

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING: PLACING CHILDREN'S INTERESTS AND ENGAGEMENT AT THE CENTRE OF A CREATIVE CURRICULUM



Image 1: Lindsay (2019)



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Creative and child-centred curricula

Avoid tokenism:

- Seasonal themes
- Calendar topics
- One-off 'activities'
- Production-line activities
- teacher-prepared or made 'craftivities'
- Not sustained by children's genuine interests or questions
- Not oriented toward education and growth of the child



Follow CHILDREN'S lines of inquiry...

"In actively seeking opportunities to **stimulate and promote children's own ideas**

through scaffolding,

co-constructing

or following their lines of enquiry,

we are not just validating children's own thinking about objects,

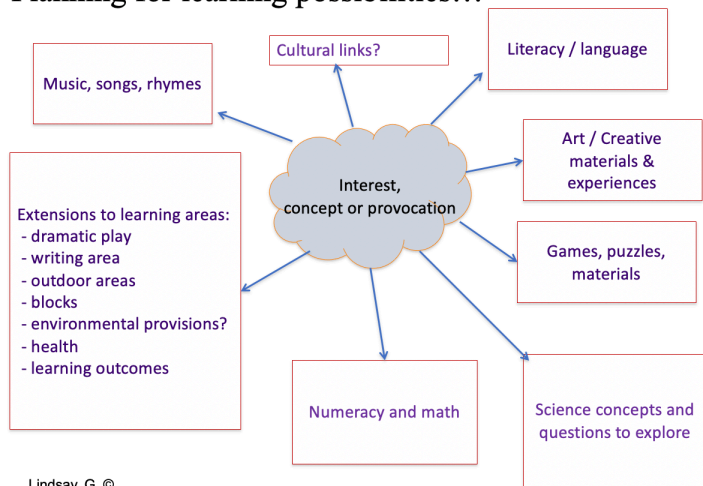
but we are also **nurturing positive learning dispositions**, such as confidence, curiosity, negotiation, risk-taking, self-esteem, enjoyment, independence, self-control, reciprocity, empathy, sustained concentration, spontaneity, imagination, critical awareness and scientific reasoning"

(Duffy, 2006, cited in Churchill-Dower (2020, p. 113).

LEARNING PROJECTS ARE:

- An approach to teaching grounded in children's natural curiosity and desire to learn.
- A topic of potentially high interest to children is identified
- Facilitate in-depth study of the topic or question
- Strengthen children's interest through project work
- Strengthens dispositions such as analysis, predicting, hypothesizing, explaining, communicating.
- Creative and multidisciplinary
- Playful and motivating
- Focused on meaningful topics

Planning for learning possibilities...



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"...and the child continually **learns**...Again the child participates in the household occupations, and thereby gets **habits of industry, order, and regard for the rights and ideas of others**...Now if we organize and generalise all of this, we have the ideal school" (Dewey, 1915, p.35).

Benefits & features of the project approach

- Empower children to become **curious, purposeful, thoughtful & collaborative** learners;
- Learning - not limited to the project topic
- Children **examine** their world;
- **Flexibility** in how information is presented to children;
- Promotes **engagement and success for all** children;
- Supports **inclusion**;
- **Holistic & multiple** means of engagement, representation, action and expression [Universal Design for Learning (UDL)];
- Diverse experiences and roles to **build** on children's **strengths** and extend **skills and interests**;
- NOT a curriculum, but a versatile teaching and learning approach that can be "woven into the fabric of the daily schedule" (Beneke et al, 2019, p.3);
- children as a community of learners
- Teachers develop new insights about their role and strengthen responsiveness to children
- Engages families and includes them in supporting their child's learning;
- Learning extends beyond the classroom to the home and community.

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(adapted from Beneke et al., 2019)

"As they engage in project work, children **learn how the world around them works** and develop **confidence** in their **ability** to figure things out. They learn how to **work collaboratively** with their peers, as they **seek and find answers to their questions**" (Beneke et al., 2019. p. 2)

The child "is already **running over, spilling over**, with activities of all kinds." The child "is not a purely latent being whom the adult has to approach with great caution and skill in order to gradually draw out some hidden germ of activity.

The child is **already intensely active**, and the question of education is the question of **taking hold of his activities, of giving them direction**"

(Dewey, 1915, p.36)

Resources and links:

- [Children and the arts - Expert insight with Dr Gai Lindsay](#)
- [Pandemic Arts Inspirations](#) – links to resources
- [At home with the Reggio Approach – resources and inspirations](#)
- [An example of how a project can be built from a favourite book.](#)

THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think that happened?
- Why is the....?
- What makes you think that...?
- What do you think might happen next?
- What would happen if...?
- What is happening?
- How could we find out more?
- How could we...?
- I wonder how we could...
- What else could we try?
- Where else could we go?
- Who else could we ask?
- What type of dance / what kind of song might the trees do when it rains?

(adapted from Beneke et al., 2019, p.78)