

WHAT IS THE GOLDEN THREAD? - RETHINKING A PARTICIPATION APPROACH TO LEARNING OUTCOMES

Sandy Eaton
Judith Duncan

Documenting Learning - Currently

- Pedagogical Narration
- Learning Stories
- Learning Narratives



The existing documentation alone could not tell us about:

1. *Learning* over time (between and across the three or four centres that the case study children had progressed through);

2. Examples of parental engagement and involvement (most of the learning stories were focused on centre based experiences of the children and excluded ‘adults’ from the stories);

Or 3. Capture the out-of-centre experiences (at home, in the community, outside of the centre).

Following Methods:

- Learning Stories collated
- Out and About Photos – and discussion with parents
- Teacher Conferencing

Once upon a time a young child had as his most precious possession a beautifully woven mat.

The coloured threads intermingled presenting a mat of great beauty. Yarns of deep gold, sparkling silver, rich purple, brilliant blue, refreshing green, glowing yellow, warm red and many others.

The colours represented threads of learning combining together to form this precious mat of knowledge.

The child spread his magnificent mat out and sat on it to play and listen to stories.

When he was tired he slept on it. When unsure he wrapped himself in it and tucked his fingers between the woven threads and was comforted by it's strength and beauty.

One day a visitor came and thought about the child and his precious mat.

He saw the colours and admired their individual beauty, impressed he decided that it would be interesting to isolate, measure and count the threads of each colour.

He slowly tugged and pulled the golden threads out one by one.

They lay in a wrinkled heap.

He looked back at the mat and began to ease out each green thread and soon they too lay isolated and separate.

He was impressed by the size of each pile.

The child watched him and then looked down at his precious mat.

The richness of the gold and the crispness of the green had vanished.

His mat was no longer complete. The gaps lay dark and awkward.

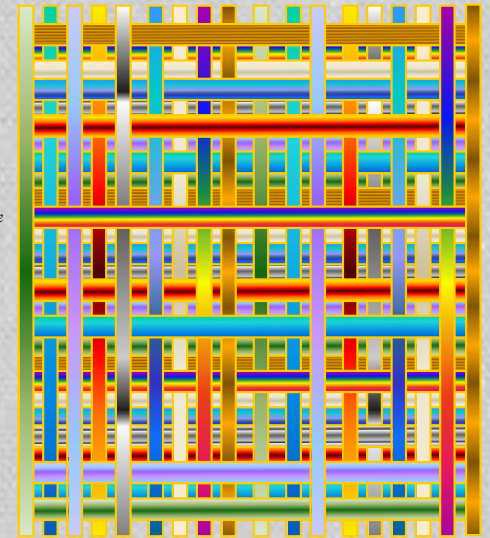
He picked up the spoilt mat.

When he was tired he lay on his mat but felt the cold ground through the gaps. When he dragged it the holes caught on objects and the mat was pulled out of shape. When he wrapped himself in it wasn't the same, his comfort was compromised.

The threads had been separated into piles of knowledge and now as they lay isolated and alone they had lost their purpose to contribute to and strengthen the child's mat of learning.

The strength and beauty of the child's learning lay in the complexity of the threads woven together. When the threads are isolated they lose the potential to contribute to the complexity of the mat of learning.

When considering unravelling children's learning or keeping areas of learning separate, remember the option of keeping it complex!



Learning Story Example

...I got a little more to Rory (even though by this time he's usually more interested in the cars and trucks coming down the street—*sorry Kim!*).

As we looked out the window this morning we saw a bus coming. "Look, there's a bus," I pointed out to Rory. He replied although I couldn't understand what he was saying.

Then we saw a car. "Can you see the car?" I asked.

"Yes," Rory replied.

We watched the cars and even a motorbike before we saw Tasha coming down the street. We waved to Tasha and watched her come into Kidz. By this time Rory was once again settled and happy to go off and play.

A little later in the morning Rory brought his profile book to me and we looked at it together. He pointed to the picture of him and Shane and said, "Dad." Then we turned the page and saw the photos of the trucks.

"We looked out the window this morning and saw the bus and the car and a motor bike, didn't we?"

Rory nodded emphatically before closing his book and moving on to a new activity.

Routines and maintaining routines (particularly routines from home) are a very important part of the philosophy of Kidz@303 but this *Learning Story* shows how important a routine that had its beginnings in the centre is for Rory. Even though he was settled and happy for Mum to go, a short while later it seemed obvious that he missed that routine where he waves to Mum and watches the traffic down the street. I wasn't sure if taking him to the window was a good idea (as he wasn't going to see Kim) but just seeing the bus and cars settled him in a way that other attempts to console him had not.

Rory has been far more settled ever since that day where Shane spent some time with him in the centre but it also seems that Rory draws comfort from a familiar and predictable routine. Since Rory has also shown an interest in trucks and since he settled today when he was only able to see the traffic and not his Mum, I suspect that watching the cars is an important part of this routine.

Now that we've once again realized just how important this routine is for Rory we won't be skipping it again!



TEACHING & LEARNING
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

WALL GROUP/TE Kōwhiri o Te Kōwhiri



Baptist Kindergarten and
Early Learning Centres

UC
UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

I took two children who are almost 2 years old, for a visit to the crèche (2-3 year old area) in order to familiarize them with the environment and the teachers before they move here.

Several of the children at crèche recognized me from the time they had spent at KIDZ.

One of them got their portfolio book and brought it over to show me, pointing to the different photos and talking about what was happening. As I sat on the floor and showed an interest in this, I was very quickly surrounded by about 4 more children all wanting to show me their books.

One young man (who I know well) even took pictures off the wall to show me.

- The children are recognising someone who is interested in them and are welcoming me to their space.
- They know that this is a place where they belong and feel comfortable and secure enough to share this with me.
- Communication is developing-the reciprocal interactions that occur between several people.

Adult Participation:

- I showed the children I was interested in them by being at their level, listening to them, looking at their pictures and talking to them. This was all it took to engage them.

Positive Child Outcomes:

- They know they are valued and important.

Robyne Huthnance

Teacher Conferencing

What came from the Family to the Centre?

What went with the family from the Centre?

What were the learning dispositions that were gained across time for each child ?

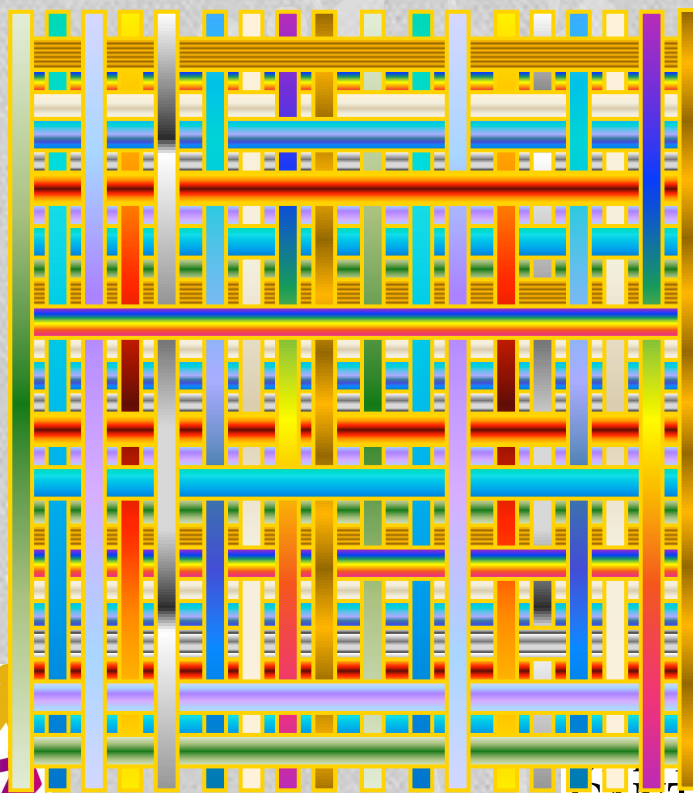
Gathered examples 19 case study children.

Parent Participation and Children's Learning Outcomes

THE GOLDEN THREAD

Robyn Lawrence

(Adelaide September 2002)



TEACHING & LEARNING
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Wāhi Kōwhiri o Te Kōwhiri o Te Kōwhiri



Baptist Kindergarten and
Early Learning Centres



UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY

Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Mildred and her family

One of three children (middle child)

Reconstituted family

Progression in parenting confidence across time

Attended CBK for three years (beginning when she was 2).

She attended Creche, Kindy, Kindy House.

THE GOLDEN THREAD:

Mildred - Mum

Mum's parenting confidence:

- ✧ joined in parent support activities and parenting groups at CBK,
- ✧ HIPPY, and
- ✧ led to part-time employment in ECE
- ✧ more involved in learning, talking with teachers, asking questions, sharing what's happening at home (interests, experiences)

THE GOLDEN THREAD:

Mildred's Learning Outcomes

- ✧ Confidence grew alongside Mum's
- ✧ Developed positive relationships with other children
- ✧ Inclusive of other children (particularly those where extra effort was needed)
- ✧ Ability to concentrate and persevere (transferrable dispositions that she used as she moved from her interest in arts at Creche to literacy at Kindy House)

THE GOLDEN THREAD:

Active parent participation

Howard and his family

One of two children (eldest)

Rural family (with Mum and Dad) - 25 km from town

Attended CBK for four years (began at Kidz, then Creche, Kindy and Kindy house)

Confident and involved family from the beginning

THE GOLDEN THREAD:

Howard's Mum

- Sharing employment interests with artefacts with the centre children linking to pedagogical focus in the centres
- Availability to support CBK operations
- Attended all centre events as a family
- Preparation at home for the events (dressups, conversations etc)
- Mum would encourage Howard to reflect and discuss his day

THE GOLDEN THREAD:

Howard's learning outcomes

- ✧ Brought confidence with him from home, which led to great involvement and participation in centres
- ✧ Moved from being a constant mover to perseverance and seeing things through – using the home-centre link as the scaffold
- ✧ Thinker and contributor – confidence in self enabled Howard to be a constant contributor (link to home conversations)
- ✧ Strong general knowledge and supported his thinking and contributions.

THE GOLDEN THREAD: Mildred and Howard

✧ Confidence – Parent:Child

- ✧ Feeling self worth and having something to offer
- ✧ Confidence turned into learning from both Mum and child
- ✧ Importance of relationships with children and teachers
- ✧ Engagement with pedagogy for the children

Discussion

1. Multiple voices?
2. Learning over time, space and place?
3. Where to from here?

Duncan, J., & Te One, S. (Eds.) (2012). *Comparative early childhood education services: International perspectives* (Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood). New York: Palgrave McMillan.

