

Playful Inquiry February 20-21, 2015 – Calgary - A few references

We very much enjoyed sharing Opal School's research with you! In doing this work, we're aware that we are standing on the shoulders of giants. Many of you were frantically trying to write down some of the passages we quoted, so we wanted to follow up by offer some of those passages below. In addition to these "outside" experts, our research depends most of all on reflecting on the experiences of the children and adults we work with. We look forward to hearing from you about what you're learning from your classroom experiences and the connections you make to our time together!

With warm regards,
Matt & Susan

Donald Graves, *The most powerful thing a teacher can say is, 'Write with me.'*

Lucy Calkins:

There is no greater gift a writing teacher can give than to help another person know he or she has a story to tell.

As writers, what we all need more than anything else in the world is listeners, listeners who will respond with silent empathy, with sighs of recognition, with laughter and tears and questions and stories of their own. Writers need to be heard.

Carlina Rinaldi:

from [In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching, and learning](#)

*We try to avoid any pre-definition that obliged you not to play the game of life with the children — Loris Malaguzzi says that the exhibit, *The 100 Languages of Children* is against all pedagogy whose purpose is in some way to predict the result, which is a sort of predictor that pre-determines the result, and that becomes a sort of prison for the child and for the teacher, and for the human being.*

from *The Relationship Between Documentation and Assessment*

As human beings, we are all researchers of the meaning of life. Yet it is possible to destroy this attitude of the child with our quick answers and our certainty. How can we support and sustain this attitude of children to construct explanations? How can we cultivate the child's intention to research? In this attitude, we find the roots of creativity, the roots of philosophy, the roots of curiosity, and the roots of ethics.

But the real issue in documentation, with which I am trying more and more to struggle, is who is observing and who is observed. And I see a lot of reciprocity. When you take a picture or you make a document, in reality you don't document the child but your knowledge, your concept, your idea. So it's more and more visible -- your limits and your vision about the child. You show not who that child is, but your thought. You don't show the child, but the relationship and the quality of your relationship, and the quality of your looking at him or her. That is why it's so dramatic because the king is naked!

from *The Pedagogy of Listening: The Listening Perspective from Reggio Emilia*

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Listening is not easy. It requires a deep awareness and a suspension of our judgments and prejudices. It requires openness to change. It demands that we value the unknown, and overcome the feelings of emptiness and precariousness that we experience when our certainties are questioned.

By moving from one language to another, and by reflecting on these shifts, children modify and enrich their theories. But this is true if, and only if, children have the opportunity to make these shifts in a group context – with others – and if they have the chance to listen and be listened to by others.

Charles Kettering: *Research is a high-hat word that scares a lot of people. It needn't. It is nothing but a state of mind - a friendly, welcoming attitude towards change.... It is the 'tomorrow' mind instead of the 'yesterday' mind.*

Brene Brown: *[Shame is] the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.*

Steven Johnson: *Chance favors the connected mind.*

Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning:

Learning is stronger when it matters, when the abstract is made concrete and personal.

There's virtually no limit to how much learning we can remember as long as we relate it to what we already know. In fact, because new learning depends on prior learning, the more we learn, the more possible connections we create for further learning.

Roger Hart, Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship: *A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic.*

Maya Angelou: *Love liberates. Pick up the battle and make it a better world. It can be better. But it is up to us.*

Karen Gallas, Imagination and Literacy: A Teacher's Search for the Heart of Learning: *Our work together leads me to wonder what would happen if all children in all parts of the world had the opportunity to explore, on a daily basis, what it means to be human in the midst of diversity.*

Loris Malaguzzi:

from Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins

We don't want to teach children something that they can learn by themselves. We don't want to give them thoughts that they can come up with by themselves. What we want to do is activate within children the desire and will and great pleasure that comes from being the authors of their own learning.

from Rinaldi, In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching, and learning

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We can be sure that if we take away the child's ability, possibility and joy in projecting and exploring, then the child dies. The child dies if we take away from him the joy of questioning, examining, and exploring. He dies if he does not sense that the adult is close enough to see how much strength, how much energy, how much intelligence, invention, capacity and creativity he possesses.

Elliot Eisner, "The Satisfactions of Teaching": *Unanswerable questions should be a source of comfort. They ensure that you will always have something to think about! But why do puzzlements provide satisfaction? Because they invite the most precious of human abilities to take wing. I speak of imagination, the neglected stepchild of American education.*

Vea Vecchi, "The Atelier: For a Richer and More Comprehensive Knowledge of New Cultural Visions"

Ellin Oliver Keene, To Understand: New Horizons in Reading Comprehension

Katie Wood Ray, Study Driven: A Framework for Planning Units of Study in the Writers Workshop

Maxine Greene:

To call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise.

Seeking their own perceptual orders, seeking patterns of meaning as they make their own imprints on the world, they may be freed to feel the paintings watching as they themselves learn how to see and bring paintings to life by lending them their own.

To make things harder for people means awakening them to their freedom.

Sarah Lewis, The Rise: Creativity, the Gift of Failure, and the Search for Mystery: An encounter with pictures that moves us, those in the world and the ones it creates in the mind, has a double-barreled power to convey humanity as it is, and through the power of the imagination, to ignite an inner vision of life as it could be.

Kenneth Lonergan, *I think we live so much in our imaginations – not just artist types but everyone – that in some ways the imaginative connection you get between a play or movie or book or painting or piece of music and its respective audience is as close as we ever get to each other.*

Ann Pelo, "A Pedagogy for Ecology": *I remembered with a child's open-hearted joy, how it feels to give over to a place, to be swept into an intimate embrace with the earth.*

Michael Brenson, *The aesthetic response is miraculous. Such an astonishing amount of psychological, social and historical information can be interwoven into a single connective charge that a lifetime of thinking cannot disentangle the threads.*

Jean Paul Sartre, *The work of art, from whichever way you approach it, is an act of confidence in the freedom of men.*

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John Dewey:

Life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interactions with it.

The enemies of the aesthetic are neither the practical nor the intellectual. They are the humdrum.

Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is.

Works of art that are not remote from common life, that are widely enjoyed in a community, are signs of a unified collective life... In the degree to which art exercises its office, it is also a remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity.

If he perceives aesthetically, he will create an experience of which the intrinsic subject matter, the substance, is new.

Words cannot duplicate the expressiveness of the object.

New ideas come leisurely yet promptly to consciousness only when work has previously been done in forming the right doors by which they may gain entrance.

Works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience.