

Pedagogical Documentation



A step by step guide to overcome the barriers with documentation and involve children in the process.

Collaboration. Engagement. Belonging. Curiosity

What does *pedagogical* mean and why does it matter?



Learning Outcomes for children from this Experience

- Engagement • Literacy and communication •
 - Autonomy • Joyful learning • Curiosity • Wonder • Awe •
 - Self-Esteem • Scientific Reasoning • Hypothesizing •
 - Questioning skills • Engagement • Expression • Reading •
 - Letter awareness • Phonetic awareness •
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We have all heard the term "Pedagogical documentation" floating around in our sector but what does it mean. For many it has been defined as, "Making thinking and learning visible" (Stacey, 2021). We believe that the processes that make documentation pedagogical is studying, examining, and theorizing learning processes. We know that the barrier to this is TIME. We know that time is the barrier to achieving the goals that you have for your pedagogical documentation and we have used our own research here at Discovery Child Care Centre to learn new and unique ways to overcome the common barriers and roadblocks with pedagogical documentation in early learning programs.

What can we choose to document?

(Pssst....the answer is ANYTHING! Documentation is based on what we and the children are curious about and making that thinking and figuring out process visible. Start small and start with what draws you in. Like all muscles in life, the more we work it, the more it will grow. Keep your documentation and notice how it evolves over time.)

Start with listening. What do you hear children say and wonder about?

- What do you see making children's eyes light up? (This is a helpful prompt for younger or non-verbal children)
- What is interesting to you?
- What is confusing or puzzling?
- Project- a short or long term project (For more information on the Project Approach. There are some great resources online.) This could include a long term inquiry such as watching a garden evolve.
- Small moments in the day (A child sharing a toy or an empathetic moment between two children).
- Something that makes your heart sing.
- Exciting never before seen moments.
- Moments that might tell a different story about children than we are used to.
- Moments where children are struggling through big conflicts.
- Moments where children are noticing political issues (i.e. ecological impact, climate change, racism, sexism, ageism etc.)

This is the beautiful thing about documentation is that we get to choose what we pay attention to. The exciting work is figuring out why we are passionate about this what what this means for our work moving forward. Start wherever you feel excited and passionate and as this muscle continues to grow, so will the possibilities.

Pedagogical Documentation

Tools to support noticing:

- Clipboards and paper
- Slowing down...if we are so wrapped up in all the "to do's" of the day, we will often miss the magical moments. Allow yourself a chance to notice and be amazed with the children.
- Paper and a variety of drawing utensils such as pens, pencils, markers, pencil crayons.
- Artifacts that represent the space or experience. These may be helpful to prompt a conversation with children about an experience.
- Notebooks
- Tools to capture audio and visual moments. (I.e. a camera or tape recorder). This is helpful for revisiting events.

Click the image below for an article called: Making Learning Visible Through Pedagogical Documentation. Written by Dr. Carol Anne Wien



Pedagogical documentation

Step 1: Relationships are the heart and soul of this work!
Like all things in life, relationships are the heart and soul of this work. In order for children to be seen by us, we need to put intentional effort into building those strong connections with children. Two prompts that are helpful with this can start with:

1. What is your connection to direction or redirection ratio? Put an intentional effort into trying to have 10 opportunities for connection for each time you need to redirect.
2. Choose to notice and be amazed by the children. A prompt to offer yourself is: what amazed me about this child today or what was something great that this child did? Choosing a positive outlook makes all the difference in this work.

This is a great place to start. You can start by writing this down for each child. This will help you notice where you have strong relationships and where your relationships may need more intention. Once you have spent 1-2 weeks doing this reflect on:

1. What did you notice from this practice? What have you learned about yourself or the children?



Pedagogical documentation



Step 2: SLOW DOWN AND BE AMAZED BY THE CHILDREN

We know that the hustle and bustle of working with children can sometimes have us so caught up in the day to day that we don't get the chance to slow down and be amazed by the children.

Start small. Promise yourself 10 minutes in the day that you are going to simply observe the children.

Communicate this with your team and ensure that others are on top of supervision and scanning. Take 10 minutes and see what you notice. We have learned that when educators make this as an intentional act, this allows them to derive new meaning and excitement from their work.

Some questions that can guide your time observing include:

- What do I notice the children drawn to?
- What makes their eyes light up?
- What do I notice that is pulling in their engagement?
- What amazes me about their play?
- What do I notice about the materials they are engaged with? What do I notice about the materials that they are not engaged with?
- What do I wonder about their play?

Pedagogical documentation

Step 3: Document, document, document

This is going to take some figuring out so be open to trial and error (and possibly some failure!) Each educator has a unique way to take notes during their observations. Some commonly used tools include:

- Good old fashioned pen and paper
- Sticky notes
- Video
- Audio recording
- Inviting the children to document themselves (i.e. writing their own ideas or writing quotes of what they say.)
- It's important to write the date, names of children involved and then you can begin to write things down.
- What do you see, hear and notice?
- What materials are the children using and how are they using them?

Write as much information as you can and you will start to find your way. As we said before...this is a MUSCLE and the only way we grow muscles is by putting in the reps, practising and over time we will find a method that works for you. We have encouraged folks new to this to also document this process. You tried using video and it didn't work...HOW FASCINATING! This is all important and will serve you in your journey.

Making this work visible

Step 4: Going public with this work and sharing it with your community

Some important things to consider before we jump into documenting:

- Who is this work for? (Will it be accessible for children and adult feedback)
- Do you want children to reflect on it and revisit it later?
- Do you want to inspire feedback and collaboration from fellow educators/family members/community members?
- What do you intend to do with the work later?
- How can you keep this work for an extended period?

Although these questions may seem unimportant; remember children are naturally curious and notice every details about their environments. Especially when it is in relation to the work they have completed. Our image of children is communicated to them by how, where, and when we give value to their work.

In a preschool classroom of 24 children aged 2.5–5 we have accessible drawings, and work of children on the walls of our classrooms that are VERY rarely destroyed intentionally. Children are far more respectful than we give them credit.

Making this work visible

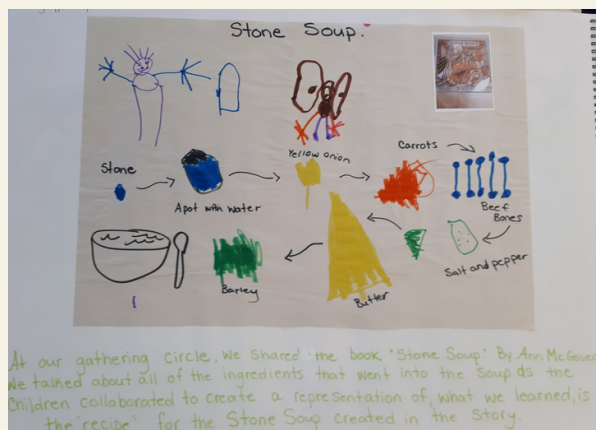
Step 5: Making meaning of this experience:

Using documentation to show children that their work has VALUE

Now that you have collected data on your work during this experience, you can begin to ask yourself and your children: How do we want to display this and represent the learning and experience? I'm sure we are all used to the bulletin boards that lined the walls of our classrooms. These systems have evolved and acknowledge there are many ways to represent children's learning in meaningful and impactful ways. The most important thing to consider is what will allow the highest level of fulfillment and engagement from yourself and the children.

Some ideas include:

- Blogs/Social Media
- Floorbooks
- Scrapbooks
- Kitchen fridge
- Picture Frames



Educator Research

Step 6: Study and reflect upon your work

This is the heart and soul of what makes documentation pedagogical. We must study and reflect upon it. We know that time is a barrier but we urge you, **DON'T SKIP THIS STEP.**

If we only ever get to step 5 and skip reflecting on our work, we believe that we cannot call our work pedagogical. In order to consider our work pedagogical, we must create opportunities to reflect upon it with our colleagues, families, and children.

You might be thinking...when in the world will I have time to do this. We hear you and through trial and error we have figured out some systems to overcome the common barriers with studying our work.

1. Make your work movable. If you can transport it then it will be easier to be reflected upon. We have landed on using Claire Warden's Floorbook strategy and this has overcome a lot of our barriers. This large book can move with us inside and outside and is co-constructed with the children, families, and educators.
2. Sticky notes are your friend. We provide our educators with reflection sticky notes to post on other people's work. This allows us to make reflections on the fly. Check out the next page for examples of how we use this. We find this strategy to be helpful in even the busiest of rooms.
3. See the children as your collaborators. Invite the children to reflect on this work. Studying your work with children (even as young as toddlers) allows you to see your work in new ways. It also creates opportunities for recall and reflection.

Educator Research

Statement On Play

How do the materials, invitations and environment in our outdoor classroom support our statement on play?

Also - planned activities outside, we can repeat if children would like, but we will be prepared for new.

- 2x art opportunities - see photos
- music / beat / Hating tubs circle - see photos
- Sensory (how change dry sand / water, natural items etc) - see photos
- gross motor (hikes, wheel barriers, etc) - see photos
- core routines - see photos
- messy materials and sheets - see photos
- update our music wall - see photos

Research shows us that "Play is a means to learning that operates on children's and adolescents' - It is the foundation for all learning for children" (Clifton & Davis, last foundation for all learning for children) - pg 245 from our program statement policy.

* We believe children deserve to have uninterrupted periods of play where wonder, curiosity, and possibility are nurtured by the educator through intentional practices and thought for the environment's. (pg 245 from our program statement policy).

Planning & Implementing Possibilities...

Where do we see...

- Curiosity, endurance, wonder, possibility, respect for nature, love for our natural world, gratitude, learning about the plants and animals we encounter in our learn space daily.
- Seeing these outcomes will show us that we are successful!

Connecting Our statement on Play to our CORE ROUTINES...

- Meet at the Day
- Morning Meeting
- Questioning and Tracking
- Expanding Sensory Awareness
- Sit Spots
- Animal Forms
- Wondering
- Mapping
- Risk Taking
- Shared Living
- Mind's Eye Imagining

* We believe children have a right to materials that connect their skills of respect and curiosity for the natural world. We believe complex materials offer children the chance to express complex thoughts and ideas. (pg 245 from our program statement policy)



Created By...

- Sarah Montgomery
- Brooklyn Macdonald
- Jenn Killam

* At Discovery Educators across play partners worked with the values of curiosity, wonder, gratitude, possibility and love. Educators use these values to guide the materials and space they co-build with their children. (pg 245 from our program statement policy)

ART & CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES



Reflection:
Two spaces in our backyard has become opportunities for creating and drawing. The flowers make it very pretty, and we like to draw the flowers.



CORE ROUTINES:
• Sit Spots
• Animal Forms
• Wondering
• Mapping
• Risk Taking
• Shared Living
• Mind's Eye Imagining

SCIENCE & SENSORY OPPORTUNITIES



Look at our art tree and see how many children have drawn the same thing. (pg 245 from our program statement policy)

Endurance
Curiosity
Possibility
Gratitude
Love

MUD KITCHEN & MESSY MATERIALS



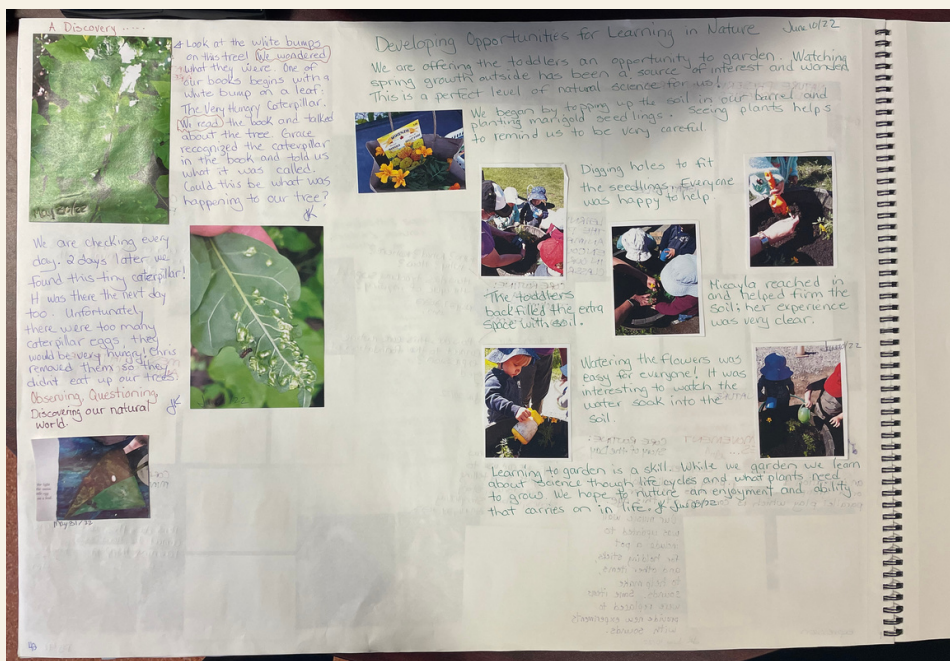
CORE ROUTINES:
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How do they support children and children to show their ideas and thoughts.

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Here is an example of some rich educator research from our toddler program at Discovery Child Care Centre. The educators embarked on a reflective journey to understand and notice the Discovery values. From this, the educators shared that they were noticing more joy in their work and saw children's behavior and expression in a newer, positive way. The educators used tools such as the Floorbook and reflective squares to reflect on each others ideas and consider how to enrich their work further. From this we plan to dig deeper into some specific questions and put together a piece of documentation as a team.

Gratitude to Sarah RECE, Jenn RECE, and Brooklyn for your effort and intention on this project.

What to do next?

Step 7: Responsive Planning

What can you do next to enrich or extend this learning?

Responsive planning allows us to think, discuss, collaborate with, and revisit the work from an experience or activity. This experience is where we can take documentation, dissect the learning, and enrich it to create further learning experiences. This is where you get to ask any question of the work that you or the children would like and understand articulate: WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT and WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GO NEXT?

- How can we enrich this experience further (i.e. adding newer, complex materials, enriching the environment etc.)
- What values did I see represented in this work (i.e. curiosity) and how might we be intentional about cultivating this moving forward?
- What processes of learning did you notice the children exploring?
- What captivated you or the children?
- What do you think the children are curious about?
- How could you extend this further with verbal, behavioral, or material prompts?



Pedagogical documentation

These questions can be connected to your curiosities and most certainly should be connected to the observations and the curiosities of your children. These questions can be used to enrich and extend literally hundreds of new activities and experiences for children.

This cycle of inquiry is perpetual and will continue to evolve with experience and the frequency that you offer new experiences to children. Some may lead nowhere and others may lead you to some of the most profound theories, ideas, and experiences with young children that will not only shape the way they think and learn about the world but the way YOU think and learn about the world.

“The middle is messy, but it’s also where all the magic happens, all the tension that creates goodness and learning.”

BRENÉ BROWN

