

Findings sections summarize our emerging understandings

Findings 2.1: Shifts in participation by teachers

Some of the shifts in teacher participation that occurred in the centre included:

- Teachers working collectively and sharing enthusiasm to work with children
- All teachers participating in art experiences with children
- The art teacher's expertise and support began to be utilized more by others
- Teachers drew on each other's strengths and interests - guidance from others was actively sought
- Teachers continually reflected and questioned themselves; there was an increased awareness of how the teacher role and interactions may influence children
- Teachers thought more deeply about what art experiences they want to offer children, both inside and outside the centre, and why they want to offer these
- Teachers made environmental changes to provide more unrestricted access to art space and resources and provision for continued experiences
- Kai routine changed to become a rolling time, allowing children uninterrupted time for their artwork
- The level of respect for children's work increased by ensuring up-to-date work was displayed and individual children's art folders were introduced
- Teachers began observing, discussing and documenting children's collaborative and continuous ventures in art more, rather than individual one-off snapshot stories.

Findings: Shifts in participation by teachers

Sarah's story: coming to know self and others

Sarah's story is an example of how one teacher came to gain a greater understanding of her own dual identities as a learner and as one who guides learning through her interactions. A similar understanding of the dual identities of children also emerged. Sarah initially held an identity as one who 'felt hopeless' in the area of visual art. She talked of how she avoided participating with children in art because she felt she had limited ability to offer. Her research journey was motivated by the team's previous exploration through which some of her prior views were challenged. For Sarah, the issue of children copying others was confusing. The detail in her story is important because it shows how the alternation between writing about events and the consideration of

implications and possible interpretation of those events allowed her to gain insight into an issue that concerned her.

Research process 2.4: Data gathering, discussion and story telling

Sarah collected the following data over a two-month timeframe during her regular participation in the centre programme:

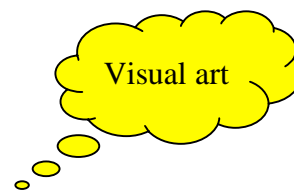
- episodes of children involved in copying documented in her reflective journal
- photographs to support the journal entries and learning stories
- learning and teaching stories that she considered relevant.

The data was collated and discussed with the research associate at two meetings. Emerging implications and understandings were documented as further data.

At the final meeting with the research associate all data was collated and analyzed. Understandings were gained by analyzing and interpreting across and among data. A series of journal entries and learning stories were selected to illustrate the resulting learning.

Sarah then wrote an account of her journey and presented this at a Centre of Innovation hui, 29 – 30th Nov 05.

To copy or not? Sarah's story



Author Sarah, November 05

Introduction

Visual arts is one of the components our centre has been exploring through our involvement in the Centre Of Innovation research. All teachers have been actively researching this subject over the past 2 years with our research associate as an integral part of our journey. My involvement began when my colleague and I investigated how visual art can support younger children's learning within project work. At that time we encountered many challenges to our perception of the teacher role. For me, it raised questions about many of my ideas and understandings of children's learning in visual art.

As a whole team (8 teachers) we have regularly had meetings where we discussed our views on visual arts, what we felt should be the teachers' role and we reviewed current visual art literature. We also engaged in visual art workshops together after hours at the centre. Through these workshops we were able to personally explore what engaging in visual arts felt like. We would then share with the group how we felt during the experience as well as about our final product. Our feelings were varied. Some teachers felt uncomfortable about their artistic abilities, while others were very comfortable. This helped us understand what children may sometimes feel when creating work. We all felt strongly that visual art was an important part of the curriculum and an important cultural tool. We were provoked to think about how we as adults showed children that art is a

Sarah's story: – coming to know self and others

valued tool of our culture. We could all answer this question in relation to cultural tools such as the written word as we model and use text in many ways with children. Why is art any different?

Through these numerous art explorations and discussions I decided to investigate an area that had niggled at me for some time - artistic copying. As a team we had made a commitment to engage more actively in visual art with and alongside children. We shared a belief that if children are to view art as something that is valued within the culture of the centre then adults need to be seen participating in art themselves. This created a dilemma for me. If we work alongside children using art media and techniques how do we avoid the pitfalls such as children receiving the message that adult art is **the** model? Together the research associate and I proposed the question, "Is copying a valid technique for learning?" I already had some preconceived notions. I did not think that copying was a valid technique for learning. I felt it had negative connotations; it made me think of forgery and theft. Regardless I was eager to embark on this research journey and find some answers. I gained my first piece of research data with a child named Justice.

Sarah's Journal, 16/6/05 **Working with Justice (1)**



We got some paper and crayons and set them down on the floor (the art table was in use). I started to draw the vase and Justice immediately started to copy what I was doing. I said to her not to copy my picture, and just draw what she saw. I told her this was what I was doing. She looked a bit frustrated and was not confident. She said "Sarah I can't draw it." I told her she could - it didn't matter if it did not look exactly like what she had seen, just give it a go. She asked if I could at least draw the vase for her. I relented and drew the vase for her. I assured her that she could

draw the flowers. She proceeded drawing the flowers (still looking at my picture and the vase). As she was drawing the flowers, at each flower she would ask me if it looked OK. I told that it was great and whatever she drew it would be fine as it was drawing what she saw. She looked at her picture and said it was not good enough.

Justice had always shown a strong interest and competency in art and was often found painting or drawing in the art room. She always had a large collection of paintings to take home every day. I thought working alongside with her would be a rewarding and positive experience for both of us. I envisioned us contently sitting beside each other concentrating on studying the vase of beautiful flowers and then interpreting what we each saw onto our papers. However, it was not an overly happy experience for either one of us. Even though there was a model, Justice felt compelled to copy me rather than the vase of flowers. She then compared her work with mine, and was not satisfied with her results. Through this comparison, she gained a negative view of her capabilities and her potential. I was distressed that she had ignored the model and concentrated on my sketch. It bothered me because I felt that copying my work impeded her unique creativity that she might have concluded that there was only one right way to draw flowers which was based solely on my interpretation. This also deeply worried me as I did not (and still don't) categorize myself with having strong artistic ability. I compare my artistic abilities to those of a 12 or 13 year old. What if she always based her drawing of flowers on this immature model and never progressed to reach her potential? Penny Brownlee (1991) echoed my thoughts. She discusses how providing children with an adult picture will take away their chance to sort out ideas on how a particular object may look and draw it in a symbolic form. Additionally

Sarah's story: – coming to know self and others

I believed that I had inhibited Justice's creativity and lowered her self-esteem. Justice in turn was frustrated and upset with herself.

A turning point in my research

Although I was initially disappointed with my first story documenting copying, I was not thwarted and continued to collect stories on children's copying. I needed more stories to answer my proposed question. Rather than set up and "stage" incidents of copying (i.e. providing children with a model to draw from) I decided to observe children working together in their natural environment. I always had my notebook and camera handy if a copying situation arose. I took notice of children's interactions together, and the language they used when documenting my stories.

Findings

Through collecting a range of stories I was able to compile several findings that I found significant. Firstly, when children copy each other, the process can foster a sense of belonging. Saffron was relatively new to the centre and I felt that through working alongside and following Brianna's lead, Saffron developed a 'connectedness' with Brianna. There was a sense of acceptance between them. This story, along with others I had collected, also illustrated to me that children don't mind being copied – they don't have the need to secure ownership of their ideas.

Sarah's Journal 21.7.05 - Copying Circles (2)



I was outside and the art easel was set up outside (it's usually in the art room). Nobody was painting and I saw Brianna wasn't currently engaged. She was walking past me when I asked her if she would like to do a painting. She answered that she would like to do a painting if I sat beside her. I agreed, and we both sat down on the wee chairs in front of the easel.

I was just painting lines, and Brianna was doing her own painting (swirls of different colours). While I was painting, Saffron approached me and said that she wanted to do a painting. *I told*

her that I was nearly finished with my painting, and then she could have my seat. I quickly finished and relinquished my chair to her. Brianna then announced that she had finished her painting, and would like to do another one. I took off our paintings, and hung them on the wire to dry. I stood a few feet behind the girls, waiting to see what they would paint. Brianna started painting away. I watched as Saffron stared at what Brianna was painting, and then proceeded to copy the image onto her paper. Both of the children were painting circles. I noted that Saffron spent much of her time looking at what Brianna was doing.

Secondly, children can move seamlessly into the roles of copier and the one being copied as Brianna illustrates in the next story.

Sarah's journal 19.7.05 - Moving between roles (3)



Emalee and Brianna were painting at the art easel together. After they had finished painting, Brianna followed Emalee to the round table. Emalee began to fold a piece of paper, and then tape each of the folded bits. I noticed Brianna watching her. Brianna then too got a plain piece of paper, and a tape dispenser, and sat beside Emalee. She too began to fold and tape each of the folds. Emalee announced that this was a present for her mum. Brianna then too said that she was making a present for her mum.

These two stories exemplify Brianna's dual roles. In the first story she was the one who was being copied. In the second story she copied Emalee's idea and process of making a present. In both situations Brianna participated confidently. There was no sense of unease. I noticed that Emalee also benefited from the experience as it was somehow cementing the friendship between the two girls. Emalee's abilities were being recognised by Brianna and I wondered about the impact this had on Emalee's view of herself. It appears that every child can gain benefits from engaging in either role.

The following collection of stories about Paris' involvement in visual art experiences helped me to gain an understanding of how embedded copying is as a learning strategy children naturally use for different purposes.

Sarah's Journal 19.7.05 - Copying as an embedded learning strategy (4)

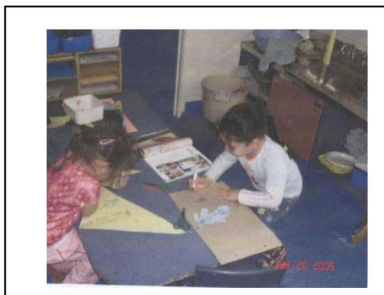


Quinn found one of the plastic cotton reels and began to coat the top with glue. Paris was sitting beside him, and noticed what he was doing. She finished her dye painting, and went to retrieve one of the reels as well. She too coated the top with glue. Quinn began to stick various items on his reel (cotton, ice cream sticks, etc). Paris then too found some things to stick on hers. Crahsau

was busily painting at the table, and he finished his painting, and followed the same process as the other two children. Denzel (child on the left) watched the other three children, but continued on his painting. Paris said she was finished, and left her reel. All of the other children soon said that they were finished as well and exited the art room after Paris.

This group of children borrowed ideas from each other while being totally engaged in exploring the media and resources for themselves. Again there was a sense of belonging apparent at the time which was in some way evident in the way they all decided to move on within a short time of each other. The next story sees Paris again in the position of wanting help with getting started. This time she is more formally involved in copying another child as Nina becomes the "teacher" who competently shows her the process.

Sarah's Journal 20.6.05 - Formal copying (5)



All of the teachers have turns with having a week of afternoons in the art room. It was my rostered week so I was in the art room when Paris asked me to help her draw a butterfly. I asked what I could do to help her and she said "draw a butterfly". I looked at what she had done so far on her paper. She had drawn the body of the butterfly so I remarked that she appeared to be nearly finished with her

butterfly. She could indeed draw a butterfly. She told me that she couldn't draw a butterfly. Nina was sitting nearby and had heard our conversation. She walked over to where Paris was and traced with her finger how to draw the outline of a butterfly on Paris's paper. As Paris and I watched Nina trace the outline with her finger I remarked to Paris that Nina might be a good teacher of drawing butterflies. I asked Nina if she would like to show Paris the way that she draws butterflies. Nina nodded her head. She was quite excited at this prospect and quickly walked around the art room looking for something to draw with. I offered her a coloured pencil but she shook her head and took a marker instead. She then drew a butterfly directly on the collage that she was working on. Paris watched her intently and immediately copied her technique. Once Paris had finished drawing the butterfly she announced that she now had a butterfly puppet. Nina then began cutting out the objects she had drawn on her collage. Paris then got a pair of scissors and began to cut out her drawings.

It was obvious to me that Nina relished her role as teacher to Paris. She could barely contain her excitement as she hurried around the art room looking for the right pen to use to demonstrate to Paris her way of drawing butterflies. Interestingly, Nina adopted Paris' idea of cutting the figures out at the end. Each had something to contribute so that it became a mutually benefiting relationship. This to me became an example of how, through social participation, children engage in co-constructing their ideas and skills. In the next story Paris again seeks assistance however this time I felt I now had a range of strategies that I could offer in support of Paris' endeavours.

From a learning and teaching story documented by Sarah (6) (21.7.05)

Paris' story about a foot

In the afternoon, I went into the art room to see what creations were occurring. Makayla was sitting at the round table by herself. I noticed she was busy cutting paper with scissors. I was soon joined by Paris. Paris looked at what Makayla was doing and said, "That looks like a foot, can you make one for me?" I told Paris that I could help her make a foot, or she could copy what Makayla was doing, or ask Makayla to show her how to make one. Makayla heard my suggestions and said, "No. I won't show her". Paris then responded with, "I can draw it then, and cut it out".

I watched Paris as she did this. Paris then told me a story about her "foot".



Once upon a time there was a monster. He found a footprint and said "Ahhh, that's my footprint." He hopped in the rubbish bin since someone was coming. He got out of the

rubbish. It was a girl coming. He went across the bridge and then went into his cubbyhouse and slept with the girl who was his girlfriend. The end.

My strategies didn't go as planned however I realised that by giving choices I had allowed Paris time to consider her own participation. Her initial idea to draw a foot was inspired by copying her interpretation of what Mikayla was doing. Perhaps in this instance if someone had provided the support or model Paris may not have proceeded to produce an image she felt proud of, nor script a creative story about it. On reflection I can see how I allowed Paris to make decisions on what her next step was to be. This enabled her to pursue her own agenda while I remained ready and willing to offer help as and when needed. I didn't feel compelled to act on her initial request but rather waited to gauge the amount of involvement she needed from me. How fickle interacting with children in visual art is.

The last story about Paris describes her in a situation where she confidently participates with other children to produce a finished product that they are all proud of. It consolidates my view of how children co-construct their ideas through watching and interacting with others. Each person's contribution is respected and valued – a learning community in action.

From a learning and teaching story documented by Sarah (7)

(26.7.05)

A climate of collaboration

I was in the art room, when Lorraine (teacher) called me over to the under's door. She was telling me about a crab that Reko had found on the under's side. She explained how he had stepped on it, and was busy putting the crab back together like a jigsaw puzzle. She added that some other children came over to help him. She had even taken a couple photos to document this. Lorraine suggested to Reko and the other children (Paris and Quentin) that they could go into the art room and stick the crab pieces on a piece of paper. The children seemed to like this suggestion, and filed on out to the art room. I trailed after them, to add support if needed. Paris got a piece of paper and they sat on either side of Reko. I sat opposite them - just watching their interactions. Paris and Quentin watched as Reko put glue on the paper, and stuck each of the crab remnants on the paper. After he was finished, the children studied the piece of paper. Quentin declared; "It needs decorations" and Paris said, "The crab needs something to look at" Quentin hopped off his chair and grabbed some magazines. He began to flip through them and carefully cut out the photos that appealed to him. Paris found some cellophane and began to cut this out as well. When Paris and Quentin had cut out a piece (ready to be stuck on) I noticed that they laid it on the paper. It was Reko's job to glue it, and determine where it would be stuck. Paris turned to Reko and said, "This is your picture eh"? Reko nodded his head. I really enjoyed my time watching the interactions of Paris, Quentin, and Reko. There was a strong culture of respect between all of the children. They also showed great respect to the crushed crab. They carefully put it back together, and gave it brilliant decorations to look at. They each were able to contribute their ideas and they collaborated beautifully on their crab motif. Later in the day, Reko proudly showed his mum the completed crab collage. Great job everyone!!

Paris' stories reinforce how valuable copying is as a learning strategy. Adopting the role of copier allows children to borrow ideas from each other to get started, try something new, learn a technique, or follow a process. In Paris' first story, she got started by borrowing another child's idea of using a reel to decorate and followed the process the other child used. She tried something new by copying the model from another child of how to draw a butterfly. She followed a process by collaborating with two other children in the art room to create a collage. Furthermore when collaborating with the other two children she offered her own suggestions and put in some hard work, even though it was determined that she would not "own" this piece of work. She was motivated by the other child's satisfaction. The children's stories taught me a lot about what my role could look like. They naturally use strategies that support, encourage and teach others. My confidence to work with visual art alongside children was growing.

The final story I will share is one that provoked further reflection for me. It has some features in common with the very first story about Justice, however the outcome is almost the opposite. Reflecting on this story has helped to address my initial concerns about how to avoid the pitfalls when children copy another. Connor's story describes how he copied an idea and process from me, but the product was completely different. He created a picture that was significant and meaningful to him

From a learning and teaching story documented by Sarah (8) (28.7.05)



Faces!

I was in the art room and there was nothing set up on the circular table. I put out an assortment of materials markers, glue, coloured paper, scissors, foam pieces, etc).

A couple of children came into the art room and began to use the materials - all differently from each other. Connor then arrived, and sat down beside me. He got a piece of paper and began to draw on it. I was feeling a bit creative myself, and decided to join the children. I glued three round buttons and some Styrofoam on my paper. I then outlined it in marker, so it looked liked a face. Connor watched what I was doing, and announced that he would like to make a face as well.

We discovered that I had used all of the round bits, so we got some down. Connor chose which of the colours he wanted to represent the eyes and nose. He diligently worked on his face and I watched him. Once he had finished gluing on the eyes, nose and mouth, he then used the same marker as me. Instead of drawing a face he drew circles around the eyes.

He looked at me smiling and declared that they were glasses. He pointed at his picture and told me that he had also drawn some ears. I said it was an awesome face, and asked him if I could take his photo with it. He agreed.

A familiar feature of Justice's and Connor's stories is that I was working with the art materials alongside the children. In both instances they copied what I was doing however on closer scrutiny I discovered a difference – one that has influenced my practice and strengthened my understandings. In Justice's story, she offered the initial idea when she suggested "Let's draw the flowers". Connor used copying to borrow my idea and then adapted it to create his own outcome. He followed his own agenda. When I think about Justice I can now see that her initial idea was interpreted by me and that the direction we took

was my idea. I had not closely ‘listened’ to her request, what did she mean by ‘let’s draw the flowers’? Perhaps she had a different approach in mind – what was her agenda? At that time my practice was heavily influenced by the understanding I held that children’s work should be their own and so I created the situation, and expectation, for Justice to do her thing separately from me. I feel that by us both drawing separately from the same model Justice felt a compulsion to copy my work. Her original idea might have been that we could do it together, and if we had engaged in co-construction the outcome may have been mutually beneficial.

What have I learnt?

I have discovered that ‘copy’ is not a four-letter word, it is a valid technique for learning. Copying is a natural way of learning. Howard Gardiner (1980) confirms this for me by describing how children naturally copy sources, models, photographs, other pieces of work or people, if they don’t have previous knowledge or schemas of how something looks or is done. My collection of stories illustrates for me how it is an approach to building a repertoire of visual art knowledge and ability.

Sarah's Reflections (9) - A summary of her own learning

From Sarah's presentation to the Centre of Innovation Hui (29.11.05)

I have learnt that copying has several benefits for children whether the copier or those being copied.

- *Being the “copied” gives children an opportunity to have their abilities recognised by others, it boosts their confidence and sense of achievement. Children are powerful teachers for other children.*
- *Copying and being copied contributes towards a sense of inclusion in and belonging to the group.*
- *The copier is a self-motivated learner who has learnt to use an effective learning strategy.*

Copying is a central strategy to co-learning. It involves sharing ideas and ways of doing things in a manner that all children can participate. Children don’t need to rely on language to be able to engage in co-constructing knowledge and abilities.

Regarding the role of the teacher I feel that there is a definite place for teachers working with and alongside children within visual arts. Teachers can assist and guide children in the teaching of techniques, ideas and skills that they haven’t been introduced to. It’s necessary for children to copy these newly taught techniques to enhance and further their artistic development. The key is to really ‘listen’ to the child and follow their agenda, not impose your own.

I also feel that it is the teacher’s role to show a genuine interest in visual art. This can be best achieved by sitting alongside children to paint, draw, or work together. If children don’t experience an environment where art is used and valued by adults how do they gain an understanding of the important place art has in our culture? A danger is that they will come to view art as a child’s entertainment activity.

Personally I have grown enormously in my confidence and competence as a visual art teacher. It doesn’t matter about the level of my own ability – when co-constructing with children I am continually learning and this is exciting!