


Submission for:	SharingPYP blog at <a href="http://blogs.ibo.org/sharingpyp/">http://blogs.ibo.org/sharingpyp/</a>
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Submission date:	...../...../..... (day/month/year)
Title of article:	A collaborative inquiry into the work of children
Tags/key words (max 5)	Collaboration, early years, inquiry, play
Summary of the article (max 50 words):	An investigation on the use of collaboration in learning through play.
Content:	<p>In the heart of Old Town in Vilnius in Lithuania, a group of early years PYP practitioners have begun this academic year with a learning commitment. The professional learning that we have undertaken has formed purposeful and productive collaboration. It has served to develop the meta-cognitive capacities of our teachers as learners as we dabble in dynamic and innovative practice.</p> <p>The collaborative nature of this meaningful inquiry is empowering teachers to be more reflective and creative. It is a significant process that impacts student learning positively. We are learning about play.</p> <p>However, as Smidt (2011) suggests, it seems almost redundant to write about play as much literature and research has focused on the concept of play. In spite of the presence of play literature, it is still a much misunderstood phenomenon and its place in early childhood education remains under question. By bringing multiple perspectives together in this professional learning community, we are beginning to model the kind of learning we articulate for our students.</p> <p>At Vilnius International School, we have been collaboratively engaged in constructing a shared way of thinking, communicating, and implementing play. Through this process we have prioritized play as a developmentally appropriate way of teaching and learning in the early years.</p> <p>We first began with a parallel between play and inquiry:</p>

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 10px; width: 45%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Play</b> (Youngquist &amp; Pataray-Ching 2004)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Children seek to answer self-generated questions</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Enables children to construct meaning of their world</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Enables children to practice and reinforce what was previously learnt</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px;">Learning is relevant and meaningful</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 10px; width: 45%;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inquiry</b> (<i>Making the PYP Happen</i>, 2009)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Children are actively involved in their learning and they take responsibility and ownership for their learning</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Enables children to understand their world</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Enables children to make connections between previous learning and current learning</div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px;">Learning is purposeful</div> </div> </div> <p>We then defined the role of the child in play as the wanderer and wonderer, as well as the constructor of meaning whereby he or she practices, reinforces, challenges, and extends their current understanding of the world. Here we have adopted what Duncan and Lockwood (2008) propose: the child is the thinker and the child is the learner.</p> <p>More significantly arising from our collaboration has been our focus on the role of the teacher and our facilitative roles in play (Tarman &amp; Tarman, 2011). In <i>Making the PYP Happen</i> (2009), it is suggested that the role of the teacher is to “facilitate connections between the student’s prior knowledge and the knowledge available through new experiences” (p. 42). We have further specified the role of the teacher in play as the facilitator whose responsibility is to observe, record, evaluate, and participate in children’s play in order to extend and enrich learning. In addition, focus group sessions have utilized examples of play through role-play to unearth the role of the teacher as an onlooker and a co-player in play episodes. Effective here has been the repeated pattern of our focus on teaching and learning in the early years. Play has allowed a level of rapport to emerge that is developing the communal construction of understanding. This is what we strive for with our students.</p> <p>The process has been an important step towards not only advocating and promoting play as an invaluable pedagogical tool at our school, but also enabling us to develop a platform for discussing play. Prior to this initiative, we have always ‘done’ play. However this process has enabled us to further provoke our thinking and conversations about play, illustrating how robust a concept it is.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;">  <div style="width: 350px;"> <p>I therefore encourage you to begin conversations about play at your school, using the following guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is play and what are the types/stages of play?</li> <li>• How do we view the role of the child in play?</li> <li>• What are our roles as teachers in children’s play?</li> <li>• How do we intervene in children’s play to make play experiences more elaborate? That is, how can we interact with children at play to extend and enrich the learning?</li> </ul> </div> </div>
Short author’s blurb:	<p>Jennifer Wong-Powell, PYP early years teacher at Vilnius International School in Lithuania. Jennifer is a PYP early years teacher and has taught in PYP schools in Asia and Europe. She joined Vilnius International School this year as a kindergarten teacher. Outside of the classroom, Jennifer is pursuing her PhD, where she is looking at the role that personal histories play in shaping our approach to play as pedagogy. Jennifer is passionate about unearthing the complexities of play through collaboration and conversa-</p>

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Link to the original blog post (if applicable):	Not applicable
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