

How do we value the learning of the child that uses no words?



There are some people
who could hear you
speak a thousand words
and still not understand
you.

And there are others
who will understand
without you even
speaking a word.

-Yasmin Mogahed

Rowan is working with magnetic shapes. She sits quietly putting two fingers out on the table as an invitation for help. She sat for over 5 minutes waiting. Eventually, Ava comes by and sits down beside Rowan. The girls work together and accomplish their task with no words spoken between them. How remarkable that their message is clear and their actions are precise in complete silence.

Taking a listening stance allows me to observe and truly examine Rowan and Ava's processes.

As I look at the learning of these two children, I realize how I see their learning holistically and not necessarily fitting into only one of the four frames in our communication of learning.

*Rowan's gestures show me her mathematical thinking (problem solving, selecting tools and strategies, representing, communicating).

*It demonstrates literacy (communication for a purpose that is clear and precise).

*I can focus on Ava's ability to comprehend Rowan's non-verbal request to complete the picture.

* It highlights the self regulation and tenacity of these children to complete the task.

*The social interaction between the two girls is remarkable and they understand that there is different ways of being and working together that does not necessarily require words.

* The problem solving skills being used are rich and deep and that they are doing it all in a collaborative and reciprocal way.

Which of these learning pieces are more important to highlight? Do they not all have equal value when demonstrating learning and growth?

The whole child needs to be valued, not the compartmentalized child.

Julie's reflections...

I feel that the four frames limit the rich learning stories that could be shared for a child by pinpointing which specific frame the learning would fit into. I would much rather see the communication of learning resemble to Initial Observation provided by the Ministry where I could comment on the child's key learning, growth in learning and next steps in learning overall. When we take the time to truly engage in pedagogical documentation, we are not just finding snippets of learning. We are looking for deep and meaningful examples of learning to highlight.