Prompts for reflection: No duplicates of vehicles

Anne Stonehouse: Hello, I'm Anne Stonehouse. Learning to negotiate the use of materials and equipment is challenging for children under three years. This vignette is about Mel's idea that intentionally not having duplicates of some materials gives children opportunities to learn over time, with guidance and support, about their own and others' rights.

As you view the vignette, think about Mel's idea. How does not having duplicates of certain materials illustrate respect? Or does it? Why is it important to know each child? What tells you that she has clear intentions or purposes?

Mel: I was actually weighing it up, and I was thinking, 'Can they or can't they deal with the fact that there's not going to be multiples of the same car? Will they be able to effectively play and have that car for a time and then change over?' And I thought: 'You know, I could probably argue this in my head for a long time, why don't I just do it and see what happens?' And so I did, and it has brought on a lot of 'I want this' or 'I want that'. But then, without that, I can't actually have those discussions with the children, because they're going to think the world has multiples of everything, and I can grab that and they'll just get another one of it too. And it's not actually the case in our wide world.

So if they can have a component of that and understand different issues that come from not being able to have a replica of that, then I think it's empowering them even more to have a bit of an understanding for their peers, for what they can and can't do. What they still will be able to do, if they kind of do other things until they get that. So just a lot of learning comes out of, I think, just one purposeful thing that you place in your room and that's just 'no cars are alike'.

And there are huge differences in their capacities, and there was a moment where I thought, 'Ooh, am I really pushing this too far for this age group?' And we've got two, the youngest I think are two and three months, so then we're going a bit further up. And as I said there still is that egocentric style about them. It is moving along and I do think they're just so competent and they do feel very confident about what they do. But I actually sat back and thought 'No, they are actually getting it. They are understanding it.'

Mel: Lotta trains over here!

Mel: What is upsetting you?

Cameron: My neeno!

Mel: Hm? Your neeno! Ah. So there's one in there, but there's also one in here. Look, you haven't looked in the box. Do you see? In the box, the white one. That's also a neeno, that's an ambulance.

Cameron: My neeno!

Mel: Is that not the one you want, you want the police car?

Cameron: A police.

Mel: Well, you know what? Van's using the police car right now. So Van, when you're finished with the police car, will you give that to Cameron? When you're done? Yes! He said he'll give it to you when he's finished!

Mel: So you can use that one until he's finished.

Mel: Isn't that nice? Have you finished?

Cameron: It's my neeno!

Mel: Nope, that was a tease. Don't tease, because he'll think he's actually going to be able to use it. So when you really don't want it anymore, then you give it to Cameron. Okay?

Mel: And Van, you also need to use some words with Cameron, because he doesn't know what a scream means. He does know when you say no.

Mel: Nah, he's gonna playing with that neeno until he's finished. And then he's going to tell you when he's finished.

Van: My neeno.

Cameron: No, neeno.

Mel: You've got it. It's here. Here's your neeno.

Cameron: Neeno, neeno, neeno.

Mel: And that's the one that Cam is gonna play with. Ah, you've got this one, unless you want to swap. Do you want to swap? Cameron, I know you're upset. He's going to give it to you when he's finished. I promise. Just don't know when.

Mel: Should we make the hill?

Mel: And should we make a long train for the hill?