

Philosophical Conversation

In the early years

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Introduction

When teachers listen carefully to very young children, a lot of important things can happen.

- Teachers can take into consideration children's needs and interests when they design lesson plans.
- Through dialogue, teachers can learn more about children's ways of thinking along with issues that are important for them.
- By incorporating children's talk into lesson plans, teachers can help children to feel that what they say is of interest and significance to adults and peers.
- Teachers can learn more about themselves as professionals and reflect on the ways they approach issues that arise in the classroom.

Opportunities for philosophical conversation emerge regularly during children's activities and informal talk but they often go unnoticed by teachers. I've collected some real incidents from my early-years classroom that I believe could have led to philosophical conversations with the children.

Firstly, I describe an incident as it took place. **Secondly**, I share my thoughts about the incident and highlight some possible issues, ideas, concepts and questions that were, or could have been, drawn out and examined further.

Thirdly, I share some activities I devised to offer to the children. If the activities interested the children, we tried them out. If not, then I was content to let them go unused. The important thing, for me, was to practice devising ways to realise the philosophical possibilities inherent in the initial situation or exchange. I felt sure that the process and some of the products would be useful in the longer term.

I hope my work will be useful to you and that you might also share the incidents I describe with children in your own class. If they are interested, you could use my reflections and activities to support the dialogue you have together.