

# Life Changing Professional Development



Meeting up with Children's Lively Minds  
With Nadia Jaboneta and Deb Curtis

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## Life Changing Professional Development is up to each of us

We want to know what the children think, feel and wonder. We believe that the children will have things to tell each other and us that we have never heard before. We are always listening for a surprise and the birth of a new idea. This practice supports a searching together for new meaning. Together we can become a community of seekers.

Louise Boyd Codwell



Deb Curtis  
Toddler Mentor Teacher  
Seattle, WA

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## Life Changing Professional Development is up to each of us

To enter into a style of teaching which is based on questioning what we're doing and why, on listening to children, on thinking about how theory is translated into practice and how practice informs theory, is to enter into a way of working where professional development takes place day after day in the classroom.

Sonya Shoptaugh



Nadia Jaboneta-Mentor  
Preschool Teacher  
San Francisco, CA

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### Children's Lively Minds Slide Show

As you look at the images and hear the ideas,  
what captures your attention?

What do you love about what you see?

What are you curious about and want to know  
more?



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### When we see Children's Lively Minds



We see children for the miracles they truly are

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When we see  
Children's Lively Minds  
We understand they are  
Far better learners than  
we are.

Children actually  
see more, hear more,  
feel more and  
experience more than  
adults do.



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Children's Lively Minds make them actually more conscious than adults.

What does this suggest about how we reflect on their experiences and the role we play in their lives and learning?



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How can we slow down and engage with children in deep investigation with their Lively Minds?



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What if we thought more deeply about the everyday moments in children's lives?



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What if we used children's perspectives and brain research to inform our understandings about Lively Minds to support our decisions about what to offer children?

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What if we see ourselves as informal researchers, actively striving to meet up with Children's Lively Minds?



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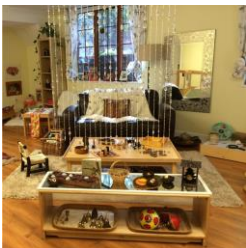
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How do we plan for environments to engage children's Lively Minds and Active bodies?



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Our choice of materials reflects how we understand Children's Lively Minds and therefore how we approach teaching and learning.



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Each day children show us their eagerness for adventure and challenge.



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How do we embrace the challenges children pursue with their bodies?



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How can we support the countless ways children relate to the natural world?



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Children's Lively Minds

Show us they are born researchers, noticing every detail to learn about others and themselves.

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Rather than teaching "social skills", what if we focused on what children already know about getting along? How do children show us they have natural dispositions for empathy, compassion and fairness.



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Children are miracles.  
Believing that every child is a  
miracle can transform the way  
we design for children's care.

We make it our job to create,  
with reverence and gratitude, a  
space that is worthy of a  
miracle!

Anita Olds

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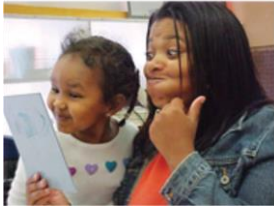
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The educators of Reggio Emilia remind us:

We must not assess what the child knows, or knows how to do,  
but what he or she could do IF...



**WE are the  
IF!**

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What touches  
your heart and  
mind after seeing  
these images and  
hearing these  
ideas?



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**Poll**

What do you find to be the most nourishing and useful ways to enhance your own or others practices for working with children?

- 1. Observe children's strengths and competencies during moments of joy?
- 1. Focus on curiosity and questions for informal teacher research?
- 1. Reflect on stories of children with others to find meaning and plan?
- 1. Hunt for and offer materials to see how children engage with them

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Overview of Big Ideas

Life Changing Professional Development Involves...

Meeting up with children's lively minds, competencies and moments of joy and delight. Looking for moments we love and value.

Finding curiosity and our own questions. The power of informal teacher research.

Using a Thinking Lens protocol to study deeper meanings.

Working side by side to observe and share stories to make meaning with co-workers and families.

Treasure hunting for our environments and materials and watch what children do with what we offer.

Deciding the role to take up in children's play and learning.

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Life Changing Professional Development

Find the moments that touch your heart and mind.




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Find the moments that touch your heart and mind.



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Life Changing Professional Development  
Find the moments that touch your heart and mind



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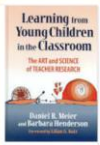
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### Life Changing Professional Development Engage in Teacher Research



“Teacher research provides a habit of mind and a set of tools that help teachers to stop reacting, and begin to see that by just looking, and then telling others what they see, they begin to deepen and clarify their role as early childhood educators.”

Daniel Meir and Barbara Henderson

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Life Changing Professional Development  
Informal Teacher Research  
The Hole Story



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Reflections and Questions

This exploration seems to be the *enclosure* schema, which on the surface seems like a simple cause and effect investigation. But we had some deeper questions about the meaning of these *enclosing* explorations for children. Are the children:

- filling the hole again and again, looking to see where the objects go, because they enjoy sharing the mystery of discovering the results of their actions?
- assessing how their actions on different objects have different effects?
- exploring the idea of things you can see and things you cannot see?
- realizing that things usually show up again and speculating about when something disappears where it will be?
- grappling with uncertainty about what is unknown and knowable?

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Life Changing Professional Development  
The Power of Informal Teacher Research

**Big-Body Movement and Sensory Area**

A story of teacher research, reflection and collaboration to transform my classroom environment



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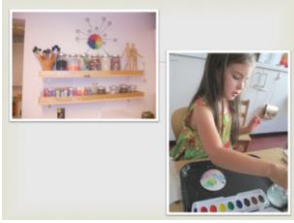
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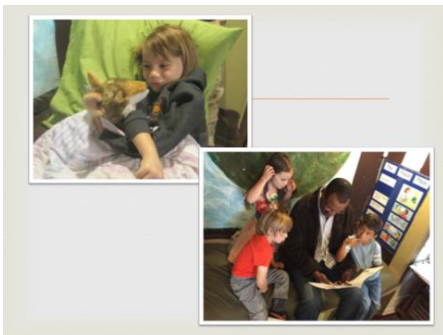
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Teacher Research  
Schema Theory and  
Connections in the Brain

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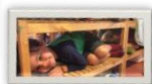
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Team Meetings



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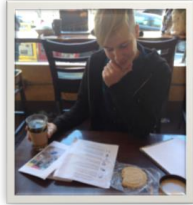
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# Should we create a big-body sensory area in our classroom?



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## Use a Protocol for Reflection and Inquiry



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## Collaborations and Different Perspectives

- Inclusion Specialist
- Occupational Therapist
- Director
- Classroom Team
- Thinking Partners



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Yes, we want to create a big-body sensory area in our classroom!!

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**Action Plan**

We met with our director and inclusion specialist to:

- Make a plan for where in the classroom we would create the big body sensory area.
- We made a wish-list of materials we needed and shared with the families (pillows, mattress, soft balls)
- We made a plan of how and when we would put the space together.
- In collaboration with our inclusion specialist, we created a "sensory library" where we would be able to borrow materials.

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Before



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After



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Poll

When you see children engage in risky, active play what is your likely response?

- That's not safe! Someone's going to get hurt. I'm going to stop this now.
- This looks really fun, but I can't allow the children to take this risk.
- I'm going to move in closer so I can be ready in case anyone needs help.
- I'm amazed by how capable children are. What new challenges can I offer?

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Life Changing Professional Development  
Observing and Studying with Others

- Side by side observations and documentation
- Study sessions with the Thinking Lens
- Telling the stories- Learning Story

As you hear this story listen to children's competencies as learners and scientists. See if you can identify schema explorations in the story.

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Making Learning Visible  
Many ways to change pastels

The children were eager to open the package of pastels we offered today. Several children began to draw people. Frankie had a different idea. He drew alternating black and orange lines across the paper. After working this way for a while he used his hand to rub the lines. He described it as fading and looking old. Other children picked up on this explorations and began to do the same. Nadia offered a box of tissue for rubbing the pastels and working to transform them became the focus for the entire group.



Working  
Side by  
Side

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The children noticed that as they rubbed the pastels on the paper, powder formed. Creating powder became of interest and several children worked to make piles of chalk dust.

One child decided to wet the tissue to see how water might change the chalk as he rubbed. The idea of using water inspired even more ideas.



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The children requested more water and Nadia offered cups, moving around the group asking children if they wanted "a lot or and little water." The children joyfully chose a lot of water, asking the cups be "filled almost to the top." The cups of water now served as a vessel for mixing chalk dust and creating different colors. Excited to see the transformation of the chalk to dust and then to liquid the children began to use sticks to scrape the chalk, mix it into the water, and to chop it to pieces creating thick, colorful liquid. The children worked fervently on these many investigations for over an hour.



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Reflections on the Children's Learning



We marvel at the children's intense focus on exploring and transforming the chalk. They used their own thinking as well as being inspired by others' ideas. As we study the outcomes for inquiry we can see the children using all of these important skills for learning. Rather than an art activity this experience sparked the children's natural drive to take action to learn about the world, just like scientists.

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### Reflections on our own learning



As the children's work was unfolding we questioned at several junctions whether we should support and extend what they were doing with the pastels or redirect it. Our adult response was to see the chalk as a tool for drawing and thought to ourselves; Is this a waste or destruction of materials? Will it get too messy? Should we help children use the chalk in the correct way?"

We were happy that we supported the children's investigations even though we were uncomfortable. As we reflect on the learning and collaboration that occurred, we see the importance of letting go of our "adult views" to see what happens. The children were remarkable in their use of observation, problem solving and cause and effect to delve deeply into learning about the materials. We are inspired by the deep focus they have for understanding and learning about the world.

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### Life Changing Professional Development

Finding Treasures to offer Children



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### In a previous life....



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Treasures to find-  
recycle, reuse,  
repurpose



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Treasures to find-  
recycle, reuse,  
repurpose



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Life Changing Professional Development  
Considering the Teacher's Role based on our Values

Peace Heroes  
Promoting  
Anti Bias Education



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- Children should learn about people as human beings long before learning about their oppression.
- Read at least 3 stories about the group where they are simply discussed as people before introducing on injustice.

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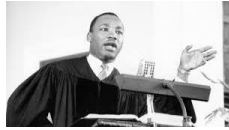
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Nadiyah Taylor

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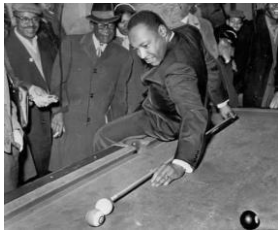
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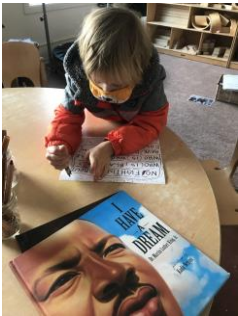
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Teachers will nurture each child's construction of knowledgeable, confident, individual personal and social identities. Children will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. (Goal 1: Identity)



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Teacher's will foster each child's capacity to critically identify bias and will nurture each child's empathy for the hurt bias causes (Goal 3)



"The earth, peace and different skin colors together, all over the world!"

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**Feelings Check-in**

Children will increasingly recognize unfairness (injustice), have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts (Goal 3)

- Happy and sad
- I wish dying didn't exist...ever!
- All the feelings
- All the feelings but more nervous. Dr. King's life must have been very hard.

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We want to know what the children think, feel and wonder. We believe that the children will have things to tell each other and us that we have never heard before. We are always listening for a surprise and the birth of a new idea. This practice supports a searching together for new meaning. Together we can become a community of seekers.

Louise Boyd Cadwell



Join our Facebook Group:  
*Children's Lively Minds*

You can find our book  
*Children's Lively Minds*  
at [redleafpress.org](http://redleafpress.org)

How will you take up your  
own life changing  
professional development?

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