**[Karen Hope]:** Sandra in her April webinar also said, and I really, this had a lot of resonance for me, that the function of documentation is regulatory and we all know that, but that is not what she thought was the purpose of it. What do you think is the purpose of documentation? It's a big one.

**[Mary Holwell]:** It is a big one. It's really hard not to have touched on some of this in the previous answers that I gave. But I think for me, when I think about the purpose of documentation, there are some key things, and I've kind of drawn myself a very scribbly little mind map that I'm going to look at occasionally as I talk, because it's the way I think about why do we go about documentation. So there is that element that it helps us understand the child more. That's the key thing or should be the key reason that we're documenting, to help our understanding of the child.

It then forms the basis for being responsive to and building further relationships, particularly with young children and those who are perhaps non-verbal because it's what we notice and what we then provide for the child that helps them understand their value as well, that we've noticed something about them. So in writing something down, it reminds us that it's important. It provokes our next bit of thinking and it becomes a cycle for us.

I think that there is an element, that what we write down does become a basis for our planning, because it helps us to determine some actions that relate to what we offer next, whether it's simply the next learning experience, whether it's about the adaptations we need to make to the environment or to the routines, particularly if we think about young children and the fact that a lot of their learning opportunities will happen as a result of the routines that occur throughout a day. It's a very rich time for interaction with an adult if we think about slowing those routines down. And it's about adapting our interactions to better match the child. The secret is to be attuned to the child. So we need to have written something down so that we remember it and can then attune ourselves to that aspect of the child as we move forwards.

It allows us to gauge our progress over time in terms of the progress of the child that is. But I think documentation when it moves towards that pedagogical documentation with analysis and interpretation is not only allowing us to track the child's progression over time, but it also allows us to track and reflect on our progression over time because we're reviewing and reconsidering what it is we're offering to the child, what the kinds of strategies we're using are. So in that analysis and interpretation, we're growing as educators, or we should be growing as educators. We're building our toolbox. We're getting a broader range of things. We're expanding what it is we can do. In that sense, documentations are a form of self-review for us, and that should not be dismissed. We often think about documentation as being only important for the child, but they are important for us. They offer a means of communicating with the family or with other colleagues. That then potentially informs reports that we might write when children move between rooms or move to the care of different colleagues within a service. So it helps us to have a more holistic understanding of the child and to see where they are tracking over time.

**[Karen Hope]:** So there's a lot to it. Isn't there, Mary? It's complicated and yet so when done well yielding of so much information, not just about child thinking and learning, but educator thinking and learning.

**[Mary Holwell]:** I think that's right. I think you used a word there, which prompted my memory, and that is, I think, our observations when we work as educators are almost an avenue or a window into the complex thinking of a teacher. So they are opening up to other people what it is we're doing as we go about our everyday work. I think that's something that's really valuable as well.

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