**[Catharine Hydon]:** So, Caroline, if you had tips for us. As, educators, as professionals working in this space, what sort of tips would you have for us to be able to navigate it? Not so much up sort of what it would look like exactly, but what do I have to do as a professional in this space?

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Sure, well I have a slide on this, if that could come up for it.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Oh good, top tips [laughs].

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Top tips. But also, I wrote this question down before, I was having another look through my PhD and I saw that one of my wonderful participants had said, is it more, talking about planning and experiences, is it more about what you want to take to the children, or is it really meaningful for the children? So a good question to ask. Um. You know, when you're thinking about, what might we do this week or next week or next year or um, and of course, it has to come back to the conversations with the children. Um, so knowing your children and families and communities really well, so establishing those relationships. So, you know what goes on at home for that child, you know the cultural background, you know some of the beliefs and values, and then you know the children's interests. You know, they're, they're sort of levels of dispositions too, because some children will be more outspoken than others. Some might be a little bit more shy, some work well with others, some need a little bit of support to interact with others. So when you know that, then you can pitch how much, you know, how much freedom you give them, how much power you share with them. Does that does that make sense, Catharine?

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Absolutely. And I think this applies for the, across the whole early years spectrum, all the way from very, very little children, babies, all the way into the early years of school, knowing these children well. You know, my, my brother is a primary school teacher, and he's in Mount Isa in Queensland, and he's been telling me a few stories about what's, what's the, what's the currency in the school. What are the children all interested in, and there are things that have got real currency, like, everybody knows about them and everyone's talking about them, and you know, it's gone through phases of all sorts of interesting things that children are really into. And our colleagues in outside school hours will know about this too. Some, this does happen in early childhood, but you know, you can see how children's interests, you've got to know them well, you've got to know what they're talking about and then you can share some other opportunities and that's where the initiative comes in. So, great top tip, keep it going. What, what else have we got on this list?

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** So always, which is exhausting, I know it's exhausting. You guys, you know the teachers and educators out there, I bow down to you, you are incredible. But engaging in these intentional interactions. So before you say, um, you know, you know, stop that it might be dangerous or put a stop to something, think about well obviously not if someone's about to hurt themselves, but think about oh what is it that that child's actually trying to do? Why are they throwing cars over the fence? There must be a motivation there, and it's probably not just to annoy you or be naughty. It's because they, they want something back from that. Whether it be throwing, whether it be the noise that it makes on the other side, you know. And we know, and I'm sure you all know in the audience, that if children aren't given the opportunity to take safe risks, managed risks, they will find a way to take risks that are potentially dangerous. So engaging in those intentional interactions of saying well, okay, what is it that this child is trying to do here? Making sure that you try and tap into what is meaningful for that child. So why are they doing that? So what can I do, that we can kind of tap into that want, that valuable, that valued outcome that they are trying to pursue. How can we do that in a way that fits with our practice in our program, that's not throwing something over the fence or something like that. So.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** The next one is really lovely too.

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Pardon?

**[Catharine Hydon]:** The next one is really lovely too.

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Yeah, so allowing children opportunities to show initiative. So, stepping back. That idea of having just that blank room, which I'm sure is very scary, but just, you know, they don't have to be given things all the time. Or at least, I think it's really important for parents too, I'd be interested to do a bit more research on that side. You don't have to entertain your children all the time, to step back, allow them to show some initiative. And then tap into what it is that they've suggested or that they're trying to do, and trying to facilitate what it is that they want to do. And I've seen examples from both early childhood education and primary settings, where there are banks of materials and resources so, you know, a lot of glass jars, and a lot of cardboard tubes, and paper in a bank where children, it's available all the time [inaudible], with paint and other things, you know, etc. They are in a bank of materials, it's a resource place, call it what you will, but that is a place where children can go, when they've got an idea, so that they can go and find out, you can see that working in a whole range of different settings. Now, obviously there are rules around it. And that's, I had another beautiful example in my research, was that one of the educators never gave the children particular paper, so sometimes you'll put, you know, you might put some charcoal out or something and you might put paper around the edge of the table. But she said, well, I feel like that kind of takes away some of their agency. Maybe they do want to do a charcoal drawing on a tiny piece of red paper. Maybe they do want to do a painting on something small, rather than a big paper, or maybe they want the big paper for something else. So, that's there. But there is that understanding, that the children know that you don't just go and grab 10 pieces of paper. There's this sense of responsibility and respect for the resources and other people, and other people's needs as well.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** And I can see, I guess this means, in early childhood and in the school settings, that is about what we understand about the way that we provide resources and materials to people. And what conversations do we have to have with other educators, other people who use those spaces, is to say. And then it's about that respect. It's about the fact that, you know, there are others involved. And last one here, what's this business about sharing power with children?

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** The sharing power, which is a big, a big concept that the, the positioning of teachers as in the position of power, is quite enduring. But challenge yourself to really share some power with children and let them have some really authentic input. Listen deeply and always follow through. So, they'll come up with some pretty fanciful ideas we know that, that can't necessarily happen like going to Queensland.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Virtually.

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Virtually. Exactly. We could, you could say, okay, we can't all get on a plane this is clear. But let's, let's think of some ways that we can engage with Queensland. Maybe we could do some zooming with an early childhood service in Queensland. Maybe we could do some research on the internet. So rather than saying oh, my gosh so crazy. You know, you're gorgeous and I love you, but we're not doing that. Think about, okay, so there's a motivation there for wanting to. Yeah, and maybe it is actually about the plane ride. So then you might go, oh cool, okay so we can't go on a plane but what are some of the things we can do?

**[Catharine Hydon]:** I think Caroline, too, there clearly are aspects of your daily work with children, be it in whatever setting, where you could find a way to open it up, like, to break it open and say, okay we usually do an end of year event. You know, we have a barbecue and all the families come over, or whatever you do. So, some, whatever, this end of year concert event is, if you have that as part of your daily or sort of annual thing, why would we not say, this time, in recognition of the ideas that we've been talking about today, you might not do it this year, you might do it next year, what could we do? We could take something that's sort of be a bit of sort of ordinary, so to speak, or something that we are used to making decisions around like an end of year event. And bring it to children and say, okay, here is this thing, what do you think? You know, and I guess this is where children get to, we're not prescribing an idea, but we're opening it up. Is that it, am I getting close there?

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Yeah. Yeah. And one of my participants, she said our end of year celebration looks different every year. We have a chat with the children and I, and other educators, we talk about what it is that the children might like to do. One year it was cooking, do some cooking for the parents, and parents came and sat down and children served them. There was some singing Christmas carols, but it wasn't your, your general what is it called? Concert. But there was some singing of carols and a sit-down dinner and there was something else, they had another, I can't remember another idea, but it is always open to negotiation. And obviously, there has to be a bit of a vote, because you can't go with everybody's ideas, but you can try and incorporate.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Democracy.

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Exactly. So yeah, definitely questioning what it is that you think that the children want, or the parents think that the children want. Which is hard because I know that there is sometimes a lot of pressure on educators from parents about expectations, that they expect an end of year concert, or they expect things coming home. But that's where lots of belief in your own beliefs, is really important. To say well, you know, this is why we're doing it the way that we're doing, and it's because I've had conversations with the children and they would like to go on a bushwalk, or you know.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** And I guess too Caroline, you’re, you're reminding us all, the participants on here today, that we have an obligation to be an advocate for this idea, and not just to understand it but to talk it through, and make sure that we can share what we understand to be the case. And I think that there's a powerful idea there, about children getting, learning the art of making effective decisions. And so if you're going to do some major things in the rest of your life, it's good to be able to practice the process of making decisions. I'm conscious of time. So, I just want to take us into one more aspect before we conclude. And I, I just wonder whether, and again there's probably quite a number of people listening today who are yeah, interested in quality improvement processes. School improvement processes. Where maybe documenting some of this and capturing some of this in a more formalised way, might be necessary. So how do I know. If that's part of, you know, your school improvement agenda to recognise children's agency, children's voice, you know, how do I know that you've done it? So just take us into how would you capture some of this? How would you, you know, where am I putting it basically, am I putting it in a document? Where am I, where is it best placed?

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Yeah, I think that while we know that documentation is really important, I would say though that sometimes some questioning of how much documentation, I know that different service providers have different expectations around documentation. But I think it's tricky because if you're really being led by the children. How do you plan ahead? And I know that can be, that can be quite a difficult thing to get over. But when you're looking back, when you're finding those extraordinary moments that happened and writing about this, this is where it took us, this is where that suggestion is from, this is where Catherine took us, this is what we did for the rest of the week. When you're captioning some photos, when you're writing that story around what the learning, what learning took place because we went on that journey, that's just where it needs to be. And so to, well, in reflection, of course. So if you can document some of the critical reflections that you've had as an educator and that you've had as educators as a team, of questioning some of your practices like the Christmas celebration, um, then that's evidence that you are. You know, it doesn't have to be, oh we, we did agency here, or a child showed agency here. It's more about well, this is where we allowed it to happen. Does that help?

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Yeah. And I think also, you know, it could of course be with children themselves, you could be documenting some of this. And of course with the educator team, or the people who are around these. And this can happen in any setting, it could happen in a library, it could happen in an outside school hours setting, it could happen in an early childhood or an early years of school setting. Where children's, um, ideas and their own understanding of their initiative, because I think that's a top word. I think, let's just try and remember that everybody, that initiative rather than choice. I mean, let's just hold on to choice, don't get rid of it, but the idea of using your initiative, how is that enacted? And of course, children can do some of that themselves, and of course, as children get older of course, they can write it themselves. They can capture it, and of course, in the digital world as well, we should remember that, that's a possibility. And I guess the other thing that's really important, and it sounds like this is certainly the case for the educators that you worked with in your PhD, is that in a rating and assessment process, or a school improvement process, you would need to have a level of confidence about your understanding. So you need to do a bit of that thinking before you start answering quality improvement questions.

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I really felt, got that sense from my participants, that they were very confident to say, oh, we don't have to document everything. You know, there was this sort of sense that, it's not about the quantity, it was really about quality. And so if you can you know show these really authentic and deep, well thought out and well reflected on examples, you don't have to have lots and lots and lots. Yeah. Um.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Yes. And I guess challenge yourself to think about some aspect of the work you do with children and their families. Where you can say, that's something that I've always decided. [inaudible]. Yes. Great. I'm going to open it up.

**[Dr Caroline Scott]:** Group time and snack times. Those sorts of things. You know, do I have to do it at 9am? How are the children reacting when, when I put a stop to their play when they've just got here, or whatever it might be. So thinking about, how can we, that's where the mess comes in as well though too. But I like my structure [laughs].

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