

Drawing in Pedagogical Practice

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Category: Blog / Curriculum in the Making

Tags: curriculum, developmentalism, discourse, curriculum creation, pedagogical commitments, Drawing

url: <https://www.ecpn.ca/blog/curriculum-making/drawing-pedagogical-practice>



Each year ECPN pedagogists think and experiment with a collective idea that they weave into the pedagogical and curricular processes they set in motion in the early childhood centres they work with. Last year (2020-2021), we dwelt on [Anna Tsing's](#) (2015) and [Thom van Dooren's](#) (2019) invitations to attend and attune to the world's ongoingness with care. This academic year (2021-2022), our focus is on 'children's drawing practices as ways to attend and attune to the world.'

Why drawing practices? There is no question that drawing is a significant practice in most children's lives, and an everyday happening in most child care centres. Yet, we felt that within early childhood education we have not yet paid enough attention to how we might create pedagogical conditions that nurture this important practice. For pedagogists to come to notice drawing intentionally, we realized it was necessary to immerse ourselves in the work of artists and *atelieristas*, while resisting the lure of approaching our work from their perspectives (as the majority of ECPN directors and pedagogists do not consider ourselves artists or *atelieristas*, and the work of the pedagogist and *atelierista* are interrelated but quite distinct).

The work of Capilano University's *atelierista* [Sylvia Kind](#) is, at large, our inspiration; we have spent several years reading, thinking with and engaging with [Sylvia's exciting scholarship](#). Her rich descriptions of drawing have certainly seduced us:

We entered together the gestural-heart-felt-bodied-experienced-rhythmic-movements of drawing and our perception of drawing becoming enlarged as we became more attuned to children's gestural and sonorous enactments and the rhythms and movements of drawing with others. There also is a need to keep in motion, especially if we think of drawing as a practice, never quite arriving, always moving towards a more attuned perception. (Kind, 2018, p. 10)

Yet, our persistent early childhood education tendency to approach children's drawings through developmental frameworks prevents our enthusiastic attempts to live Sylvia's proposal. Or even to work pedagogically with the idea of attending and attuning to a world beyond the individual child.

In fact, most of us pedagogists and educators conceptually approach children's drawings, as [Kris Sunday, Marissa McClure, Christopher Schulte](#) write, from "long-standing traditions of early childhood art—traditions grounded in a modernist view of children's art as a romantic expression of inner emotional and/or developmental trajectories" (2014, p. 1).

With the intention of challenging these limiting ways of thinking about drawing, since September 2021, we (alongside educators) have been struggling with the difficulty of [challenging the developmentalism](#) that continues to creep into our modes of being/doing/thinking, as well as approaching drawing as a practice that matters beyond children's development.

Taking seriously Sylvia's and other art educators' offerings (see [Chris Schulte's](#) and the [Occasional Papers Series #14](#)), we are reimagining and reinventing ourselves as pedagogists and educators to consider children's drawings as social practices, as events, as modes of inquiry.

In this process of reimagination and reinvention, we are individually and collectively noticing:

- the ways in which drawing lives and is lived in the centres;
- how materials matter in the process of creating alternative educational spaces;
- how children experiment with lives and worlds through drawing;
- how drawing propels children to imagining the otherwise as well as the possible/impossible;
- how drawing alters and repositions relations, how drawing sustains questions.

Why engage pedagogically with drawing practices in early childhood education?

Drawing is a way to notice how children engage with the world. It is a starting point to think with educators about the kind of relations that we want to sustain. Drawing is a way to read carefully the educational contexts in which children live. Drawing is a way to enable a dialogue with educators that would allow them to collectively think about what kind of questions and /or ideas they want to centre their attention on as they continue nourishing the pedagogical propositions that might alter those very educational contexts. (Personal communication with pedagoga [Cristina Delgado Vintimilla](#), 2021)

As with all modes of speculative curriculum making, we do not presume to know the entirety of what might be possible when we consider drawing outside of its familiar places in early childhood education. But it is these tentative and hope-full practices that propel us forward to collectively imagine many possibilities when we risk what is comfortable and known.

References

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