



# 'Peeling back the layers'

the art of practitioner inquiry in an  
early childhood setting

Catharine Hydon

Margaret Hammersley

# Our agenda...

Context

Inquiry Approaches and why do they matter to ECEC.

Undertaking an inquiry process – how does it work.

What happened.

What we learnt.



Context

*The Kindergarten* in Kempsey (Mid North Coast NSW)





2014  
Memories

aces

ump

# Pedagogy and Inquiry

What matters just as much is the longing and the capacity to think differently, to listen and to work with different stories; and the passion, commitment, collaboration and sheer hard work of individuals and groups of individuals who want to tell a different story and who desire to gain and maintain movement to achieve transformational change.

(Moss, 2014, p. 169)



# Inquiry is Educators Research

Educator 'research is important because it repositions the meaning of [educator] from one who simply performs or acts to someone who generates and contributes to the knowledge on which [our] practice is based and how decisions are made. [Educator] research is liberating and empowering inquiry that allows ... [educators] to take their lives as teachers seriously, to generate knowledge and understanding that can improve teaching and potentially create a more democratic and equitable learning community.

(Perry 2012 p114)

Rhizomatics eliminates  
'roots and foundations, to thwart  
unities and break dichotomies,  
and to spread out roots and  
branches, thereby pluralizing and  
disseminating, producing  
differences and multiplicities,  
making new connections.  
(Best and Douglas 1991, 99)

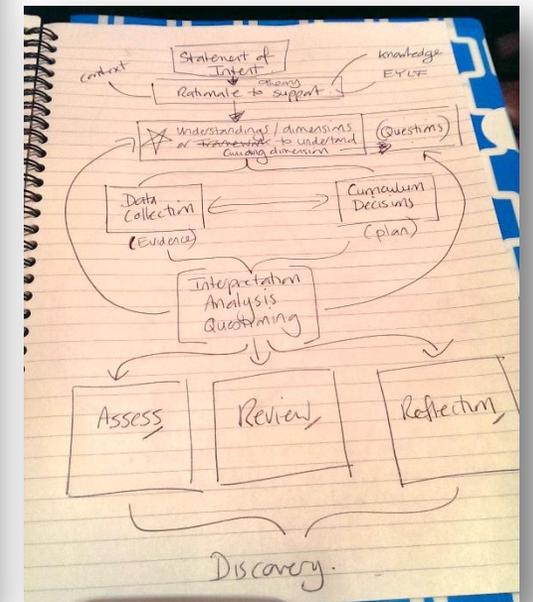
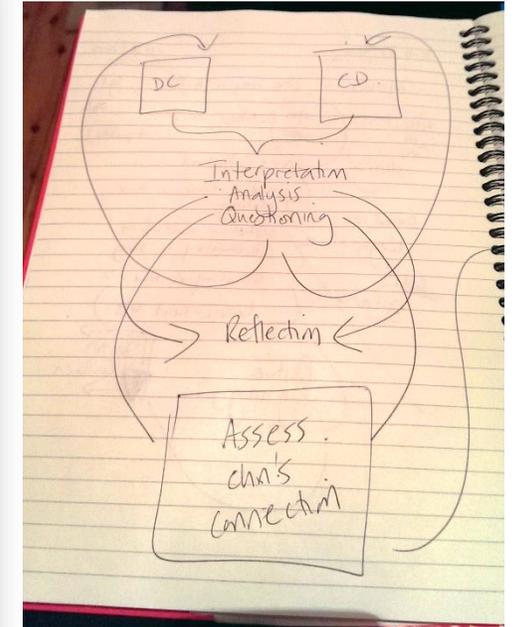
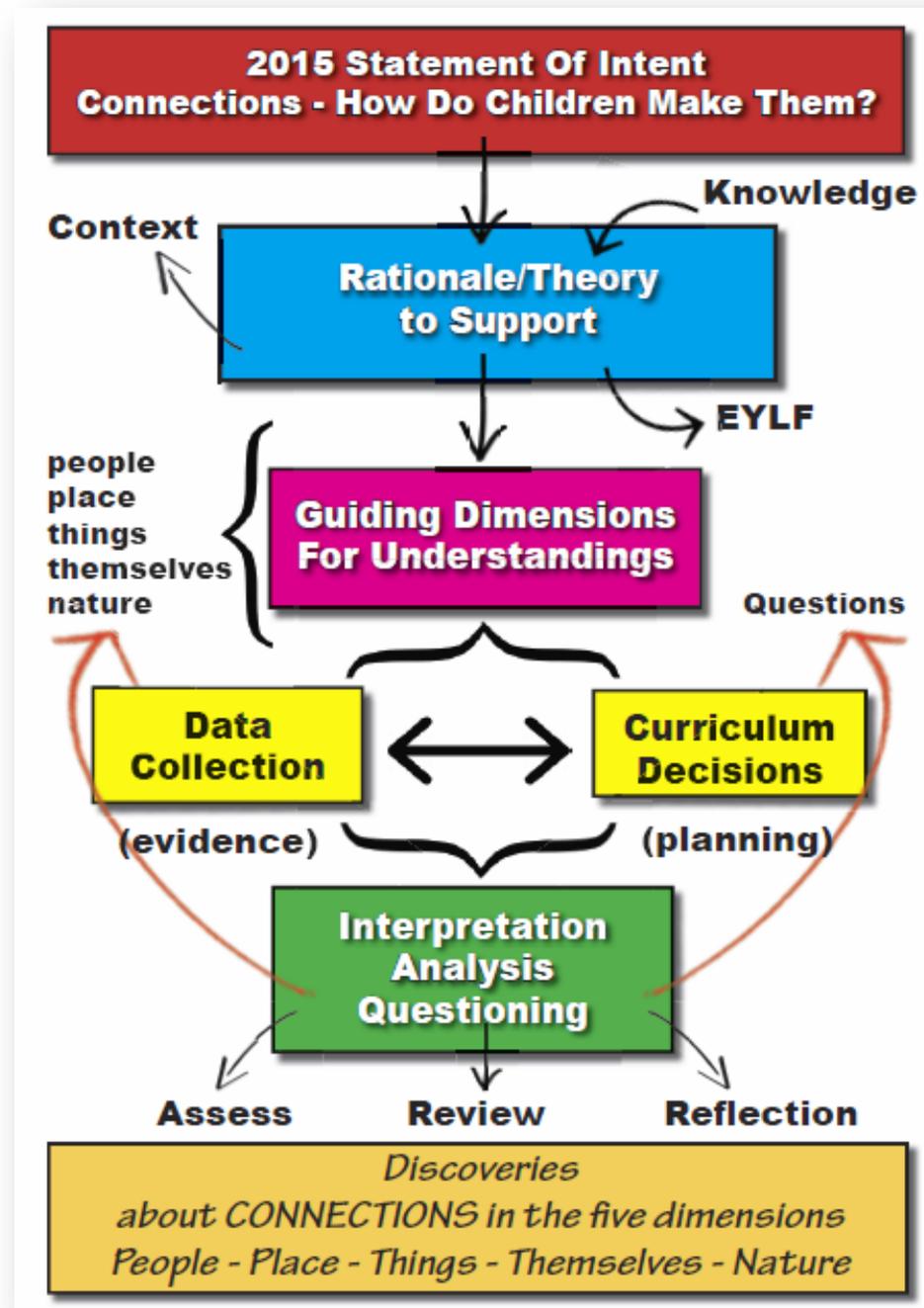


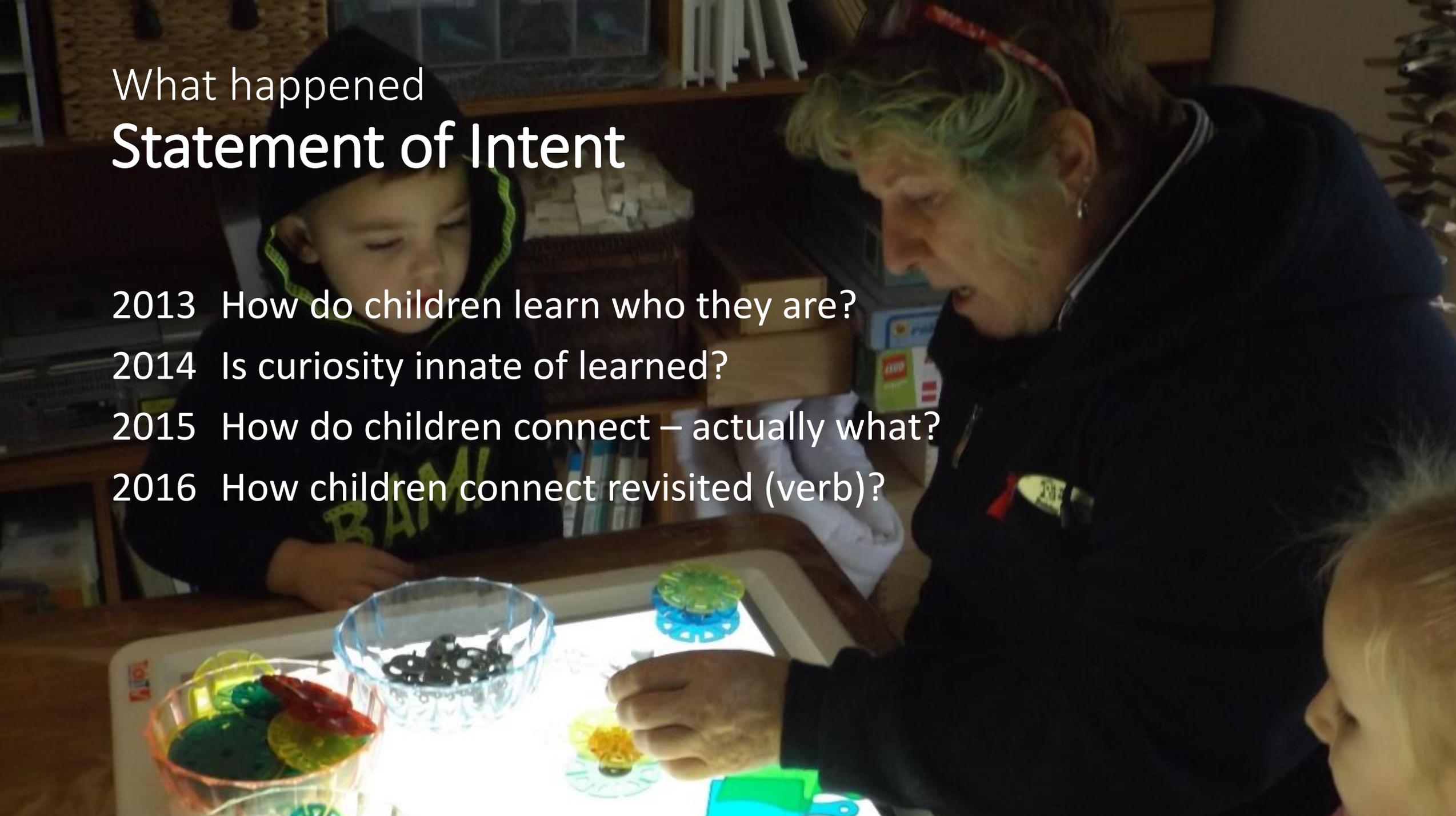


The educators in Reggio Emilia describe their planning for children as **progettazione**, a flexible approach which hypothesises many possible ways to work (in the classroom, promoting staff development and in relationship with the parents) towards particular intentions which, wherever possible, are shared by both children and teachers.

# The approach

- Statement
- Rationale
- Guiding Dimensions
- Data collection
- Curriculum decisions
- Interpretation/analysis
- Discovery



A woman with short blonde hair, wearing a dark blue jacket, is leaning over a table, interacting with a young child. The child is wearing a black hoodie with green trim and a yellow 'BAM!' graphic. They are sitting at a table with a light table. On the light table, there are several colorful objects: a clear glass bowl filled with black beads, a clear glass bowl with colorful beads (red, green, yellow), and a clear glass bowl with colorful beads (red, green, yellow). The woman is pointing at a yellow object on the light table. The child is looking down at the light table. The background shows a bookshelf with books and a LEGO box.

# What happened

## Statement of Intent

2013 How do children learn who they are?

2014 Is curiosity innate or learned?

2015 How do children connect – actually what?

2016 How children connect revisited (verb)?

# What happened...

## How do children make connections? (Collecting the data)

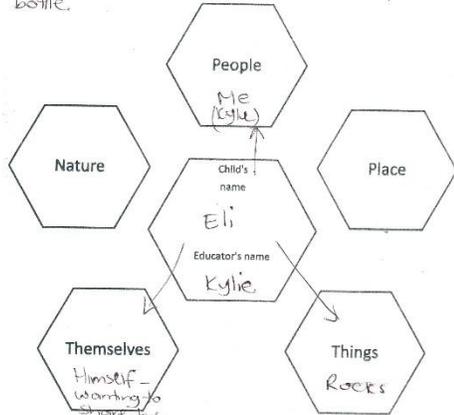
Child's Name: Eli age: 3yr 5m Date of observation: 2.9.15

### Brief account of the observation/provocation

Eli shook rocks from bottle into trapot, as each rock fell he said "1,2,6,7,6". However when placing rocks back into bottle with his hand he counted 1-11. Eli looked at me each time he placed a rock in the bottle.

What role did educator play in this scenario?

I was the hands on Eli's circle - he was looking for my attention & acknowledgement each time he placed a rock in the bottle.



### Further reflections and curriculum decisions:

Why was Eli able to count 1-11 when placing the rocks into the bottle? Was it because he was physically touching them, & had more control over them?  
Emergent numeracy - Eli is aware that numerals exist in his environment & is slowly making sense of them and that he needed to count in order.

## How do children make connections? (Collecting the data)

Child's Name: Jade + William Age: 3yr 6m Date of observation: 12.2.16

### Brief account of the observation/provocation

Jade got her photo book out "look Kylie, that's my family, Amber, Mum & Dad", "see Dad, he dropped me off this morning".

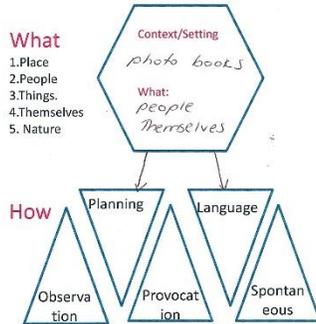
Jade got Alfred's book next "oh look Alfred baby, oh & his family".

William found Mason's book "Hi's my friend Mason". He spent much time looking at & examining every photo.

William got his book - however he only quickly flicked through the pages.

### What role did the educator play in this scenario?

My role was to be available for Jade & William to share the photo books with.



### Further reflections and curriculum decisions:

Jade demonstrates a strong connection to her family. She connected to herself through planning & language.

William demonstrates a strong connection to his friend, Mason. He connected to people through planning & language also.

Week beginning: 25.4.16  
Primary teaching question 2015 - Connections: HOW do children make them?

Secondary teaching questions come from the 5 dimensions listed below.

### WHAT

1: People: (external) children and adults  
Who do I belong to and who belongs to me?  
Who do I want to share my ideas with?

Lots of talk about what ANZAC day is and why it is important

From data gathered last week, our curriculum decisions this week are:

- light table w/ trays + Skeleton
- Introduced blocks with laminated photos.
- sand art
- paint w/ shape

2: Place: (external)

Where do I belong? Where do I want to go?  
What is my favourite place to go?

Girls are very excited to visit ST PAULS to check out the stage.

Intentional teaching plans for the week:

DR SUEZZ BOOKS

Literacy  
Rhyming + Sound association

Community / cultural / family events and involvement:

ANZAC DAY

School goes back

Ongoing/new interests / projects / investigations

- Collage

3: Things: (external) methodology used to connect - eg: senses

What things do I need?  
What do I want to play with?

Kye, Braxton, Felix, Noah, Brent & Eli connected in the sandpit working collaboratively to reach their goal of making a trench and filling it with water until it reached the swing area. All of the boys listened to each idea, explored & discovered together, experimenting with gravity.

### HOW (Tactics observed of the child)

- Observation
  - How are they observing?
  - Why was it observed?
- Language (Verbal/Non Verbal)
  - What kind of language was observed?
  - Are they using their 5 senses?
  - Who are they sharing their information with?
- Planning
  - What can we see?
  - How is the child's learning made visible?
- Provocation
  - What was the outcome?
- Spontaneous
  - Why do you think it was spontaneous?
  - What was the outcome?

Monday  
ANZAC DAY  
PUBLIC HOLIDAY

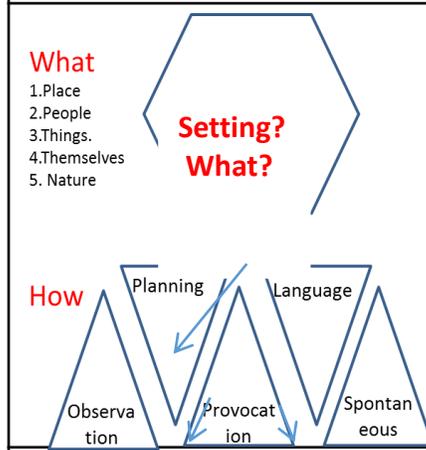
Tuesday  
Cody's B/day

<b>Group Members: Noah</b>	<b>Staff Member Completing Observation: Debby</b>	<b>Date Commenced: 22/6/16</b>
----------------------------	---	--------------------------------

*The Story: When we listened we heard engagements/ interactions/ connections/ knowledge/sharing/ imaginative, creative play/ role play/time frame.*

This morning I noticed that Noah was having trouble connecting to an activity so I intentionally intervened and lead him to the light table where I offered him an opportunity to explore the shapes and we studied the different items and colours. Slowly I started to build a tower using the different shapes and Noah started to copy . We both started to build our towers and then they would fall. We built again and again and finally they balanced until we had no coloured wheels left.

*Interpretation/evaluation of play; What is happening? What learning and teaching is happening here? What did you learn? What could you change? How are the children making connections in relation to Observation, Planning, Provocation, Language and Spontaneous? What are the children connecting with in relation to People, Place, Things, Themselves and Nature? What are we seeing in relation to EYLF/NQF/QIP?*



For a number of weeks I have been observing Noah and have noticed his reluctance to engage in a commitment to draw so I have intentionally taken him into my circle of security as I could see his self confidence needed a boost . Earlier in the morning he had a ‘melt down’ and as I have a good rapport with him I knew I would be able to reassure him and encourage his self confidence to have a great day at preschool. As we sat together his body language told me he was engaging even though he had no words. Noah is a little overwhelmed by the other children's confidence in the room.

*Opportunities and Possibilities; Where to from here? How can we strengthen, support and extend the children’s learning?*

As we engage over the next few weeks together I am sure Noah's confidence will strengthen and he will be more comfortable around his fellow students.

# Wonderings

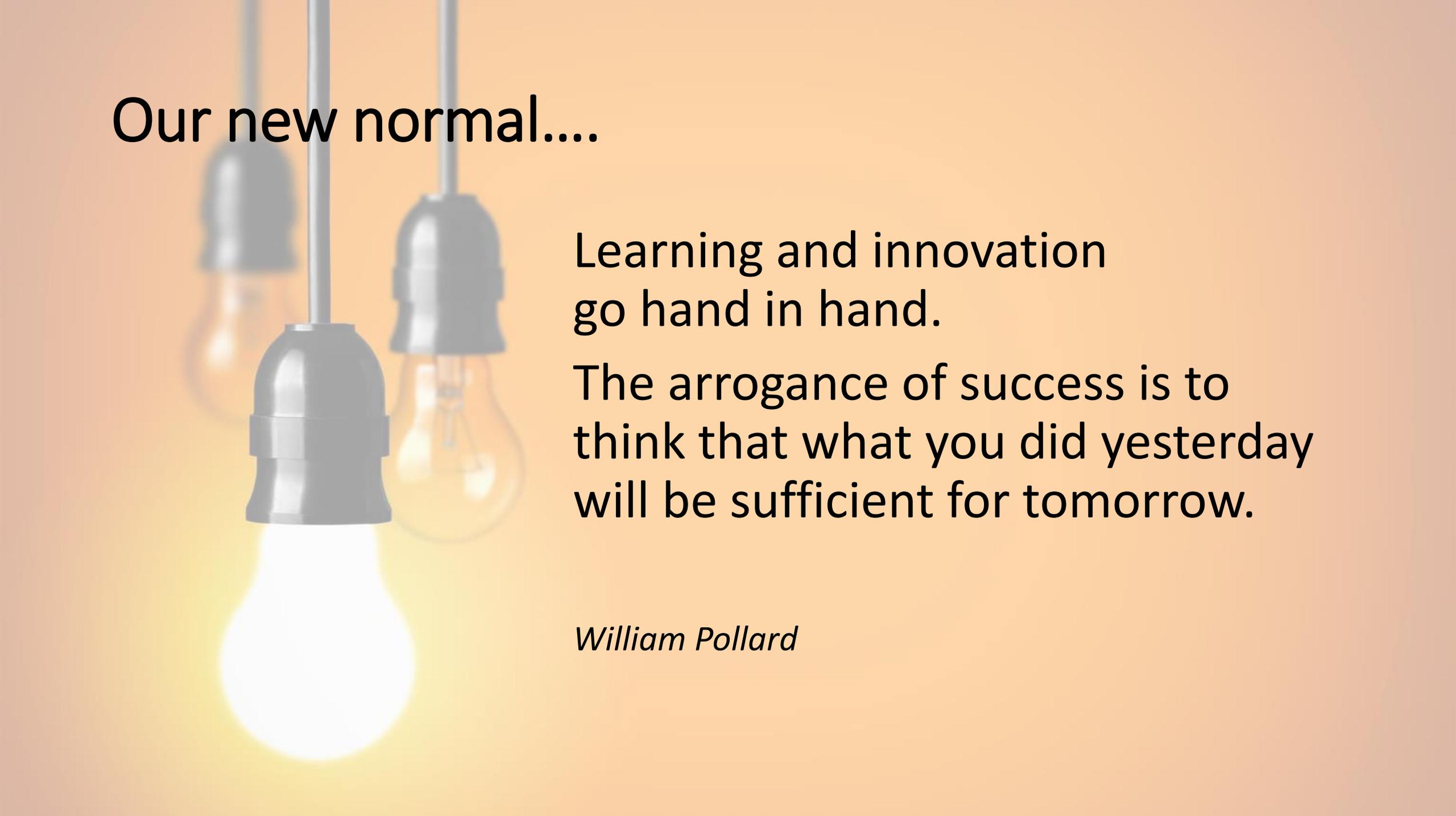


# What we learnt...

- More complex and interconnected than we first imagined.
- Once you start there is no going back - the depth of the approach to understanding teaching and learning is addictive.
- Take your time – it is not an art learnt quickly.
- It takes persistent and committed leadership.
- Its not about proving something – the theory that we seek is the foundation that you work from.
- Much of the success of a process like this depends on the stability and capability of staff team.

## WARNING

An approach like this it altruistic, it will take time – and requires of educators a commitment to think beyond their paid hours...

The background of the slide features three hanging light bulbs. The central bulb is brightly lit, casting a warm glow. The two bulbs on either side are unlit and appear as soft, out-of-focus shapes. The overall background is a smooth gradient from light orange at the top to a slightly darker shade at the bottom.

# Our new normal....

Learning and innovation  
go hand in hand.

The arrogance of success is to  
think that what you did yesterday  
will be sufficient for tomorrow.

*William Pollard*

Margaret Hammersley  
**Director**

A: 51-53 North Street, Kempsey,  
NSW 2440

M: (02) 6562 8144

E: [director@thekindergarten.com.au](mailto:director@thekindergarten.com.au)

W: [www.thekindergarten.com.au](http://www.thekindergarten.com.au)



**The  
Kindergarten**

A Place of Learning for 2 to 5-year olds

51-53 North Street, Kempsey, NSW 2440  
[director@thekindergarten.com.au](mailto:director@thekindergarten.com.au)  
(02) 6562 8144  
[www.thekindergarten.com.au](http://www.thekindergarten.com.au)

Children have opportunities to become:-

"Thinkers who listen  
Inventors who negotiate  
Inquirers who collaborate  
Individuals who are confident in themselves"



Member of ...  
Reggio Emilia Australia  
INFORMATION EXCHANGE  
*in search for a new culture of childhood*



Early Childhood  
Australia  
A voice for young children

Catharine Hydon  
**Early Childhood Consultancy,  
Professional Learning and Advice**

M: 0409 554 450

A: PO Box 331, Glenroy, 3046

E: [catharine@hydonconsulting.com](mailto:catharine@hydonconsulting.com)

W: [www.hydonconsulting.com](http://www.hydonconsulting.com)



**HYDON**  
**CONSULTING**