<u>Documentation as Professional Development</u>

Summary from January 18, 2014 session with Carol Vaage

What and how we choose to display children's work conveys strong messages about what we as adults value.

Our professional development session on documentation was **emergent**, in that not one of us knew exactly how the session would unfold. We first gathered information about the participants, to build our background knowledge about the group and to determine where everyone was in their journey in the documentation process. In each group, the participants had a diverse range of experience, from brand-new, to 'tried a few things', to those who are questioning how to get to the deeper values of fully understanding documentation.

For the newbies, I shared a few sites.

- A condensed version of the Documentation PowerPoint that I shared with Edmonton Regional ECEC last year: http://www.k-3learningpages.net/professional%20development.htm (See Documentation.) It has the content, but not the photos. Also on that page I referred to a page I have developed entitled: Provocation Starters. This is a list of questions and statement starters that will help lead children to articulate their learning and theory building.
- My Documentation Pinterest board: http://www.pinterest.com/carolvaage/documentation/ for people to see examples of how others have documented learning – from small examples to very thorough and complex examples. From my Pinterest board, I highly recommended these web addresses that have been linked from Pinterest images.
  - o Interaction Imagination – a Swedish teacher, Suzanne Axellson has an amazing, profound blog with examples of her journey with documentation: http://interactionimagination.blogspot.se/2013/09/documentation-first-peek.html?m=1
  - o Early Childhood Australia – National Quality Standards newsletter – on noticing and recording learning: http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/e-newsletters/newsletters-51-55/newsletter-55/ They have other great documents worth searching out as well.
  - o Miss Reggio's 8 ways to document: http://missreggio.blogspot.com.au/2013/07/8-ways-to-document-childrens-learning.html This is a quick example of different styles.
  - o Harvard Project Zero – documentation wiki - https://makinglearningvisibleresources.wikispaces.com/Bulletin+Boards This one page is about Bulletin Boards, but you'll see other topics on the left side as well.

Our next step was to generate questions that would guide our professional development. With the addition of questions, it turned into an **inquiry project** for our learning. The questions guided our learning. Then as a group, we addressed the topics. Here is a summary of our questions/issues, and

some of the ideas that evolved from the group collaboration, and advanced as a result of **social constructivism.**

Audience: Who is viewing and reading our documentation?

- Parents, teachers/colleagues, children, administration, consultants, visitors
- I would add that we are as well – we are the one reading it most intently as we prepare, assemble, discern what is of value. (audience is self)
- Also noted how much better the process is when you have a colleague to share and discuss the documentation.

Learning: What exactly do we want to show for the learning on our documentation boards?

- Curriculum based
- Depth of learning in the play
- Process of learning (versus product)
- Showing and explaining what is not immediately obvious to an observer
- Does documentation capture thinking process
- What motivated the project to begin, continue, change direction?
- What were breakthroughs, pivotal remarks or actions?
- How did they solve the problem?
- The goal is to enable whoever is reads the documentation to understand what the child attempted and how they went about it to see the stimulus, process and outcome.

Time: How can a person fit in the time to actually do documentation?

- Family time is always the priority, and prepping documentation should not be all-consuming. There are ways to become more efficient, and do things *smarter*.
- Use a student teacher on practicum to help you document a bigger project: photos, write ups, setting up. This process is excellent for both parties. Grant MacEwan also has Early Childhood Diploma students who do practicums and part of their assignment is to do one documentation.
- Coaching your EA or parent volunteers to take photos or capture conversations can be a worthwhile endeavor.
- Using tech apps and templates (list of apps later in document)
- Co-share the responsibility for documentation with the class. At the beginning of each learning adventure, build in the idea of *how will we show our learning*? That way the class will always be aware of the need to collect artifacts, photos, as well as sharing the responsibility of identifying what are pivotal and key moments in the learning process.
http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791473098821/
- Have children start to take photos of the learning in the class. One or two children seem to have a special talent for this. The example shared: Teacher said to student, "Could you take a pic of…?" The K student replied "I'm already on it…" Children have 100 languages + 100 + 100. This could be someone's gift.

- By taking photos and capturing words, children begin to understand the value of documentation and will notify you of when they feel they've done something worthy of documenting. Ask them to give you the words of why they feel it is important, or explain it, or write a description… Then you have the dialogue to accompany the photo.

Beginning: Where and how do I start documenting?

- Take photos –of the process of learning, of things children have made (block construction), play scenarios…
- Start listening to children's conversations and writing down some dialogue. What happens is that children begin to understand that what they say is important to you, especially when you notice learning moments and theory building. They begin to recognize those moments too, and can either record them (iPad) or call you over to capture it. Ask the question, *What just happened in your brain?*
- Collect samples of artifacts – either photograph or photocopy products or use actual samples
- Add a pedagogical statement. Tell why you are sharing these pictures, artifacts, dialogue quotes. Tell the motivating incident, or describe the collaboration, or the theory building, or the process of learning.
- Use Experience Chart paper to capture the children's words, tape or staple samples, artifacts. http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791472800981/
- Save SMART Board brainstorming work and print as part of the documentation.
- Creating class books can be a form of documentation. http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791472966089/ or http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791471805730/
- Create stand up (tri-fold) small nametag for each child. When they have something they want a photo of, they bring their name over to the piece and take the photo.

Photos: What photos should be included in a documentation?

- Pivotal moments in a learning adventure – moments where something new erupts, a new discovery made, new materials introduced, theories are being tested…
- Representative photos – not every child needs to be included in every documentation. Explain to the parents and your class at the beginning of the year about the value of documentation, and that different children's photos will appear as representing the learning for the class. Assure both groups that their photos will be used at a different time for different projects. When children initially realize why other children were used in the photos, their engagement in the learning process increases. They would like to be included, and know that those photos of engaged learning are likely to be included. In addition, to be more inclusive, you could include other children's writing, dialogues, or artifacts as part of the documentation.

Curriculum: How can documentation show that we are covering the curriculum?

- Photocopy pieces of the curricular outcomes, enlarge them and mount them on colourful paper. Add them as one more element of the documentation.
- Use "I can…" statements that directly link to the curriculum.

Children's Dialogue: Do we have to have the exact words as a quote for documentation?

- Use an audio recorder to capture important learning sessions that you do want to quote accurately.
- Capture key words to "quote" in your dialogue. If you miss the entire sentence, but remember the intent, you can fill in the key words with quotation marks around those.
- Have children write their stories, their words to accompany the photos or learning documented. http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791471675348/

Documentation as Assessment: How can documentation be used as assessment?

- Apps - http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791472892780/
- Year portfolios http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791472801128/
- Photos as evidence - http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791471805726/

Emergent Ideas: What was new for us?

- Supporting the learning (as part of documentation) – this is a piece written for parents to give suggestions of how they could extend this type of learning at home.
- Tech ideas (see following)
- Documenting our documentation: A few people shared binders of their documentation similar to http://www.pinterest.com/pin/177399672795960835/ Taking photos of your documentation and adding it to a year's binder, taking the content (print/photos) of what you are typing for your documentation or blog and printing it, etc. This resolves the documentation storage problem, as well as offering an instant access for class/parents/colleagues/admin/visitors of what had been done previously this or previous years.
- Evolving class web: This is a web of class interests, ideas and learning which continues to grow and evolve throughout the year. It can be used to show progression of ideas; connections between learning topics; and to document the messiness of learning. It shows that learning does not happen in a sequential, linear model, but rather in quite an untidy fashion.
- Use documentation as provocation to sustain inquiry or to bridge to connected or extended learning.

Media Resources:

- Pic Collage - http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791473098817/
- 3 ring - http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791472899103/
- Photo Collage for androids

- Clic (with Pearson Publishing – need a district license)
- School share sites, blogs
- Word templates: New document to templates to flyers (several samples there)
- QR – which is the smart encoder to audio/document files. The app is Qrafter which will connect your smart device to a QR code and also transform your documentation with a QR code.
- iMovie
- Evernote & Skitch - http://www.pinterest.com/pin/329325791472892763/
- Easy Portfolio
- Explain Everything
- Show Me

Culminating Thoughts:

As each group completed the inquiry, we had some sharing time, looking at examples of teachers' documentation. This is what happens at every PD session, we see ideas, and get motivated to try something new in our practice. We had so many ideas throughout the day, and what emerged is the next step in our journey.

Now that we have talked about it together, we want to prep our documentation together. I hope to see you at that workshop, where we can work alongside each other and get ideas and feedback from each other to help us take one more step in our journey.

One of the Concordia students remarked to me that it was inspiring to see teachers continuing to learn, question, and be motivated to continue learning how to be a better teacher. This student saw evidence of teachers as lifelong learners, of teachers professionally developing through documentation! What a great understanding to have of our profession. ☺