

Pedagogical Documentation

An Approach to Early Learning Policy Framework



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Foreword

This policy document has been produced to support educators working across all sectors in Angus in providing the very best possible learning opportunities for our young children.

Based on the vision, principles and practice of Curriculum for Excellence, and influenced by the theories of Vygotsky, Dewey and Bruner and the early years centres in Reggio Emilia, this approach puts young children clearly at the heart of their learning. Part 1 of the document sets out the context to this approach.

Valuing children as unique individuals our documentation approach is underpinned by four key principles. These are that children:

- have the right to be listened to
- are resourceful and capable
- are active participants in their learning
- should be perceived as individuals within a social and cultural context

Part 2 of the document gives clear guidance on how these principles can be embedded in practice.

Over the past decade early educators across Angus have engaged in a wide range of Continuing Professional Development opportunities to support them in implementing documentation approaches in practice. Work undertaken during these CPD opportunities has helped to inform the development of this policy framework.

Part 3 of this document provides a range of CPD materials which can be used both by staff teams and by cluster networks to support reflection, critical thinking and professional discussion. In addition lists of further reading and web links provide very good opportunities for early years educators to deepen their understanding of this approach.

The document and support materials are also available on GLOW ensuring that the information is accessible to all educators.

My thanks go to all the educators who have influenced the development of this work. In particular I would like to record my thanks to Angela Lindsay, pre-school support teacher who was responsible for writing this policy framework.

In conclusion I am delighted that this document has been developed and am convinced that the messages contained within it will be key drivers in taking learning and teaching forward within all Angus settings.

Susan Duff - Senior Education Manager

Angus Council Pedagogical Documentation Policy Framework

Introduction

This document has been written in response to an identified need to share the philosophy of a pedagogical documentation approach both within and beyond pre-school settings in Angus. The approach has been in use in most pre-school settings for a number of years and following evaluation of our exhibition in 2010, it seemed appropriate to share the philosophy more widely, in particular across all early years settings. This document will provide further support to those who use the approach as part of their daily practice.

This policy framework has been written with three clear purposes in mind. Part 1 provides information about pedagogical documentation. Part 2 outlines the policy, values, beliefs and principles into practice and Part 3 supports Continuing Professional Development (CPD) through examples of practice, reflections and further reading. Reference is made to Part 3 throughout Parts 1 and 2 by further associated reading or reflection references in brackets.

Acknowledgement

This document is influenced by professional development led by Liz Greig and Pat Wharton of Early Learning Associates to whom we are very grateful for their inspiration and understanding of young children.

This policy framework is also supported by materials on GLOW.

PART 1

Pedagogical Documentation Approach in Action

A - I've got a really big potato and it has three eyes! (she laughs out loud).

Miss C - Why are you laughing?

A - Because its funny because they are not real eyes. I don't think that it can see anything.

Miss C - Why do you think they are called eyes then?

A - I don't really know. My eyes don't look like that. This one is like an alien.

1. Pedagogical Documentation Approach in Action

Pedagogical documentation is an approach developed and used in the nurseries of Reggio Emilia, a city in the north of Italy. (Part 3 - Further readings 1 and 6)

It is an 'Educational project for children birth to 6 years old which is based on the image of the child who has enormous potential and who is the subject of rights. The aim of this project is to promote children's education through the development of all their languages: expressive, communicative, symbolic, cognitive, ethical, metaphorical, logical, imaginative and relational.'

(Malaguzzi, 2000, p19 cited in Kinney and Wharton 2008 pxi).

The purpose of documentation is to make learning more visible. *'Pedagogical documentation plays a role in seeing and understanding rather than normalizing children against standardized measures'*.

(Moss, Dillon and Stratham, p23, cited in McDonald, 2007).

Documentation is a way of making learning transparent to all stakeholders; children, educators, parents, managers, members of the community and visitors.

Pedagogical Documentation is also a way of making teaching visible and in Angus we are adopting the view that in order to inform learning and teaching and professional development, documentation will make both learning and teaching visible and transparent.

Documentation: 'A working definition

Some of the elements of documentation include:

- *conducting careful observations.*
- *developing questions and tentative answers about how and what children are learning.*
- *collecting evidence of individual and group learning.*
- *interpreting observations and evidence in relation to your question(s).*
- *inviting others' interpretations.*
- *using the information to guide future teaching.*
- *starting all over again'.*

Making Learning Visible Project 2005

Making learning visible

There are various documentation tools and media that can be used which enable adults to gather and document information about how children are going about their learning (approaching their learning/their sense making):

Tools for gathering information:

- Digital voice recorders
- DVD clips
- Interactive Whiteboard
- Photographs
- Powerpoint presentation
- Talking books

Collections of evidence:

- Diaries
- Folios
- Group Learning Books
- Photographs
- Learning Walls
- Mind maps

Children's representations:

- Drawings
- Models
- Movements
- Schemas

Adults' presentations:

- Wall panels
- Powerpoint presentation

The above examples show evidence of learning experiences and the way in which children go about their learning. The actual learning becomes visible and transparent in the publication of narratives, dialogue and captions created by the educators.

It is not possible to use all of the above at once nor is it desirable to use them all. Rather it is important that the type of pedagogical documentation reflects what is being documented, e.g. a conversation is possibly best documented using a digital voice recorder or

DVD. Concentration may be best documented through a photograph supported by a brief comment, e.g. the length of time and further obvious signs of concentration. A child's understanding of place and time might be best shown through a drawing of an event with a commentary to match. It is essential that educators use the best approach for the learning being made visible.

In addition consideration should be given to whom we are making learning visible and transparent and the most appropriate way to do this for different audiences, e.g. a group of parents may prefer to watch a DVD with a spoken commentary explaining learning, rather than reading a written commentary.

Individual learning

Each child, although unique, lives within a social and cultural context and for pedagogical documentation to be as effective as possible it is essential that educators try to understand each child's social and cultural context and how this affects learning. Individual learning can be documented in a folio as this is particular to each child whereas a group book shows how a learning group has developed knowledge, skills, processes and attitudes.

Group learning (Appendix 3)

Children are all unique but in a group setting are individuals in relation to others, their own family and cultural context as well as to their environment. When documenting the learning of the group there will be an emphasis on how children learn together, in relation to each other and so it is important that this is documented as part of the learning process.

Making teaching visible

Teaching can become visible and transparent through pedagogical documentation particularly if the educators can be seen and heard in the documentation. In the same way that learning is analysed, teaching too can be analysed. For example, educators can hear their words and scrutinise how they support and extend children's learning through quality and purposeful interactions. They can analyse how well they 'listen' to children. Analysis of teaching will become an integrated part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) encouraging staff to learn more about this approach through professional dialogue and personal research. (Further reading 2 - Appendix 3)

2. The Scottish and Angus Context and a Pedagogical Documentation Approach

In Angus, originally set within the context of Assessment is for Learning, the approach was introduced as an appropriate way to assess where young children were in their learning and then to identify next steps. Whilst this still remains a focus for using this approach there have been many changes within the context of early years in Scotland, stated in documents such as The Early Years Framework, 'Getting It Right' in Angus, Curriculum for Excellence and the Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families, which have encouraged us to look again at this approach in Angus.

A pedagogical documentation approach to early learning is a way of working with children which will become embedded in practice. The Reggio approach is set within the cultural, economic and political context of that specific region in Italy and in Angus we have chosen to use a pedagogical documentation approach within our own cultural, economic and political context. As there are certain requirements that have to be met in Scotland this document highlights how we are inspired by the Reggio approach but clearly sets this inspirational approach within the context of our own authority.

Pre-Birth to three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families

There are four key principles which underpin the Pre-Birth to three document: Rights of the Child, Responsive Care, Relationships and Respect. These principles also underpin a documentation approach. The Rights of the Child underpin the whole approach as children have the right to be listened to (Article 12 Respect for the views of the child, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in UNICEF (undated)) (Further reading 7) and this is translated into practice by observation and interaction that respects each child as an individual within a social and cultural context which also recognises the importance of positive relationships between children, children and educators and educators, parents and the wider community.

A Pedagogical Documentation Approach to Early Learning and Curriculum for Excellence

This approach embraces the values and principles that underpin Curriculum for Excellence; justice, compassion, integrity and wisdom. It is a creative approach based on an inspiring curriculum which can meet the needs and interests of all children. Through focused learning, educators get to know children

better and thus provide further, more meaningful learning experiences. The approach is based on valuing children as members of society who have a voice, have capabilities and who are rich in potential. It is about valuing educators as professionals whose interest in the child means they critically analyse and reflect their contribution to each child's development and learning.

The four capacities

In relation to the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence documentation provides opportunities for children:

- to be successful learners by: encouraging participation in planning learning, motivating children by making their learning visible, sharing it with others, reviewing and analysing learning.
- to be confident individuals by: recognising their achievements through making learning visible and sharing with others, recognising children's capabilities and resourcefulness and building self-esteem.
- to be responsible citizens by: making decisions about their own learning in relation to self and that of others.
- to be effective contributors by: putting forward ideas, suggestions and theories which are valued and acted upon by skilled educators.

The seven principles of curriculum design

Using a documentation approach supports the seven principles of curriculum design in the following ways:

Breadth

- Documentation makes visible the breadth of learning opportunities offered to and experienced by each child.
- Space and resources to play and learn are planned collaboratively to ensure each child has access to broad, balanced and relevant learning opportunities.

Relevance

- Documentation puts the child at the centre of learning.
- Documenting a child's learning allows the educator to clearly assess what is really relevant to the child – to see things from the child's perspective.
- This approach allows children to make sense of their learning, to re-visit and evaluate experiences and to see the value of the learning in which they engage.

Personalisation and choice

- Through documenting children's learning educators are able to respond to the needs, interests, enquiries and ideas of individual children/groups of children.
- As children engage in their learning, they are given many opportunities to make choices. The educator's role is to support children in making choices then to plan interactions to extend children's learning based on these choices.
- Children are part of the planning, review and decision making process and as a result take more ownership of their learning.
- Encouraging children to make choices builds self-confidence and helps them to feel valued.

Challenge and enjoyment

- Making children central to their learning will implicitly mean that they are more challenged, motivated and engaged in the learning process.
- Group learning encourages children to collaborate and learn from and with each other.
- Documenting learning clearly shows how capable, rich and resourceful young children are.
- A documenting learning approach involves children in their own learning giving them a positive outlook to engaging in both personal and group enquiries.

Depth

- Children are given opportunities and time to create, explore, discover, investigate, and make decisions by themselves or collaboratively in learning groups.
- Children are given opportunities to share ideas, thoughts and feelings through personal and group learning stories, photographs, displays and video providing opportunities to review, re-visit and extend learning.
- The educator is part of the learning group and brings his/her own experience and knowledge to help bring meaning and depth to children's enquiries, theories and hypotheses.
- As children begin to participate more actively in their learning, their understanding becomes deeper and more meaningful.

Coherence

A documentation approach is about

- Taking a holistic approach to children's learning.

- Removing barriers to learning by giving children opportunities to transfer knowledge, skills and understanding – making connections in learning.
- Seeing things from the child's perspective and asking the question, 'What is really meaningful to each child?'
- Giving children and educators opportunities to build on prior learning thus supporting continuity of experience.

Progression

- Documenting children's learning in a variety of ways helps educators to plan children's learning based upon previous experience and achievements.
- Carefully analysing documentation ensures that educators allow children to progress at their own pace in different areas of learning.
- Documenting learning provides opportunities for children, parents and educators to review, re-visit and build on prior knowledge, skills, strategies and processes.

Documentation and planning

In the Reggio nurseries there is no set curriculum but rather one that evolves as a result of the documentation process. In Scotland we have a curriculum which we must ensure that all of our children, from the age of three to eighteen experience. Documentation is the Angus approach to support the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). When planning with children educators will identify some of the potential learning and will have a focus in their minds. How this is implemented will depend very much on the interests and needs of the children as well as the interactions. Young children's learning is holistic and not compartmentalised and therefore children will be learning and developing across areas of the curriculum. Staff need to be fully aware of linking learning to and progression in curricular areas. It is very important that learning is made visible through using documentation as it is easier to show the holistic nature of young children's learning and the connections that they make. Documenting learning is also a very good way to show breadth, challenge and application in the small chunks of learning relevant to young children. The Angus planning and profiling tool 'On Track with Learning' will be used within the documentation process to plan and record significant, focused learning. More holistic learning (how children learn, how they make sense of the world, how relationships impact on learning, attitudes etc.) will be made visible through the documentation process and in particular through the educators' commentaries.

'The adult's schema of expectation is not prescriptive but orientative' (p70 Rinaldi 2006). Learning should evolve in a meaningful way as the encounter or project develops supported by educators who listen to and plan with the children.

Curriculum for Excellence learning and teaching approaches

Using a pedagogical documentation approach to early learning is underpinned by the learning and teaching approaches outlined in Curriculum for Excellence.

- Engaging and active.
- Setting challenging goals (relevant to each child).
- Shared expectations and standards (documentation is an excellent tool for moderation within levels and across settings, between partners and Local Authority and between pre-school and P1).
- Timely, accurate feedback (quality interactions which support and extend learning, educators discussing learning with the children as part of the reviewing process).
- Collaborative (learning groups feature prominently in a documentation approach).
- Reflecting the ways different learners progress (this is the analysis of learning by educators and children).

By using this approach educators are in a more informed position to see what and how children learn. Knowledge, skills, processes, strategies and attitudes (Appendix 2) all become visible through this approach which allows educators to see the whole child more clearly, thus impacting on future learning experiences. Documenting skills in particular allows educators to show development in skills that are common across curricular areas but which are essential for learning, life and work. Using this approach can also show educators how much their teaching contributes to the development of skills, e.g. whether there are enough opportunities for children to develop higher order skills.

(Reflections 2 and 3)

'By talking about and planning their own learning from early years onwards, children and young people will develop the skills to:

- *identify, discuss and reflect on their own evidence of learning.*
- *use appropriate language for self-evaluation*
- *take responsibility for managing their own learning.*

- *help to plan their own next steps in learning and set their own learning goals*
- *make informed choices and decisions about their future learning'*

p13 The Scottish Government (2009)

Documentation provides the perfect opportunity for children to develop the skills outlined above.

However, assessment traditionally focuses on what is valued by the educator who is assessing. Although there is an emphasis on skills development within Curriculum for Excellence, a pedagogical documentation approach values all aspects of learning and therefore educators should ensure that there is not an overemphasis on skills to the detriment of the other aspects of learning e.g. processes, strategies, attitudes, knowledge and understanding.

3. The Roles and Responsibilities of the Educator in a Pedagogical Documentation Approach (Reflections 4 and 5)

The educator's role becomes more research orientated basing practice around a cycle of enquiry and reflection. Educators become part of the enquiry with the children, no longer assuming how and what children hope to learn but working with them, listening to all that children say and do. Further, pedagogical documentation allows for a closer look at how children are perceived, listened to and valued in our settings. According to Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, (2007, p6) 'Documentation increases the knowledge of the teacher, her knowledge of children's learning styles and behaviours and perhaps most importantly her relationships with the child'. The educator needs to adopt the role of researcher when using a documentation approach. It is an opportunity for the educator to better understand each child's learning by using gathered documentation for analysis to find out what children have been learning and how children have been learning (Appendix 1). In addition to researching individual's learning the educator can also find out about specific aspects of learning within that group of children.

In practice this means that educators have to engage in depth with a child or children, listening to what they are really saying through different languages rather than what the adult thinks they are saying/

communicating. Part of this process is also about deciding what is relevant for documentation purposes.

Educators have enquiries too just as children do, e.g. Is there a link between children's blockplay and later development of spatial awareness? How could documentation support this type of enquiry? The whole purpose is to use the analysis of documentation to improve opportunities and experiences for the specific group of children as well as for children in general.

CPD

A key part of the educator's responsibility and role in this approach is to be actively engaged in CPD. The process of documentation is a reflective and analytical one and it is crucial that educators are given opportunities to practice these skills, not only in terms of children's learning but also of their own. Professional dialogue plays a big part in the documentation process and is necessary as part of the process of making learning visible and transparent. The reflections and further reading set out in Part 3 will support critical thinking.

Relationships

Relationships are central to this approach. By documenting learning and making it visible it is easier to establish very strong relationships between children, parents and educators because everyone can see that the children are respected and valued. The inbuilt process of reviewing learning creates this opportunity for children to hear their words and see their involvement thus helping them to become very aware of their own thinking and to know that their voices are heard.

Ethical practice

Pedagogical documentation is an all encompassing way of working with children which values them and their parents. It is a way of really listening and



allowing the curriculum to evolve in a way that involves children's ideas and enquiries. It is also a highly respectful approach of viewing children within their differing contexts and recognising that their lives are lived in relation to many things including other people and their environment and not in isolation. Shared values and beliefs are central to this approach. Using this approach requires a great deal of sensitivity to children's and adults' feelings which should always be respected in the documentation process. (Further reading 1)

The Role of Observation within a Pedagogical Documentation Approach

Observation is a key part of the educator's role when working with young children yet documentation is not about child observation in the sense of assessing *'psychological development in relation to already predetermined categories produced from developmental psychology and which define what the normal child should be doing at a particular age.'*

p146, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007).

This type of approach to observation assumes that children will fit into specific boxes in terms of learning. However *'pedagogical documentation by contrast is mainly about trying to see and understand what is going on in the pedagogical work and what the child is capable of without any pre-determined framework of expectations and norms.'*

p146, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007).

A framework of expected developmental norms can be limiting in terms of what children are really capable of and what they can really do. That is why educators have to look beyond highly structured success criteria and restrictive checklists when working with young children. However, there will be times when this type of observation, e.g. identifying barriers to learning, may be necessary but importantly observation within a documentation approach is about more of a holistic approach based on relationships between children, parents and educators.

Traditionally observation was seen as being best implemented as objectively as possible but when relationships are developed between children and educators this is not possible. Observations within a documentation approach are subjective as they are based on the relationships that have formed between the children and educators as well as between the parents and educators. Each child lives in relation to others and learning should be viewed in this way too as a much more realistic picture of the child will evolve. It is important in a documentation approach that cognisance is taken of these relationships.

4. The Environment Required to Support a Pedagogical Documentation Approach (Reflections 6 and 7)

In Reggio the environment is referred to as the 'third teacher'. The environment that is required to be able to document children's learning has to be an environment:

- that is creative and inspiring (Further reading 3).
- in which children have the freedom to choose spaces and resources that encourage them to represent their thoughts and ideas in many different ways.
- that stimulates learning but does not interfere with learning.
- that fosters creativity in both children and adults.
- in which investigation is encouraged through the use of open ended materials that create no barriers to individual's learning.
- that incorporates the natural elements into play.

If the environment is sufficiently inspiring, including the educators working with the children, then children will be involved more deeply in their learning, allowing educators to spend time observing and documenting. An environment that is not inspiring does not create opportunities for children to show their full potential and therefore learning is inhibited. If this is the case it is likely that documentation will be limited and limiting in terms of giving a better understanding of children and improving further learning experiences.

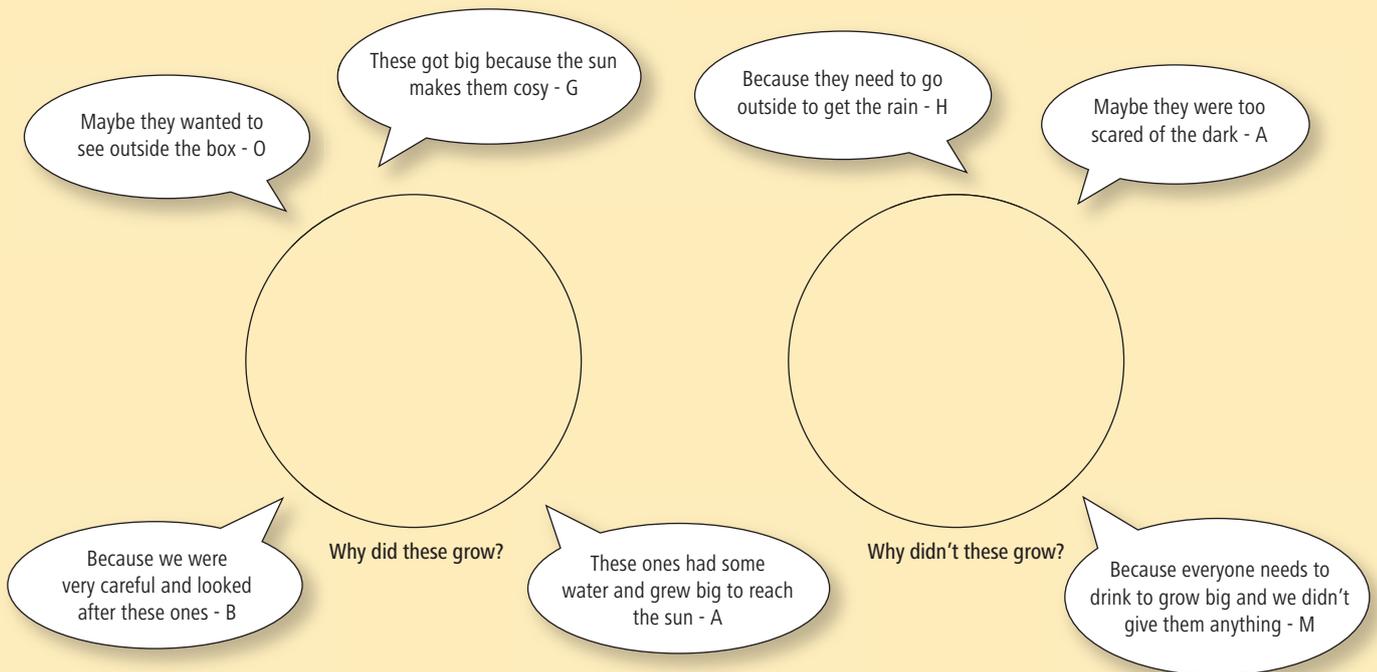
For example, an art area with limited resources and with adult led activities on a regular basis does not provide a stimulating environment in which children can show their potential. Educators will only be able to gather quality documentation if the experiences on offer and the interactions are of the highest quality.

The actual environment itself should be a beautiful one that inspires children and adults alike. Wall space should be pale with no intrusive colour that will detract attention from the documentation and from the children themselves. (Further reading 4)

What can be documented? (Reflection 8 and Appendix 1)

- Children's learning and relationships
- Language
- Questions and theories
- Concentration and levels of involvement

Recording children's ideas encourages us to reflect on learning



- Skills
- Learning processes and strategies
- Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Teaching
- The environment

When can we document?

It is pertinent to document an episode of learning, which might become a project, when you think there may be enough evidence gathered to suggest that there is a real interest amongst a group of children, e.g. when a group is keen on a particular type of play and revisit it often – gather some of their learning, discuss with the group what it is about and whether they would like to pursue this further. Draw up a plan (this might be a mindmap), discuss what they might find out about/investigate/enquire about and then become part of that learning group with the children – supporting, scaffolding, co-researching and co-constructing as well as sharing with parents. The educator is part of the learning group and can influence what happens next whilst really listening to the children. It might also be when you have gathered enough evidence to suggest that the children would benefit from having their learning/experiences/enquiries documented or for a specific purpose, e.g. developing relationships on entry to the setting or documenting a project that is long-term such as planting and growing. **(Reflection 9)**

5. Pedagogical Documentation in Relation to Assessment

Building the Curriculum 5 outlines key principles of assessment. The purposes of assessment include:

- supporting learning.
- helping to plan next steps.
- informing learners and their parents of their progress.
- summarising achievements (sometimes through qualifications).
- monitoring the education system and influencing future developments.

The Scottish Government (2010b), p2

By using a pedagogical documentation approach educators are reflecting on learning which has been made visible and transparent to all therefore making it easy to share learning with parents as well as children. Analysis and evaluation (Appendix 1) of documentation supports the learning experiences on offer as well as providing a means for educators to monitor the effectiveness of their teaching. The analysis of the documentation can be used to provide summaries of achievements at relevant points throughout the year.

Eight key ideas

There are eight key ideas which shape the priorities in Building the Curriculum 5. These ideas are:

1. Learner engagement in assessment is crucial.
2. Teachers need to use many approaches to assessment.
3. Assessment should focus on breadth, challenge and application.
4. Evidence of learners' progress can be gathered across the four contexts for learning.
5. Professional dialogue is central to agreeing standards.
6. Assessments should be reliable, valid and proportionate.
7. Curriculum for Excellence principles should underpin reporting.
8. Assessment needs to be quality assured.'

The Scottish Government (2010b, p2).

Each idea will now be taken in turn and discussed in relation to pedagogical documentation.

1. **Learner engagement in assessment is crucial**

A pedagogical documentation approach fully embraces this idea. When children reflect on their learning, made visible by themselves or the educators, they are encouraged to think critically about their own thinking (metacognition) and learning, what they thought they found out about, what they know now and what they understand and what they can do now. Involving children in the planning process encourages this engagement too. Working collaboratively as a learning group encourages children to consider peer assessment in addition to self assessment.

2. **Teachers need to use many approaches to assessment**

By using a pedagogical documentation approach educators are using different ways to make learning visible which includes 'say, make, write and do'. Educators make learning experiences visible through photographs, drawings, video and models and make the actual learning visible through their written narratives. This ensures that the approach to assessment is varied according to the learning opportunities.

3. **Assessment should focus on breadth, challenge and application**

Pedagogical Documentation makes teaching visible as well as learning and is a perfect way to show the breadth of learning that children have as different experiences are documented in a variety of ways. When educators show their voices in the documentation process with young children the challenge in learning becomes more obvious. The analysis to accompany the learning can show where

the challenge lies for different children. Quality documentation with informed analysis can show holistic learning, i.e. knowledge, understanding, skills, strategies, processes and attitudes which supports educators to be able to recognise when children are able to apply existing learning into new situations.

4. **Evidence of learners' progress can be gathered across the four contexts for learning**

Two relate to learning within curriculum areas and interdisciplinary learning. The other two – the ethos and life of the school as a community and broader opportunities for achievement in the outside world – are now seen as equally important.

(The Scottish Government 2010b, p6).

Documentation can show learning across all of the curricular areas as young children's learning is interlinked. Learning is made visible for all and there are opportunities for this approach to involve others, sharing learning with parents and beyond just as there is with home/setting documentation that encourages educators and children to share achievements that occur at home.

5. **Professional dialogue is central to agreeing standards**

A key feature of pedagogical documentation is professional dialogue. Educators should be explaining and describing what they see with other professionals in an attempt to understand children better. In doing so they are also moderating learning. This can be done in and across settings e.g. practitioners' cluster networks.

6. **Assessments should be reliable, valid and proportionate**

Pedagogical documentation will be used by all early years staff and it is likely that as an assessment tool, including moderation, this will be a reliable and valid approach which is also proportionate as it is part of daily practice.

7. **Curriculum for Excellence principles should underpin reporting**

As outlined at the beginning of this section pedagogical documentation makes learning visible and should be shared as a form of reporting.

8. **Assessment needs to be quality assured**

Documentation, in different forms and shared by educators, parents and the wider community provides an ongoing opportunity for quality assurance. The needs of individuals, learning experiences offered, interactions and parental and community involvement should all be visible and transparent.

6. Conclusion

A pedagogical documentation approach to learning is one that really makes all people involved with young children consider children's perspectives and their approaches to working and being with children, in a way that they may not have previously done. It changes thinking and subsequently practice. It raises many questions and challenges but it is hoped that this document will support you in the challenges that may lie ahead. We believe that a pedagogical documentation approach to working with young children is the best way to deliver Curriculum for Excellence in Angus.

In summary

A pedagogical documentation approach is:

- underpinned by the same values as Curriculum for Excellence.
- about making learning and teaching visible and transparent to others.
- based on Rights and Respect.
- based on theories of Vygotsky, Dewey and Bruner.
- based on quality interactions and experiences.
- inclusive of all children, families and educators.
- a way of continuously developing professionally.
- a way of working that has to be learned.
- underpinned by shared principles.
- child led in conjunction with informed adult interaction.
- central to each child's learning.
- the best way to deliver Curriculum for Excellence when working with young children.

Further references and links to support understanding of the above can be found on GLOW.

PART 2

The Policy Framework

We will recognise children as
capable and resourceful

The Values Underpinning Curriculum for Excellence

'Justice, Wisdom, Integrity and Compassion.'

The values which underpin Curriculum for Excellence also underpin a pedagogical documentation approach to early learning.

In Angus current practice is guided by 'Effective Learning and Teaching in Angus Policy Guidelines'. The underpinning principles are listed below and are reflected in the principles underpinning this policy framework.

Underpinning Principles

We believe it is important to nurture in all children and young people a love of learning and a capacity to acquire the values, skills and knowledge needed for life in the 21st Century. To this end we wish to promote:

- *the fundamental values of wisdom, justice, freedom, compassion and integrity.*
- *the belief that all children and young people are often capable of greater achievement than they and others might at first recognise.*
- *positive relationships which engender mutual care and respect, security, encouragement and hope.*
- *a commitment to identify and address the needs of individual learners.*
- *the important relationship between the quality of learning experiences and pupil achievement.*
- *the importance of training and of supporting teachers and other staff involved in the teaching process.*
- *the value of partnerships involving staff, pupils, parents and carers, other agencies and the community.*

The vision statement for the Angus Education Service underpins this policy. In Angus we are committed to realising the potential of children and young people by:

- *putting people at the heart of all we do.*
- *nurturing an ethos of achievement.*
- *striving for sustainable improvement.*
- *working co-operatively*

Angus Council (undated a)

Values and beliefs

A pedagogical documentation approach to early learning 'is underpinned by the value base of the setting and of those who are involved in the setting', (Greig 2008). In Angus we have explored values and beliefs during CPD sessions and it is from these discussions that the principles for this policy have been created. These principles should inform the way we work with young children, particularly aged three to six.

In Angus we value each child as a unique individual. From this value base we have created a set of principles which should underpin practice.

We believe that each child:

- has the right to be listened to and to be valued.
- is resourceful and capable.
- is an active participant in learning.
- should be perceived as an individual within a social and cultural context.

Principles in practice

Principle 1

We will listen to and value each child's opinion by:

- taking time to get to know each child.
- listening using all of our senses.
- responding appropriately to views, ideas and suggestions.

In practice this means:

- ensuring discussion takes place with parents and child prior to joining the setting.
- taking time to complete the 'My World' process before starting in the setting and using this information to begin the documentation process for each child.
- observing each child in context in a holistic way, analysing the observations (appendix 1) and adding commentaries as part of the documentation process.
- providing stimulating experiences for children to represent their ideas in different ways. (Further reading 5 and 6)
- observing and documenting children's words, movements, body language, drawings, dance, models (different forms of representation) analysing and responding appropriately.
- playing a key part in planning learning with children.

(Appendix 4)

Principle 2

We will recognise children as capable and resourceful by:

- responding to their needs and interests and individual stages of development.
- supporting them to follow and develop their interests, theories, knowledge, understanding, skills, processes, strategies, dispositions and different learning styles.

In practice this means:

- providing resources that are inspiring and meaningful and in response to needs and interests. These will be real, made from natural and quality recycled materials whenever possible. (Further Reading 5)
- preparing the environment for documentation by creating neutral backgrounds such as Hessian or painted a pale, neutral shade with no coloured borders (making documentation more visible and colour being created by the children themselves).

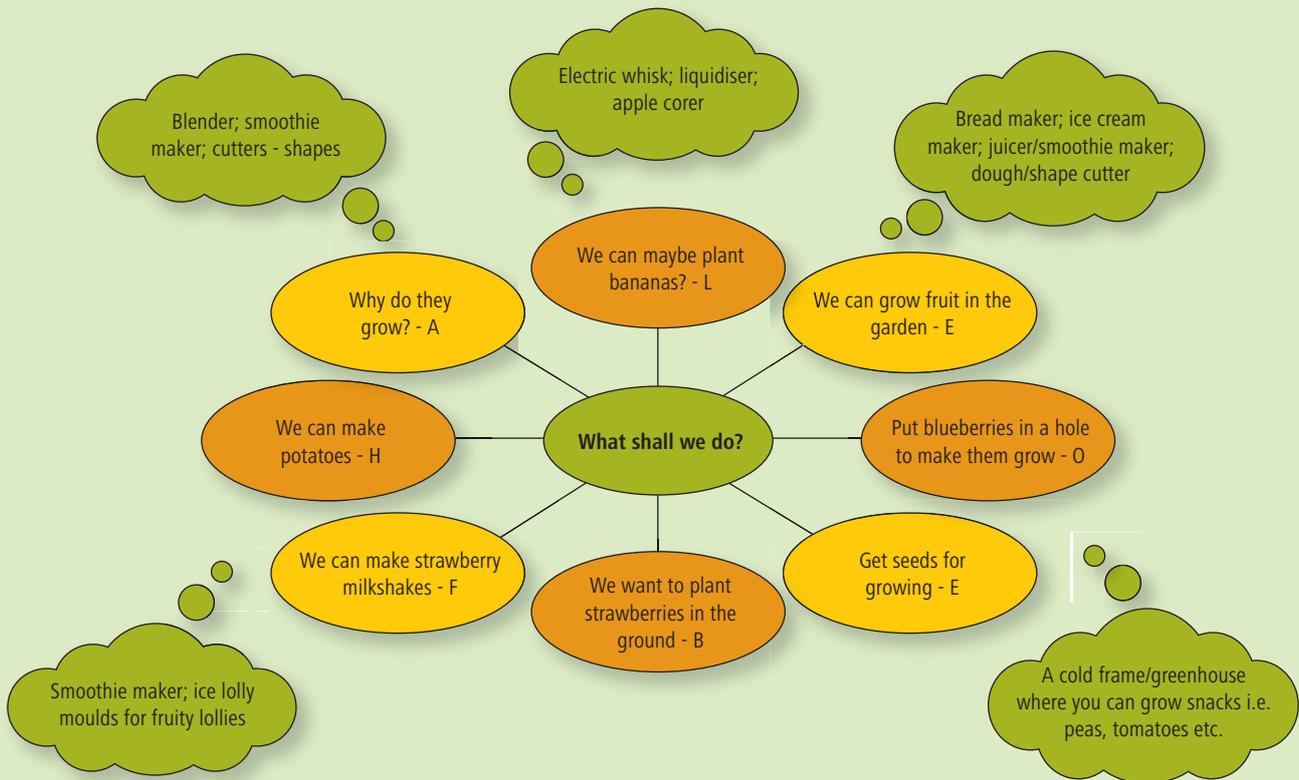
- documenting their ideas, e.g. mind maps, video, powerpoint, folios, group books etc.
- sharing learning with parents through discussion of documentation, e.g. folio/diary/wall panel.
- building up a picture of each child's learning that reflects capabilities and resourcefulness through individual and group documentation.
- observing in a way that allows us to find out about interests and theories and then document these.
- documenting learning in a way that focuses on knowledge, understanding, skills, processes, strategies, dispositions and style of learning. (Appendix 2)
- using documentation for assessment, identifying challenge, breadth and application in learning.

Making learning visible

<p>Thomas was engrossed in the machinery more than anything else. He shared his knowledge of tractors with farmer M and the children during the visit.</p>	<p>Thomas found some shredded paper and began to roll it round and round.</p>	<p>Educator: That's a good idea, it's important to get some rest to make sure you can drive the tractor safely.</p>
<p>He didn't ask many questions while at the farm but on return to pre-school, he talked at length about the visit and what he had learned about the machinery and how it helps with work on the farm. He also showed his interest and increasing knowledge in his chosen activities.</p>	<p>Educator: Can I ask what you are doing now? It looks interesting.</p>	<p>Thomas: You don't want to crash into stuff.</p>
<p>Thomas began to busy himself at the art table. He doesn't often choose this area so I was intrigued as to what he would do. He chose a tin that is normally used for play dough and a scoop and jug.</p>	<p>Thomas: I am making the hay bales to put in the field. My tractor has been working and made lots of hay bales.</p>	<p>With that, Thomas set off and began to look amongst the leaves and branches we collected. He selected a branch that had some leaves on it and tried to put it in the soil.</p>
<p>Educator: What are you doing Thomas?</p>	<p>Educator: How many do you think you will make?</p>	<p>Thomas: This is the tree. Aahh it fell down!</p>
<p>He didn't answer. He went to the tuff spot and began to fill the jug with soil. He brought it back to the table and filled the tin with the earth. He added a duplo tractor to it.</p>	<p>Thomas: I don't know yet.</p>	<p>Educator: Oh dear, what can you do now?</p>
<p>Thomas: This is my farm for the tractor.</p>	<p>He continued rolling his hay bales and added them to the field.</p>	<p>He got some sticky tape and applied it, but it fell over. He then got some plasticine, moulded it into a ball and stuck the twig into the top.</p>
<p>Educator: Wow it looks good.</p>	<p>Educator: Your tractor has been very busy. How many hay bales have they managed to make today?</p>	<p>Thomas: That's it.</p>
<p>Thomas: This is my farm for the tractor.</p>	<p>Thomas: They have just made three, it's getting too dark for them now. They will make some more tomorrow.</p>	<p>Educator: That works well, how did you know that would work?</p>
<p>Educator: Wow it looks good.</p>	<p>Thomas: 'Cause its sticky.</p>	<p>Thomas: 'Cause its sticky.</p>

They are bigger than the ones that I can see from my garden. I like the big wheels they are bigger than me.

Children's ideas were recorded on a mind map and families' ideas in thought bubbles - sharing learning



Principle 3

We recognise children to be active participants in their own learning by:

- engaging children in discussion, encouraging them to think about their learning.
- supporting children to pursue their own interests – giving them ownership.
- involving children's families in sharing home learning experiences.
- enabling children to organise themselves into learning groups.

In practice this means:

- reviewing documentation with children, asking them about their learning and identifying future learning.
- actively seeking children's ideas on the use of space and resources in relation to their learning.
- actively involving children in planning learning experiences through regular and spontaneous meeting times, e.g. times for planning with a particular learning group.
- using folios or diaries or wall panels to discuss learning with families as well as actively encouraging some kind of a record of experiences at home, e.g. photos/DVD/ comments in folio.

Principle 4

Children are perceived as individuals within their social and cultural context by:

- listening to the context of each child in our approach and involving parents/carers in sharing the documentation process.

In practice this means:

- making learning visible in an ethical way for each child that takes account of each particular context.
- making learning visible for parents in a way that is meaningful for each particular group of parents.

Professional Development

In order for this approach to work professional development has to be an integral part of daily practice.

Educators will do this by:

- actively engaging in relevant CPD to ensure up-to-date knowledge and understanding about a pedagogical documentation approach.
- making their teaching visible in the documentation process: questions/interactions and resourcing will be visible and analysed and the analysis used to engage in professional dialogue that will impact on practice.

This policy will be evaluated and monitored by staff, parents, management and centre based staff in June 2013.

PART 3

Continuing Professional Development - Reflections

Shared values and beliefs

Reflection 1: Shared values and beliefs

Aim: To consider personal values and beliefs and to come to a shared understanding which fits in with the philosophy of a pedagogical documentation approach.

Discuss:

- What do you value in terms of children and childhood?
- Are these values shared with others in your work context?
- How do you explore this with colleagues?
- Look at how the values underpinning Curriculum for Excellence and pedagogical documentation underpin your practice.

Reflection 2: Higher Order Thinking Skills

In Building the Curriculum 4 we are reminded of Anderson and Krathwohl's (2000) version of Bloom's taxonomy of higher order thinking skills (*figure 1*):

cited in Angus Council (undated) Skills for Learning, Life and Work in Angus '

- *Remembering involves such activities as recall, recognition or locating information.*
- *Understanding might involve activities such as describing, explaining, summarising and translating.*
- *Applying requires the learner to use or apply their knowledge and understanding in different contexts.*

- *Analysing requires learners to break down information into component parts and search for relationships.*
- *Evaluating involves making an informed judgement about something, for example an issue or method. Activities such as comparing, appraising, prioritising, rating or selecting, could involve learners in evaluating.*
- *Creating happens when learners are required to generate new ideas and products through activities such as designing, creative writing, planning, reconstructing, inventing, formulating, producing and composing'.*

p11 The Scottish Government (2009)

Use the extract above from Building the Curriculum 4, which provides descriptions of each level of Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl 2000, cited in Angus Council undated b) and discuss practical examples from your setting where you think children have the opportunity to develop all these higher order thinking skills.

Consider the example of documentation in Appendix 5 and try to identify how children are developing some of the thinking skills referred to above.

How can you use documentation more to identify children's development of these skills?

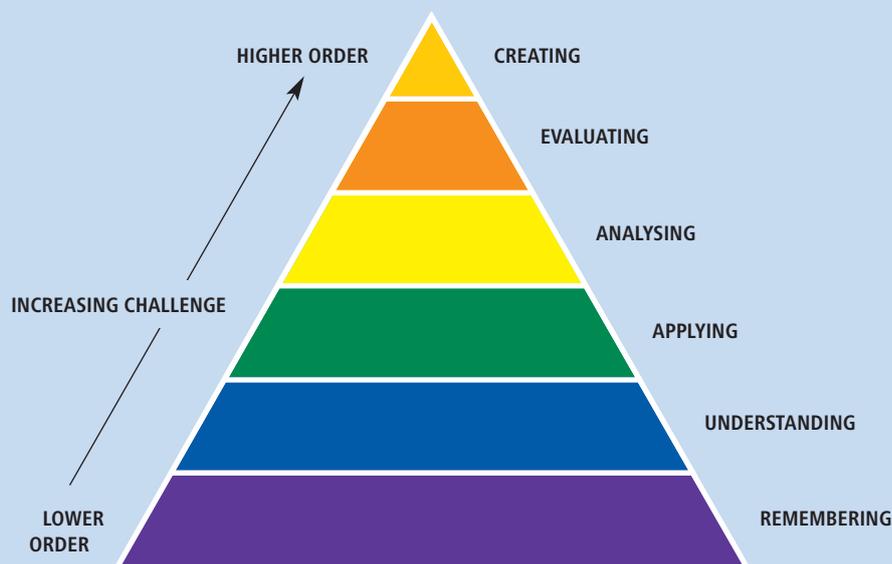


Figure 1

Reflection 3: Skills for Learning

Consider the ways that you use your documentation to help children develop the following skills:

- *identify, discuss and reflect on their own evidence of learning*
- *use appropriate language for self-evaluation*
- *take responsibility for managing their own learning*
- *help to plan their own next steps in learning and set their own learning goals*
- *make informed choices and decisions about their future learning'*

P13 The Scottish Government (2009)

Reflection 4: The roles and responsibilities of the educator

Aim: To highlight the different roles and responsibilities that the educator plays in a pedagogical documentation approach and to consider what your role is like in actual practice.

The following extract taken from the educator's journal shows the important role of the educator and is a good illustration of what some of the more technical terms relating to documentation mean. The writing in italics is that of the educator and the writing in brackets shows why this reflection helps the educator to use the documentation to inform learning and teaching.

The following extract can be used as a starting point for discussion about your roles in interacting, supporting and extending learning.

The two boys were playing with the cars and wanted to make a lift to raise the cars from the floor up to the window. They had looked at some ideas which were not successful. They approached an adult explaining what they wanted to do and asking if she had any ideas on how they could achieve their goal. (The two boys and the adult together could become a learning group).

The two boys and the adult discussed what they wanted to achieve. (What do the children want to learn about? The adult is listening to the children). The first thing they did was look for suitable materials to make the lift. (The educator is helping to resource with the children – co-constructing learning) The children discussed one way of raising the cars which was unsuccessful so with the support of the adult researched some other ways. (Co-researching and co-constructing – finding out together. The educator is suggesting and prompting ideas without telling the children). They decided which approach to use and constructed the lift using materials in the room. They evaluated the working model and made some refinements to the original design.

The two boys were assisting one another, listening to other people's suggestions and trying out each other's ideas. They were both thinking things through and working out problems. They were making changes and refining their ideas through practice. Both of the boys were leading and following at different points in the encounter. They were motivated and focused until they had completed their objective. (The children worked in relation to each other, the educator and their environment. The focus on co-operative learning is evident from the educator's reflections which show clearly, from the documentation, that these children were interdependent and independent).

The educator in this encounter supported the children to organise their ideas, to contribute her experience so that the children could expand on their ideas, to assist them in research and with choosing some of the materials used. These two boys learn by designing or 'making something', discussing thoughts and ideas and then refining their ideas until they are satisfied. (This is a very powerful statement showing that the educator has found out about how these children learn, the processes that they go through and also the strategies that they use. This also shows that the children were allowed to use their preferred strategies and were positively disposed to wanting to find out because of their self motivation. The documentation and reflections on learning can be used now to look at how the curriculum is offered to these children but perhaps also other children particularly when they move on into P1).

Reflection 5: Analysis of documentation

The extract below shows, through the analysis of documentation, what the educators learned about a group of children from a piece of documentation based around the interest of popular characters from Super Mario games.

The educators were amazed at the in-depth knowledge of these 4 year olds and just how articulate they are when sharing a common interest! At the heart of our pedagogy is the belief that learning should be an active process – that thought develops through action; that knowledge is gained through experience.

This encounter highlights the children's very positive disposition towards independent learning. It is clear to see that they are enthusiastic explorers who find out about the world around them in many different ways. They are highly motivated to learn new things and are able to direct their own learning. We have displayed photographs of this encounter – along with the children's drawings - in their individual wall spaces, in order to make their learning visible and to show how much we value their contributions and want to share their achievements.

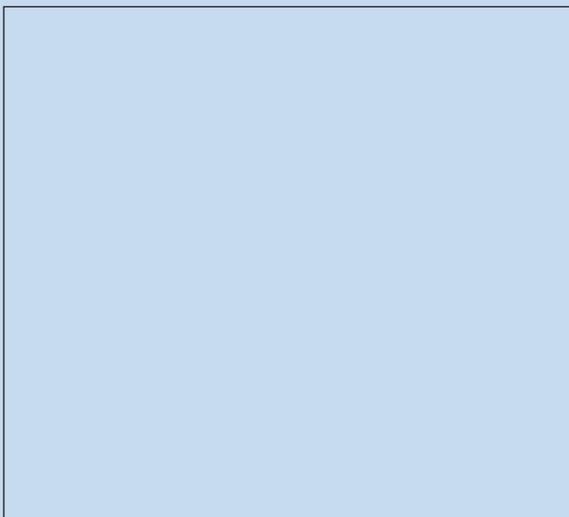
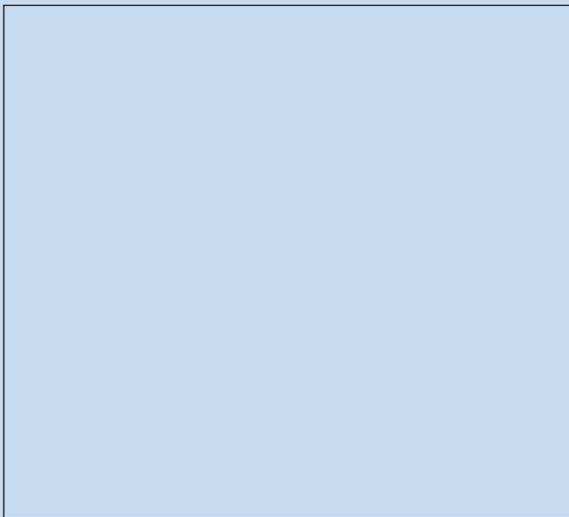
Now take a piece of your own documentation. What have you learned about your group of children? How can you use this information to support and extend learning in future?

Reflection 6: Creating an inspiring environment

Aim: To consider the extent that the environment is used as the 'third teacher'.

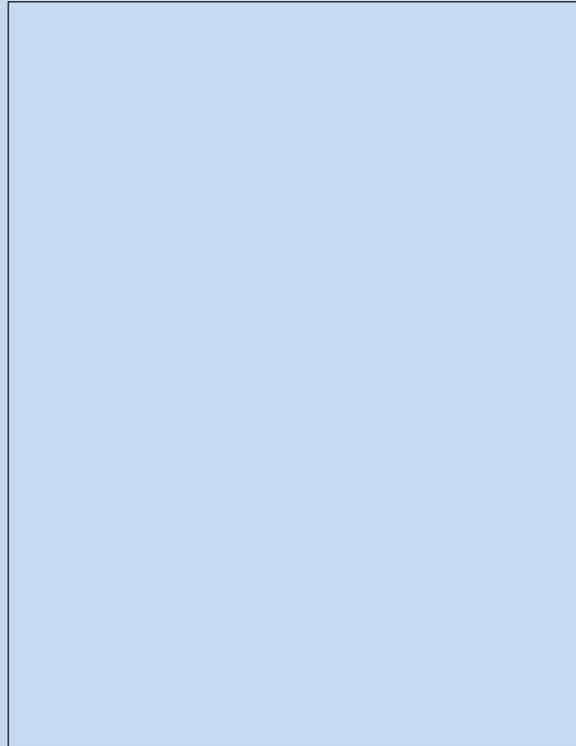
Creating a beautiful and inspiring environment is central to a pedagogical documentation approach to early learning. In the photos below you can see how the creative selection of resources offers different perspectives for children, thus opening up their minds to new possibilities. In this example the environment is created to be the 'third teacher'.

Now look at your own environment. Can you identify how you use the environment as the 'third teacher'?



Reflection 7: The environment

In the following picture you can see a table with small bits and pieces plus more small things on a shorter and smaller table. On the largest part of the table you can see frames that have been arranged to inspire children to create their



transient art inside the frames offering more opportunities for children to look at different patterns and structures in their learning and to motivate them to create further frames. Consider how this learning experience is presented. What might the children find appealing about this table? What might draw them in to want to create? Now think about a similar space in your setting. What do you do to make your space stimulating? How do you use different types of paper to create inspiring backgrounds on which children can use their imaginations?

Reflection 8: What can be documented?

Take each of the following bullet points and discuss what might be the best way to document each one, e.g. oral language is probably best documented through the use of video, reviewing and then analysing

- Children's learning and relationships
- Language
- Questions and theories
- Concentration and levels of involvement
- Skills
- Learning processes and strategies
- Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Teaching
- The environment

Reflection 9: Reflecting on current documentation

Aim: to encourage you to think about what you do document, why and what you do with it. As a staff team you need to decide where your own development needs are in terms of this reflection.

Take some of your most recent documentation and consider it in the light of the following questions. You may wish to photocopy this page and note your responses.

- Which learning experiences have we documented?
- What learning is visible?
- For whom is learning made visible?
- What type of documentation have we used?
- Whose learning have we documented?
- What will we do with the documentation now?

Which learning experiences have we documented?	
What learning is visible?	
For whom is learning made visible?	
What type of documentation have we used?	
Whose learning have we documented?	
What will we do with the documentation now?	

Reflection 10: Documentation and assessment

Aim: To deepen understanding of the way in which documentation meets the key ideas of Building the Curriculum 5.

Use a piece of your own documentation. Discuss how the 8 key ideas from Building the Curriculum 5 are or could be shown as part of the documentation process.

1. Learner engagement in assessment is crucial.
2. Teachers need to use many approaches to assessment.
3. Assessment should focus on breadth, challenge and application.
4. Evidence of learners' progress can be gathered across the four contexts for learning.
5. Professional dialogue is central to agreeing standards.
6. Assessments should be reliable, valid and proportionate.
7. Curriculum for Excellence principles should underpin reporting.
8. Assessment needs to be quality assured.'

The Scottish Government (2010b, p2)

Identify any development needs that you may have and consider how you can address these needs.

Further Reading

1. Reggio Emilia – history and background
www.communityplaythings.co.uk/resources/articles/reggio-emilia.html
2. Reggio Children
<http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/reggiochildren.htm>
Reggio point of reference UK - Sightlines
www.sightlines-initiative.com/
3. Inspiring environments – free video and booklets
www.communityplaythings.co.uk/resources/index.html
4. Colour and sound in the environment
www.communityplaythings.co.uk/resources/articles/colour-and-sound.html
5. House of Objects promotional video
www.northtyneside.gov.uk/browse.shtml?p_subjectCategory=812
6. www.Itscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/assessment/progressandachievement/whatweassess/curriculum/experiencesandoutcomes/index.asp (accessed 18/05/11)
7. UNICEF (undated) fact sheet summary of UNCRC
www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf
8. Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics
www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code_of_ethics/code_of_ethics.html

Read the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics.

Compare this code to your personal practice.

Discuss any implications that you think this could have on the practice in your setting, in relation to a pedagogical documentation approach.

9. http://pzweb.harvard.edu/mlv/index.cfm?content_section=4&content_page_id=7§ion_page_level=2 (accessed 24/08/11)

References

Angus Council (undated a) *Effective Learning and Teaching in Angus Policy Guidelines*.

Angus Council (undated b) *Skills for Learning, Life and Work in Angus*.

Dahlberg, G. Moss, P. and Pence, A. (2007) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, Post Modern Perspectives*, London, Falmer Press.

Edwards, C. Gandini, L & Foreman, G. (1998) *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach – Advanced Reflections*, Westport, Ablex.

Greig, E. (2008) *Handout – CPD*.

Kinney, L. and Wharton, P. (2008) *An Encounter with Reggio Emilia: Children's Early Learning Made Visible*, Abingdon, Routledge.

MacDonald, M. (2007) 'Towards formative assessment: The use of pedagogical documentation in early elementary classrooms', *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22, 232-242.

Making Learning Visible Project 2005 available online at http://pzweb.harvard.edu/mlv/index.cfm?content_section=4&content_page_id=6§ion_page_level=3 (accessed 24/08/11)

Rinaldi, C. (2006) *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*, Abingdon, Routledge.

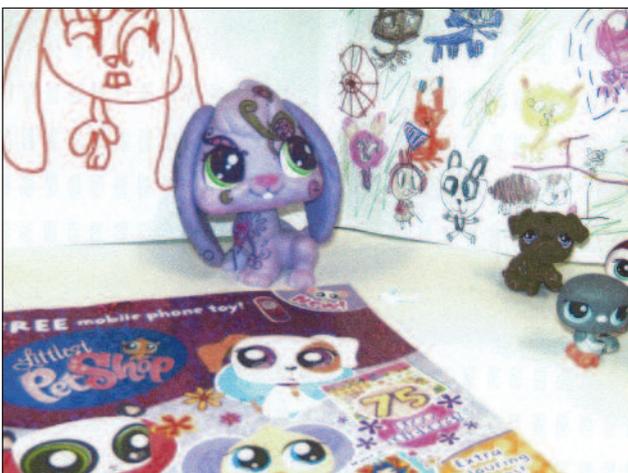
The Scottish Government (2009) *Building the Curriculum 4, Skills for learning, skills for life, skills for work*, Edinburgh, The Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government (2010a) *Building the Curriculum 5, A Framework for Assessment*, Edinburgh, The Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government (2010b) *A summary of Building the Curriculum 5 a framework for assessment* (available online at www.Itscotland.org.uk/Images/btc5_tcm4-605259.pdf, accessed 09/06/11)

UNICEF (undated) fact sheet summary of UNCRC
www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf (accessed 22/08/11)

Making meaning through drawing



Appendix 1

Analysis of Documentation

Analysis of documentation:

- When analysing documentation it is essential that you ask questions of what has been documented because this will help you 'see things' more clearly.

The questions could include:

- What is the child doing?
- Who took the lead?
- Did the child ask questions?
- Was the child following another child's lead?
- Was the child playing independently or collaboratively?
- How did the child use any resources?
- Has the child explained any actions?
- What is the child showing in terms of understanding?
- What knowledge does the child have?
- What skills does the child have?
- Which strategies does the child use/seem to prefer?

Involvement questions:

- How involved is the child? How do you know?
- You can use the following criteria to evaluate a child's involvement level:

- Concentration, perseverance/persistence
- Energy
- Complexity and creativity
- Precision
- Facial expressions and composure
- Reaction time
- Verbal expression
- Satisfaction
- Interaction with others/materials
- Length of time of involvement

- If possible it is also helpful to look for any connections in documentation, e.g. does the child always seem to be exploring their learning in a particular way?
- If possible it is good practice to discuss your thoughts on the documentation with another educator as another perspective may be offered.
- Use different sources of documentation to look for information.
- Revisit any mind maps to review learning and also to see how learning had moved forward.

Greig (undated), adapted from CPD handout

Appendix 2

The Process

Processes: skills used within the process: strategies: attitudes to learning

Processes	Skills Used	Strategies	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening - Asking questions - Watching - Modelling - Assisting - Exploring - Experimenting - Practicing - Revisiting - Consolidating - Refining - Hypothesising - Trial and error - Planning - Sketching out ideas - Interpreting - Categorising - Talking it through – working it out - Problem tackling - Predicting - Problem solving - Representing - Communicating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening, watching, noticing - Ask correct questions - Copying - Helping - Becoming aware, playing - Trying things out - Repeating - Returning and extending - Go back and revisit and do again - Making changes - Thinking and reasoning - Thinking skills: physical skills - Logical thought: organisation skills - Mapping skills: drawing skills: design - Categorising and sorting out - Sorting and arranging into common elements - Using appropriate vocabulary: explanation skills - Reasoning skills - Prediction skills - Thinking and reasoning - Express ideas in a range of ways - Explanation, talking, writing, listening, discussing, sharing ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working alone - Working with friends - Do side by side - Watch and follow others' ideas - Being the leader - Being the follower - Asking for help - Asking questions - Accessing information from books, pictures etc - Discussing with others - Trying out each others' ideas - Watch and try later - Practising – doing a draft - Think and plan ideas first - Layout in order – categorise - Seek help from home, others - Check out ideas with others - Try first - Follow instructions first or after trying out - Read, gather information then apply to task - Engage in dialogue with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interested - Confident - Eager - Perseveres - Tries - Concentrates – keep focused - Self-motivated - Wants to learn - Excited by new learning - Seeks out information - Sees the purpose behind things - Enquires - Does not give up easily - Lacks interest - Sees little purpose - Lacks confidence in self and ideas - Lacks motivation - Avoids difficult challenges - Responds to challenges - Lacks motivation to see the purpose - Pessimist - Optimist - Negative questioning re why?

Appendix 3

Group Learning

Group Learning Features in Practice

“What do these features of learning look and feel like in the classroom? What actions are taken and what ideas are held by students, teachers, and others in learning groups? Here we offer some additional details about learning in groups.

1. The members of learning groups include adults as well as children.
 - Teachers identify learning goals for themselves (often about how children build knowledge) as well as for their students.
 - Teachers share their learning with other teachers, parents, and children.
 - Parents generate their own research questions.
 - Rather than seeing themselves as the sole or primary sources of information, teachers encourage students to enlist the cognitive and emotional support of their peers.
2. Documenting children’s learning processes helps to make learning visible and shapes the learning that takes place.
 - Individuals in learning groups are often encouraged to share and compare their work.
 - Learning becomes more visible and new learning happens when teachers share children’s work and words with them by, for example, putting quotations and samples of children’s work on the walls.
 - Documenting children’s learning entails making decisions about the moments and experiences that are most meaningful to record and build upon.
 - The act of documenting slows teachers down and changes their understanding of what went on in the classroom.
3. Members of learning groups are engaged in the emotional and aesthetic as well as the intellectual dimensions of learning.
 - Teachers look for topics of study that will stimulate passion and wonder and captivate the imagination so that adults and children want to learn more.
 - In seeking to make the ordinary extraordinary, Reggio teachers pose questions such as: Do these materials generate unexpected transformations or

strong aesthetic effects? Do they inspire passion or curiosity or joy? Will children and adults be motivated to create work of the highest quality?

- The aesthetic dimension can be found in three aspects of the learning environment: the set-up of space and choice of materials; the nature of the learning process; and the nature of ideas.
4. The focus of learning in learning groups extends beyond the learning of individuals to create a collective body of knowledge.
 - Children working in a small group are often responsible for sharing what they are learning with the rest of the class.
 - Reggio teachers often ask, “What can you do to remember what you did so that you can communicate it to others?” This focus on sharing learning with the group also supports individual learning by asking children to consider their learning from another perspective.
 - In schools or classrooms operating as a learning group, school work involves more than completing a series of discrete tasks; children and adults feel like they are contributing to a larger, more meaningful whole, one they can share in and communicate to others.”

Other Aspects of Learning in Groups

“Here we offer some additional points about learning in groups.

- *The make-up of the group (size, age, competencies, interests, friendships, the children’s own suggestions, etc.) is an important consideration in how the group functions and learns.*
- *Learning groups also share a focus on learning how to learn in a group and understanding the understanding of others.*
- *What a learning group learns is often connected to how the group learns.*
- *Learning in groups is central to how individual learning is constructed.”*

Making Learning Visible Project 2005

Group Learning Folio

An example of how one setting made group learning visible through a Group Learning Folio.

How do we create a group learning folio?

- By compiling the 'history' of a series of learning experiences the children have been involved in.
- By involving the children in bringing together learning stories, photographs, drawings and other documentation – including records of discussion about 'future possibilities' that have evolved from an initial idea or interest.
- By listening deeply to children and making time to take their views and ideas forward – without 'kidnapping' these ideas and running off with them in the wrong direction!

Why do we create a group learning folio?

- To make the children's learning visible to each other, to staff, to parents and to other interested children and adults.
- To create a very valuable assessment tool for staff to evaluate their own interaction as well as the children's learning.
- To provide evidence of the children's knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes and to make their breadth and depth of knowledge very visible.

- To show how capable and resourceful children are and to make them feel valued – to know what they say and do is important.
- To act as a further stimulus for further learning, shaping and supporting future learning experiences, thus providing staff with a planning tool to extend learning by planning interactions and resources.
- To create a 'book of memories', a record of shared experiences, for children to re-visit at a later date.

Who is involved in creating a group learning folio?

- A whole community of people: children, staff and potentially parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, wider family members, friends and people in the local community.
- A collection of individuals who have, in some way, shared interests, ideas, experiences, skills and some knowledge as they solve problems, create products and make meaning in learning groups.

When should a group learning folio be created?

- When the children want it and/or when we are aware that significant learning is taking place.

Appendix 4

Planning Learning with Children

The following example shows how the children and educators in one setting planned together after discussion that followed on from listening to 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff.'

This text has been adapted from a powerpoint presentation.

Following the story of 'The Billy Goats Gruff' the children's words were recorded whilst constructing bridges from junk. Photographs of the process of building accompanied this conversation.

J: I'm making some sweet grass with jumps over the water to keep the bridge up. I'm just going to cut this tube.

R: I need this bit cut... How do I do this? I need sellotape. Can you hold it upside down?

Mum: Do you want to stick this down on the green bit?

J: I'll get some glue... I need a bit of sellotape not glue.

Mum: What's the bit on top?

J: The path.

Mum: Over the bridge?

J: Yes...There's my bit ready.

R: I need to stick this corner on.

J: Mum, help me and R.

Mum: What do you need?

R: I need sellotape.

J: I need a bit for the other side.

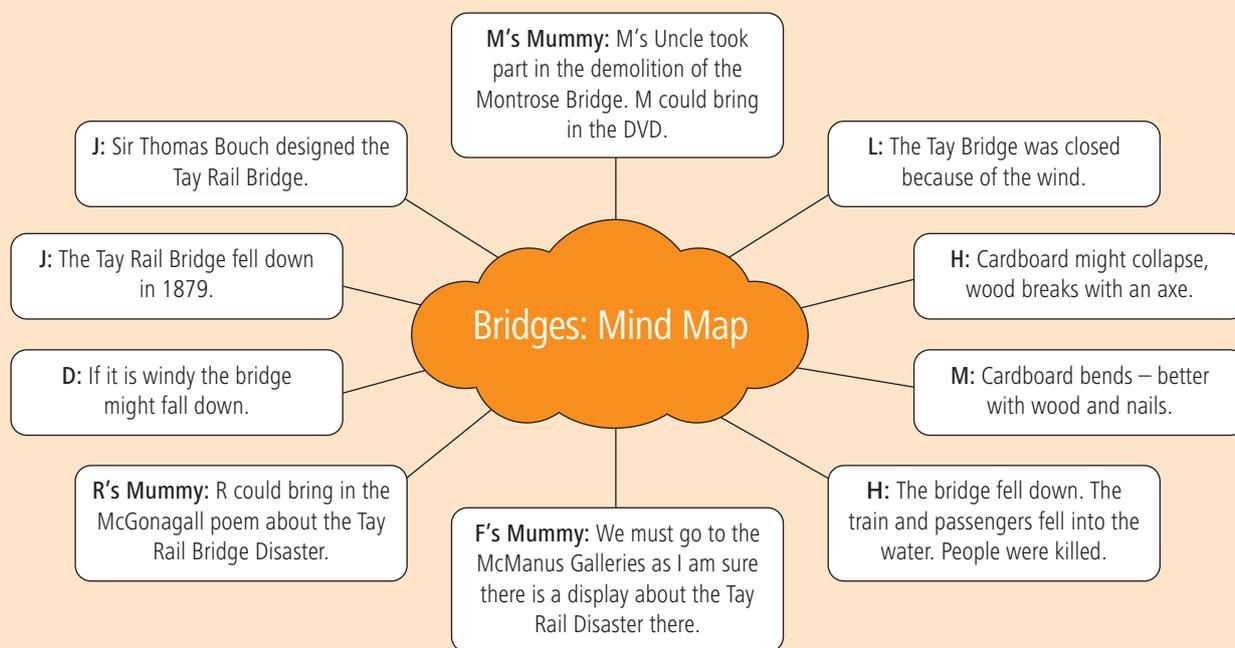
Mum: What's that you're making, R?

R: I'm finished that bit now...I need 2 straws to do something with them.

J: It still comes off... Now it's all breaking... I need something flat. The tube's not flat.



A mindmap was used to record what the children and parents could contribute to the interest in bridges.



The next day the educators and children co-collaborated in their search for pictures of interesting bridges. The DVD of the building of the Montrose Bridge was brought into playgroup. The group went for a walk to the 7 Arches bridge which is close to the playgroup. Some of the conversation was recorded.

- D:** Trains went over the 7 Arches Bridge a long time ago. I had a stick and I watched it floating along. J brought his troll. H said "somebody killed the troll".
- L:** I threw a stick in the water. It sanked... because it never floated.
- K:** I was throwing sticks in the water. The water made them move.
- K:** The trees were near the brick bridge.
- N:** I threw sticks in the river.
- O:** There was water at the side of the bridge and there was a fence so you don't fall in.
- F:** We threw stones and twigs into the water. They floated because they were light. If they are heavy they sink.

The next day one of the children brought in a poem by McGonagall about the collapse of the Tay Rail Bridge. Over the course of the following three days the children showed a lot of enthusiasm for the DVD of Montrose Bridge.

- M:** The bridge is made of concrete. The 7 Arches Bridge is made of bricks. There's enormous cranes for Montrose Bridge.
- C:** They plan at the beginning.
- H:** Plan so everyone knows what they're doing.
- Teacher:** That's why we plan at Playgroup – so we all know what we're doing.
- F:** 2004, Montrose Bridge (reading from TV screen!)
- M:** The new one's different.
- H:** Hard hats in case something falls on their heads.
- D:** They work through the night.
- M:** All night and all day, so they are so tired.
- F:** New bridge is blue and white.
- D:** They worked all night. They wore gloves.
- M:** New one is even better than the old one... Take bits of the old bridge away from the sea so it does not hurt the fish.
- H:** Orange coats to keep the dust off them.

The interest in the DVD continued and then some photos of the bridge were sent in to the playgroup which kept the interest alive. This motivated the children to represent their bridges in different ways.

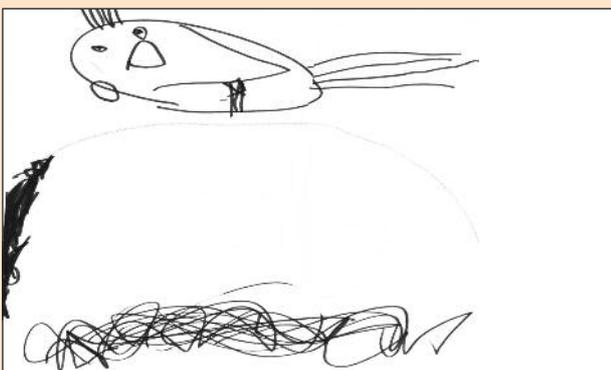
S: There were steps at the bridge. I went on the bridge long ago with Mummy, Daddy and K.



S drew a picture of the bridge.

The children returned to the Seven Arches:

- R:** I walked on top of the bridge when I went to Dobbies with my Aunties and cousins....There's some water dripping down from the bridge.
- L:** It is called Seven Arches Bridge because it has 7 arches. We went for a walk to the bridge. It's made from bricks and it's really big.
- R:** It was near the water.
- H:** We went under it and there was a big hole. There was dirty pipe. It has to get painted.
- L:** The bridge didn't fall down.
- K:** There was a pattern on the bridge.
- R:** We got our photo taken.
- D:** There was a gate. The bridge was bigger than the metal one.
- O:** It was made of bricks. There was a pipe nearly dripping on our heads.
- S:** There were chairs on the bridge. We had ice cream on the stairs of the bridge. There was lots of water down the bridge.



S drew a picture of the bridge.

One of the children brought in photos of his trip to the Forth Bridge.

The following week one of the children brought in her older brother's project on the Tay Bridge.

Into weeks 5 and 6 of the bridges project the children still asked to watch the construction DVD of Montrose Bridge.

K: I'm drawing M's bridge. It is the one that collapsed. I'm going to do the planning. The men need to wear coats and hats. They will need cranes. It will take seven weeks and seven days. That's how I'm going to plan it.

The children had a visit from O's daddy who worked in construction. He brought in some plans to show the children and this sparked off an interest in creating their own plans for building a playgroup.



K drew a picture...

S: This is a picture of a bridge. The square is the bridge, the orange bits are the tiles and the circle is for measuring. The coloured lines are so that the bridge doesn't fall down. The blue lines - so that the bridge doesn't fall down.

I'm the lady on top of the bridge. I have to cross over the bridge to go on holiday. I could sleepover for lots and lots of days.

I went over the bridge on a train or an aeroplane. The black square is the hotel.

I went to Glasgow on the train.

Into week 8 the children found out about the world's highest road bridge when someone brought in an article from the local newspaper.

The educators listened carefully to the children and planned experiences around what they were interested in rather than what the adults thought the children would be interested in. Input from families impacted on the experience and learning too.

Glossary

The following glossary provides a brief definition of some of the terms associated with a pedagogical documentation approach to learning which will be adopted in Angus.

Episode/encounter: a short term enquiry (a few days perhaps).

Project: a long term enquiry which children and adults return to in order to extend their learning and thinking.

Provocation for learning: a stimulus used at different points throughout a project: the provocation could come from the children or the adults, e.g. a visit or a visitor or an authority led initiative such as Learning and Growing Together. Different provocations may arise or may be introduced in a project as the lines of enquiry evolve. It is the role of the educator to use documentation evidence to consider when provocations for learning are appropriate. Documentation evidence assists any decision to consider when a provocation for learning is necessary or appropriate.

Co-constructing: a shared act between adults and children. Children and adults working together to make sense of an enquiry or experience and with support to ultimately construct one's own meaning.

Listening pedagogy: an approach in a listening environment where adults use all their senses and knowledge of young children to tune into what children are communicating about themselves, their emotions, feelings, understandings, knowledge and their desires in relation to learning.

Co-collaborating: a shared act between adults and children or between children, working together on shared interests, enquiries and theories.

Co-researching: a shared act between adults and children, working together to find out about a particular interest/enquiry/theory.

Visible learning/teaching: learning/teaching that is seen, made explicit and likely to attract attention.

Transparent learning/teaching: making the learning/teaching easy to recognise/understand.

