

Depth of Engagement in Play

Professional Reflection - 2/2/16

I had set the week aside to observe the children's play and to write learning stories about them. I spent Monday filming different children playing and decided that their play on the day, didn't meet the requirements which enabled me to write an effective learning story.

I decided to look into what made a good learning story and found a quote in an article from Early Childhood Australia that resonated with me.

"Writing a Learning Story is about recognising a good narrative. It is based upon something which troubles or excites or inspires or disconcerts me".

Mel Hazard - Learning Stories: One way to assess and report — professionals and children working together, 2011

The following day, I continued to watch the children's play in hope of writing a good learning story. Instead, I found that the children didn't appear to be engaged in quality play but rather, occupied their play time by running around. There was no deep level thinking, no reflective thinking, no problem solving, minimal creativity and minimal cooperation. I felt as though we weren't providing the children with effective resources that stimulated these important skills.

Immediately, I thought of loose part play and how simple, yet effective it can be. That day, I read some early childhood blogs on loose part play. One blog in particular was based on research by Simon Nicholson and highlighted what I believe our problem in Kindy was.

"In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it." Simon Nicholson – *The Theory of Loose Parts*, 1971

The 'variables' we were providing the children in Kindy with were all 'finished' materials that allowed little flexibility in their use. Loose parts however, are said to have limitless uses, as they have no set purpose.

Nicholson believed that loose parts allow children to participate in crucial learning experiences that derive from being involved in the creating process. I believe that to nurture and empower children's creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, reflective thinking and cooperation, we need to implement the use of loose parts in our Kindergarten and foster these skills into our future generation.