

A father's story

Joshua came home with a wooden paddle. He asked me, "Where wheels?"

On Saturday, Joshua again asked me, "Where wheels?", so I asked Joshua to put the paddle "on my workbench". We don't have a real workbench, but Joshua clamped the paddle in the vice, all on his own.

Joshua then helped me to lay in the extension cable. He also helped me to remove the electric drill from its box. Joshua held my hand when I turned the screws holding the wheels on.

When the first wheel was mounted, Joshua let out a loud squeal (I nearly had a heart attack) and said, "We did it, Dad."

This happened three more times as each wheel in turn was mounted.

Joshua disappeared into the house at a rate of knots to show Mum.

Joshua had to be called back to help me clean up.

Joshua's father later commented that Joshua had remembered to ask to make the truck a second time, that he took the initiative by putting the paddle in the vice, and that he had again been hugely excited as the truck emerged. He also noted that Joshua remembered that he was expected to help clean up after himself.

What's happening here?

Joshua's father wanted this story to be part of Joshua's assessment and learning profile because he wanted the teachers to read about the excitement and enthusiasm Joshua displays as the truck comes together in front of his eyes.

What aspects of inclusive assessment does this exemplify?

In this learning story, Joshua's father tells the teachers how he helps Joshua to build his truck. Both Joshua's voice and his father's come through clearly. Joshua clamps the paddle in the vice all on his own and then helps his father get the extension cable and the drill ready. Finally, he holds his father's hand as they put the screws in. All this is valuable information for Joshua's teachers. Showing just what support is needed and how much a child does for him- or herself is useful information to include in assessment.

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

Joshua's excitement as he cries out, "We did it, Dad" is a wonderful moment to record. This story also documents for Joshua aspects of himself as a capable and competent learner who orchestrates the assistance of people (his father), places (a "workbench" at home), and things (the vice and drill). His teachers, reading this learning story, will be encouraged to replicate Joshua's sense of achievement with similar activities and a similar level of support for his interests. Revisiting the first story may have encouraged Joshua to ask to make the truck a second time, to put the paddle into the vice on his own initiative, and to remember that he is expected to clean up afterwards.

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

This is Joshua's father's story, and it clearly shows how he values and supports Joshua's learning. He understands what it is that Joshua wants to do when he comes home with the wooden paddle and asks "Where wheels?" Because of his empathy with Joshua, he is able to recognise and respond to the learning opportunity.