Participant Learning: The Inquiry Process

• We met once per month to reflect on our learning and to set goals for the next month.
• Evidence of educator and student learning (pictures, videos, student work, charts) was brought to the table and shared. The videos reflected the learning of the children. We discussed the impact of the changes we were making on the children, for example, the use of the pictures and video as a learning tool.
• We also read various articles along the way in order to move our thinking forward (see bibliography).

Data collected

• photographs,
• video,
• observation sheets,
• products (or pictures of products)
• direct quotes from the children
• observations
• anecdotal notes

Curriculum Leader Reflections

The collaborative inquiry process enables educators to support each other while exploring new practices in the classroom. To be successful, educators need to meet fairly often (once per month or so) to feel that they are in a safe environment, to bring new ideas to the table and to wrestle with these new ideas. The educators involved in these projects felt that their learning was a process that they could not readily hand over to other educators. Going through the process was necessary in order to truly understand the pedagogy. Also, even one year of learning was not enough to go into as much depth with each topic as was needed. Adult learning is not that much different from the learning of children. How do we provide these opportunities for more educators?

The Curriculum Leader who facilitated this inquiry was also involved in facilitating two other inquiry groups this year. All three groups started with very different questions on different topics based on reflection of their own practices. One group began with a literacy question, one with a question on teaching through problem solving in math and the other on assessment for and as learning in the kindergarten classroom. It was interesting to see that many of the same new understandings came out of these very different questions:

• The importance of real life contexts
• Release of control of the learning to the children
• Tapping the children’s interests = engagement
• Collaboration is critical: educator & student

What does authentic assessment look like in a play-based program?
• The importance of play in learning

All groups felt the need to share what they learned not only with grade level colleagues but also with colleagues from upper grades.