

DOCUMENTATION

Why ISU values Documentation: A why sheet for teachers

Documentation is the process of gathering, analysing and acting upon learning-related data. It is a procedure that sustains teaching through conversations about the learning processes of the children (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

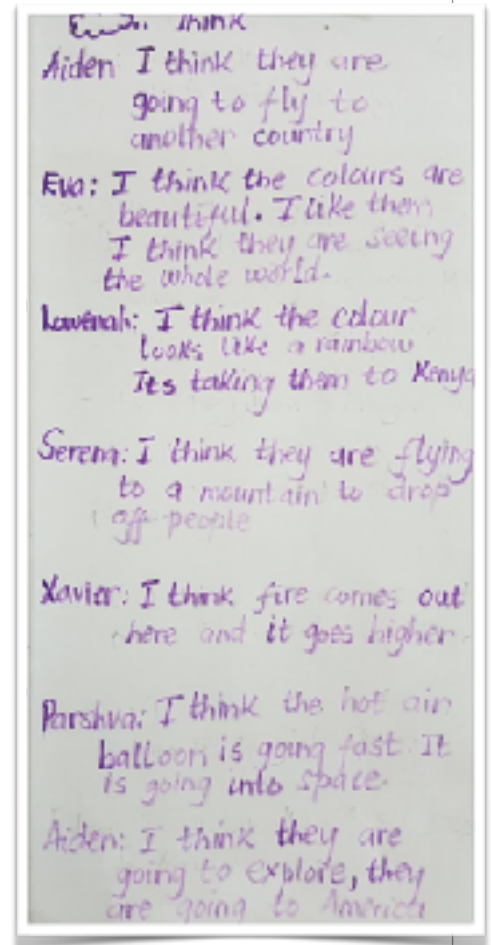
Reasoning and Research

If we believe that children are uniquely capable and curious then the role of the teacher is to inquire into those capabilities and curiosities through careful listening and observation. The IB states: “Teachers recognize students’ capabilities through listening, respecting and responding to their ideas. They make thoughtful considerations and decisions with an emphasis on relationships, dialogue and respect for one another” (2018, p.2). Dedicated educators are connected in their belief that children have much to teach us about the world we live in. One thing that we can all do, is to listen to them and to encourage the growth of their ideas (Keyte-Hartland, 2014).

In placing documentation at the heart of practice, the teacher becomes a researcher and a collaborator. “Teacher research is a team sport; an endeavour most successful when teachers are in dialogue to formulate questions, analyze data, and come to new understandings about children, childhood, teaching, and learning” (Mardell et al., 2013). From this understanding, teachers are empowered to move forward in their practice. In this partnership, teams of teachers work alongside students to monitor learning and provide feedback, which acknowledges learner agency and the importance of self-efficacy (IBO, 2018, p.2). “When teachers support student agency they notice and reflect on the students’ existing capabilities, needs and interests in order to personalize learning; and actively listen to students’ opinions, wonderings, perspectives and aspirations to extend student thinking and action” (IBO, 2018, p.3).

The curriculum design considers the student voice. Regarding curriculum design, the IB state that units of inquiry are based on the interests and emerging theories of students (IBO, 2018). Teaching teams loosely pre-plan learning experiences and modify this in response to on-going monitoring and documentation of student questions, theories, knowledge and skills development (IBO, 2018).

Children are keen observers and explorers. Through their experiences and interactions with others and the environment, they develop intricate, multi-layered perceptions and understandings. When children see and sense that the adults around them are working in a collaborative way, important social and emotional skills, as well as attributes such as trust and respect, are modelled. Therefore, ‘teacher as researcher’ and collegial collaboration help build and sustain the social and emotional environment.



Citations

Augsburg, T. (2014). *Becoming transdisciplinary: The emergence of the transdisciplinary individual*. World Futures.

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IBO. (2018). *Principles into Practice*: IBO.

Johanson, S., & Khu, L. (2013). Critical Friends Groups in an Early Childhood Setting: Building a Culture of Collaboration. *Voices of Practitioners* 8, no. 2.

Keyte-Hartland, D. (September 2014). *Children as Ideas Makers*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV5GJluJz5I>

Wein, C.A. (2013). *Making learning visible through Pedagogical Documentation*. <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/>



Documentation also allows children to see themselves as a learner, to engage in peer and self-assessment and to build reflection skills. As learning is shared with the wider community, the processes of learning are emphasised.

Finally, through documentation, teachers become co-learners together, focusing on children's expanding understanding of the world as they interpret that understanding with others (Wein, 2013). "Every planning meeting becomes an opportunity for teachers to rework their personal interpretation of the relationship between theory and practice" (IBO, 2018, p.8).

Documentation forces a paradigm shift that moves most teachers out of their comfort zone. The IB states: "Tension is inherent in transdisciplinary learning and necessary for learning; it is through constantly questioning and challenging previously held assumptions that learning discoveries are shaped and connections are made" (IBO, 2018, p.16). Through collaboration, teachers gain the ability to look beyond their own boundaries, the ability to reflect, and the ability to take on new ideas — all are necessary to bridge and to transcend knowledge (Augsburg, 2014). "A [PYP] school considers its perceptions of how children learn, children's capabilities and the overall value of childhood. When teachers consider their beliefs around children's identities and rights, they are examining personal beliefs, theories, cultural backgrounds and values" (IBO, 2018, p.3).

Partnership

We value your input and feedback. If you have ideas or questions we would love to talk with you. You may find it helpful to consider the following reflective questions:

1. What do your own actions in the classroom and at the planning table reveal to you about your own values and beliefs around teaching and learning?
2. What could you try over the next week to power-up your practice as 'teacher as researcher'?

