

# AN ALTERNATIVE WAY OF THINKING: PROCESS OVER PRODUCT



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Now it might only be November – but we all know that very soon our eyes will be met with twinkling Christmas decs at every turn and our ears will be ringing with Michael Bublé tracks as we are reminded that it is beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

The lead up to Christmas is without doubt a precious and magical time for most children & practitioners in any setting, but it can't go unsaid that it also a time of year when everything cranks up a notch. On top of our already heavy workloads comes the pressure of creating the perfect Christmas card or gift for loved ones at home. Not to mention a Nativity or two crammed in.

Practitioners spend hours trawling the web for unique, show stopping crafts and this only elevates stress levels well before a piece of card or insert is printed on mass.

## **SO... STOP! 'STEP AWAY FROM THE COMPUTER!'**

**GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK AND TAKE A MOMENT TO READ THIS BLOG. WE MAY JUST HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO CONSIDER.**

Rest assured, your teaching capabilities are not judged on how many perfectly presented and identical reindeer handprint (or footprints if you are really looking to go all out) cards YOU can create, or how superior YOUR snowflake cutting skills are.

Particularly at Christmas our vision is clouded by the twinkle of Christmas as we steam off down very adult directed paths driven by the opportunity to pull at a parent's heartstring or create milestone memorabilia; unintentionally we drown out that little, but oh so powerful and capable voice of 'the child'.

So rather than 'What shall we decide to make' being the hot topic on December's staff meeting agenda, let's take a moment to consider 'why' we are doing it.

**ARE THESE 'GIFTS' FROM US, OR THE CHILD? WHAT ARE YOU INTENDING THE CHILDREN TO GAIN FROM THIS THE ACTIVITY?**

## **WHAT IS THE LEARNING - IS IT MEANINGFUL?**

If the answer is, they've learned to follow instructions and use positional language, matching pre-cut objects on a page – then maybe, just maybe, this isn't the time or place.

An alternative way of thinking.

## **AT THE BARN, WE ENDEAVOUR TO PROMOTE CURIOSITY, INVESTIGATION, AND DISCOVERY.**

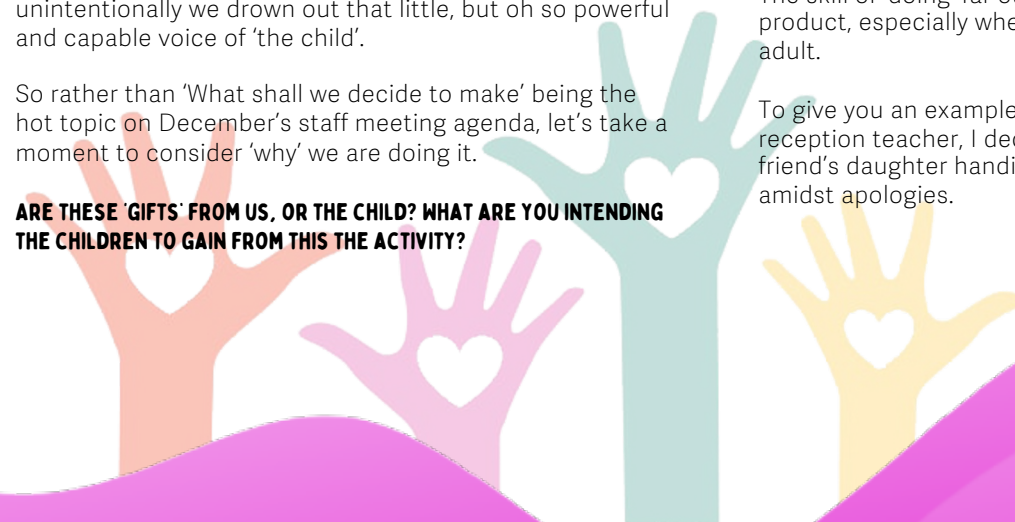


**THIS PRACTITIONER IS MIRRORING THE CHILD'S PLAY. THIS ACTIVATES MIRROR NEURONS IN THE BRAIN PROMOTING JOINT ATTENTION AND ENGAGEMENT.**

For children to be curious in all they do, and not just in the 'classroom' environment, then we must embrace and encourage their uniqueness. We must listen to their ideas and value their voices allowing them to experience first-hand trial and error. Let's let them make mistakes too...because this is how we learn to never give up and to bounce back. This is how we learn to become resilient.

The skill of 'doing' far outweighs the impetus of any end-product, especially when that end-product is the vision of an adult.

To give you an example...back in the day when I was a reception teacher, I decided to go rouge off the back of my friend's daughter handing her Mum her Mother's Day card amidst apologies.



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The apologies were a consequence of being instructed to copy a tea bag card for her Mum. But her Mum didn't drink tea. The card was made all the same.

Instead, the only adult directive I gave my children was that they had 'something' to share with a loved one. Whatever that may be.

The learning and teaching that unfolded before our very eyes over the next few weeks was both inspiring and of the highest quality. No extra resources were needed, our well equipped, child accessible environment delivered all they needed.



**THROUGH SENSORY EXPLORATION CHILDREN ARE ENCOURAGED TO EXPLORE DIFFERENT TEXTURES, PROMOTING SELF-DISCOVERY, IN TURN SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

**TEACHER'S TAUGHT IN THE MOMENT AND IN RESPONSE TO NEED: CHILDREN EXCEEDED IN THE MOMENT TARGETS AND THERE WAS NO CEILING ON LEARNING.**

One superhero enthusiast made his Mum a batman cape so she could do her jobs quicker, others made a sticky playdough creation that went home in a bowl or wonky self-folded card with a black/greeny/brown work of art on the front.

All had reams of writing and sentimental messages presented in an array of meaningful symbols or committed to memory up top. Whatever their form, the vocabulary used exceeded any age-related expectation that a pre-typed message delivered, just in case Mum's had forgotten it was Mothering Sunday and that their child loved them.

One thing is for sure is that each gift was a true reflection of the unique and individual child's efforts (not their teachers!) at that stage in their life. All bared real meaning.



**PRACTITIONERS CAN SUPPORT CHILDREN TO USE TOOLS TO REPRESENT THEIR OWN THOUGHTS AND IDEAS THROUGH MARK MAKING, SUPPORTING FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LITERACY SKILLS.**

**EACH CHILD COULD GIVE YOU A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF EVERY STEP THEY TOOK, THE PROBLEMS THEY HAD ENCOUNTERED, SOME WERE EVEN ABLE TO COMMENT ON THINGS THAT THEY HAD FOUND TRICKY.**

The skills that they had learned enabled them to create without limits. Skills that were transferable to countless other challenges and what was most important was that 'they did it themselves'!

But it was a particularly quiet summer born boy that found 'adult led' learning challenging that changed my mindset forever. This creative soul, spent countless hours carefully snipping all manor of materials into little pieces and tiny shapes. I don't know how many times I had to tell my support teachers to 'back away from the Hoover'. I insisted there was a purpose – we just couldn't see it with our adult eyes yet. So instead, I sat beside him and listened.

In the moments I sat beside this little boy, I learned more about him than in any assessment or adult driven activity. His little snippets, now all wrapped up in a piece of card and bound with tape transpired to be a 'pocket full of love' for his Mother. So, whenever they were apart, she could carry his love with her.

Now that is a priceless gift that cannot be driven by any adult vision, instead, it is quite the opposite. It is the absence of the adult vision and the presence of valuing the child's unique voice that raises the roof on success.

**CLICK HERE TO VISIT THE EVIDENCE STORE, OR TO FIND OUT MORE, WE HAVE ATTACHED SOME FURTHER READING...**



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