

A story about clouds

Sandra's story

"Look, look, look, look!" shouted Joey, excitedly waving his hands in front of my face. "What? What? What?" I jumped up to see just what was so amazing. "Look!" exclaimed Joey, pointing up to the sky. Well, what a sight! The most amazing cloud formation had formed. Stripecy clouds were whizzing in the opposite direction to large, white, fluffy ones. Spectacular! "Quick, go and tell Jill – she'll love them," I told Joey. I then called the children to the hill, and we all lay on the hill to observe nature in action.

Jill's story

Joey was playing outside. He raced inside, excitedly telling us about the clouds. We all went outside to see the two different types of clouds in the sky going in opposite directions. The children lay on the hill, looking up, while Veronica informed us that they were stratus and cumulus clouds. Stratus clouds from the west and cumulus from the east. Lots of joy and wonder. Great observation, Joey!



Mum's reaction

Joey's father is a science teacher, but Lottie (his mother) feels this doesn't necessarily direct Joey's behaviour. She said, however, that Joey does tend to notice things in nature, especially things in the sky. If there is a full moon, Joey will spend time gazing at it. He loves choosing factual books from the library, and his latest choice includes one about poisonous animals.

What's happening here?

Joey notices an unusual cloud formation. In Sandra's words, "Stripecy clouds were whizzing in the opposite direction to large, white, fluffy ones." The children and the adults lie on the ground to watch them. This story is noticed and commented on in three different ways by Sandra, Jill, and Joey's mother.

What aspects of children's contribution to assessments does this exemplify?

The format of this assessment item encourages a sense of multiple viewpoints on every event and that all contributions (including the children's) are valued. Although Joey doesn't have his own story in this example, he is given credit for starting the stories ("Great observation, Joey!") and for contributing to the sense of "joy and wonder".

How might this assessment develop children's capacity to contribute to assessments?

Joey started this story. This exemplar can demonstrate to the readers (including Joey) that

the same story about an event can be told or interpreted in different ways, depending on the storytellers' perspectives, knowledge, and experience. The "spectacular" sight amazes Sandra. Jill includes some scientific information (an explanation from Veronica) about stratus and cumulus clouds. Lottie (Joey's mother) adds information about Joey's interest in the sky.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

An assessment exemplar that describes or interprets the same event from multiple perspectives is unusual. Because the cloud story is written in this way, differing perspectives appear to be valued in this setting. For example, the teachers invited a third voice from Joey's mother.

The adults in the early childhood setting have written up this story using words such as "amazing", "spectacular", "excitedly", "joy", and "wonder". There is a sense of the enjoyment of the spontaneous and an appreciation of children's initiatives.