What is pedagogical documentation?

- Inspired by the practices of Reggio Emilia, Italy

- In everyday life, we document in many ways...diaries, social media, keeping records

  BUT

- In early years education, pedagogical documentation refers to ‘making thinking and learning visible’ in many ways...using text, transcripts of children’s words (ideas, thoughts), photos of the process, and traces of children’s work.

- We document in order to share, to understand, and to be understood.
What do we document?

- Interesting or puzzling events during play
- Project – short or long term
- The process of learning (series of small or large panels)
- Small, significant moments
- Developmental milestones
- Our questions....what do we wonder?
Making children’s thinking visible:
‘Thinking in Action’

The water is leveled...using stones

Thinking....

Labeling the containers

Making a record of guesses

‘Messing about’ provides clarification

Using little containers to check on quantities...
How do we use documentation in Inquiry-based practices?

- .....it depends!

- Possibly:
  - Making learning visible
  - Facilitating conversations with parents
  - Revisiting with children; what do they think about their work or the event?
  - Reflective process for teachers that informs our teaching; raises questions for us and provides next steps
Beginning with questions....

- Who is the documentation for?
  (Our audience dictates the content and the vocabulary)

- Is it for....
  - Ourselves as teachers?
  - Children?
  - Parents?
  - Other professionals?
Keeping track of our thoughts..

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations, Studio/sensory/mack</strong></td>
<td><strong>Susan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responses/Plans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regimenplan</strong></td>
<td><strong>Casual Roll-up</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responses/Plans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regimenplan</strong></td>
<td><strong>Casual Roll-up</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responses/Plans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Regimenplan</strong></td>
<td><strong>Casual Roll-up</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Monday**
  - Responses/plans: hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, robe, white, robe, white, robe.
  - Light table with washing/food (x).

- **Tuesday**
  - Responses/plans: hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.
  - hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.

- **Wednesday**
  - Responses/plans: hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.
  - hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.

- **Thursday**
  - Responses/plans: hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.
  - hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.

- **Friday**
  - Responses/plans: hose, dress, plate, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe, white, robe.
Nov 6 (Photos, artifacts)

"We were making chocolate"
"We were making powder"
(show crushed nibs)
"Is it powder yet?" (No).
"They worked hard, what do we have to do? It's still not a powder.
(show cocoa, par plus nibs to see difference)."

-seriate process (with some scaffolding)
how can we make it powder?
-crunch it & something bigger
-a big stick
-a machine

"they warned it"

T: "What did he add, in the movie?" (unsure)
offered samples of cocoa paste, ground nibs

"Don't like any of them"
"One is yucky"
"What does it taste like?"
"It tastes yucky."
What did the bo add?"
First steps

- Make the decision about **what** you want to document, and **why**
- How will you document? What form is best suited to this focus?
- What about design? Things to consider.....
  - Layout
  - Font
  - Pathway for reader + accessibility
  - Voice of the child
Forms of Documentation

- Ordinary Moments for quick, one-time events
- Learning Stories (see Margaret Carr, N.Z.)
- Panels, for longer term interests, projects, or developmental paths
- Log book, for daily updates
- Digital Documentation
- Immediate (on the spot) documentation for revisiting with children
- Curriculum Paths for Teachers
Ordinary Moments

There is an owl in our classroom!
N plays with fit-together letters, and then goes to find a word puzzle. After piecing together the word 'cat' she makes this word again with the plastic letters. Then, she finds paper and pencil, and writes the word. One word, in three forms....a natural exploration of print.
Levi invents a computer game

After playing for several days with a non-working computer, pretending to type, L spontaneously created his own ‘game’ to play. He drew the graphic, placed it on the screen, and explained to others how to play his game. Several other children picked up on this idea, and for days created their own games.
The inspiration of lines

After exploring lines in the environment, and looking at artists’ works, Noor often went to the easel and experimented with various lines and shapes. Here, she has used straight lines, geometric shapes, and zig zags, made with pencil, and then filled in with paint.
Log Books

Monday, March 18, 2007
AM

We are learning about the life cycle of an egg... and chickens!

Linda's group read The Rain Came Down.

Jack brought our snack today - grapes, muffins, and milk — thank you!

Monday, November 20, 2007
AM

In a few weeks the FALL will come to an end and Winter will be here. We decided that our party float could have the theme "WELCOME, WINTER!" Now we will decide what it needs... Today we painted WHITE!

Happy Thanksgiving to everyone!

Patterns

Peter's pattern...
blue, orange, red

Notice: To read Peter's pattern you have to work top to bottom and left to right (just like reading!)
October 1st

When a new globe with 3-D effects was introduced to the children at morning meeting, it was an opportunity for them to think about yesterday’s idea that the Earth is ‘bumpy’ rather than smooth. It was hard to actually see the bumps (i.e., mountain ranges) even with a magnifying glass, but a gentle touch with fingers enabled the children to feel the raised areas.
An investigation of Holes...

In the neighborhood hall, children noticed a hole in a piece of paper. They drew a circle in ink and used the pencil to cut the hole. When we wondered, did the hole come from?

While children were using clay, they made holes in various ways, including using their fingers, and pegs. This process was photographed, and was shown to the children at circle time.

The children were invited to use short lengths of string to make holes. They used the string in various ways...

The teacher laid the string in a straight line and asked, “Can this be a hole?” The children knew that it wasn’t a hole, and tried to define the nature of a hole in their own words. This was difficult for them to articulate. What children associated a hole with a round shape.

If a circle hole were drawn, children were asked to find holes in the classroom. Their findings were photographed, and later made into a story. The teacher also had them to find them. A child who had not found one to hang on, was asked about the hole. They then had to find one to hang on. We asked them, “What is a hole?”
Reading to the classroom, the children were asked, "Do you think it would help us to figure this out if we sent an email to some bigger kids?" They also were told enthusiastically, that they felt that the older student in the school should have the answer. We decided to email the whole prep school. The children dictated the email and watched as the teacher typed it. We pressed send and waited...

The ‘Big Kids’ respond....

Next time we were in a small group, I ask, "What are your ideas about how it goes from our computer to someone else’s computer?" They are puzzled by this, and we wonder how we could find out. We offer information about computer systems coming from the back of the computer, so we go to our classroom computer to take a look. In particular, they notice the blue wire, and the conduct that runs up the wall and into the ceiling. We talk about the classroom and try to find it, but nothing holds the wires. So, we walked down the hallway toward P1 where the utility switchboard is. We do not go south again, we go to the prep teachers’ office. There, up on the wall, is a box with many blue wires going into it, and shiny lights. This seems to prove to the children that they were right about the blue wires in our classroom. Teacikel Phillip says, "That’s where the wires go into the ceiling to all the classrooms."

We pressed into P1 and then write to sound. Looking at Mr. Outlaw’s desk, they find his computer and look behind it and also on the floor. They notice there are wires too. However, they do notice that there are no wires on the way out of the classroom.

After receiving a great idea from the “Big Kids” about how email works, the whole group wanted to learn to read and compose emails. Most agree that "Carrie was right" and that email travels through wires. Others are still confused and refer to it as a printed out, someone delivers it.
FAREWELL TREE

OLD TREE

"The day we learned our old tree had to come down, there was a lot of excitement and sadness among the people in the circle tree.

The tree was the heart of the community. It was a place where people could come together and share stories. It was a symbol of strength and resilience.

Before it was cut down, we were told to prepare for the sadness. The saving of the tree was a struggle, but we won.

When the tree was cut down, it was a sad day for everyone. The tree had been a part of our lives for so long, and it was hard to see it go. But we were happy to know that it would be preserved and kept for future generations.

This is about our tree.

This is the tree we love since childhood. This is how the tree looks now.

What will be when the tree comes down?

ENDS

SABRINA

This is what we did through pictures and drawings to support our old tree.

"
Immediate Documentation for Reflection with Children
Portfolios; not only for assessment
The children first used the platform of the overhead projector with varied objects and then tried ways of changing the background color of the screen. Once closed, they could observe a shadow on the screen to check if it is green.

Exploring light and shadow: we used the overhead projector, celophane, and white paper to do first investigations of how light passes through things — or not!
Learning Stories

- Written *for and to the child and his/her family*
- Describes what was seen, ‘with the heart’
- Makes meaning of the event
- Invites parent comments
Today, when building a chute for the chocolate factory from loose parts, you came up against a big challenge! When the cocoa beans ran down the chute and into the blue container, they bounced right out again and all over the floor! But you didn’t give up....
You and your friend looked all around and found a piece of netting – you had an idea! You put the net over the opening to the chute to catch the beans as they bounced.
….and then you tested your solution. It worked! The beans stayed inside the container. You and your friend danced around, so happy that you solved the problem.
Note to child:

- Dimitra, you were such a scientist today. You built a factory, came up against a problem, and solved the problem. You worked together with your friend, and you both listened to each others’ ideas. You worked for over an hour by yourselves – and you did it!

What it means:

- Dimitra has staying power; she does not give up easily. As well, she is able to collaborate when solving a problem.
- She is able to use materials creatively, using whatever is at hand, and through trial and error, figuring out what works.
- Dimitra and her friend constructed lots of scientific knowledge today, about cause and effect, ramps, and speed.
From observation to curriculum: documentation of long-term projects
A conversation about our progress (while revisiting photos of their work):

'Were making chocolate powder'
Teacher: Is it powder yet? (no). They worked hard, it's still not powder, what do we have to do?
Crunch it with a big stick!
Crunch it with something bigger...
'A machine!' 
Teacher: What did he do in the video?
'They warmed it'
Samples of crushed nibs were offered
'I don't like any of them'
One is yuck!
'It tastes yucky'
Teacher: What do we need to add? What did the boy add?
'Sugar, cinnamon'

Further development of 'The Chocolate Factory'

Although the children had used baskets on pulleys, pestles and mortars, and dramatic play materials to pretend to produce chocolate, we now moved mixing real materials into the dramatic play area.

The children added cinnamon and sugar to their crushed nibs, and then ground them further using an electric grinder:
'Spice!
'It's a grinder!
'It makes it into powder!'
The beginning... making solid and liquids

This project did not begin with children. Rather the children were engaged in an alphabetical activity where they revisited several familiar soda brands (e.g. 7Up, Sprite, Fanta, Sprite) and recorded the changes.

The children and teachers later reviewed what had happened, using photographs.

Teacher: What did we put in to make bubbles? What happened when we put more? Do we see the layers? Child: The top is chocolate, the bottom is water. Teacher: What did we put? Children: Chocolate Powder.

Over the past week, we have tried many different times, creating recipes for the chocolate. We will share our end results. Our teacher, Mr. Terry, mentioned that chocolate is made from cocoa.

On meeting and mapping in the past, the children suggested making a chocolate production log. Today, the children had the task of building a chocolate factory.

3. Ingredients needed for the past, the children needed the ingredients from the previous day. Today, the children had the task of building a chocolate factory.

M. Meetings:
Research: finding out about stuff

Studio: Student Teacher
Mixing:
changes, predictions
everyday materials

ch. gravitated to cocoa
Did you know choc is made from cocoa?

Revisited at m.meeting: "Where does ch. come from?" How will we find out? book compound
Video of child in rainforest
- pods
- beans
- nibs

borrowed from Frank

Smell group
Digital documentation

Spinning offers children a sense of exuberance, of freedom. Spinning, getting dizzy, and regaining balance helps children orient themselves in space. The development of the vestibular system results in balanced and coordinated movement. When the children were first asked about things that spin, their first response was, “Me! I spin!!”

As children spend time engaged in these kinds of movement activities, they explore the concept of spinning with their whole bodies. What does everything look like when you are spinning? What do you hear? How does your body feel? These are questions we will be exploring in the children’s play.
The children have spent a great deal of time investigating how our spinning objects work. Through engineering inquiry in the classroom and in the studio, the children have begun to develop their own ideas and theories about spinning.

“It works. You spin it round.” - Jake

“It’s a track. I just put a car on it and then it spins.” - Dejana

“Fast, so fast! Faster! Faster! - Angus

“My hand makes it go and my hand makes it stop.” - Silas

“It’s a spinner. It spins. [What makes it spin?] Maybe the stripes? Oh! Maybe this part—a screw!” - Sienna

“There’s a little tiny button.” - Dejana

“It is a button.” - Silas

The children studied pictures and models and discussed how to represent a horse.

“I’m going to do a tail and a leg and a face and one of these—a saddle.”

“I draw a tail. A big tail!”

“A head is right on the top.”

“TaDa! I made a horse!”
A word of caution...

- Since it is fast...digital documentation can sometimes be less reflective; remember that the intent of the documentation remains the same!

- Confidentiality issues – who will have access?
The importance of photography
The language of documentation

- Must be clearly understood by the intended audience
- Must be grammatically correct
- Brief and to the point, but NOT captions!
- Pull out enough information to make learning visible.
- Describe why this event or series of events is important. What does it mean? Include your interpretation and your questions!
Cognitive development is encouraged through hands-on exploration of manipulatives.

Today, the children used Magna-tiles for the first time. These tiles contain small magnets, which means that they can be easily formed into 3D shapes such as pyramids or cubes. As the building became more complex, the children made connections between their previous knowledge of 2D shapes (e.g. squares) and the base of their 3D shape (e.g. pyramid).
Thinking about design

- The reader must be able to see how to read the documentation….think about flow, accessibility, white space, and the ratio of text to visuals
A designer explains...
Remember...

- Avoid ‘decoration’ and instead think about creating understanding for the reader

- Who is the reader? Could be children themselves, colleagues, parents, public

- The audience will dictate the language and presentation of the material
In the Studio:
Using very small paper, fine-tipped pens, and watercolours, the children drew and then painted their memories, and dictated the words about their memories to a teacher. These were then typed and taken back to the children for review, which prompted even more memories.

We wonder what their earliest memories are....one or two children told us that they ‘remember being a baby’ and in further conversations, we discovered that they have baby books which tell them the story of that time. Do you have a baby photo of your child that you would entrust to us, perhaps after March Break? These could be shared at morning meetings, and we anticipate that the photos would produce lots of conversations and more memories....
Final thoughts...

A quote from “Pedagogical Documentation” (coming in March from Redleaf):

- “Documentation is about bringing families and other interested readers into the complex circle of thinking that is teaching."

- Documentation is also about and for the children; it honours and scaffolds the thinking and learning of both children and teachers...we all learn from it.
Contact and book information:

- Emergent Curriculum in Early Childhood Settings
- Unscripted: Emergent Curriculum in Action
- Pedagogical Documentation: Making children’s learning and teachers’ thinking visible.
- All books available through Redleaf Press, Amazon, or in Canada through Monarch books
- www.suestacey.ca (web page, blog, email contact & upcoming events)