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Primary Children's Perspectives on their School Experiences:
Using Multiple Modes of Communication to Inform Practice



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Outline of Presentation

- Overarching Framework – Children as Curricular Informants
- Link to IB Transdisciplinary Themes
- Researcher Position
- Description of Urban School Context & Outdoor School
- Outline of Research Study & Findings
- School District Claim
- International-Mindedness and Transnational Children
- Pedagogical Recommendations



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Children as Curricular Informants

Acquiring students' perceptions and thoughts in primary classrooms can provide insight for educators and researchers in regards to children's different ideas, interests, and motivations.

(Kragh-Muller & Isbell, 2011)





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Funds of Knowledge

A perspective which recognizes that knowledge is socially constructed through historically and culturally developed skills, abilities, and ideas specific to certain contexts (McWayne & Melzi 2014; Moll & Greenberg, 1990)





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IB Transdisciplinary Themes

- Who We Are
- How We Express Ourselves
- Where We are in Place and Time





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Researcher

Faculty Advisor at the school for 3 years
prior to engaging in research with 35
research participants

Developed trustworthiness with school community

Second year of two-year study
(1st year - drawing at mid and end-of-year to
share favourite school learning experience)

Data from 1st year revealed children's interest in
outdoor play; relationships with Nature/peers/
teachers outside; sense of freedom and
autonomy





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Relationships in Education A Pedagogy of Listening

From the beginning, children demonstrate that they have a voice, they know how to listen, and they want to be listened to by others.

The capacity for reciprocal listening, which enables meaningful communication and dialogue, is a quality of the human mind and intelligence that is clearly present in young children - in fact, it abounds in young children.

(Rinaldi, 1994)



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Principal

Administrator at the school for 7 years

IB World School Authorization
(June, 2015)

School celebrated 100 year anniversary
in the community (May, 2015)





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Queen Mary Community School





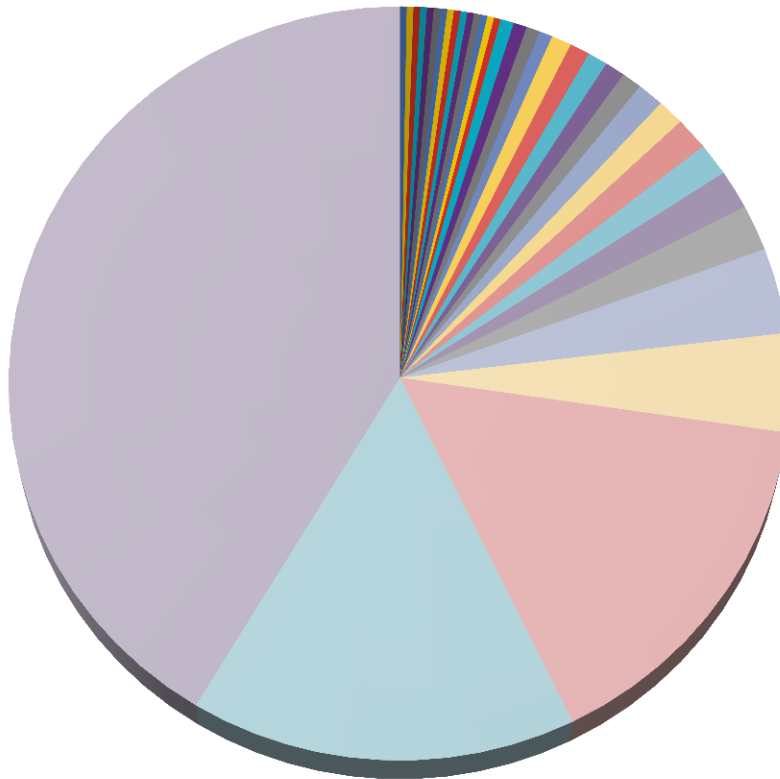
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School and Community Demographics

- 356 students
- 11% of the students are of Indigenous ancestry
- Low socio-economic community
- Significant English Language Learners population

Students

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- Albanian 1
- Berber (North African) 1
- Bislama (Vanuatu) 1
- Bulgarian 1
- Cantonese 1
- Chinese 1
- Gujarati (Indian dialect) 1
- Italian 1
- Marathi (Indian dialect) 1
- Nepali 1
- Polish 1
- Punjabi 1
- Tamil (Indian dialect) 1
- Telegu (Indian dialect) 1
- Bosnian 2
- French 2
- Hindi 2
- Vietnamese 2
- Arabic 3
- Bengali (Indian dialect) 3
- Cebuano (Philippine dialect) 3
- Portuguese 3
- Slovak 3
- Mandarin 4
- Romanian 4
- Philippine (other) 5
- Russian 5
- Kurdish 6
- Japanese 7
- Korean 13
- Spanish 15
- Farsi 55
- Tagalog (Philippine) 56
- English 147



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North Vancouver Outdoor School





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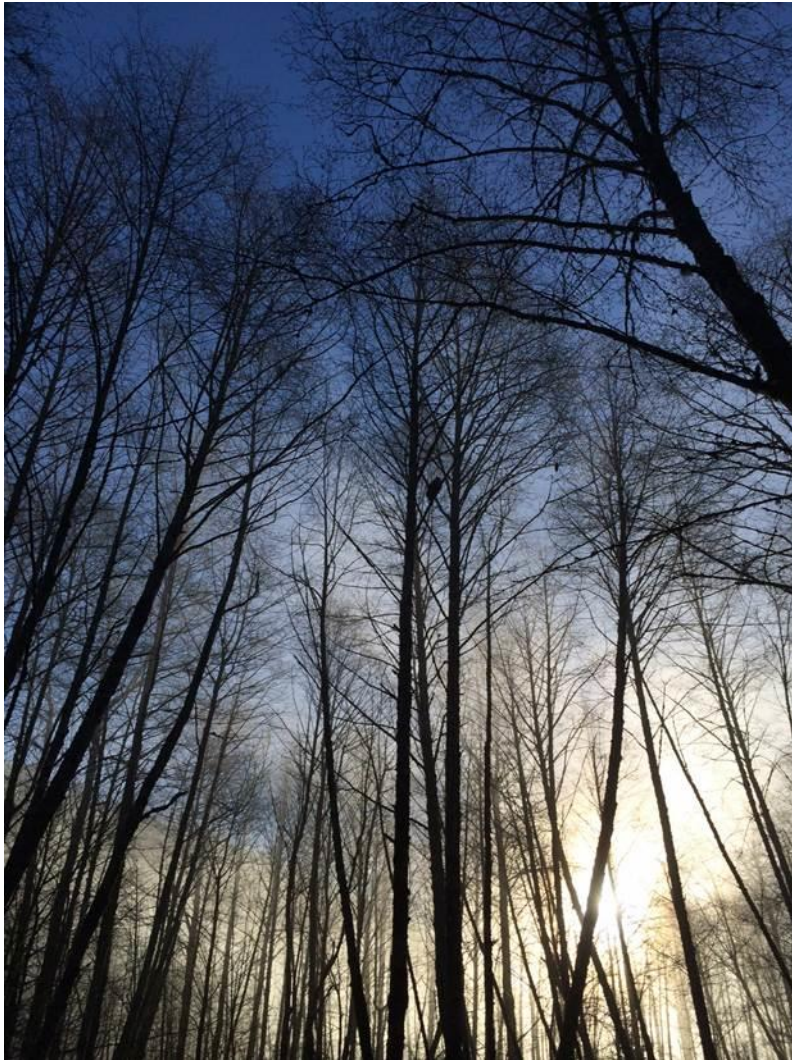


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Research Questions

What are young children's favourite learning experiences at school?

How can this information inform IB pedagogy in PYP classrooms?





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Theories

- Multimodality
(Kress, 2012)
- Community of Learners
(Brown & Campione, 1994)
- Place-Based Theory
(Sobel, 2004)





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Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Large group meetings with students

Individual student meetings
(midpoint and end of year)

Mode-based focus groups
(e.g., story writing, drawing, painting,
digital photography, video documentation)

Conversations

Field notes





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Data Analysis

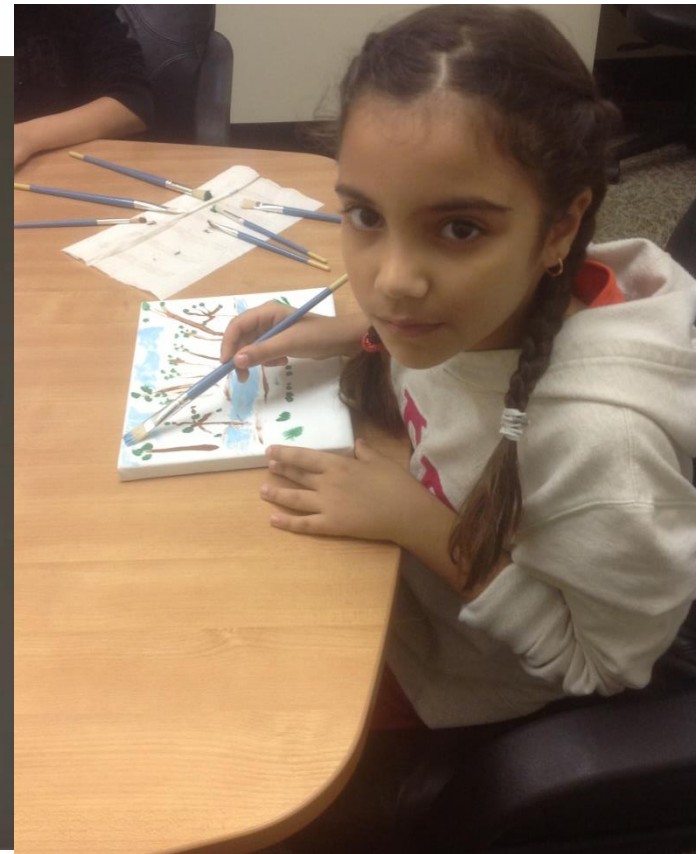
Narrative Analysis - allows learners to tell their own stories in a recursive way (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Kendrick & McKay, 2004)

Visual Analysis - the examination of multimodal, visual representations: producers, text, audience (Rose, 2001)

Thematic Analysis - deciphering themes within and across the data (Boyatzis, 1998)



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Parmis: I loved when we went to Outdoor School. It was really fun, especially going in the forest. I liked when you would sink down because of the snow, and I liked playing games in the snow with my friends. We would close our eyes and someone would lead us around, and we would pretend to take a picture. I loved it because every day is a normal day at school and this was different.



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I was born in Iran and I went back there with my mom. Iran had a roller coaster inside a huge store – like at a mall. I wouldn't like it so much in Iran because I would have to wear a hijab, actually it's a different word in Farsi. I like the freedom in North Van.



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Oscar: The Bird Field Study was the best! In my picture, the eagle is eating a salmon. Another eagle is flying over the water to get a salmon. I also liked playing with my friends at Outdoor School. But, I really liked bird watching, and playing in the deep, deep snow. Outdoor School is still my favourite.

I liked all the footprints in the snow too.



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I was born in Guatemala, it's right beside Mexico. Then I moved to North Van with my mom, dad, and my little sister, Julia. The dogs in Guatemala are wild! So are the turkeys, chickens, and pigs - there is poop everywhere. I like Outdoor School better and going owl watching at night.



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Diako: I liked Outdoor School – the eagles, and salmons, and goats. We also went owl hunting and I told Swiper (high school counsellor) that there was an owl on his back! There really wasn't!



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I was born in Iran. The thing I remember is that there were green and yellow busses. Then I moved to Finland. I learned how to speak Finnish and I remember making gingerbread cookies. Then I moved to Canada – the thing I like about Canada is Playland. I came with my mom and brother to Canada – my uncle was already here.



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DJ: I liked the chickens at Outdoor School and the Math – like counting chickens. I liked chickens because they make a Cock-a-Doodle-Do sound. It was awesome – especially the cabins! I still like Outdoor School best, it had such nice views and my friends were there. It was awesome there.



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My mom and dad are from The Philippines, but I was born in Dubai. Then I moved to Squamish, then I moved to North Van. In The Philippines there are lots of markets and parades.



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Calum: My favourite thing was going to Outdoor School. It was fun because you get to learn about salmon and you get to go to the farm. We were also told stories at the campfire and in the cabins – but they weren't too scary. Outdoor School is still the best thing I've done. It was good because it was snowing.



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I was born in Thailand because my parents decided to live there. My dad is American, he's from Pittsburgh, and my mom is from Scotland. My big sister was born in Thailand too. I've been to Scotland one time.



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Zara: I like playing on the playground with my friends. We play Cookie Monster, Rocket Ship, and Marshmallow Land. It is so much fun.



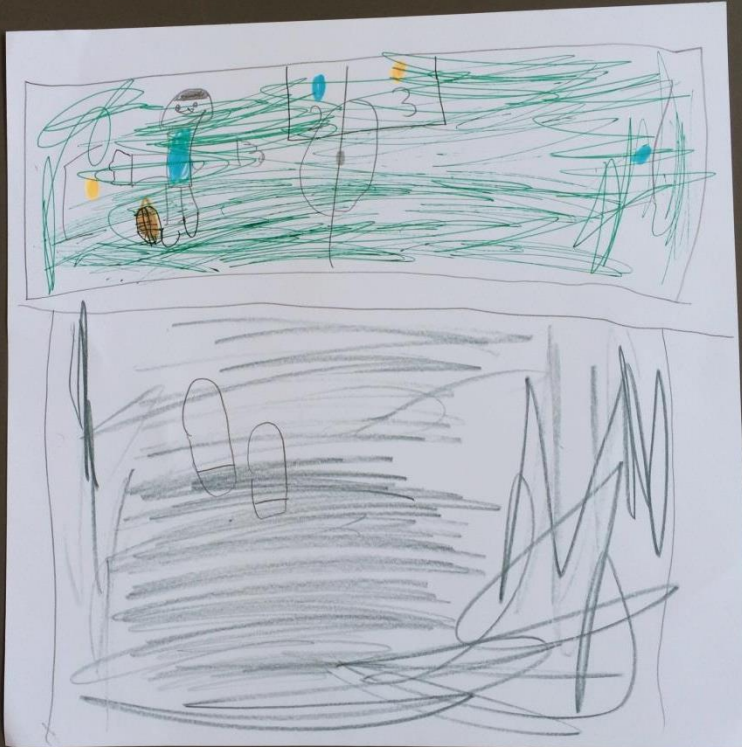
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I was born in Bangladesh. I don't have any brothers and sisters. I was just back in Bangladesh. I liked mostly everything - the worst thing was that there are wild dogs, and it stinks a bit. In the cities there are lots of animals, and in the farms, there are no animals! There is also garbage everywhere. I like the food, it's very spicy.



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Jaden: I made two favourite things. I made a picture of me playing soccer. I'm on the blue team in front of the goal. The orange team is having a break, so I'm just practicing. I really want to be on a real soccer team. I also made the snow at Outdoor School – I loved it! A couple of nights ago, I dreamed that I was at Outdoor School hiking and even eating a cookie too.



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I was born here - I'm Squamish, and I live with my mom. I go to the Powwow and we have feasts. You can buy stuff there too, like CDs. There is a big stage and a place with lots of seats that go up. There were lots of eagles at Outdoor School. In Squamish tradition, you aren't supposed to point at eagles, but I don't know why.



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Research Findings

- Impact of Nature on Children’s Learning Experiences
- Relationships & Autonomy
- Children’s Wealth of Out-of-School Experiences





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North Vancouver School District.... the natural place to learn





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Knowing Children's Stories...

Valuing transnational students' global experiences

Acknowledging Indigenous children's diverse worlds

Critically reflecting on IB language in regards to **international-mindedness** – (authenticity, identity, voice, power)



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Pedagogical Recommendations

- Evidence of children’s thoughts and valued experiences in IB Planners
- Family Involvement – building on families’ cultural, social, and linguistic funds of knowledge in IB World Schools
- Increase in children’s exposure to Nature-based experiences, relationships with living things
- Developing a broader understanding of place and *diversity of place* and the impact on children’s identities



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I liked the snow at Outdoor School. There was 2 feet of snow and I loved jumping in it! One night, at 7pm, we were throwing snowballs against a tree – our counsellors were in the cabin.

I also liked the bald eagles - I would stay out there longer. I really loved the field study about Salmon too. Seeing pictures makes me want to go back – too bad we couldn't go back!





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My favourite thing is Outdoor School. I liked playing in the snow. I just have so many memories – making snowballs, making a snowman...there was so much snow! I would like to stay there for 3 weeks, but I would miss my parents, my Xbox, and kind of Queen Mary.

