

# The Importance of Documentation

## **Children's learning is enhanced.**

- Children become even more curious, interested, and confident when they think about the meaning of what they have done.
- The processes of preparing and displaying examples of the children's experience and effort provides a kind of debriefing or revisiting where new understandings can be clarified, deepened, and strengthened.
- Children also learn from and are stimulated by each other's work in ways made visible through the documents displayed.
- A display documenting the work of one child or of a group often encourages other children to become involved in a new topic and to adopt a new method of doing something.

## **Children's ideas and work are taken seriously**

- Careful and attractive displays can convey to children that their efforts, intentions, and ideas are taken seriously.
- These displays are not intended primarily to serve decorative or show-off purposes.
- An important element in the project approach is the preparation of documents for display by which one group of children can let others in the class working on other parts of the topic learn of their experience and findings.
- Documentation encourages children to approach their work responsibly, with energy and commitment, showing both delight and satisfaction in the processes and the results.

## **Children's learning made visible**

- Documentation provides information about children's learning and progress. The focus is on how children making meaning, of how they come to understand.
- While teachers often gain important information and insight from their own first-hand observations of children, documentation of the children's work in a wide variety of media provides compelling public evidence of the intellectual capability and competence of young children.
- Documentation uncovers the learning process as it highlights children's theories, interests and relationships.
- Conversation or dialogue is used to present children's words as serious attempts to understand concepts and ideas.

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## Teachers plan and evaluate with children

- Continuous planning is based on the evaluation of work as it progresses.
- As the children undertake complex individual or small group collaborative tasks over a period of several days or weeks, the teachers examine the work each day and discuss with the children their ideas and the possibilities of new options for the following days.
- Planning decisions can be made on the basis of what individual or groups of children have found interesting, stimulating, puzzling, or challenging.
- Experiences and activities are not planned too far in advance, so that new aspects of work can emerge based on children's interests and be documented.
- Teachers reflect on the work in progress and the discussion that surrounded it, and consider possible new directions the work might take
- When teachers and children plan together with openness to each other's ideas, the activity is likely to be undertaken with greater interest than if the child had planned alone, or the teacher had been unaware of the challenge facing the child.
- The documentation provides a kind of ongoing planning and evaluation that can be done by the team of adults who work with the children.

## Teacher research and process

- As teachers examine the children's work and prepare the documentation of it, their own understanding of children's development and insight into their learning is deepened.
- Documentation provides a basis for tweaking teaching strategies, and a source of ideas for new strategies, while deepening teachers' awareness of each child's progress.
- Using information gained through documentation, teachers are able to make informed decisions about appropriate ways to support each child's development and learning.
- Documentation explains how one activity was pivotal in understanding an issue, connecting to previous learning, or provoking a new inquiry.
- Documentation helps teachers promote a positive exchange of ideas.
- Documentation highlights the issues or problems that emerge during a study or activity.

## Parents appreciate and participate

- Documentation makes it possible for parents to become more aware of their children's experience in the school.
- Parents' comments on children's work can also contribute to the value of documentation.
- Through learning about the work in which their children are engaged, parents may be able to contribute ideas the teachers may not have thought of.
- The opportunity to examine the documentation of a project in progress can also help parents to think of ways they might contribute their time and energy in their child's classroom.
- There are many ways parents can be involved in documentation within the classroom: listening to children's intentions, helping them find the materials they need, making suggestions, helping children write their ideas, finding and reading books.