

Documentation provides an extraordinary opportunity for parents, as it gives them the possibility to know not only what their child is doing, but also how and why, to see not only the products but also the processes.

Rinaldi, 1998

So how might parents become more involved in their child's learning?

They could:

- Take the time to carefully read the documentation in the environment and offer feedback
- Enhance their child's learning journey by responding to learning stories in their portfolio
- Share memorable moments from home
- Enquire about the classroom programme
- Support the teachers' efforts in the investigation, e.g.. an exploration of the local park may require parents to assist with an excursion.

Bear Facts
Pedagogical Documentation
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In an effort to heighten the communities perception of the enormous potential of young children the founder of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, Loris Malaguzzi, saw the need to communicate the work of children.

This is done by exhibiting the children's work through exhibitions and displays in public spaces. This highlights the strong image of the child the teachers of Reggio Emilia hold for their children while also giving value and respect to the theories and ideas of the young children of this northern Italian city.

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The tunnel leading into the train station in Reggio Emilia clearly depicts children's representation of bicycles. Documenting children's learning in the community is a means of eliciting peoples reactions and support, and thus a way of advocating for high quality early childhood programs (Kocher, 1999)

PEDAGOGICAL DOCUMENTATION



The most powerful tool that supports children to learn, to develop their own ideas, theories and strategies, in a way that respects them as individuals, is documentation. The documentation I am discussing here is, in fact, “pedagogical documentation”.

Gandini and Goldhaber, 2001

WHAT IS PEDAGOGICAL DOCUMENTATION?



Examples of pedagogical documentation:

Left: teachers working collaboratively with one another

Right: a display which represents the creative abilities of the children



What is Pedagogical Documentation?

The walls adorn powerful and thought provoking investigations while each child's portfolio illustrates their individual learning journey. These are examples of the documentation we regularly refer to as teachers. Pedagogical documentation, however, encompasses much more than these concrete and visible forms.

Pedagogical documentation is a point of strength that makes timely and visible the interweaving of actions of the children, parents, whānau and teachers. It improves the quality of communication and interaction that exists and enables teachers to sustain the children's learning while also learning (to teach) from the children's own learning (Rinaldi, 1998).

Pedagogical documentation...is a way of making visible the often otherwise invisible learning processes by which children and teachers work in early childhood centres and schools.

(Cadwell, 1997)

A culture of documentation

On a weekly basis each Bear Park teaching team participate in planning meetings. Not to be confused with the traditional term where teachers plan in advance, set goals and prepare specific activities and objectives. Rather in Bear Park we collaborate together to formulate hypothesis of what may happen. From information gathered in our observations we device hypothesis based on the children's knowledge and prior experience. Collectively each teaching team then prepare flexible objectives which are fitting with the children's interests, rights and needs. This process is greatly influenced by the thoughts and ideas of children, parents and whānau.

As teachers we give great value to group learning; believing children learn in social contexts. Therefore we aspire to engage children in in-depth investigations. These investigations stem from a shared interest among the children where teachers and children debate and critique each others theories. To demonstrate the learning that is happening within the environment the children's work is made visible through documentation. This includes wall displays, daily diaries, investigation books and children's portfolios. Having children's work so clearly displayed in the environment enables children to reflect and extend on the learning they have gained through their investigation, as well as other significant learning opportunities. Parents also become acutely aware of the children's learning, changing their expectations while also adapting a more inquisitive approach towards their child's learning.

We view all adults - parents and teachers as resource people whom children can turn to. Rather than give children the answer we strongly believe in provoking them to find their own answers and to ask themselves and each other their own questions. Through this culture of documentation it causes us adults to slow down, to reflect on and understand the deeper meaning and value of a learning experience.