the children.

In my first observation, they had placed very small stones and sticks to keep the different amounts of water from some level. One child had laid a stick across the top of the glasses. The other had 5 tiny stones. I didn't realize how important the children understood what it meant to 'level'. It was only because of their curiosity and desire to see the effect of leveling in water that I did this.

We set ourselves a challenge to see what, if measured with the only single container, and measuring, is it at the end of the experiment. It probably has to do with a single measuring vessel.

Labeling the containers



Making a record of guesses



'Messing about' provides clarification



Using little containers to check on quantities.... Aha!



# How do we use documentation in Inquiry-based practices?

▶ .....it depends!

▶ Possibly:

- ✓ Making learning visible
- ✓ Facilitating conversations with parents
- ✓ Revisiting with children; what do they think about their work or the event?
- ✓ Reflective process for teachers that informs our teaching; raises questions for us and provides next steps

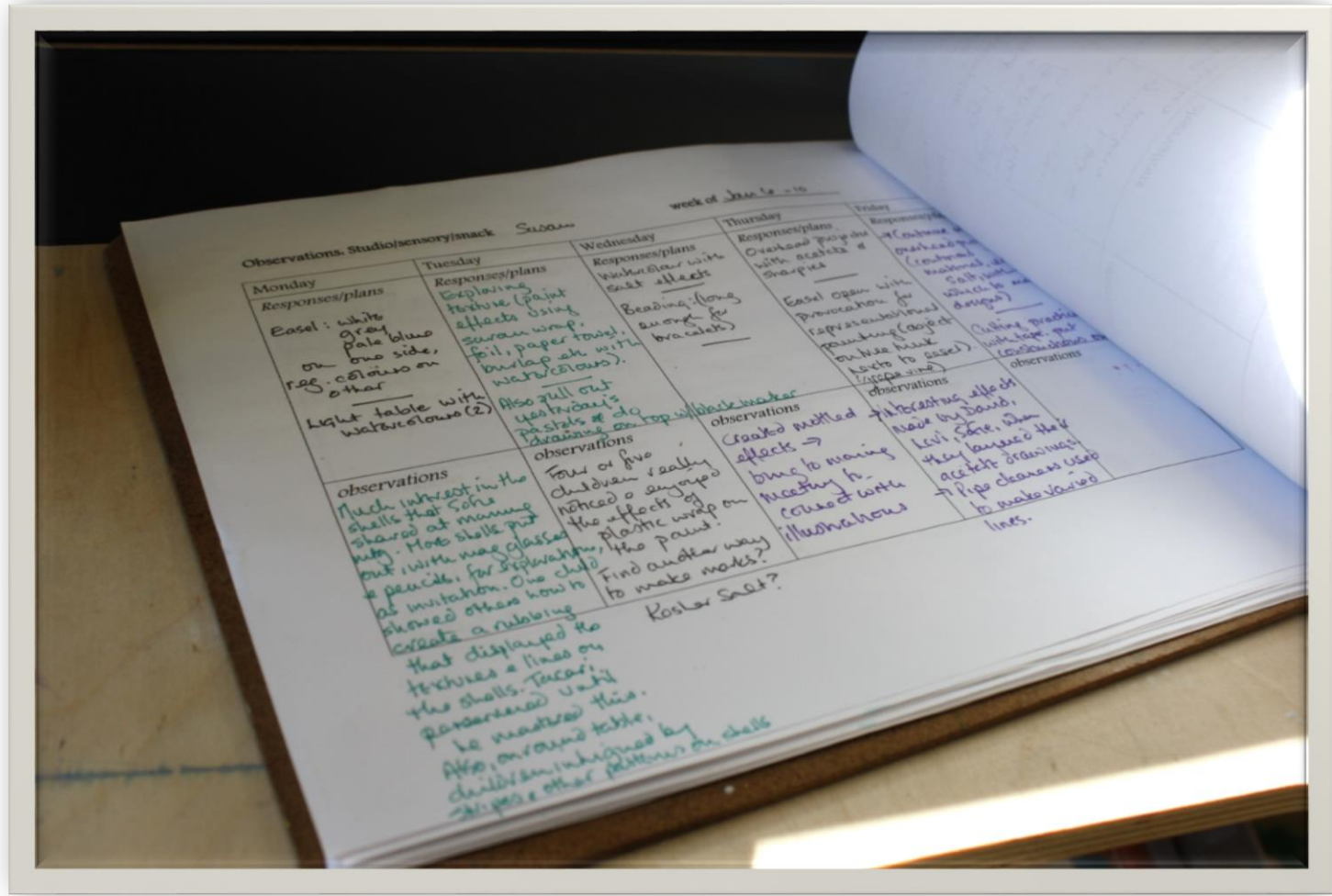


# Beginning with questions....

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



# Keeping track of our thoughts..





Nov 6 (Photos, artifacts)

"We were making chocolate"

"We were making powder"

(show crushed nibs)

"Is it powder yet?" (No).

"They walked 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  $\bar{c}$  something bigger

- a big stick

- a machine

"they warned it"

T: "What did he add, in the movie?"  
(unsure)

offered samples of cocoa pdr <sup>ground</sup> nibs

"Don't like any of them"

"One is yuck"

= What does it taste like?

It tastes yucky.  
What did the boy add?







# 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

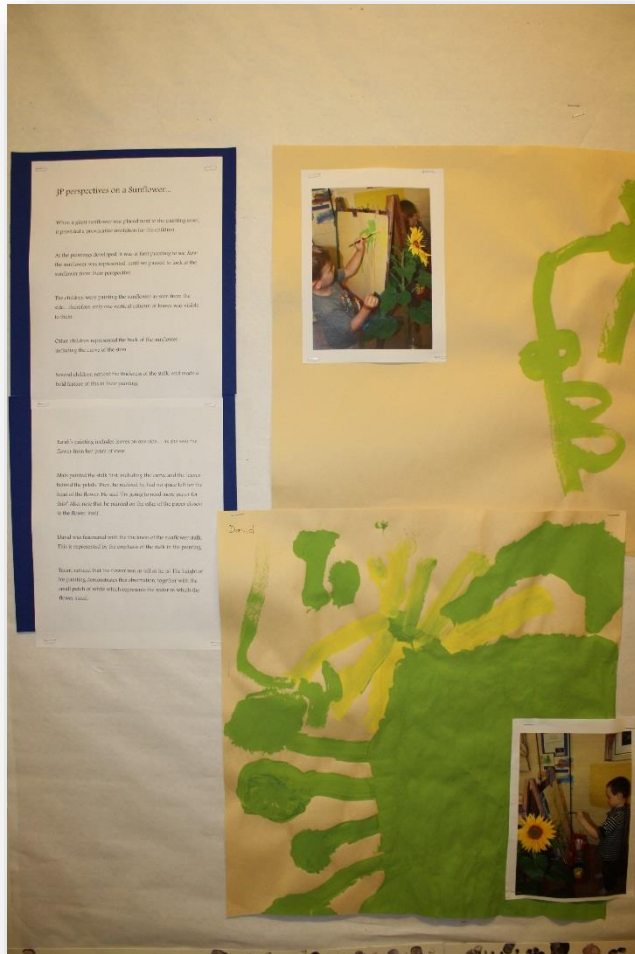


# Forms of Documentation

- ▶ Ordinary Moments for quick, one-time events
- ▶ Learning Stories (see Margaret Carr, N.Z.)
- ▶ Panels, for longer term interests, projects, or developmental paths
- ▶ Log book, for daily updates
- ▶ Digital Documentation
- ▶ Immediate (on the spot) documentation for revisiting with children
- ▶ Curriculum Paths for Teachers



# Ordinary Moments



# One child, three forms of print



- ▶ N plays with fit-together letters, and then goes to find a word puzzle. After piecing together the word 'cat' she makes this word again with the plastic letters. Then, she finds paper and pencil, and writes the word. One word, in three forms....a natural exploration of print.



# 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.





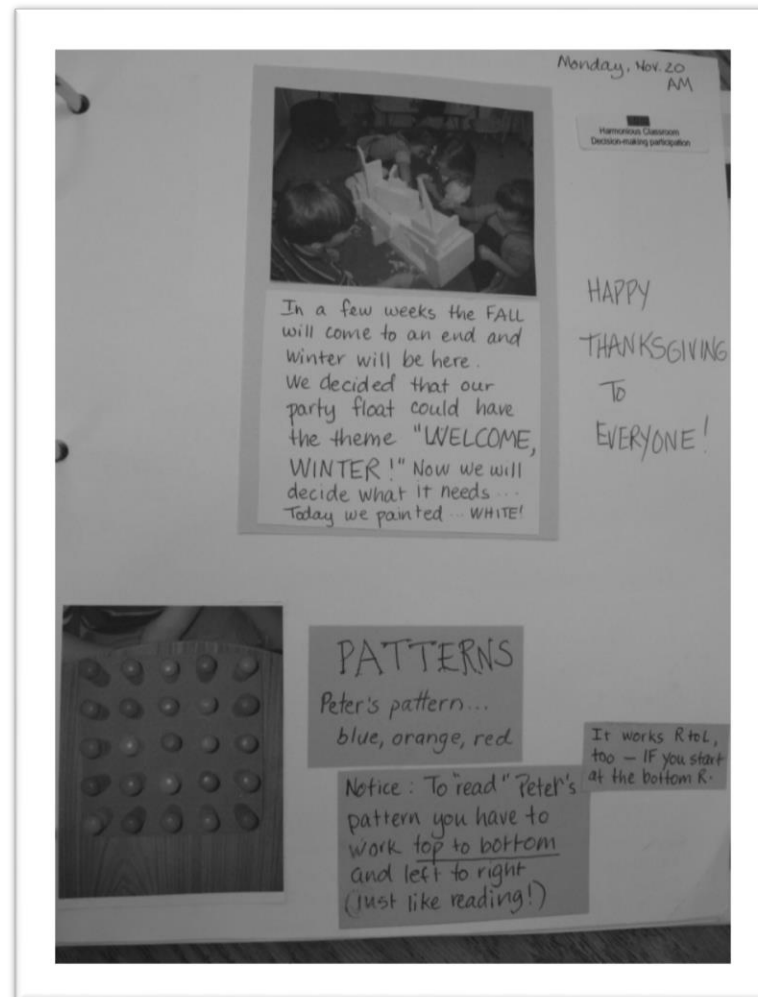
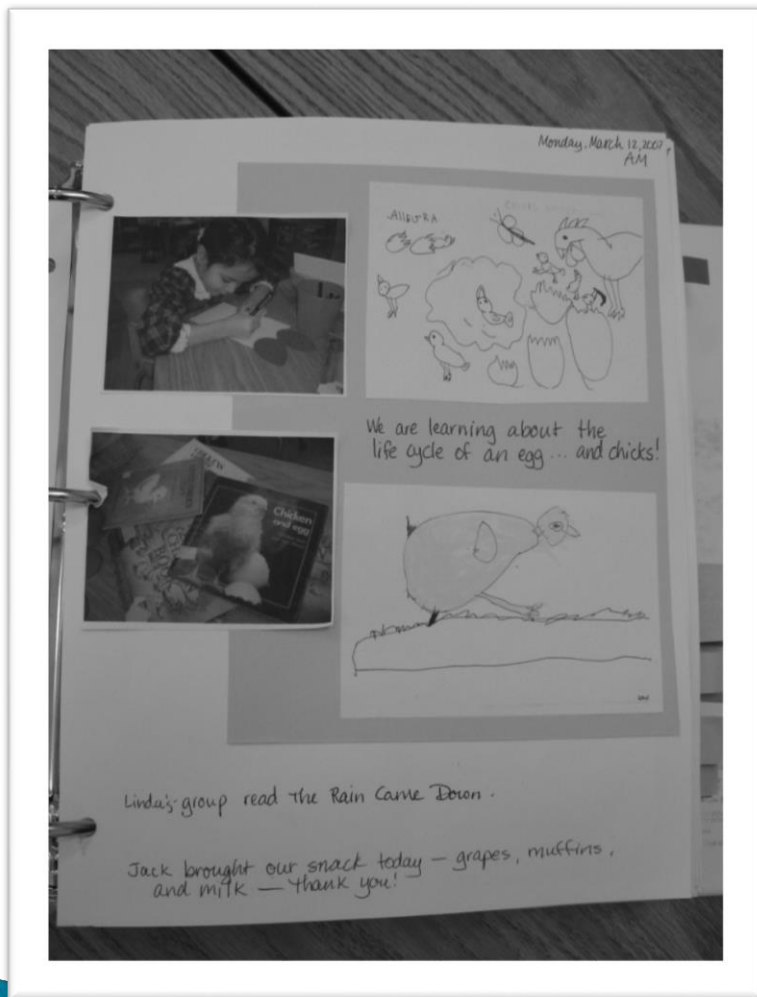


## The inspiration of lines

After exploring lines in the environment, and looking at artists' works, Noor often went to the easel and experimented with various lines and shapes. Here, she has used straight lines, geometric shapes, and zig zags, made with pencil, and then filled in with paint.



# Log Books







## October 1<sup>st</sup>

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 children to feel the raised areas.





# Panels

**An investigation of Holes...**

On a neighbourhood walk, children noticed a hole in a piece of bark. The bark was brought back to school for children to handle. Where, we wondered, did the hole come from?



While children were using playdough, they made holes in many ways, including using their fingers, and pins. This process was photographed, and was shown to the children at circle time.



The children were invited to use short lengths of string to make 'holes.' They used the string in various ways...



Making circles on the floor to represent holes

Making spaces with string, using their hands and feet

The teacher laid the string in a straight line, asking, 'can this be a hole?' The children knew that it wasn't a hole, and tried to define the nature of a hole in their own words. This was difficult for them to articulate. Most children associated a hole with a round shape.



At a later circle time, therefore, children were asked to find holes in the classroom. Their findings were photographed and later children have had time to look at and think about the further, we will again see 'what is a hole?'





Returning to the classroom, the children were asked 'Do you think it would help us to figure this out if we sent an email to some bigger kids?' This idea was received enthusiastically, since they felt that their older siblings in the school would have the answer. We decided to email the whole prep school. The children dictated the email and watched as the teacher typed. We pressed 'send' and waited...

Printed by: Susan Stacey  
 Title: question from Junior Primary - Halifax Grammar School  
 November 28, 2008 2:24:48 PM  
 Page: 1 of 1

From: Susan Stacey  
 Subject: question from Junior Primary  
 To: Prep Teachers 08-09

Hello everyone  
 the junior primary children are trying to figure out how email works. They would like the big kids to send them ideas about how it works (they are dictating this message!). We will check here every day to see if we got any email. We think they will thank you for your help.  
 Ms Stacey and the Junior Primary children.

## The 'Big Kids' respond....

Printed by: Susan Stacey  
 Title: answers to JK's question - Halifax Grammar School  
 November 27, 2008 2:21:30 PM  
 Page: 1 of 1

From: Ruth Callupe  
 Subject: answers to JK's question  
 To: Susan Stacey

Matthew Sutton says, "There is a big hole under the ground that goes to all of the classrooms and when the message gets there, from the computer that sent it, the message stays there until someone clicks on the e-mail thing."

Abby says, "The messages go into a big tube that goes up to the classroom and that is how I think it gets there."

Ethan says, "There is a special sensor in the computer that sends the message through a little hole in the wall that goes in pipes and then it tells the message on the computer in another class."

Evan says "You type what you want to tell the person that you are sending the message to..."  
 "I think something like the wind, you know something like that, carries the message."

Kai says, "It starts at the computer in our classroom and it goes through a little plug and it travels through the plug to the JK room."

Seren says, "Messages get there because it has a connection."

Ana says, "The messages go through the computer cords and travel through the building until the cords connect to their computer."

Printed by: Susan Stacey  
 Title: Re: email explanation... - Halifax Grammar School  
 November 28, 2008 2:27:09 PM  
 Page: 1 of 1

From: Eleanor Mangusso  
 Subject: Re: email explanation...  
 To: Susan Stacey

Okay...I asked a few of my P3 friends and here are three email explanations:

- 1.) Wires connect to all the computers. When you press the send button it goes to whoever's name you type in.
- 2.) Electricity sends it to the computer. It goes through the cable because of the power.
- 3.) Electronic signals are sent by going through a special magnet that is in all computers. These magnets send the message to your computer. This also works on blackberries.

Hopefully, the JP's won't be completely confused after these explanations.

Yours in learning,

Ely

email

### Next steps in exploring email

After receiving varied ideas from the 'big kids' about how email works, the whole group meets to listen to these and consider them. Most agree that 'Carson was right' and that email travels through wires. Others are still convinced that after it's printed out, someone delivers it.

Next time we meet in a small group, I ask 'what are your ideas about how it goes from our computer to someone else's computer?' They are puzzled by this, and we wonder how we could find out. They offer information about computer wires coming from the back of the computer, so we go to our classroom computer to take a look. In particular, they notice the blue wire, and the conduit that runs up our wall and into the ceiling. We leave the classroom and try to find it, but the ceiling hides the wires. Walking down the hallway (toward P1 where the emails came from) we do not see wires again until we come to the prep teachers' office. There, up on the wall, is a box with MANY blue wires going into it, and flashing lights. This seems to prove to the children that they were right about that blue wire in our classroom. Excited, Phillip says 'That's where all the wires take the emails to all the classrooms.'



We proceed down to P1 and they invite us inside. Looking at Ms. Callupe's desk, they find her computer, and look behind it and also on the floor. They see many wires, but none are blue. However, they do notice a blue wire on the way out of the classroom.





# Immediate Documentation for Reflection with Children



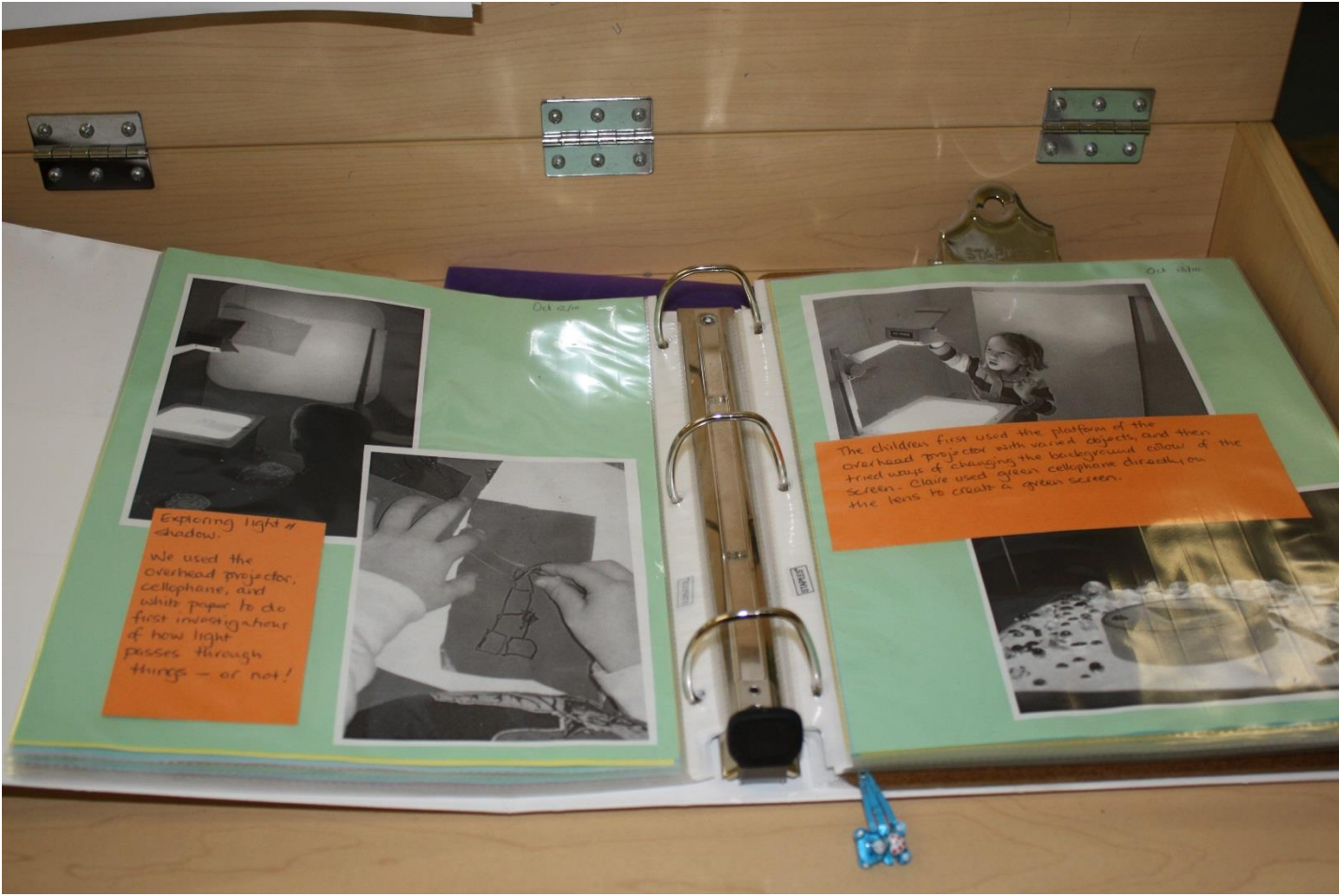




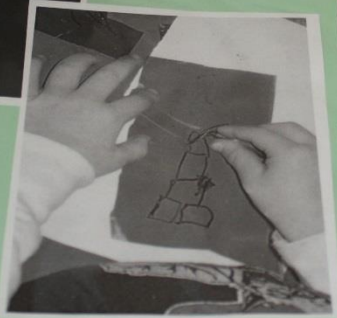


# Portfolios; not only for assessment





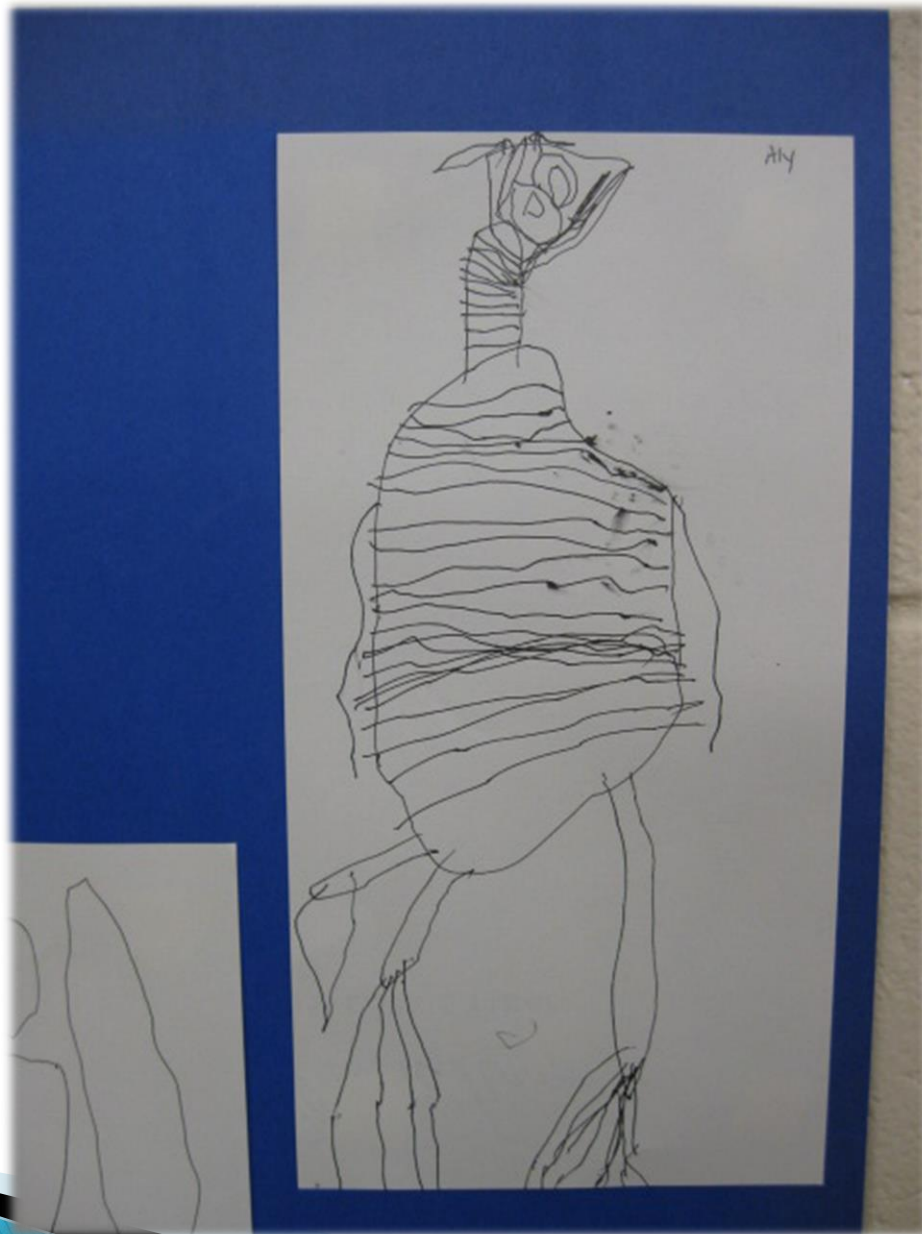
Exploring light & shadow.  
We used the overhead projector, cellophane, and white paper to do first investigations of how light passes through things - or not!



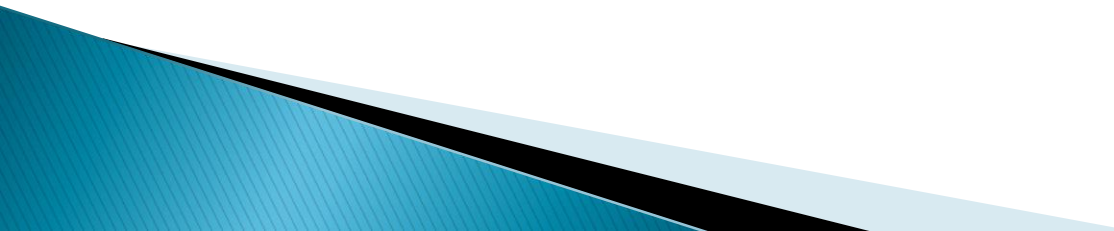
The children first used the platform of the overhead projector with varied objects, and then tried ways of changing the background colour of the screen. Claire used green cellophane directed on the lens to create a green screen.







# Learning Stories

- ▶ Written *for and to the child and his/her family*
  - ▶ Describes what was seen, 'with the heart'
  - ▶ Makes meaning of the event
  - ▶ Invites parent comments
- 

# A Learning Story Example



- ▶ Today, when building a chute for the chocolate factory from loose parts, you came up against a big challenge! When the cocoa beans ran down the chute and into the blue container, they bounced right out again and all over the floor! But you didn't give up....







- ▶ You and your friend looked all around and found a piece of netting – you had an idea! You put the net over the opening to the chute to catch the beans as they bounced



- ▶ ....and then you tested your solution. It worked! The beans stayed inside the container. You and your friend danced around, so happy that you solved the problem.

## Note to child:

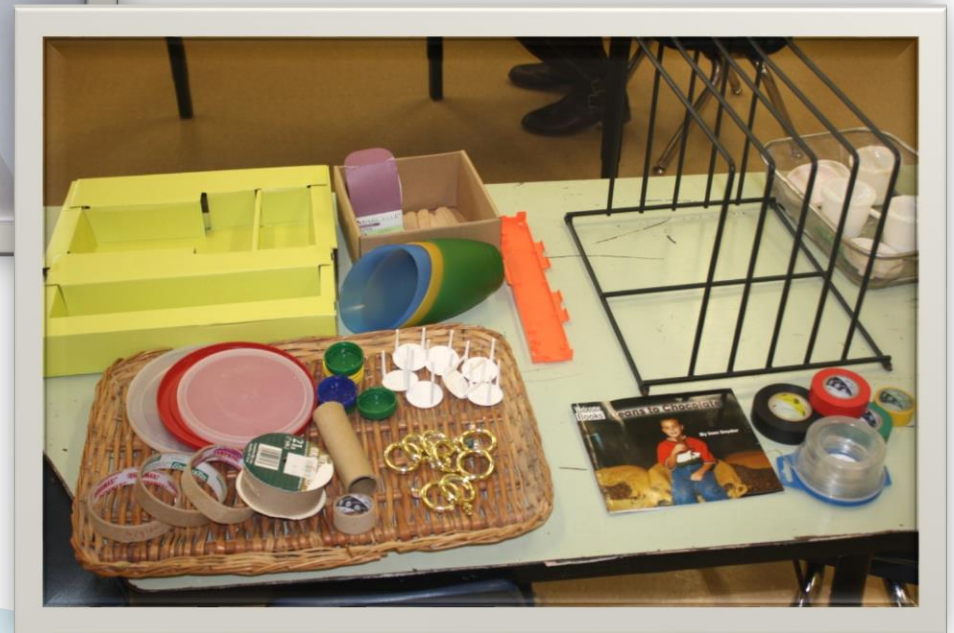
- ▶ Dimitra, you were such a scientist today. You built a factory, came up against a problem, and solved the problem. You worked together with your friend, and you both listened to each others' ideas. You worked for over an hour by yourselves – and you did it!

## ▶ What it means:

- ▶ Dimitra has staying power; she does not give up easily. As well, she is able to collaborate when solving a problem
- ▶ She is able to use materials creatively, using whatever is at hand, and through trial and error, figuring out what works
- ▶ Dimitra and her friend constructed lots of scientific knowledge today, about cause and effect, ramps, and speed.



# From observation to curriculum: documentation of long-term projects







A conversation about our progress (while revisiting photos of their work):

'We were making chocolate powder'

Teacher: *Is it powder yet? (no). They worked hard, it's still not powder; what do we have to do?*

'Crunch it with a big stick'

'Crunch it with something bigger....'

'A machine!'

Teacher: *What did he do in the video?*

'They warmed it'

Samples of crushed nibs were offered:

'I don't like any of them!'

'One is yuck'

'It tastes yucky!'

Teacher: *What do we need to add? What did the boy add?*

'Sugar, cinnamon'



#### Further development of 'The Chocolate Factory'

Although the children had used baskets on pulleys, pestles and mortars, and dramatic play materials to pretend to produce chocolate, we now moved mixing real materials into the dramatic play area.

The children added cinnamon and sugar to their crushed nibs, and then ground them further using an electric grinder:

'It spins!'

'It's a grinder'

'It makes it into powder!'





**The beginning... mixing solids and liquids**

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

The children and teachers 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 favourite item was cocoa powder. Our class teacher, Ms Terry, mentioned that chocolate is made from cocoa.

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

- X chocolate factory
- X store
- X bakery
- On the ground
- From a tree

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

*We could ask Mr. Graham, the Do the computer*

*We can ask grown-ups*

X dictionary

M Meetings:

Research = finding out about stuff

Revisited at m. meeting: "Where does ch. come from?"

"How will we find out?" → book comp

ch. gravitated to cocoa

"Did you know choc IS made from cocoa?"

Video of child in rainforest

- pods
- beans
- nibs

borrowed from Frank

Smell group




studio: Student Teacher

Mixing: changes? predictions

veryday materials

children noticed Smells

provided spices, baking mat.

# Digital documentation

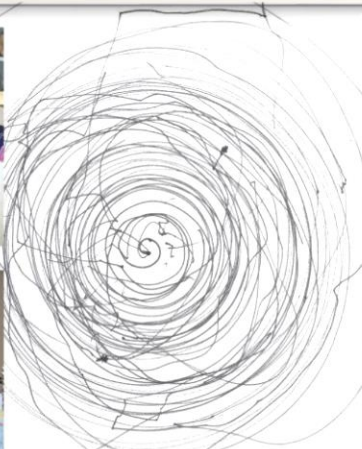


Spinning offers children a sense of exuberance, of freedom. Spinning, getting dizzy, and regaining balance helps children orient themselves in space. The development of the vestibular system results in balanced and coordinated movement. When the children were first asked about things that spin, their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

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







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

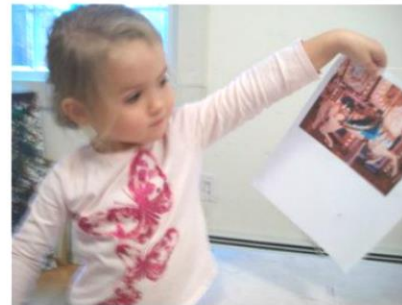
*"It's a track. I just put a car on it and then it spins."* -Dejana

*"Fast, so fast! Faster! Faster!"* -Angus

*"My hand makes it go and my hand makes it stop."* -Silas

*"It's a spinner. It spins. [What makes it spin?] Maybe the stripes? Oh! Maybe this part—a screw!"* -Sienna

*"There's a little tiny button."* -Dejana *"It is a button."* -Silas



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!"*





# A word of caution...

- ▶ Since it is fast...digital documentation can sometimes be less reflective; remember that the intent of the documentation remains the same!
- ▶ Confidentiality issues – who will have access?


# The importance of photography







# 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 visible.
  - ▶ Describe why this event or series of events is important. What does it mean? Include your interpretation and your questions!
- 

# For instance.....



‘Cognitive development is encouraged through hands-on exploration of manipulatives’

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)

# Thinking about design

- ▶ The reader must be able to see how to read the documentation....think about flow, accessibility, white space, and the ratio of text to visuals



# A designer explains...



# Remember...

- ▶ Avoid 'decoration' and instead think about *creating understanding* for the reader
- ▶ Who is the reader? Could be children themselves, colleagues, parents, public
- ▶ The audience will dictate the language and presentation of the material

### In the Studio:

Using very small paper, fine-tipped pens, and watercolours, the children drew and then painted their memories, and dictated the words about their memories to a teacher. These were then typed and taken back to the children for review, which prompted even more memories.



We wonder what their earliest memories are....one or two children told us that they 'remember being a baby' and in further conversations, we discovered that they have baby books which tell them the story of that time. Do you have a baby photo of your child that you would entrust to us, perhaps after March Break? These could be shared at morning meetings, and we anticipate that the photos would produce lots of conversations and more memories....

Reminders:



# Final thoughts...

A quote from “Pedagogical Documentation” (coming in March from Redleaf):

- ▶ “Documentation is about bringing families and other interested readers into the complex circle of thinking that is teaching.”
- ▶ Documentation is also *about and for the children*; it honours and scaffolds the thinking and learning of both children and teachers...we all learn from it.

# Contact and book information:

- ▶ *Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings*
- ▶ *Unscripted: Emergent Curriculum in Action*
- ▶ *Pedagogical Documentation: Making children's learning and teachers' thinking visible.*
- ▶ *All books available through Redleaf Press, Amazon, or in Canada through Monarch books)*
- ▶ [www.suestacey.ca](http://www.suestacey.ca) (web page, blog, email contact & upcoming events)