

John's connecting stories

Date: 23 July

Teacher: Julie

A learning story

John watches two children and an adult play with hooks, chains, and lines.

When they move to work nearby, he begins joining the objects together.

He places them in a line. Some droop over the end of the table, so he brings a chair to attach the length to.

A hook comes free on the table; he looks, then reattaches it the other way around.

He has difficulty attaching the length to the chair and pushes it into a hole. He continues linking and hooks the length to another chair.

He goes to the other end of the table and looks at the doorknob, where a scarf is hanging. He removes the scarf and gives it to an adult without speaking.

He links his objects from the table to the doorknob, then adds chains and lets the length hang down.

He steps back and smiles.

Short-term review

John is interested in "linking objects". He watched a group before attempting his work.

John continued to link his objects for a prolonged period.

A few of John's hooks became detached. However, he was able to solve this by turning the hooks the other way. He solved the problem of how to hook the length over the table to a plastic chair, and he used the doorknob to attach his links at the other end.

John pointed to his construction with a big smile.

What next?

Look for opportunities for John to work out ideas about connecting – e.g., boxes, blocks, tyres, string, paper-tape, carpentry.

Encourage John to talk about his interest in this play.

Date: 19 September

Teacher: Toni

A learning story

On the deck by the carpentry table. It's raining.

John picks up a paper tube and looks through it. "Rain," he says, "rain."

He looks at me as I talk into a tube. He puts the tube to his ear. I talk into it. "Yes, it's raining." John laughs, pulls the tube away, and puts it to his ear again. I whisper, "How are you?" He laughs.

John runs to the shelf and puts another tube on the end and puts it to my mouth. I say, "Pl-plop! Rain." He laughs and gets more tubes off the shelf, adds three more tubes, and passes me the end. I put it to his mouth. He says, "No. You noise." I say, "Patter, patter, rain." He holds it to his ear and laughs.

He adds two more tubes and puts one end to my mouth and the tubes start falling off. John puts it on the ground and fixes the tubes that fell off and attaches more tubes. He goes back to the shelf and sorts through the tubes. He adds more tubes – 17 in total. Sam and Blake join in and add more tubes on.

Short-term review

John spent time looking at the rain before talking. Once he heard me talk, he indicated he wanted me to talk into his tube by putting it to his ear. He enjoyed hearing me talk in different tones of voice and using words to explain the noise of rain hitting the ground beside us.

John knew how to connect the pipes by choosing different sizes so they would connect together.

What next?

Continue joint attention with John.

Include other children in his play.

John is focused on connecting things together. Support his fascination with connection in the areas of play – e.g., blocks, pipes in the sandpit, tracks for the cars, boxes, and carpentry.

Date: 9 October

Teacher: Toni

A learning story

John is in the sandpit. He picks up a plastic pipe and connects it to another. He looks around. I ask him to help get more out. As he walks towards me by the storage box, he says "Okay" and carries two pipes and connects them to the other two. He gets three more and connects them to the others.

He looks at me and says, "Water." We check out the water tanks. He takes a hose and puts it in the end of his pipe. He looks in the pipe, takes the hose out, and pulls off some of the shorter pipes. He adds three to a longer pipe, sorting pipes that are similar in diameter. He puts two small pipes in, says "No, no", takes them off, and adds two larger ones.

Joshua joins him. John looks at him and continues to add pipes, adding to Joshua's pipe. He puts the hose in the longer pipe. "Oh, water," he says and shovels sand over where the water is leaking, covering four leaks with Joshua talking to him.

Short-term review

John had an idea of linking the two pipes, looked for more, and was happy to help carry more to the sandpit. He decided to add to the longer pipe and knew how to sort the sizes so they linked together with little gap around the seal. He enjoyed connecting the pipes and seeing the water in the pipes. He decided covering the joins might stop them leaking.

What next?

Continue supporting his fascination with connection.

He includes other children in his play – continue to encourage this.

Encourage John to "talk" with children he works with by telling them what he seems to be directing at me – e.g., he looks at me if he is unsure.

Date: 9 October

Teacher: Toni

A learning story

At the bike track, John rides his bike around once, stops, and pulls at a trailer on another bike. I encourage him to tell me what he wants. He points and says, "Trailer on bike."

He unhooks the trailer as I tip the bike. He hooks it onto his bike and rides around, watching Isaac following him. John stops, adds another trailer onto his trailer, and goes around the track. He stops by Isaac and watches him. He puts another trailer onto his trailer (three now). He squeals and follows Isaac. He goes around again, stops, hooks on another trailer and looks at Isaac, who's hooking on more trailers, too.

John smiles. "More," he says. "Go now?" he says and smiles at Isaac. Isaac follows him and talks with him. John points to both their bikes. Each has four trailers connected together.

Short-term review

John asked for help because the trailer was hard to get off. He knew how to hook the trailer onto his bike and enjoyed moving his legs fast to push his bike around. He kept looking back at Isaac, enjoying having him there.

Having other trailers out and free supported John's connecting, as did Isaac following his lead. He spoke directly to Isaac and enjoyed being with him.

What next?

Continue supporting John in including others in his ideas and also in joining others himself when he indicates that he wishes to.

Give him the words he needs, if needed.

Continue supporting the fascination with "connecting" – make an obstacle course, with him leading how he wants it to connect.

Junk construction – heavy boxes, tubes, etc. to join together.

Date: 18 October

Teacher: Stephanie

A learning story

John was in the sandpit, connecting pipes. He made the pipes connect almost a quarter of the way down the playground. At the end of some of the pipes, water was leaking out instead of going down the next pipe. John got sand and packed it around the leaky spots to stop water from coming out onto the grass.

Short-term review

John found an interest in connecting the pipes to make the water flow. He keeps his interest for a sustained period of time and was playful with the materials. When he chose the task, he came up with a solution to solve the water leaking out the sides.

What next?

Challenge John to set and solve his own problems.

Encourage trusting others and group interactions.

Date: 3 March

Teacher: Toni

A learning story

John stopped in front of Joshua, who was holding a stop/go sign he had made. When the sign changed to red, John looked behind him, not moving. Oliver, Blake, Sam, and another child behind shouted "Go now!"

John moved on and went round again, this time stopping on green. Oliver said, "You go on green, John." John smiled and moved on.

He looked at another child making a stop/go sign. He ran down and took some green cellophane out of the box and found long pieces of bark. He said "Stick", cut off some tape, and stuck it to the bark. He tried three times and it wouldn't stick, so he went inside and got some sticky tape and paper, with no prompting at all, and stuck the cellophane to the paper, and then sticky taped it to a tyre on the bike track. He smiled and said "Go now" and rode off on his bike.

Short-term review

John listened to the other children and joined in the game. He decided to make a sign, and in trying, solved his own problem. He decided to put his sign on a tyre by where Joshua had stood. He joined in the game again.

What next?

John is enjoying taking the initiative, knowing how to solve his own problem. Encourage him to verbalise what he is doing, too.

What's happening here?

These learning stories describe how John's teachers extend his interest in connecting objects. His fascination with this is distributed across the curriculum, enabling him to involve other children in his games.

What aspects of inclusive assessment does this exemplify?

An important function of inclusive narrative assessment is to show progress towards IP goals. One of John's IP goals is interacting with other children. John's learning pathway is unique, but we can see his progress towards this goal as his interactions become more frequent and the stories become more complex.

John's voice comes through strongly in the stories, as a result of his increasing participation in the curriculum and the learning that follows from this. For example, when he drives through a red light, it is against his better judgment, but he does so because his friends tell him to. His hesitation next time round (to check whether the red/green rule has changed) and the way he solves the problem with his sign reveal a lot about the way he is thinking.

How might this assessment contribute to this child's learning and development?

This set of assessments shows John's ongoing progress. Trusting to John's interest, while documenting carefully just where he is up to and going, allows the teachers to take John forward towards the goal of building relationships with the other children. These assessments, particularly that of 3 March, show the adults in John's life (and John himself) that he is beginning to put other points of view first – a big ask for him.

Incidentally, John's parents enjoyed the stories very much and joked that he might grow up to be a plumber!

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

This set of stories illustrates the thoughtful reflections of John's teachers. They notice what is happening and recognise how this may contribute and lead to the goal of interacting with other children. Their responses highlight their sensitivity and professional expertise.