

REAIE Inner West Sydney Network Group

Zoom Meeting Minutes
12th August 2020: 6pm-8pm

Zoom Meeting Participants

Deb Garrett, Emma Cullen, Ruth Mules, Marion Barriere, Michelle Ng, Courtney McConnell, Miho Kobayashi, Su Garrett, Karen Dresser, Laure Hislop, Megan O'Brien, Paula West, Hollie van Ravenstein, Silvia Lorenzotti, Pip Mason, Jamie Nielson, Lucy Rymer, Xanthe Young

Apologies

Kylie Lawson, Alicia Roberts, Mel Elderton, Helen Smith, Rosie Pupo

Welcome

Deb gave an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed everyone with an overview of the history of our Inner West network group.

Thanks to Xanthe and Explore and Develop Leichhardt who had offered to host tonight's meeting. Hopefully we will be back face to face next year 😊

Previous Meeting Minutes

Deb explained that the previous minutes were verbose so that we could maintain the storyline of our group's experience. We may write the story and experiences of our Inner West group during this time up for Challenge.

Liminal Time

Deb shared some reading she has been doing around 'liminal time' – an anthropological term - a transition time, a time that is in between, where what has gone before may not be the same as in the future. This resonated with Deb and she made the connection with our previous discussions around Windows and transitions as a result of Covid. Dr Genevieve Bell spoke about this on The Drum on ABC recently.

REAIE have been innovative in connecting with members during this time with some wonderful blogs, webinars and the online piazza, and we have also seen stories shared from Reggio Emilia itself where they have had to adapt and move to a whole new way of living and being.

Looking through a lens of liminal time we hold onto hope. While there is tension during periods of uncertainty, it also offers a degree of contentment, peace and excitement as we look to where we might be heading next.

Ruth drew a parallel with Nicholson's Loose Parts Theory – when he speaks about "the space in between". This is currently being explored at Betty's, who are looking at what is happening in the space in between the loose parts - what is happening in relation to gender, to relationships between children, when loose parts are explored in relation to music and nature.

What window has this time allowed us to move into?

Marion spoke about the photo display they have put along their fence at Betty's to create a window into their world – for the community to see what they have been doing with the resources they have acquired from Pay It Forward and Reverse

Garbage, and to share the narratives of exploring loose parts from the perspective of the children.

Deb reflected on windows as a tool of connection, like when rainbows and teddies were shared during the early weeks of Covid.

Miho shared a reflection on second hand items, describing them as “things that have a home in the future” – a beautiful lens - looking towards the future and providing hope.

Su also resonated with the concept of liminal time. Annandale were grappling with the perceived loss of identity that the pandemic caused, and members of the team has expressed feeling lost and overwhelmed. However, liminal time gives hope and transfers the focus to ‘what’s next’? They have held on to the idea of this being a transition time, and are questioning ‘what will our new identity become? What will be?’

Deb suggested that it was not the loss of identity, but the feeling of finding a new identity.

Michelle elaborated further on windows at Betty’s. They have observed them to be a meeting place, a place of relationship. The panel display on their fence is symbolic of a window of relationship – connection and reflection back towards the community. A deep, meaningful connection with the community, at a time when it can be difficult to connect.

Deb was reminded of Play School – looking through the windows: going into worlds. People can see into our worlds even if they can’t physically step into them.

Camdenville shared a reflection on relationships, particularly in their Kindy classrooms. Families are not able to come onto the school site and this has changed the way they are connecting and building relationships. They are reaching out to families and sharing learning through digital platforms.

Miho had a similar experience, and felt the atmosphere had changed. Their numbers remained high, but with families not able to enter the centre, family relationships are different. She has found this more challenging with new families, not so different with older families.

How do we build community with the constraints we are facing with families not being able to be as physically present? How do we create windows into our world that allow us in?

Xanthe’s centre have retained their relationships with families as families can still come into the service. She reflected that the wider world is different eg. at the shops, but that they have retained their ‘normal’ for the children.

Su has been encouraging families not to stay as long as in the past, and has been considering the impact of this on the welfare of the children. They have been trying to keep things as normal as possible, but her team shares some anxiety around if they are doing enough.

Silvia has been researching the transformation of relationships. Silvia’s gaze has changed over time. She started with a question of how the atelier can transform the relationships among children involving all classrooms and different languages. But

then she realised that was her window, her gaze, and so she is now looking at - What transformation of relationships is, from the children's perspective?

We welcomed Megan to her first meeting. She commented that there are a number of different ideas and perspectives being shared by the group but that they are all entwined. She reflected on a 'Covid quilt' artwork project in Melbourne – multiple perspectives, almost like windows – looking out and looking in.

Deb explained a little about our 'Windows project' and its' genesis through discussion, with inspiration from Jeannie Baker's wordless picture book 'Window'. We had to put our plans on hold when Covid hit, but would like to reflect more on this, and using Malaguzzi's quote as inspiration, think about some central questions - Where are we going? What are we doing? What is going to emerge?

Marion was in isolation for two months, but maintained connections with Betty's via video. She shared songs in French, and footage of caterpillars from her backyard. These videos were projected in the 0-2s room, providing a beautiful visual connection. The children were able to get a window into Marion's world, and it allowed Marion to still feel connected with the children and her colleague. When Marion returned to the centre, the personal relationships and connections were reinforced and stronger than ever.

This sparked reflection on the use of technology. Babies and toddlers are born into a world that is filled with technology, but we sometimes steer away from using it with them. What are their rights?

Annandale have long embedded technology in their program. Su shared that the children have been missing their local excursions, and so they took some video footage of their favourite excursion places and have been sharing that with the children in different ways eg. projecting the Morton bay fig over the dinosaur landscape. The children had a mixed response, and seemed to want to connect with the real thing not an image.

Laure enjoys using technology, and reflected on the Reggio book 'Border Crossings'. Discussion followed about the use of a digital microscope, including one of the presentations at the Perth conference. Laure also reminded us to consider confidentiality and privacy laws when using technology.

Camdenville spoke about windows as a barrier, thinking about their changed community connections this year. They already had digital communications and technology in place, but have lost the much valued person to person connections.

Jamie's school use digital tools for communication – Seesaw to share learning, and Instagram for play based inquiry inspiration. She saw the positives in increased online communication - it created a different relationship, and some families were more engaged. The family community bonded with the school in a different way to before. Physical presence not possible, but connection through technology has been a blessing. The school decided its' priority was to nurture play and provide families a window into what they are doing at school

Camdenville spoke about the privilege of communicating through technology. Not so much an issue in the inner west, but definitely in other communities.

Emma reflected on her experiences using technology during lockdown on Norfolk. Internet is cost prohibitive for some families on island, however it was still the best

way to connect when everyone was at home. Educators created videos, sharing a window into their world at home, and also shared provocations through Seesaw.

Miho spoke about the beauty of writing letters, making things and connecting in ways that don't need technology. She values the 'patience and pondering' that goes into writing, posting and receiving letters.

Emma spoke about the physicality of relationships – it was delightful to see the way the children reunited after returning to the centre after lockdown. They just wanted to 'be' in company with each other. Technology provided us a window into their worlds and vice versa, but the physical aspect of the relationship remained most important, and was only strengthened after a period of absence.

Paula shared some of the reflective thinking and transformation that was possible at NNS, as a result of lower numbers. They have thought about the way they teach and learn, creating smaller groups and different ways of being together – working on relationships, choice, responsibilities, and how to offer rich possibilities without as much. Paula linked this to liminal time and exploring options for the future. She reflected on the extraordinary resilience, joy and energy children bring to living every day.

Courtney has experienced continuity at Abbotsford, aside from lower numbers initially. They connected with families via Zoom, however found it difficult to engage with the children on screen. They have been missing their connections with the local community, and have used the pathway and driveway as a window into their world, and a connection point eg. by sharing rosemary sprigs for Anzac Day.

Moving Forward

We would like to continue sharing stories and windows into our worlds, but would also like to pick up the idea of a group project. We will do some more thinking around this and share with you next meeting.

Next Meeting:

Thursday 5th November