

Embracing Educational Change.

April 2010

What an amazing experience it has been in these last two days. The conference was full of fantastic ideas, suggestions, thoughts and learning opportunities. The initial provocation was set by Janet Robertson with her talk on 'exploration of thinking outside'. As I reflected on her presentation, there were few things that spoke volumes to me. Janet's passion for the outdoor environment was inspiring. I agree with her views on how the outdoor space and place are often not seen as an area where the learning that is taking place has an equal amount of value as that which happens indoors. Her question about 'what would the children remember in an outdoor setting?' reminded and challenged me as I wondered what would the children at Browns Bay Pre-School remember? Janet also called the outdoor space as a garden rather than a playground or the outside area. This gave a whole new image and meaning when we see children being involved in an outdoor space where the environment is loved, valued and respected.

Alma Fleet's presentation on pedagogical documentation reinforced the importance of presenting the learning and teaching in meaningful and professional ways. Again, I was challenged by re-looking at what we document and how is this manageable. We were fortunate to be able to unpack this further at the workshop. Pedagogical documentation demonstrates our professionalism as early childhood educators. Alma mentioned how documentation allows children to have memory as a springboard for later understanding. Alma reminded me of the importance of capturing and recording moments of learning which otherwise can easily get lost or missed. We also discussed about 'documentation as a process of reciprocal learning and not product focused'. (Carlina Rinaldi 2006, p19).

Anthony Semann's presentation on social justice was interesting and challenging. He raised many issues that we are facing both in New Zealand and Australia. He also provoked my thinking in discussing the uncomfortable situations that we face. It was encouraging to understand the importance of creating opportunities to talk about experiences or issues that are difficult. I felt challenged as whilst it is easier to avoid the awkward issues, Anthony reinforced that is the very issue that we do need to talk about. Again, we had the

opportunity to unpack the social justice in the workshop. It allowed us to be engaged in conversations and we agreed the importance of standing up for justice at all times and living it everyday.

In conclusion I felt inspired when Anthony suggested, to look at a child or adult and ask what gift that they are giving us regardless of the situation we might find ourselves in.

'Finding inspiration in the everyday' was something Wendy Shepherd from Mia Mia encouraged everyone to do. Wendy also shared 'children's thinking and learning and the teacher's thinking and learning, who leads, who follows, who learns?' It reinforced for me the importance of building relationships and to be aware of the magical moments that we encounter everyday. "Wait, watch and wonder!" (Muir, Stupples & Guy 1989).

I felt excited when I observed the passion that Toby Honig showed for the Infants and Toddlers. It was fantastic to hear him share his enthusiasm and for being an advocate for the younger children.

Thank you to all the speakers for their contribution and having a positive influence in my teaching practice and learning. The knowledge gained from this conference has impacted me both on a personal and professional level. Thank you to REANZ for organizing such a fantastic conference.

What an amazing and wonderful experience this was!

Sharmini Crosland
Browns Bay Pre-School.