



# Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years



## Supporting Playful K-2 Literacy Learning Through Story Workshop

Monday, January 15th

8:30am - 2:30 pm

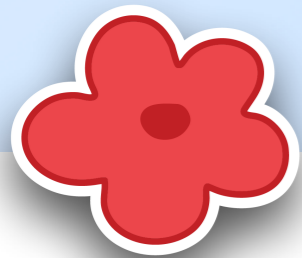
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## *Our learning objectives*

Today we will become more familiar and comfortable with Story Workshop, including how to start, and how to deepen practice, including...

- ✓ noticing the connections between Story Workshop and oral language development and writing
- ✓ exploring the connection between Story Workshop and the Early Learning Framework

Throughout the day, we will explore **loose parts** and **provocations**, engage in rich and reflective **conversations**, and consider how the **stories** we tell support our sense of **identity** and **agency**. We will provide **practical ideas** that you will be able to use in your classroom **tomorrow**.

# Shape of the Day



- 8:30–10:15am
  - ✓ Setting the stage and making connections
  - ✓ BC's ELA curriculum and the Early Learning Framework
  - ✓ Story workshop – the five elements; setting the table
  - ✓ Story workshop, oral language, and writing – building on ideas and connections
- 10:30–12:00pm
  - ✓ Connecting to mentor texts and being inspired by what we read
  - ✓ The role of play and loose parts as provocations
  - ✓ Asking the big questions – reflect, discuss, and plan
  - ✓ Using documentation to inform your practice
- 12:45–2:30pm
  - ✓ Playful pathways to engagement with materials and the world
  - ✓ Resources to support careful noticing and observation
  - ✓ Connecting to meaningful writing experiences
  - ✓ Story workshop at home – suggestions for families
  - ✓ Putting it all together – reflect, discuss, and plan your needs and next steps

## Checking in - you and story workshop

How would you describe your prior experience and comfort level with Story Workshop?

- \* Haven't tried it yet
- \* Have tried it a bit
- \* Feel pretty comfortable with it
- \* Feel very comfortable with it

# What is Story Workshop?

Adults invite children to imagine, write, edit, revise, publish, and share their stories. Prepared spaces and organized materials inspire and entice children to overflow with thoughts and ideas and memories and imagination.



"Stories are maps  
of your life."  
-Kellen, age 4

# What is Story Workshop?

Story Workshop **invites** children to **show** and to **tell** us what **makes sense** to them

- ✓ it is grounded in the stories children bring to school – real and imagined
- ✓ it encourages writing from those stories
- ✓ it supports children to develop an authentic relationship between their experiences and the way they choose to create and tell stories about them
- ✓ these tellings, in a variety of forms, nurture listening
- ✓ the reciprocity of storytelling and listening allows students to know themselves and each other better
- ✓ students learn that stories help us find each other, and that writing is a powerful tool for connection

# Why Story Workshop?

Story Workshop helps teachers work with students who exclaim they have nothing to write about during writing workshop.

Students start to understand that they:

- \* can be curious about the environment around them
- \* are competent communicators
- \* have important stories to tell
- \* can make connections to other people's stories
- \* have big emotions they can explore and share with others

Story Workshop is the confluence of meaning-making, play, and the arts.

# *The power of telling stories*

Stories give a firm basis for the learning of language

Learn new vocabulary

Words are said in context

Words are used in different ways

Connection between speaking and listening

Stories form relationships ...

Provide connection between storyteller and listener

Learn what is important to students

Students come to see educators as real people

Students see that their voice is valued



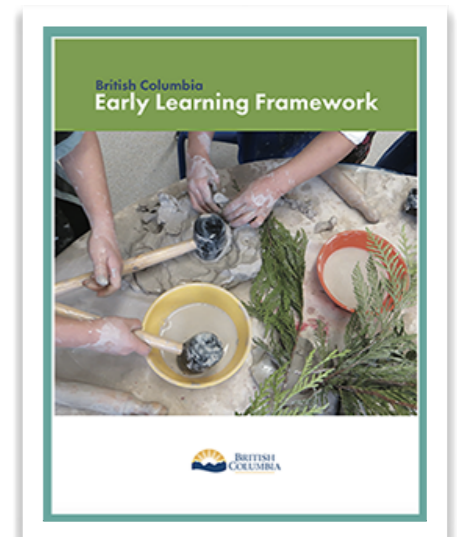
# Kindergarten to Grade 2 - ELA Big Ideas



- ✓ Language and story can be a source of creativity and joy
- ✓ Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves and our families [and our communities] (Grade 2 / 3)
- ✓ Stories and other texts can be shared through pictures & words
- ✓ Everyone has a unique story to share
- ✓ Through listening and speaking, we connect with others and share our world
- ✓ Playing with language helps us discover how language works
- ✓ Curiosity and wonder lead us to new discoveries about ourselves and the world around us

# BC's Early Learning Framework Principles

- Children are **strong**, **capable** in their **uniqueness**, and full of **potential**.
- **Families** have the most **important** role in contributing to children's **well-being** and **learning**.
- Educators are **researchers** and **collaborators**.
- Early years **spaces** are **inclusive**.
- People build **connection** and **reconnection** to **land**, **culture**, **community**, and **place**.
- **Environments** are **integral** to well-being and learning.
- **Play** is **integral** to well-being and learning.
- **Relationships** are the **context** for well-being and learning.
- **Learning** is **holistic**.



# How does Story Workshop support and honour these Big Ideas/Principles?

## K – 2 ELA Big Ideas

- ✓ Language and story can be a source of creativity and joy
- ✓ Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves and our families [and our communities]  
(Grade 2 / 3)
- ✓ Stories and other texts can be shared through pictures & words
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## Early Learning Framework Principles

- ✓ Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness, and full of potential.
- ✓ Families have the most important role in contributing to children's well-being and learning.
- ✓ Educators are researchers and collaborators.
- ✓ Early years spaces are inclusive.
- ✓ People build connection and reconnection to land, culture, community, and place.
- ✓ Environments are integral to well-being and learning.
- ✓ Play is integral to well-being and learning.
- ✓ Relationships are the context for well-being and learning.
- ✓ Learning is holistic.



# Pathways for Engagement with Others, Materials & the World

Designing environments and cultivating practices that consider:

## Knowledge & Theories

Respect the knowledges & theories that children hold

## Spaces, Objects & Materials

Children can investigate and experiment with materials in ways that are meaningful to them

## Time for Engagement

Experiment to re-imagine routines, schedules & transitions

## Reconnection to Land & Space

Consider what it means to be in relationship with land

## Local Community Connections

Learning spaces become places of gathering, and children are active participants in the community

# *The Five Elements of Story Workshop*

## Preparation

organizing materials and environments specifically designed to support both the children's story creation and the teacher's research

## Provocation

the whole-group session that begins each story workshop, including a proposal the teacher introduces to the children to engage, sustain, and extend their interests and curiosity

## Invitation and negotiation

is the transition between provocation and creation; intended to support each child with a plan to get started

## Story creation

makes up the bulk of a session of story workshop; a time for using the arts and play as well as writing to make meaning, to imagine, to create, and to share stories

## Story sharing

brings closure to story workshop each day, and is a time for building community through story and reflection

# Preparation

There are two kinds of preparation:

## 1. Setting intentions and documenting

Getting ourselves ready to LISTEN to children, meet them where they are, and learn alongside them

## 2. The physical space

Organizing a physical environment that supports research, relationship, and the construction of meaningful language and literacy.

“We are preparing ourselves for stories”

## Writing Workshop Connection

interesting paper, journals, good writing materials, staplers, tape, interesting office supplies, stapled blank books, clipboards, alphabet charts, personal dictionaries, folders...

# Provocation

## Invite children to play with ideas

- offering a proposal to children to engage, sustain, and extend their interests and curiosity as they begin the workshop
- like mini-lessons in writers' workshop – they both ready the children to use their independent time constructively
- a kind of prediction that a teacher makes – a hunch about what will spark and sustain children's curiosity

It's like a game of ball toss between teacher and children.

### Example & Context:

**longer term learning goal:** becoming more familiar with literary nonfiction in order to inspire students' own writing

**smaller goal:** exploring the topic of forests

# Invitation & Negotiation

## Overview & Expectations

- giving a daily overview of the materials available
- the teacher and students make agreements about where each child will get started and spend their time during story creation
- the teachers check in, listen, nudge, encourage, and hold children accountable each day
- the child and their work meets up with the teacher and their research, in genuine relationship and authentic inquiry

It's a moment to play with each child individually

## Writing Workshop Connection:

**transitioning to independent work** teachers take care to help children focus as they head to work; children may be asked to state an intention before they head to work



# *What invitation and negotiation sounds like*

- What's your plan? What are you working on?
- Where will you find your story?
- What part of your story are you working on?
- What materials are you going to use? What tools do you need?
- You used blocks yesterday and got stuck. What new material might help you get unstuck today?
- How will you capture your story?
- Would you like to start by telling a friend what you've got so far?
- What are you struggling with and how can I help you?
- What will you do if you get stuck?

# Story Creation

Independent work time devoted to using the arts, play, and writing to make meaning

- children play with materials (including art media), talk to each other, and tell and write stories
- teachers work with small groups and individuals, as they explore patterns, connections, and relationships through the arts and play
- young authors construct and share meaning – to make sense of their relationship to the world through story

Teachers create the conditions that promote 'relaxed alertness'

## Writing Workshop Connection:

teachers use children's own writing to teach writing skills and strategies; children are invited to write like readers and read like writers; children gain important skills through writing and then reading their own words

# Supporting Children Through Story Creation

When talking with children about their stories,  
use supportive language...

- Can you tell me more about...?
- I notice...
- That reminds me of...
- Your story makes me feel...
- I wonder... (where that idea came from, what will happen next, how that character felt)
- What would you like to do next?
- How do you plan to capture that story?
- What tools do you need?
- I look forward to hearing more!

# Story Sharing

Each session of story workshop ends with a whole-group reflection on the work that happened during story creation

- it's a time for zooming in, paying attention, listening, and making connections
- it's a journey to explore the territory of understanding, imagination, curiosity, and empathy

## Writing Workshop Connection: Author's Chair

one child sharing a piece of writing, sometimes to get feedback from peers (compliments, questions, or suggestions); or a few children are asked to share what they tried in their own writing; or small groups or pairs share with each other from their ongoing work

# Engaging in story sharing by focusing on connection

It takes time to learn to listen deeply.

We can ask questions like:

- Who was reminded of their own story?
- What pictures did you make in your mind?
- What are you wondering?
- How did the story make you feel?
- Do you have any connections?
- What inspired you?
  - What does listening sound like, look like, and feel like?
  - How do you feel when someone listens to you?
  - What do you do when you get stuck?
  - Why do people tell stories?

# Reflect, Connect & Share

What are you noticing or wondering about, in relation to these five elements of story workshop?

1. Preparation
2. Provocation
3. Invitation & Negotiation
4. Story Creation
5. Story Sharing

Reflect on the information just shared and connect it with your own personal story workshop experiences, and share your thoughts, questions, ideas etc. with your table group.

# Grade 1 Students on Story Workshop

“I like doing lots of things like making cool stories and getting to write and draw, it’s fun” – Taylor

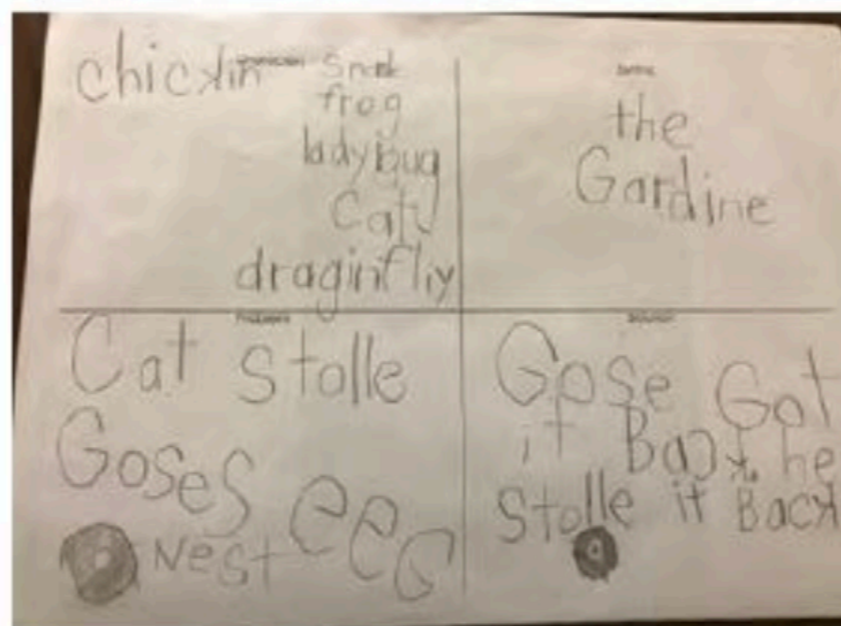
“I like to build stories with my hands” – Luke

“It’s fun to make stories with friends, they help make my story better” – Maeve

“Because you already have a picture it helps you write.” – Ryan

“Well you make stories with different materials, it helps you to write stories because it gives your brain ideas.” – William

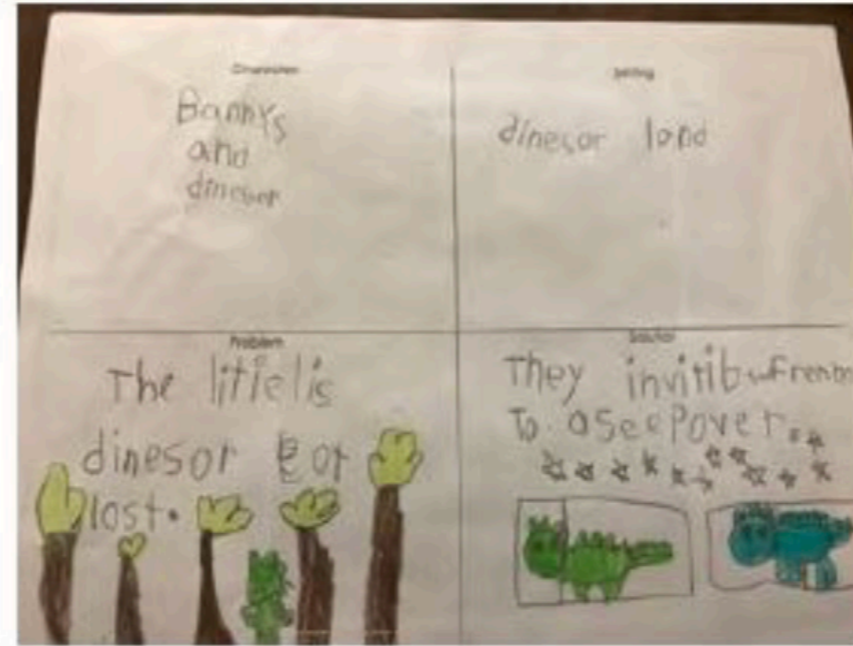




## The Garden By Kate

Once there was a garden. One night in the garden there was 1 chicken, 1 cat, 1 snake, 1 frog, 1 lady bug, 1 dragon fly. The cat stole the chicken's egg and chicken stole it back.

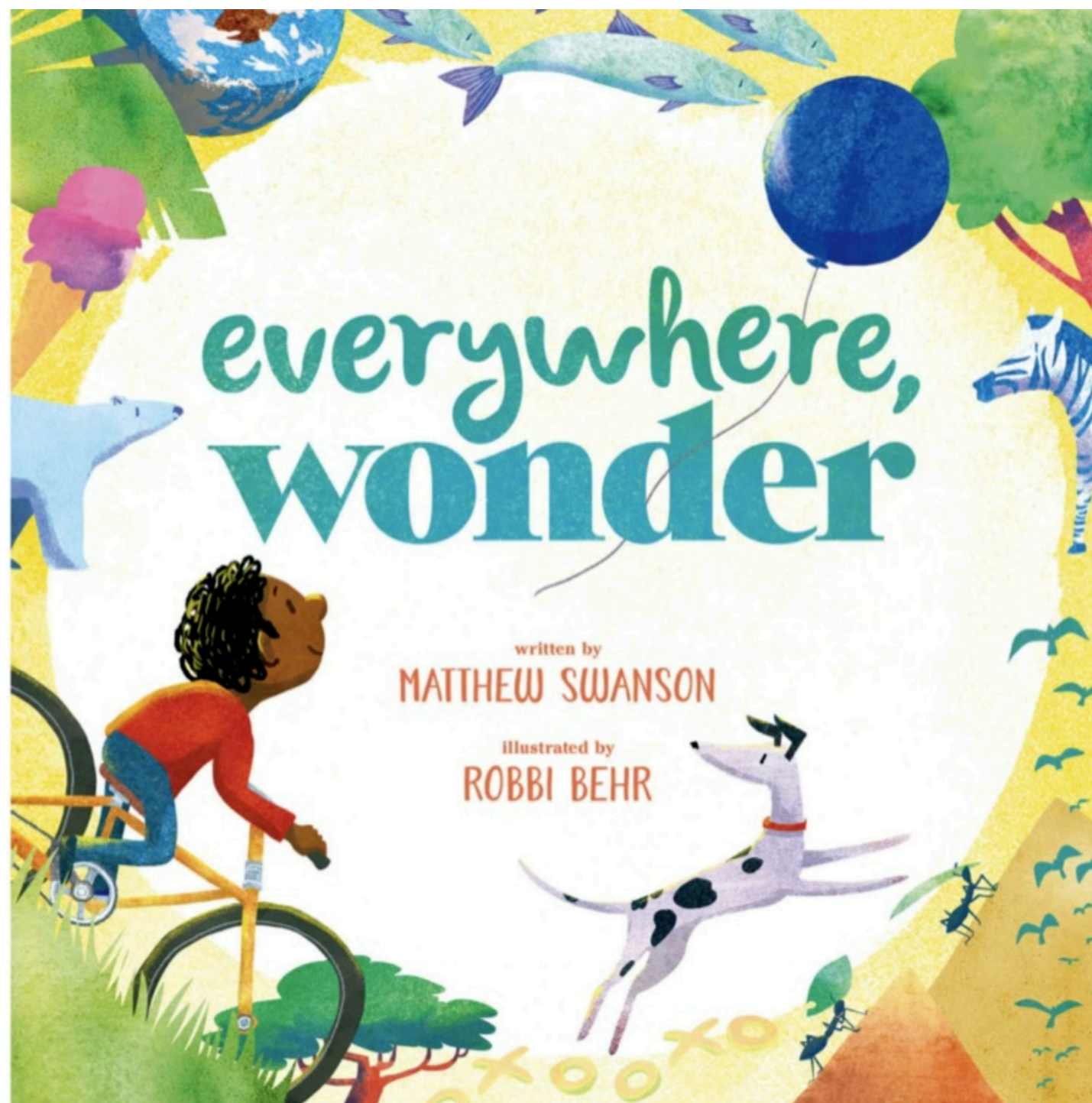




## The First Day the Dinosaurs and the Bunnies Raced By Margo

One beautiful sunny morning the dinosaurs wanted to race with the bunnies. So they decided to race in the forest. "One...two...three GO!" said the dinosaur and they went. But when they raced the smallest dinosaur got lost and they went to look for him, and the biggest dinosaur found the smallest dinosaur. But the Dinosaur was stuck. So they dinosaurs had a good idea, they went to get scissors but the scissors didn't work. All the dinosaurs pulled and pulled and finally got the dinosaur out. The dinosaur was really happy and they invited their friends.

# Read Aloud - Everywhere, Wonder



# Connecting Stories to Our Own Lives

**Question:** What becomes **possible** when you take time to notice?

Think about 4–5 things you've noticed in your community.

## Sharing – oral storytelling

–Choose **one** of your things to describe, and share a brief description with your table group

## Connecting – the reciprocity of listening and storytelling

- Listen to what everyone is sharing
- Select one story that resonates with you, and tell the group

## Finding & Creating Stories – loose parts

–Using the loose parts available, tell your story



Rachel, that maple tree changing colour sounds beautiful. My grandparents had a giant red maple in their front yard.

# Reflection on working with the materials

**Question:** What becomes **possible** when you take time to notice?



- What did you notice?
- What did you wonder?
- How did using different materials help to deepen or extend your thinking?
- Compare the qualities of the materials you used. What are their gifts? Their limitations?
- What might happen if you explored the same question with different materials?



## *Loose Parts as Provocations in Story Workshop*



When children interact with loose parts, they enter a world of “**what if**” that promotes the type of **thinking** that leads to **problem solving** and **theoretical reasoning**. Loose parts **enhance** children’s ability to **think imaginatively** and see **solutions**, and they bring a sense of **adventure** and **excitement** to children’s play.

–Daly & Beloglovsky in  
Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children

- ✓ promote active learning
- ✓ deepen critical thinking
- ✓ promote divergent and creative thinking
- ✓ support developmental domains –
  - ★ physical development
  - ★ social–emotional development
  - ★ cognitive development
- ✓ are developmentally inclusive
- ✓ promote a wide range of play –
  - ★ functional play
  - ★ constructive play
  - ★ dramatic and symbolic play
- ✓ are sustainable and economically feasible
- ✓ support the curriculum –
  - ★ math, language/literacy, science, art, dramatic and symbolic play, sensory exploration, movement and music

# Story Workshop & Provocations



★ What story can these colours tell?



# Emotions and story workshop

Can you use colours and lines to capture the feeling of angry?



“I used brown and black and I made scribbles because angry things feel scribbles. You might explode.”



“When I’m angry, it is a loud angry, like thunder and lightning.”



“The pinkness is I’m mad because my cheeks get pink. The redness comes out of my ears like fire coming out of your ears.”

# The Power of Questions

Story workshop is a structure and approach that supports language and literacy development. Adults work alongside children as they explore prepared environments and experiences and share stories.

Together with our students, we wonder...

Where do stories live?

What stories do I want the world to hear?

What stories do I need to tell?

How do stories influence me and our community?

How do my stories become part of my community, and how do the stories of others in my community become a part of me?

# Sample of a big question and smaller questions

**Big Idea:** exploring our relationship to the natural world

**Big Question:** How might nurturing our relationship with the natural world support empathy and agency?

Inside this big question live smaller questions...

- How will our relationship with the natural world help us learn more about ourselves and one another?
- What new connections will we uncover?
- What ways will we find to share what we are learning?
- How will the stories we tell shape our relationship with the natural world? With each other? How will those stories help us find out more about what we care about as a community?

## Reflect & Share: What are your Big Questions?

Think of a **big idea** you are exploring with your students this year, or would like to explore with them before June. It might be related to Literacy, Science, Social Studies, Math, Art, or Music...

What is the **big question** you are inviting (or can invite) your students to **wonder** about?

Are there 3 – 4 **smaller questions** you are guiding (or can guide) your students as you **explore, discover, and reflect together**?

A beautiful question  
shapes a beautiful mind.  
-poet David Whyte

# Your Turn! Asking the Big Questions

Take some time for **reflection** and **table chats**, and see if you can come up with some questions for story workshop together.

- What can we learn about \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- How can you use \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
(material) (explore, capture, imagine) (idea, question, experience)
  - How can you use **watercolour** to **imagine** where stories come from?
  - How can you use **clay** to **capture** your reflections on today's discussion?
- What stories can we find in \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
(material)
- As you play, what stories will you find in \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
(material)

# Using Documentation to Inform Practice

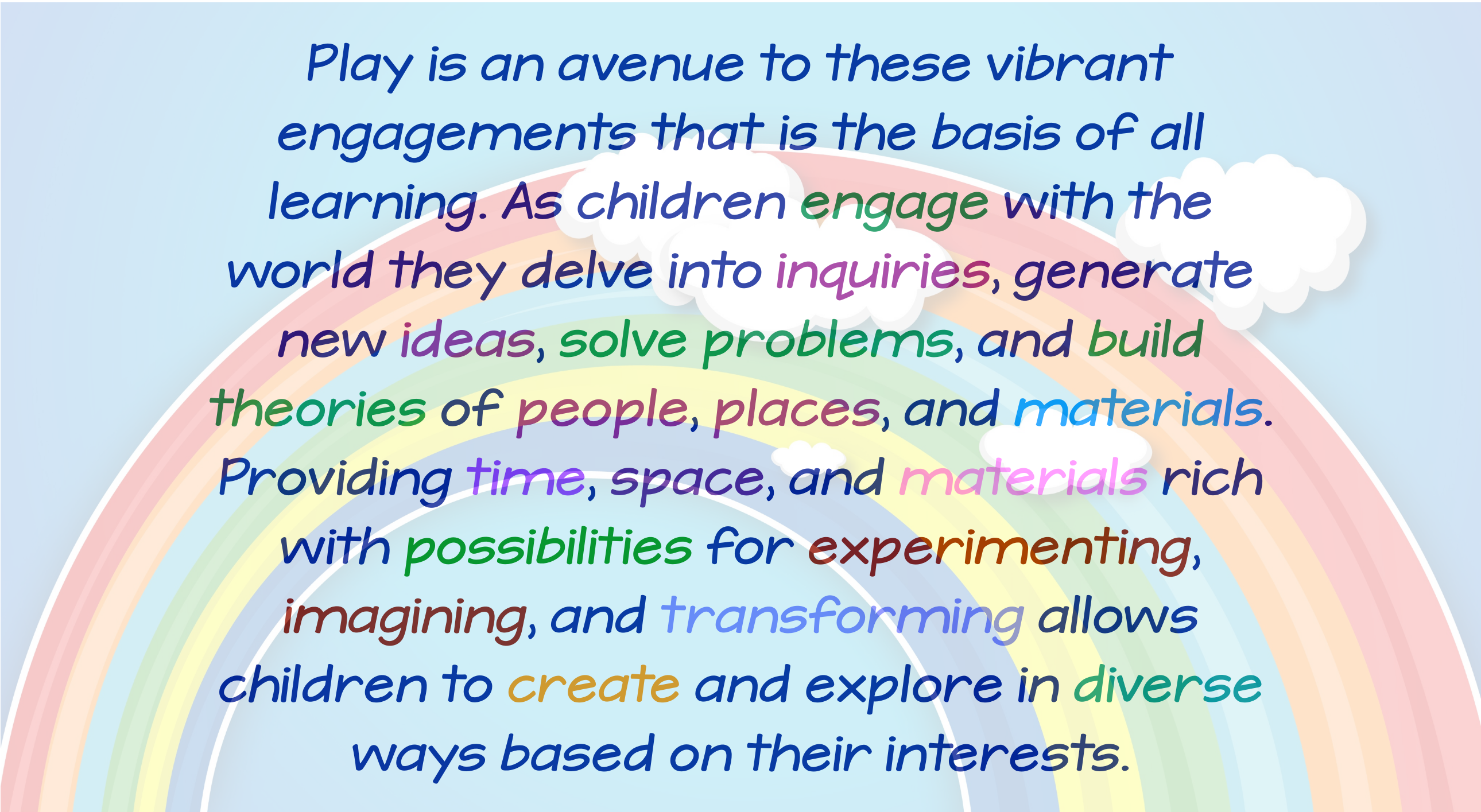
**Consider Intentions:** What is your learning intention? What materials will you need? What provocations will you use? What will you invite the children to do?

**Prepare:** What do you want to gather more information about? What tools will you need? How will you position yourself to observe with an open mind?

**Observe:** Capture through notes, writing down children's dialogue, take photographs to support your memory.

**Interpret & Speculate:** What do you notice? What patterns do you see? What evidence do you see that supports your interpretation. What surprises or confuses you?

What documentation tools work for you?  
What can support story workshop for you?



Play is an avenue to these vibrant engagements that is the basis of all learning. As children **engage** with the world they delve into **inquiries**, generate new **ideas**, **solve problems**, and **build theories** of **people**, **places**, and **materials**. Providing **time**, **space**, and **materials** rich with **possibilities** for **experimenting**, **imagining**, and **transforming** allows children to **create** and explore in **diverse** ways based on their interests.

*A bird flying.*

*by Mattia, 3 years old*



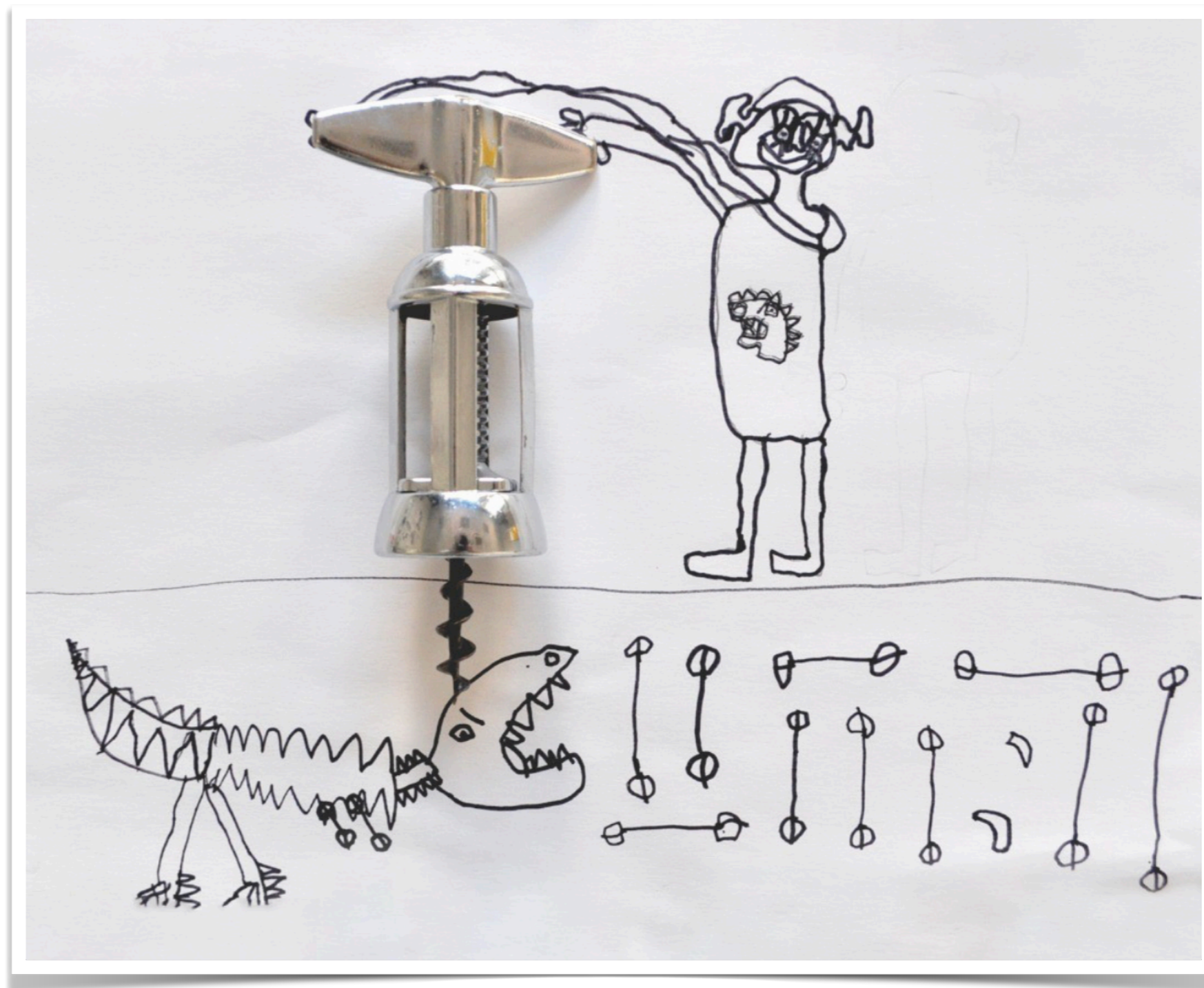


## Corkscrew drill

by Gianmaria, 5.7 years old

*“A paleontologist digging for dinosaur bones with a playstoric drill.”*

The making of metaphor is a process that leads to unusual, unexpected and often original outcomes and that invites our thoughts to open up and expand...



# Supporting a Classroom Culture of Storytelling/Writing

*Young writers need...*

- ★ Practice and time
- ★ Topics and audiences that matter to them
- ★ A storytelling and listening culture
- ★ Varied genres, forms, purposes
- ★ Clear goals and frequent feedback
- ★ The time and space to approximate good writing



## Questions:

How does Story Workshop help support these six things?  
How is oral language supported by Story Workshop & writing?

# Sit spots: Storytelling inspired by observing nature



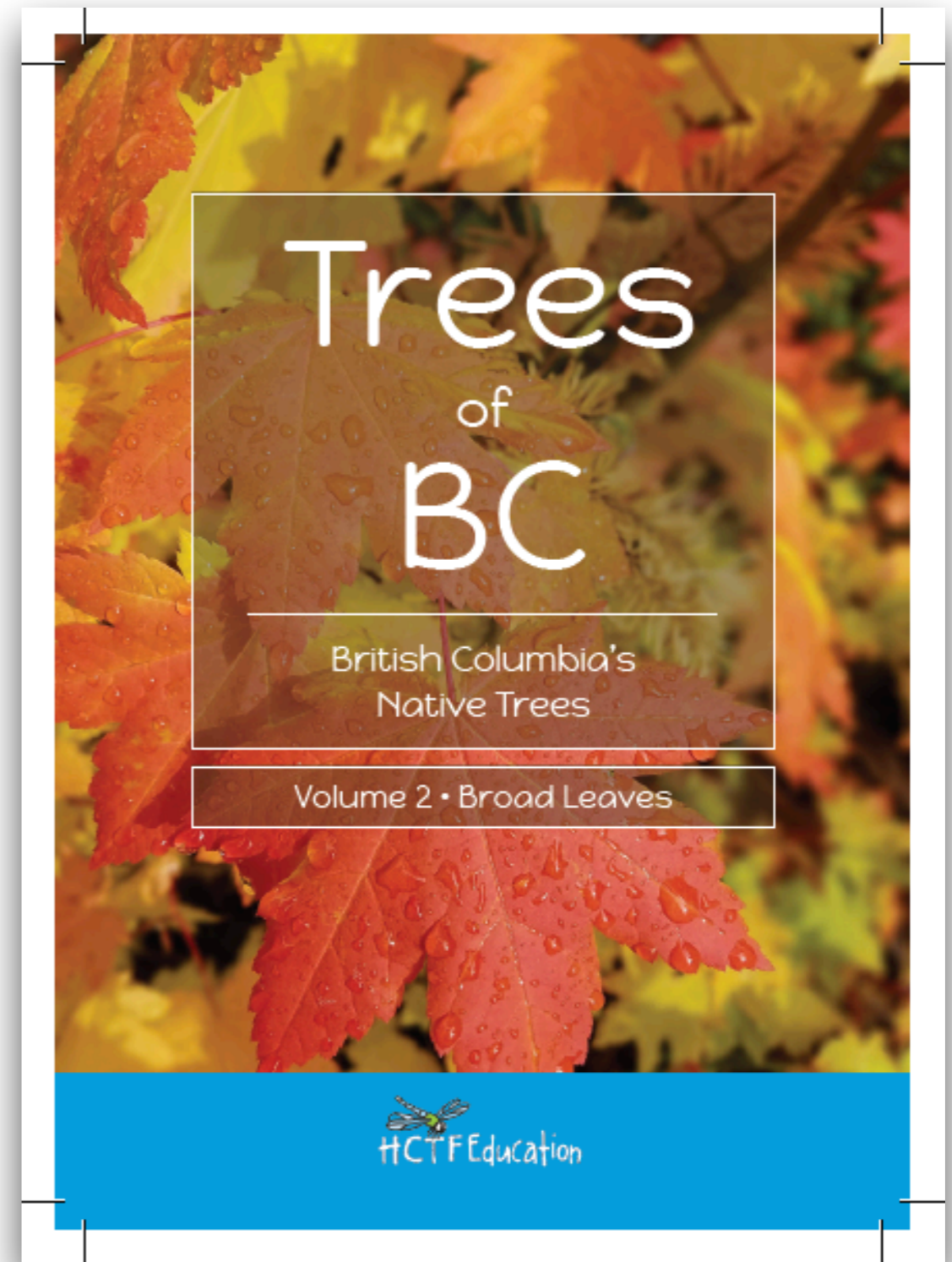
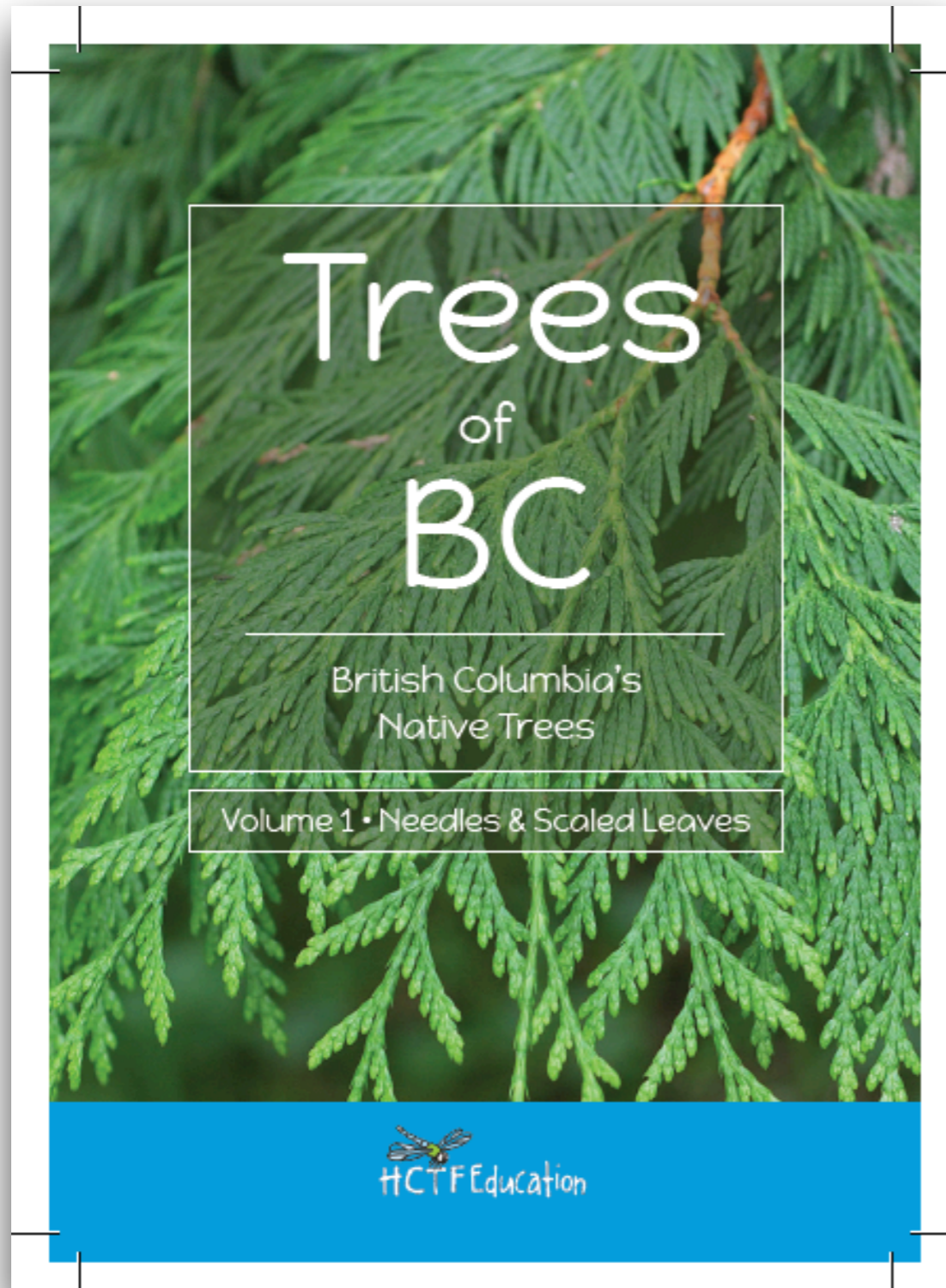
- \* self-selected spots that students can return to many times
- \* promotes careful observation and reflection
- \* stories can be factual or imaginary, or a blend of both
- \* stories can blend what they're seeing in the natural world with their own lives – e.g. *maybe that spider is a really good drummer*
- \* students might imagine what plants or animals are thinking or feeling; what would they say if they could talk?
- \* repeated visits to these sit spots can also highlight changes in the seasons and how these plants and animals are impacted

# Sit spots for cultivating our powers of observation

- \* Choose one photo as your virtual sit spot
- \* What do you **notice**, **wonder**, or **connect** to?
- \* Share 2–3 thoughts about your chosen photo
- \* Can you **imagine** a **story** taking place here?



# Resources to support close observation & noticing



# Resources to support the close observation of trees

## Broad-leaf characteristics

### Position



alternate



opposite

### Edge



toothed



smooth

### Shape



oval



pointed oval



lobed



maple



triangle

## Conifer characteristics

### cone features



bracts



fused



fleshy



aril

### cone shapes



round



egg-shaped



cylindrical



conical

### leaf grouping



bundled



single



stalked bundle



scales

### needles features



flat



fine



triangular

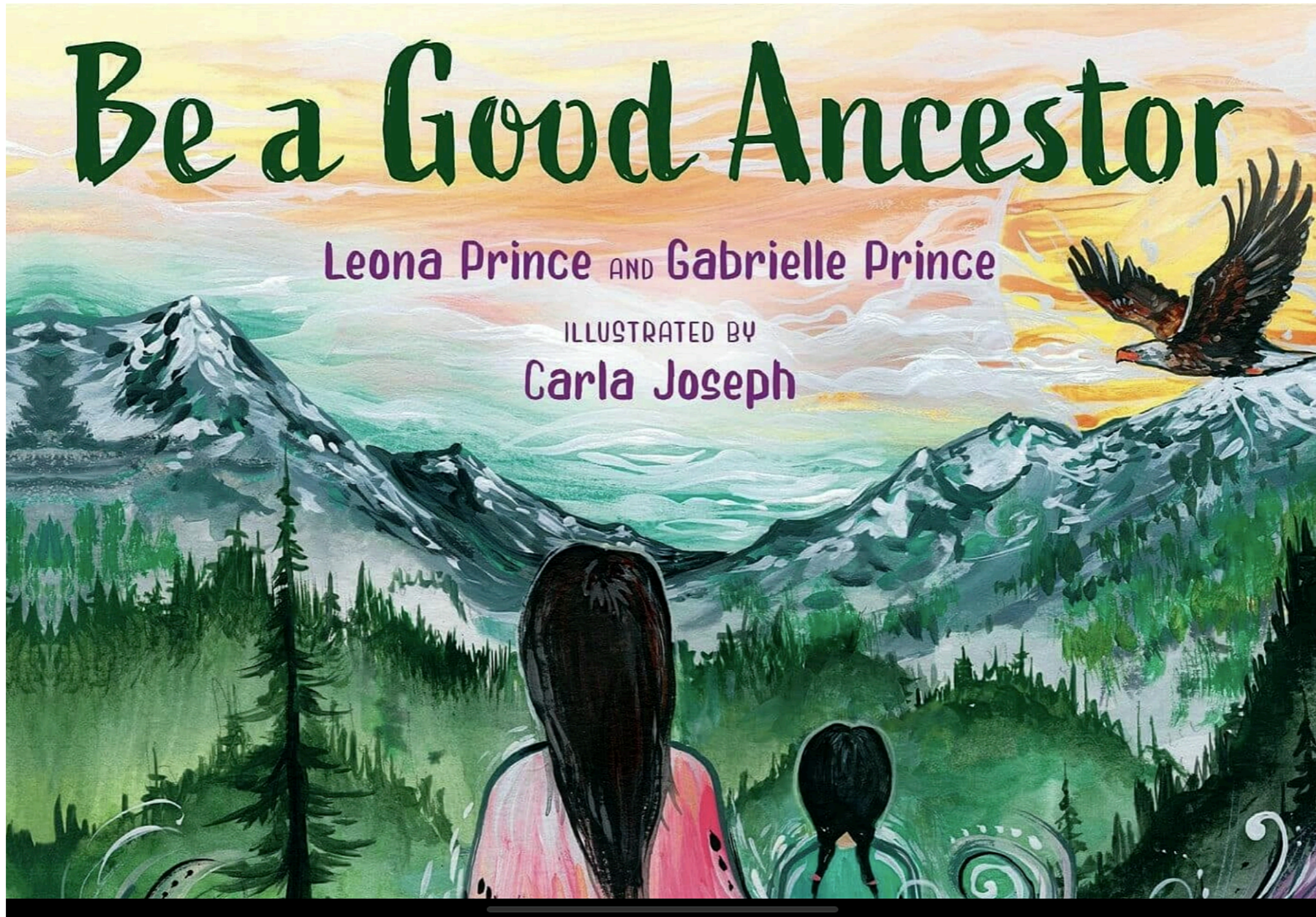


notched



Educators **collaborate** with children and their families as **partners in research**. This means educators are continually **observing, listening, and experimenting** with an **openness to the unexpected**.

*Making personal connections to place through story*





# Being a good ancestor in your community



How can you use loose parts to capture your respect for the natural world?

- Use loose parts to create a representation of your region of BC.
- What parts of your environment need to be cared for and protected?
- How can you be a good ancestor?

Share in collaborative and reflective conversations with your colleagues as you each find your story.

How did using these materials deepen your thinking about this topic?

What story did these materials reveal about your relationship with your environment?

# Reflection on working with the materials



**Question:** What becomes **possible** when you take time to reflect?

- What did you notice?
- What did you wonder?
- How did using different materials help to deepen or extend your thinking?
- Compare the qualities of the materials you used. What are their gifts? Their limitations?
- What might happen if you explored the same question with different materials?

# Supporting story workshop connections at home

## Inspire

- read, view or listen to a book
- explore outside using your senses
- learn something new in science, socials, math or any subject
- remember an experience at school, at home, on holidays
- retell how to do something...

## Create

- Using 'stuff' build a picture to explain your learning
- Move the stuff around to play out the story of your learning
- Play out the learning story one or more times adding stuff or using new stuff.
- Recreate the learning story with paints, pastels, crayons, clay, play-doh, sand, sidewalk chalk...

## Share

- tell someone the story
- draw the story by copying what you have created
- label the drawing with letters and words
- write a sentence to summarize the story
- write out the whole story
- video record the story as you play it out

What kind of practices ensure that each child walks into the classroom each day knowing that they matter? That the work that goes on there each day couldn't happen without them - that it wouldn't be the same without them? We can ensure children learn how to live like they matter, and in so doing, explore what it feels like for ourselves. We can practice. We can write a new story. We can fulfill our commitment to offer joy, not to protect us from the hard stuff, but to find out what it means to move through it together.

-Susan Harris Mackay

# Sources

## Info Links

[BC Ministry of Education – ELA Curriculum](#)

[Opal School: Why Story Workshop?](#)

[BC Early Learning Framework](#)

[Invitations to Play – An Introduction to the Reggio Emilia Approach](#)

[Vancouver Reggio Association – Story Workshop in the Grade 1 Classroom](#)

[Opal School – Translating Ideas Between Different Materials](#)

[Delta Learns – Story Studio at Home](#)

[Habitat Conservation Trust Fund Education – FREE Downloads of Tree Cards](#)

## Books

Story Workshop: New Possibilities for Young Writers – MacKay

Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children – Daly & Beloglovsky

Storytelling and Story-Reading in Early Years – Medicott

A Festive Thought: Visual Metaphor in Children's Learning Processes – Reggio Children Publishing

## Videos

[Opal School Video – Setting the Table](#)

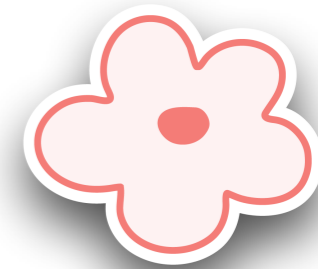
[Opal School: Children on Play & Learning](#)

[J Allair – Kindergarten Story Workshop inspired by Opal School](#)

[Rights of Children – North American Reggio Emilia Association \(NAREA\)](#)



# Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years



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# *The Values of the Reggio Emilia Approach*

Children are active protagonists in their growing experience.

- Children are equipped with extraordinary potential
- Every child is a constructor of experiences

The hundred languages

- Children possess a hundred ways of thinking, expressing, understanding...

Participation

- The educational strategy that is constructed and lived in encounters and relations day after day

Learning as a process of construction

- Every child is the constructor of knowledge, competencies, and autonomies

Educational Research

- Priority is given to research between adults and children as an everyday practice, a necessary attitude for interpreting the world

# *The Values of the Reggio Emilia Approach*

## Educational documentation

- Documentation is an integral part of educational theories and practices and gives them structure
- It renders the nature of learning processes as visible and invaluable, and turns them into a shared common legacy

## Design

- Educational action is shaped through the design of teaching, environments, participation, and the professional growth of educators

## Organization

- The organization of work, of spaces, of time, are central structures that support stability, continuity, and a sense of belonging

## Environment and Spaces

- Interior and exterior spaces are designed as interconnected, and are offered to children and adults as places to live together and research
- Care for these spaces creates familiarity, belonging, safety, well-being...