Creating a Reflective Culture that Transforms Pedagogy

an exploration of possibilities
with Margie Carter

Explorations:

- Forming a learning community with "critical friends" to experience some elements of a reflective culture.
- Practicing a protocol for examining what unfolds in the teaching and learning process
- Creating a "culture of inquiry" with your routines and structures to support teachers learning together with children

Become a student of your own teaching

I suggest that for all of us as teachers it is a good idea to cultivate our own intellects and nourish the mind. For teachers, the cultivation of the mind is as important as the cultivation of our capacities for understanding, compassion, and caring — not less important, not more important — but equally so. In other words, we must come to see ourselves as developing professionals also — whether we teach adults or children. So I suggest: become a student of your own teaching — a career-long student of your teaching.

Lilian Katz (2009)
In Andrew Gibbons and Colin Gibbs, (Eds), *Conversations on Early Childhood Education,* Exchange Press.

Professional development with critical friends

Critical Friends are peers or colleagues who ask probing questions and offer helpful critiques. …their role is to ask probing questions to enable those involved to gain fresh insights into their work. The main benefits of using critical friends are that they provide:

- an outsider's view of the project/task/issue
- independent questioning to ensure that the focus is maintained
- alternate sources of information or expertise.

Protocols for disciplined thinking and dialogue

The kind of talking needed to educate ourselves cannot arise spontaneously and unaided just from talking. It needs to be carefully planned and scaffolded.

Joseph P. McDonald, Nancy Mohr, Alan Dichter, and Elizabeth C. McDonald (2003)
Power of Protocols. An Educator's Guide to Better Practice.

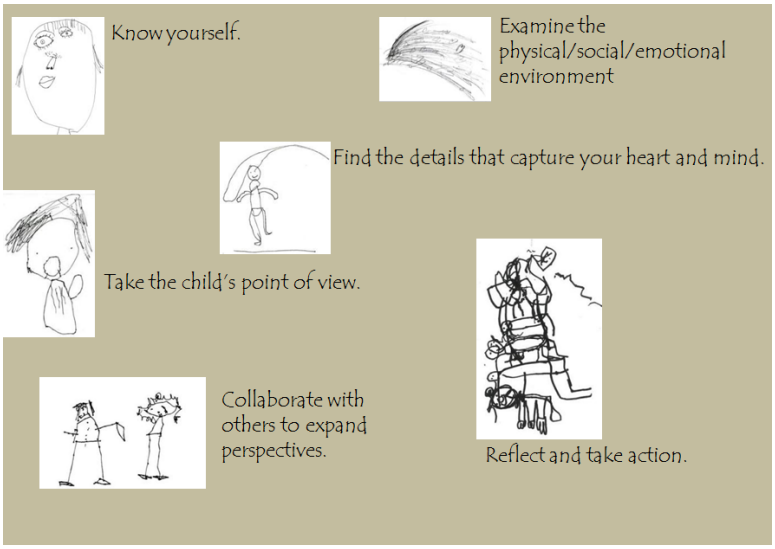
Three Fields of Knowledge		Learning Opportunities
What do we know? The knowledge of practitioners involved in the discussion.	→	**Adaptive learning**: Reshaping what is known and understood
What is known? The knowledge from theory, research and best practices.	→	**Additional learning**. Adding to what is already known.
What new knowledge? The knowledge we can co-create through collaborative work.	→	**Creative or Innovative learning** Discovering new meaning, new ways of understanding and action.

Network Facilitation: The Power of Protocol, Karen Carter, Chris Cotton & Kirsten Hill

Communities of practice
(Professional learning communities- PLC)

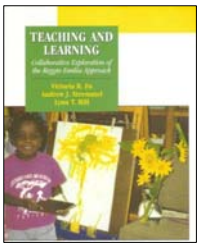
To change their practice, teachers must go through a regular process of self-analysis -- inquiry and reflection. Doing this analysis in a collaborative situation allows for remarkable professional gains. Questions from peers about assumptions and beliefs on student learning can, over time, impact the learning of those teachers' students.
Jill Hudson, Judith Gray (2006)
Renewal through Collaborative Inquiry: The Critical Friends Group Process, New Horizons for Learning

A Thinking Lens for Reflection and Inquiry



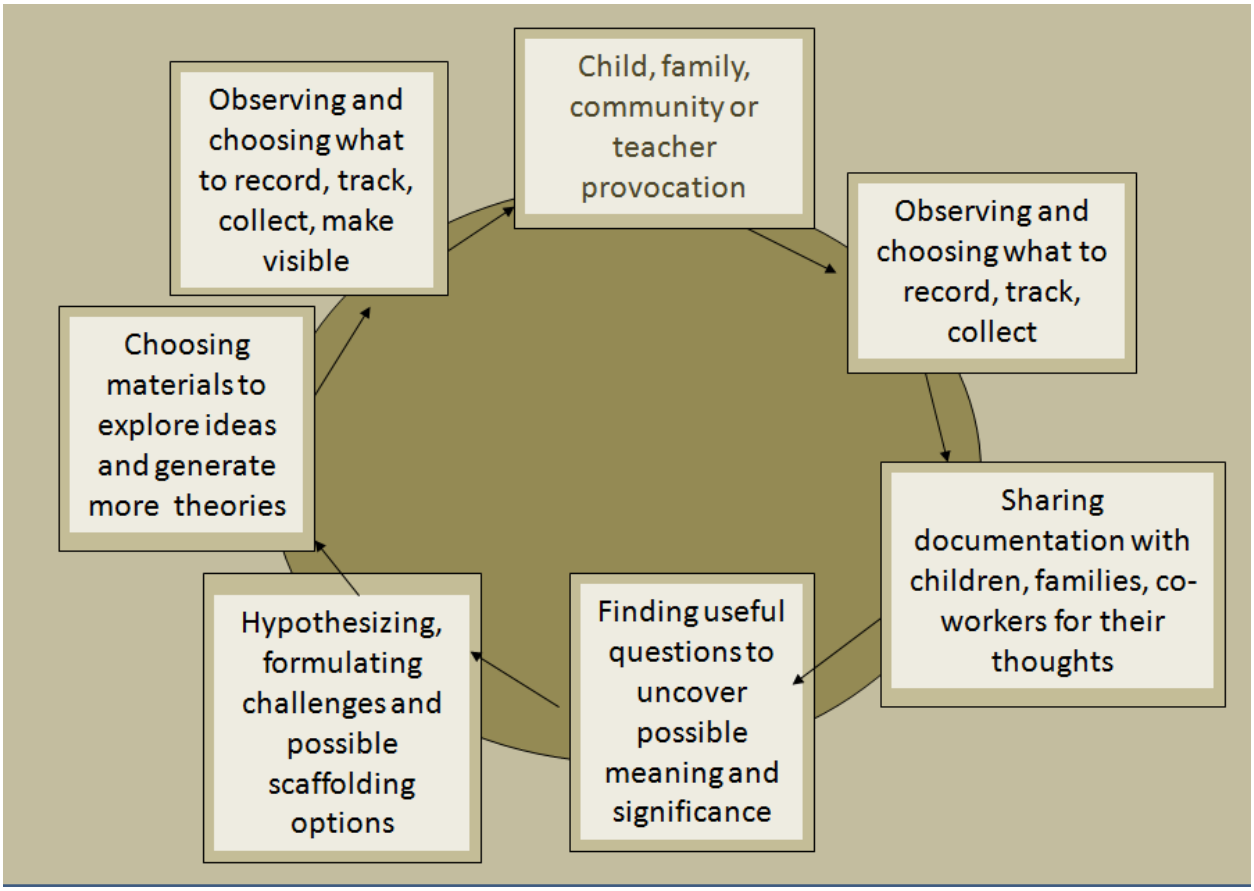
Seeking the child's point of view

When we venture a guess about a child's question or comment, we are prompting further inquiry, reflection, or the correction of our own misconception. Even when we guess incorrectly, chances are good that we may gain a clearer insight into the child's line of thinking as the exchange proceeds.



Pam Oken-Wright and Marty Gravett
Big Ideas and the Essence of Intent In V. Fu, A. Stremmel, L. Hill (2002)
Teaching and Learning. Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Use a thinking lens with the cycle of inquiry

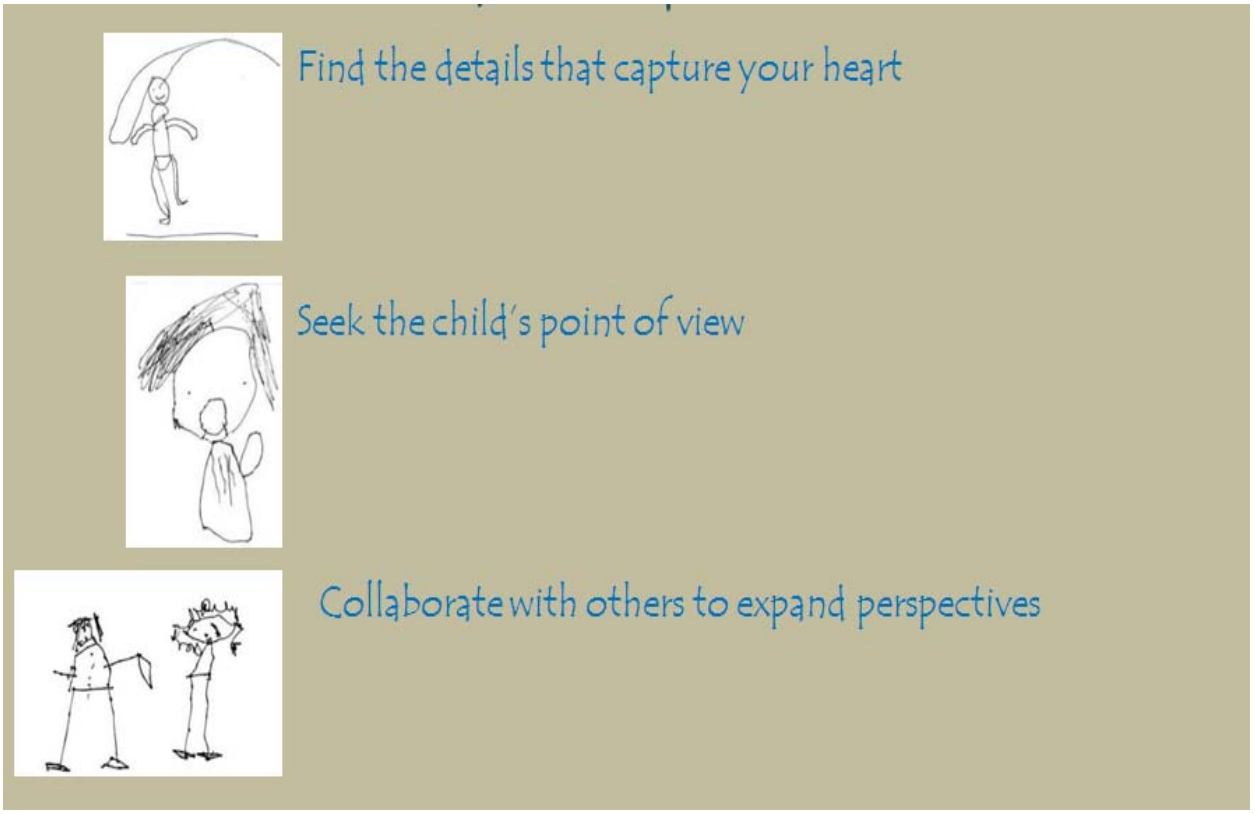


Pedagogical documentation

All this documentation…becomes an indispensable source of materials that we use everyday to be able to 'read' and reflect critically, both individually and collectively, on the experience we are living, the projects we are exploring. This allows us to construct theories and hypotheses that are not arbitrary or artificially imposed on the children.

Vea Vecchi (1998) "The role of the atelierista" in C. Edwards, L. Gandini, and G. Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children.*

Generate 3 specific questions for each element of the thinking lens

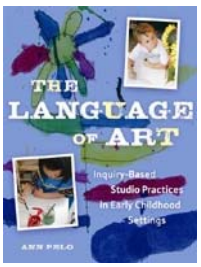


Create a culture of inquiry with children

Representing and re-representing ideas

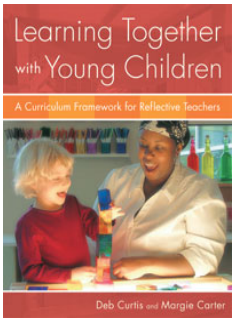
When children represent and re-represent their ideas, they become fluent in a range of "languages "and become skillful at translating from one language to another, for example, moving from the language of a photo to the language of wooden mosaic pieces and from that into the language of a sketch. With this fluency, children

- Become more aware of their understandings
- Change perspectives
- Notice new details and nuance
- Develop a history of their thinking and work
- See each other's thinking and experiences
- Open up a dialogue with others

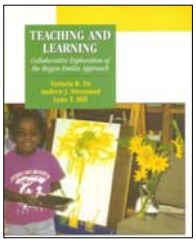


Ann Pelo (2007) *The Language of Art. Inquiry-Based Studio Practices in Early Childhood Settings.*

Helping children learn about learning



- ✓ When you want to get smarter about something, look closely at what you have done and think about your ideas.
- ✓ You can tell someone your ideas through a conversation, through dictation, or by creating a story.
- ✓ You can teach someone what you know or the steps you followed.
- ✓ Writing our ideas on a chart or in a book reminds us what we have been learning. We can come back to these ideas again without having to start from scratch.
- ✓ Another way to get smart is to create drawings of our ideas.
- ✓ We can use different materials to explore the same idea or better understand our theories about something.
- ✓ Inviting others to join us in thinking will make us smarter.
- ✓ Our friends, our families, people in the community or books might give us more ways to think about our ideas.



Asking children to explain their drawings encourages them to work with deliberation and forethought. We often look for the child's unspoken theory and bring it to the surface where it can be exposed, articulated, and explored. I listen for motivation, interest, cognitive knots and inconsistencies in thinking.

Alise ShaferOrdinary Moments, Extraordinary Possibilities. In V. Fu, A. Stremmel, L. Hill (2002) *Teaching and Learning. Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach*

Connecting your experience with professional knowledge and theories

From this experience a concept you better understand from the following list:

Exploring to learn (physical knowledge)

Collaborating to learn (social constructivism)

Brainstorming to Learn (divergent thinking)

Hypothesizing to learn (theory making)

Drawing to learn (symbolic thinking and consolidating knowledge)

Making thinking and learning visible through multiple representations
(multiple intelligences)

Studying children's work for your own learning
(pedagogical documentation)

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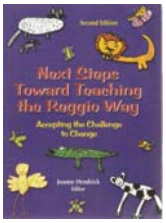
To enter into a style of teaching which is based on questioning what we're doing and why, on listening to children, on thinking about how theory is translated into practice and how practice informs theory, is to enter into a way of working where professional development takes place day after day in the classroom.



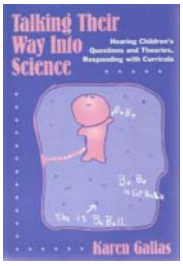
Sonya Shoptaugh (2004)Reflections on a Journey of Inspiration: Teacher Change in Public Education. In J. Hendrick, *Next Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way*.

The pedagogy of listening

In a pedagogy of listening and radical dialogue, the teacher has to dare to open herself or himself to the unexpected and to experiment together with the children in the here-and-now event…the teacher and children become partners in a process of experimentation and research, in which the children invent a problem before they search for solutions.
Peter Moss (2005). In G. Dahlberg and P. Moss, *Ethics and Politics in Early Childhood Education*

Generation of Theories

When we begin to examine what kind of world the scientist lives in, we find that it is not simply a rational world where theories are calmly proposed and carefully argued. Descriptions of the work of research scientists allow us to enter a world where dialogue among colleagues is critical to the generation and development of theories; where creative processes that one might delegate to the artist or poet, such as intuition, imagination, visualization, and wonder, work hand in hand with experimentation; where emotion, morality, and religion inform the scientist; and where the act of writing and communicating the final outcomes of research erases the private process of science.



Karen Gallas (1995) *Talking Their Way Into Science.*
Hearing Children's Questions and Theories, and Responding with Curricula

Language and Power

Teachers can coach the children in talking and establish talk protocols for the children to distribute power embedded in talk.
"I was able to see from the development of this class as talkers that even the phrasing of a question, whether asked by an adult or a child, can silence
(and thereby exclude) some children who have less experience in the "coined" terminology of science. Further, I saw that those children who have had more exposure to the technical language of science and often can speak with authority because they use those terms, rarely understood the meaning of the terms even thought they often applied them in the correct contexts. I cannot engage all of my students in the study of science unless a critical level of familiarity and collegial talk is achieved. *Real collaboration results in a process of de-centering on the part of the child and hence, cognitive growth.*"

Karen Gallas (1995) *Talking Their Way Into Science.*
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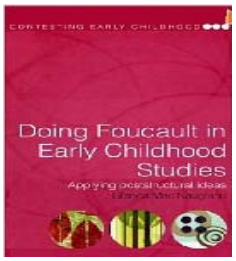
Critical reflection

Critical reflection is a process of identifying and questioning how power circulates within and through our teaching and learning; and, as such, it can help to transform unfair and oppressive teaching practices.



Glenda MacNaughton (2005)
Doing Foucault in Early Childhood Studies.

Drawing to Learn More

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Alise Shafer (2002)
Ordinary Moments, Extraordinary Possibilities In V. Fu, A. Stremmel, L. Hill
Teaching and Learning. Collaborative Exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Choosing your learning goal

Is it more important to know the facts or is it more important to develop a style of thinking and discourse that is analytical and inquisitive?
We agreed our goal was to engage children in high-level thinking were possibilities could be explored. Ultimately our goal is to nurture the disposition to wonder, to explore, and to construct meaning.

Alise Shafer (2002)Ordinary Moments, Extraordinary Possibilities In V. Fu, A. Stremmel, L. Hill
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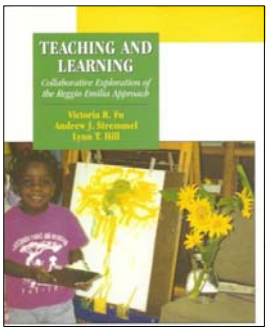
Meeting children's minds with a pedagogy of listening

Our minds are tuned to two vital mantras, one an assumption, one a question.
Assumption: Children are powerful thinkers.
Question: What is the child's intent?

We want to listen not only with the goal of hearing what the child is saying, but also mindful of the possibility she is seeking meaning beyond her words.
We want to learn to read the child's intent. What is the thinking behind her play, representation, body language, words? We are seeking deeper meaning for the child, even if she is not aware of it in the beginning. What about the idea fascinates the children?
Questions that help us uncover intent:
What's your plan?
How did you figure that out?
Who gave you the idea to…….?
How did you know that?
What are you thinking about when…?



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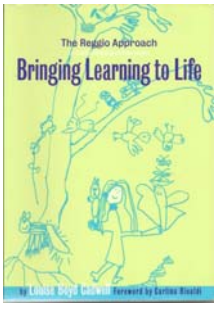
Becoming a Community of Seekers



We want to know what the children think, feel, and wonder. We believe that the children will have things to tell each other and us that we have never heard before. We are always listening for a surprise and the birth of a new idea. This practice supports a searching together for new meaning. Together we become a community of seekers.
Louise Boyd Cadwell (2003) *Bringing Learning to Life*

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