

# Who Leads the Learning?

## Sharing Playful Learning Stories

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Argyll and Bute Early Years Conference

Kirsten Thomson

Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA)



kirsten\_thomson@hotmail.co.uk



@kirstenthomson9



# Scottish Educational Research Association Early Years (SEERA)



43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference

Wednesday 21st November – Friday 23rd  
November 2018

Critical understanding of education systems:  
what matters internationally?

School of Education, University of Glasgow

# My Journey

- Dunoon born and bred...
- Principal Teacher of Early Level and Secretary for SERA - Early Years
- Range of councils, MEd EYP, Froebellain certificate, keen to further my knowledge...
- Pedagogies of Educational Transition (POET)
- Expeditions: New Zealand (2016), Iceland (2017), Reggio Emilia (2017)

# Society's View on Children and Childhood

- "Children should be seen and not heard."
- The importance of the Early Years
- "Powerful thinkers who are active citizens and experts on their own lives" (Clark and Moss, 2001).
- UNCRC (1989) - enforced in Scottish law through the Children and Young People Bill (2012)
- Getting it Right for Every Child (2008)
- The Early Years Framework (2008) provides a social policy framework for the development of policy and practice to ensure optimum opportunities for children to be at the centre of their learning.
- HGIOELC (2016) - "Children Leading Learning"

# Educational Theorists Supporting Children Leading Learning

- Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) – Self activity of the child
- Jerome Bruner's (1915-2016) Spiral Curriculum – the importance of adults scaffolding learning
- Tina Bruce (2015) reminds us that children and adults should learn from each other, children should not be seen as in need of instruction from an all-knowing adult.
- Julie Fisher (2016) – Interacting or Interfering
- Claire Warden (Mind Stretchers) – Pedagogical Dance

# Dispositional Curriculum = Educator Autonomy and Child-Centred Experiences?

Curriculum for Excellence vs Te Whariki – dispositional curricula

- 4 Capacities
  - Confident Individual, Successful Learner, Effective Contributor, Responsible Citizen
- Principles
  - Well-being, Holistic Development, Empowerment, Belonging
  - 1996 vs 2016: Reduction of Learning Outcomes from 118-20

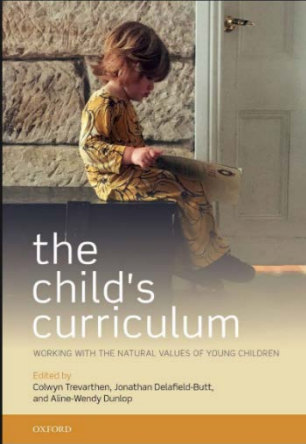
New Zealand Teacher's view on the new Te Whariki:

"I was sceptical at first but quickly realised the reduction meant we weren't doubling up or finding ways to fit things into boxes. The new document allows for growth, for deeper thinking and for the Kaiako (teacher) voice to shine through. The Education Review Office (ERO) are wanting us to look at children's learning on a much deeper level so instead of having 118 outcomes to 'choose' from and compartmentalize children's learning and assessment, we have 20 that are open to interpretation and empower our Kaiako to think for themselves"

# Children's 'working theories' as curriculum outcomes

Peters, Davis and McKenzie (2018) consider pedagogical approaches that are **attuned and sensitive to the child**, where adults prioritize particular ways of being and interacting with children to achieve **intersubjectivity and the mutual understanding** necessary for the **co-construction of learning and the development of 'working theories'**.

- Working theories and learning dispositions can be thought of as two sides of the same coin, both being about the **what and the how of learning**, and they are relevant to learning in the early years and beyond. The adoption of a pedagogical approach that included trying to recognize unspoken theories had the potential to shift the ways the youngest members of learning communities are seen and understood as learners. **More attention and respect were offered to what the youngest children might be engaged with, and thinking about.**
- Overall, it was clear that the child's curriculum was much more complex than adults might perhaps plan for young children. In fact, the **depth of children's ideas and designs often pushed the adults' thinking or challenged the adults to keep up.**
- Three key points emerged that are relevant to both teachers and parents:
  - **To learn to listen carefully to the ways young children think, and can think, about the world around them**
  - **To intentionally form a repertoire of strategies that help, rather than hinder, the development of thinking**
  - **To create authentic learning opportunities for young children that are highly motivating and interest-focused which build on existing interests and expertise and which grow new ones.**



# The Role of the Adult

“Children have a natural disposition to wonder, to be curious, to pose questions, to experiment, to suggest, to invent and to explain. Staff have an essential role in extending and developing this...it is often the **skilled involvement** of staff that ensures that learning is taken further.”

BtC2, p13

“All children and young people should experience personalisation and choice within their curriculum, including identifying and planning for opportunities for personal achievement in a range of different contexts. This implies **taking an interest in learners as individuals, with their own talents and interests.**”

BtC3, p19

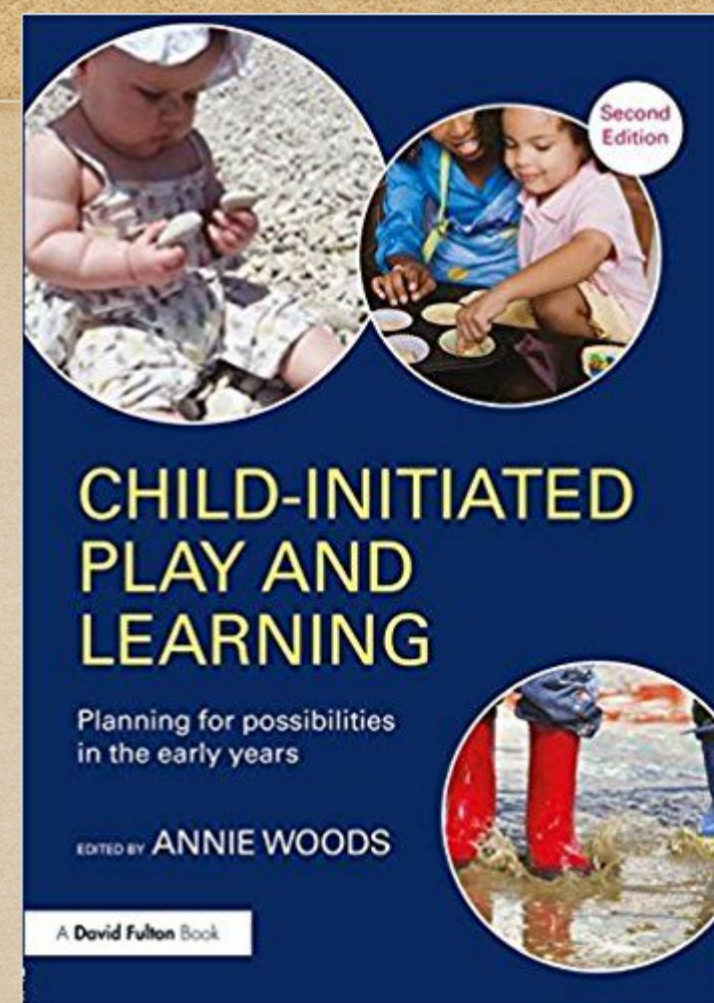


# Theory into Practice

- Principal Teacher - Early Level
  - 95 / 95 Family Centre - 80 x 3-5 years and 15 x 2 years
  - 10 CDOs, 1 DHoC, 1 EYT, 2 Primary One Teachers
- The shift to Narrative Assessment
- The shift from planning for outcomes to planning for endless possibilities
- Practice should take a detour through theory (Henry Giroux)

# Child-Centred Approach

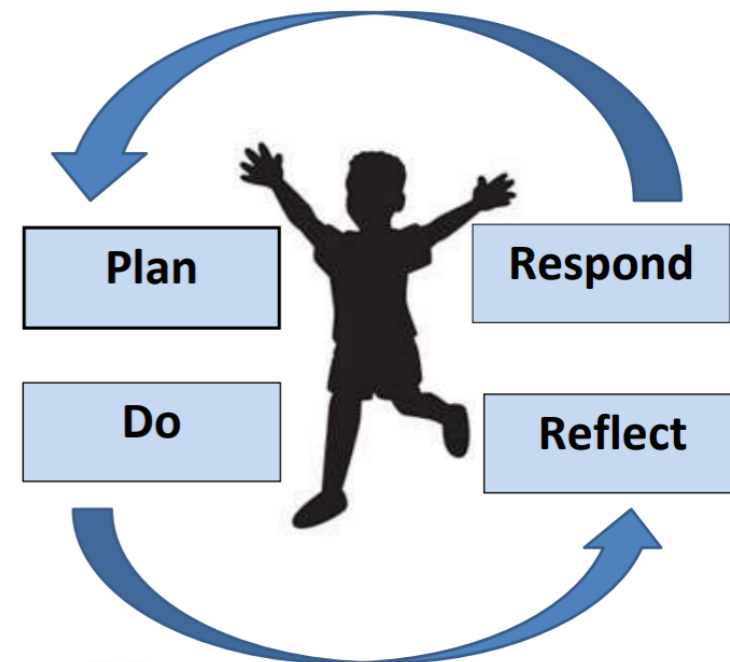
- Planning for possibilities rather than outcomes switches the dynamics of planning and assessment.
- The practitioner's role is to facilitate learning (to follow rather than lead). The control and responsibility more balanced in its distribution, thus resting more with the child.
- Planning for endless possibilities removes limits on learning. As learning is rooted in real-world, hands-on, experiential learning: planning and preparing for the possible paths, directions, interests and activities that could arise without narrowing, or indeed forcing, these possibilities.



# Child-Centred Approach

- Child at the Centre
- Taking time to observe children at play
- Everything you do should be driven by children
- View children as capable and active learners
- Empower children

## Leading Planning in the Early Years



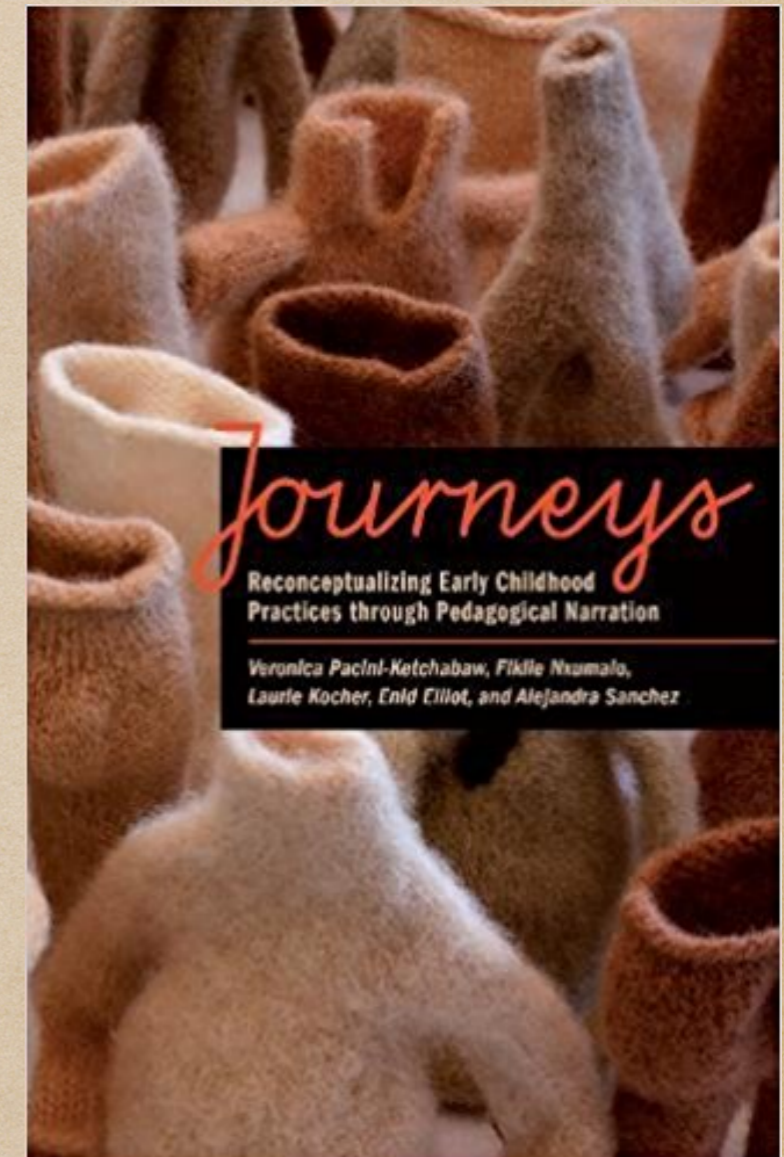
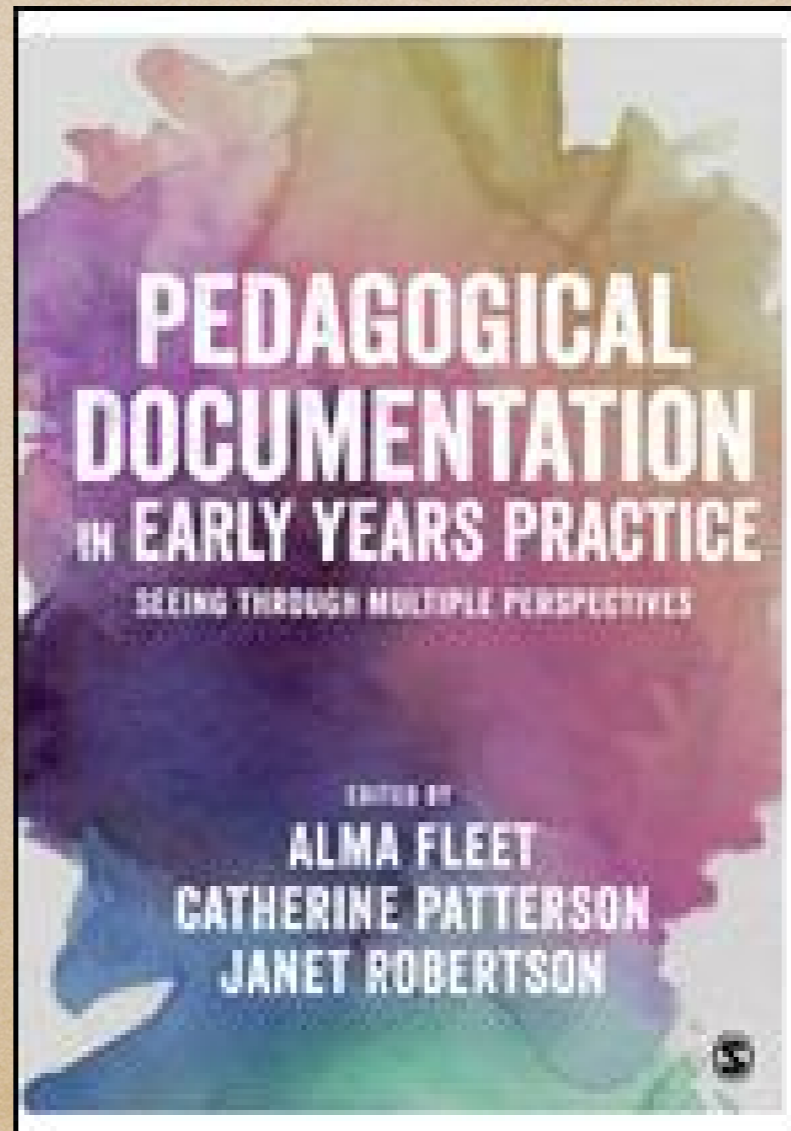
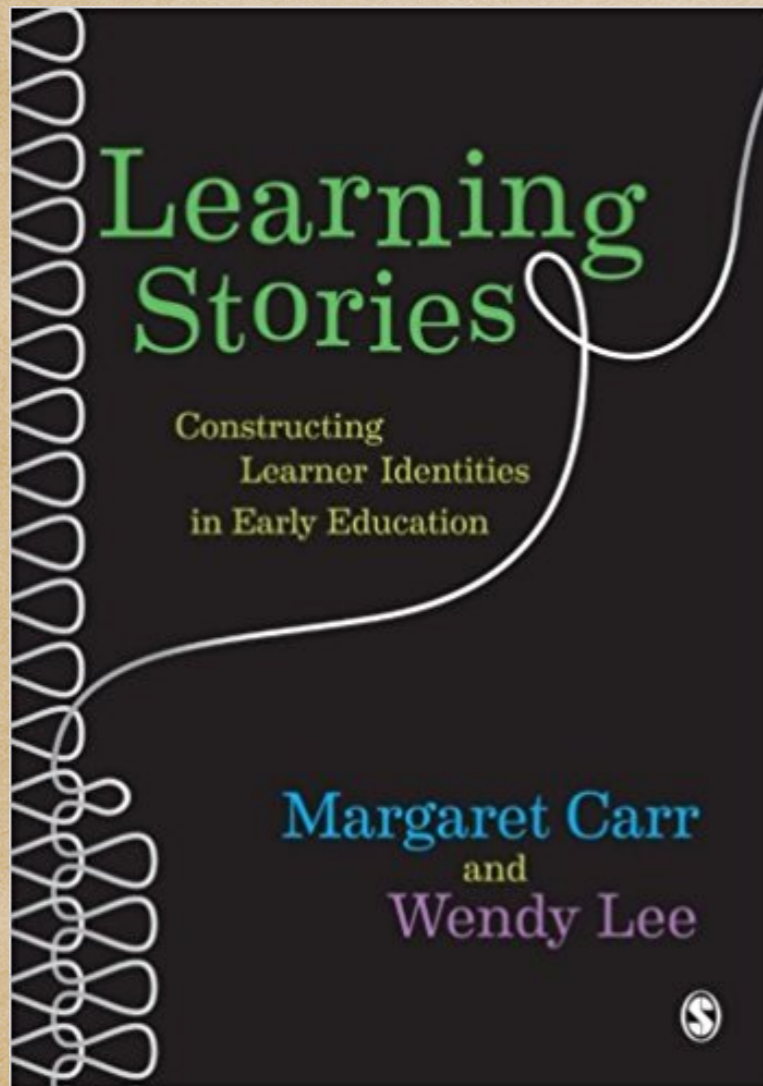
# Pedagogical Documentation

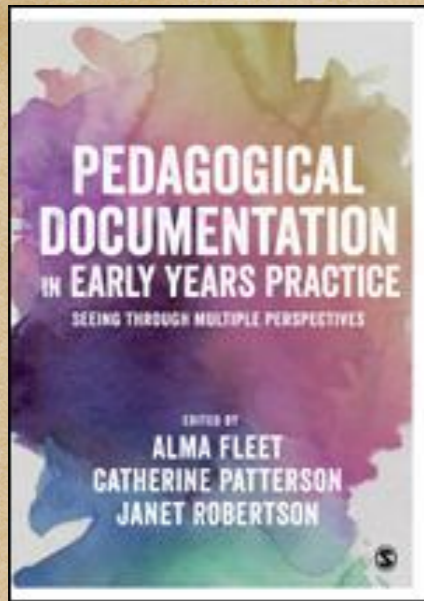
“Pedagogical documentation is about **more than recording events** – it is a means to learning about how children think and learn”. It is a “process to explore all of our questions about children”

Carlina Rinaldi suggests that documentation is a “way of listening to children that helps us to learn about children during the course of their experiences and to make the learning visible to others for interpretation”.

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 21)

# Relevant Texts





- Pedagogical documentation as non-linear, interdisciplinary sites of possibility rather than product-oriented record keeping (Rinaldi, 2006)
  
- Pedagogical documentation as a component of socially just practice (Fleet et al., 2006, 2012).

# Analysis of Observation

- Where has the spark of interest come from?
- What questions/enquiries does the child have?
- How are they trying to make meaning?
- What theories about the world are they exploring?
- How can we support and extend this learning? –  
Questioning/Comments? Resources?  
Experiences?

# Pedagogical Documentation

## The Process:

(Wein, 2013)

1. **Making documentation a daily habit** – tools at hand, on going process of enquiry
2. **Choosing what to document** – being attuned to children's thinking and observing children's working theories
3. **Go Public** – Share your analysis of learning with children, parents, co-workers to widen frame of reference and strengthen partnerships
4. **Development of visual literacy skills** – the more we document, the more we will become skilled in removing clutter, selecting just the images that show what we are noticing, ensuring this is child friendly with a depth of learning.
5. **Making learning visible to everyone** – when we have made children's thoughts, feelings, and values visible we can study the meaning of events to children, offering our thoughts collaboratively so that our own understanding widens, deepens and takes in multiple perspectives.
6. **Plan, support and extend children's learning** – once we are in tune with children's interests, line of enquiries and developmental needs we can then support and extend their learning.

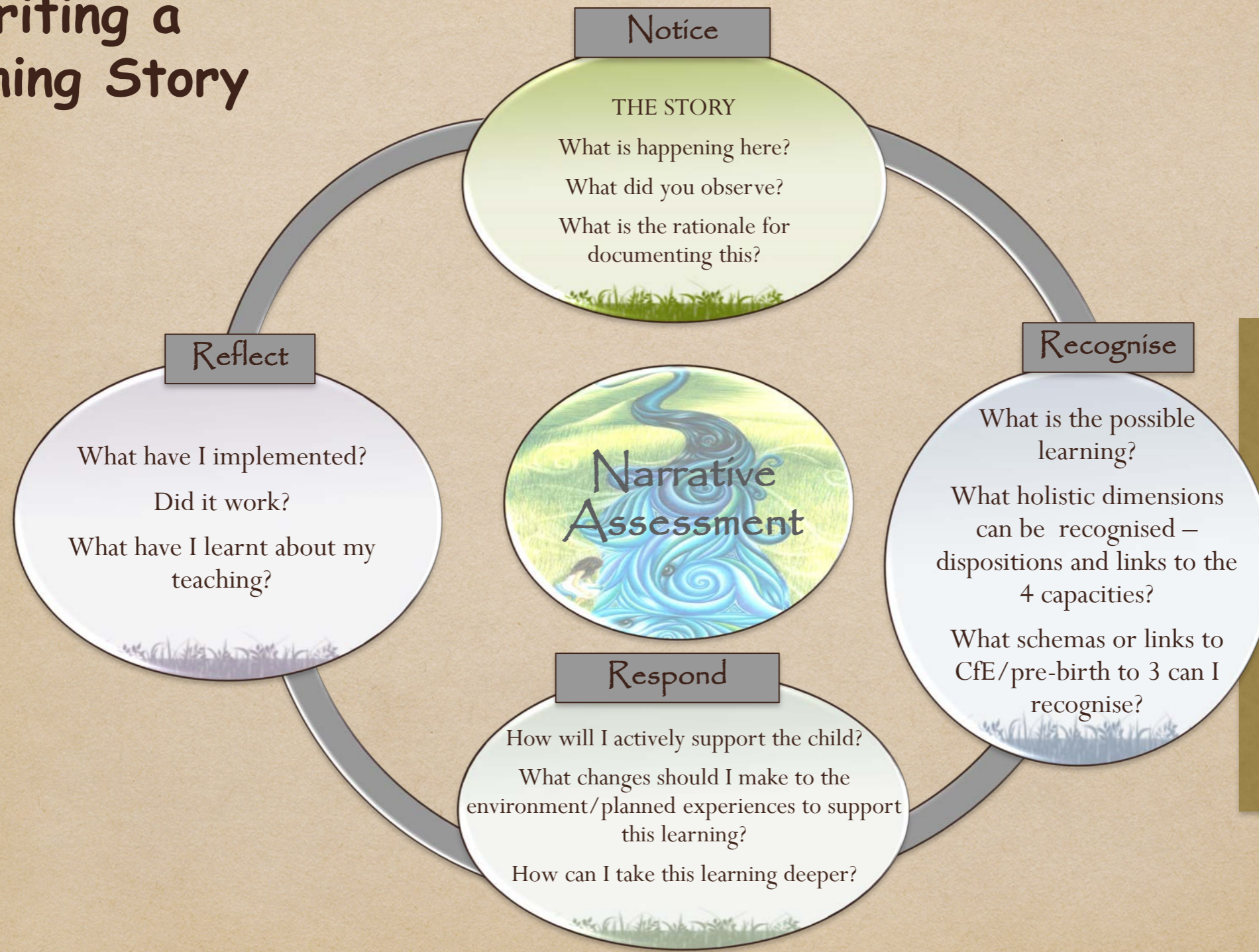


- The New Zealand Early Childhood curriculum focuses on learning dispositions – these are attributes that are necessary for life-long learning such as:
  - Taking an interest
  - Being involved
  - Persisting with difficulty
  - Expressing an idea or a feeling
  - Taking responsibility
- These link well to Scotland's 4 Capacities:
  - Successful learner
  - Effective contributor
  - Responsible citizen
  - Confident individual

# Learning Stories

- “Learning stories are narrative accounts of an episode of learning, usually accompanied by photographs: they include an analysis of learning, often in dispositional terms, and suggestions of possible pathways forward...they are housed in portfolios” that are easily accessible to children to revisit and reminisce on their learning (Carr et al., 2010)
- Learning stories have become the most commonly used assessment tool in New Zealand Early Childhood Education.
- Learning stories are assessment for learning and in line with ‘Assessment is for Learning (AifL).
- Lee, Carr, Soutar and Mitchell (2013) describe 3 elements of a learning story:
  1. Narrative that describes significant learning events
  2. Analysis of the learning
  3. The planning (but this may not be written in every story).

# Writing a Learning Story



- Examples:
- Schemas
  - Es and Os
  - Froebelian Principles
  - Dispositions
  - 4 capacities
  - Pre-birth to 3
  - SHANARRI
    - BTA
  - HGIOELC
    - BTC<sub>2</sub>

## John Works Hard at Wood Work!



John it is great to see how happy and confident you are arriving at nursery each day. You have settled in to nursery so well and it is great to see how happy you are to be here each day. You are growing in confidence when communicating your needs, thoughts and opinions and I have noticed you have shown a keen interest in the woodwork bench. You impressed me with your 'risk management skills' "I need to wear the goggles so nothing goes in my eyes" and when your friend Tony approached, you reminded him of safety at the bench: "stand back Tony so you don't get hit." I was also very impressed that you were able to identify and name the various tools and when I demonstrated how to use the saw safely you were able to follow the instructions clearly.

### **What learning do you think is happening here?**

Today John you were developing very important skills for life by assessing your own risk and the risks to others. You were able to communicate your needs by asking for the wood work bench to be opened and confidently spoke about the different tools you were using. You were developing your listening and talking skills by listening to and following instructions. By hammering the nails into the wood with the hammer you were developing your fine motor skills and hand to eye co-ordination. Pete Moorhouse, who teaches us all

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about the importance in developing wood work skills at a young age, reminds us why wood work in the early years is so important: "I'm passionate about the depth of learning it inspires, encompassing maths, scientific investigation, physical coordination, language and vocabulary." You were certainly developing all of these skills as you showed confidence and determination to explore and create. Great work John!

### **How can we grow this learning together?**

John, I know you enjoy spending time at the wood work bench. You should continue to develop your curiosity and explore the properties of wood as you create your next masterpiece. Make sure you continue to share your knowledge and skills with your friends and adults. Maybe next time you visit this area we can work on your knowledge of measurement by identifying various sized nails and screws and using tape measures? Do you enjoy exploring wood work at home?

Joan Bloggs (Peach group Key Worker)

### **John's Voice:**

I enjoy playing with wood work when I come to nursery. I am always safe and use glasses and make sure my friends are safe too. Next time I am going to make something for my mum.

### **Family Voice:**

We are very impressed that John is learning about wood work skills at such a young age! He tells us all about the importance of safety when working at the wood work bench and is keen to share his new skills with us. We will attempt to get the tools out at home and involve him in all the DIY jobs around the house from now on! Thank you for sharing this wonderful story with us.

# 'John Works Hard at Wood Work' Curricular, Policy and Development Links?

## Positive Learning Dispositions:

- Taking an Interest, Confidence, Creativity, Kindness, Responsibility, Persevering with Difficulty

## Experiences and Outcomes

### Health and Wellbeing

- I am learning to assess and manage risk, to protect myself and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible. **HWB 0-16a**
- I know that friendship, caring, sharing, fairness, equality and love are important in building positive relationships. As I develop and value relationships, I care and show respect for myself and others. **HWB 0-05a**
- I make full use of and value the opportunities I am given to improve and manage my learning and, in turn, I can help to encourage learning and confidence in others. **HWB 0-11a**
- In everyday activity and play, I explore and make choices to develop my learning and interests. I am encouraged to use and share my experiences. **HWB 0-19a**

# 'John Works Hard at Wood Work' Curricular, Policy and Development Links?

## Experiences and Outcomes

### Literacy

- As I listen and talk in different situations, I am learning to take turns and am developing my awareness of when to talk and when to listen. **LIT 0-02a/ENG 0-03a**
- I listen or watch for useful or interesting information and I use this to make choices or learn new things. **LIT 0-04a**
- Within real and imaginary situations, I share experiences and feelings, ideas and information in a way that communicates my message. **LIT 0-09a**

### Numeracy and Mathematics

- I can collect objects and ask questions to gather information, organising and displaying my findings in different ways. **MNU 0-20a**
- I can match objects, and sort using my own and others' criteria, sharing my ideas with others. **MNU 0-20b**
- I enjoy investigating objects and shapes and can sort, describe and be creative with them. **MTH 0-16a**

# 'John Works Hard at Wood Work' Curricular, Policy and Development Links?

## Experiences and Outcomes

### Expressive Arts: Art and Design

- I have the freedom to discover and choose ways to create images and objects using a variety of materials. **EXA 0-02a**
- Working on my own and with others, I use my curiosity and imagination to solve design problems. **EXA 0-06a**

### Science: Materials

- Through creative play, I explore different materials and can share my reasoning for selecting materials for different purposes. **SCN 0-15a**

### Social Studies

- I make decisions and take responsibility in my everyday experiences and play, showing consideration for others. **SOC 0-17a**
- Within my everyday experiences and play, I make choices about where I work, how I work and who I work with. **SOC 0-18a**



# 'John Works Hard at Wood Work' Curricular, Policy and Development Links?

## Experiences and Outcomes

### Technology

- I explore ways to design and construct models. TCH0-09
- I explore everyday materials in the creation of pictures/models/concepts. TCH0-10a
- I explore and discover different ways of representing ideas in imaginative ways. TCH0-11a

17 Experiences and Outcomes were touched upon during this one observation

## Development Links

- Fine Motor Control, Gross Motor - Strength Development

# 'John Works Hard at Wood Work' Curricular, Policy and Development Links?

How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (2016)

## Curriculum 2.2

- The curriculum is current and relevant to children. It is informed by shared values and beliefs about how young children learn.
- All practitioners and partners are ambitious and expect high levels of progress and achievement for all children.
- Practitioners' up-to-date knowledge of early learning pedagogy is evident in all aspects of practice within the setting.
- There is a clear focus on the development of children's skills in early language and mathematics.
- We create rich and meaningful opportunities for our children to be active participants in the community.

# 'John Works Hard at Wood Work' Curricular, Policy and Development Links?

How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare? (2016)

## Learning, Teaching and Assessment 2.3

- Children can talk about their learning and achievements with practitioners and peers.
- Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching and is used effectively to plan high quality learning experiences for all children.
- High quality observations take place naturally during everyday activities and interactions.
- We use our knowledge of how children learn, for example schema, when making observations of children and as a basis for future planning.
- Practitioners make sound judgements about children's progress and respond quickly to ensure learning opportunities meet the needs of individuals.

# Examples

- There is a wide variety of examples for you to look at – ranging from 0 – 5 year olds.
- Some of these are Scottish and some are from New Zealand
- All names have been changed.
- Have a think about how these assessments compare with what you currently have in place.
- What do you like/dislike about the narrative approach to assessment?

# Learning Story Examples

- Fiona Digs for Worms - 2 year old
- Tom's Big Building Plans - 4 year old
- Janie is King of the Castle - 4 year old
- Aidan the Author - 4 year old
- Super Strategies - 5 year old (P1)
- Creating a Picture Takes Time - 5 year old New Zealand Example
- Free Movement and Body Awareness - Baby New Zealand Example

# How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare?

## Q1 2.3 – Learning, teaching and assessment: Highly Effective Practice

- Children can talk about their learning and achievements with practitioners.
- Practitioners, children and parents/carers share and use a range of assessment information to improve learning and development, and to reflect on quality of practice.
- Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching and is used effectively to plan high quality experiences for all children.
- High quality observations take place naturally during every day activities and interactions.
- We use our knowledge of how children learn, for example schema, when making observations of children and as a basis for future planning.
- Practitioners make sound judgements about children's progress and respond quickly to ensure learning opportunities meet the needs of individuals.

Thank you for listening

Any Comments or  
Questions??

kirsten\_thomson@hotmail.co.uk

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