

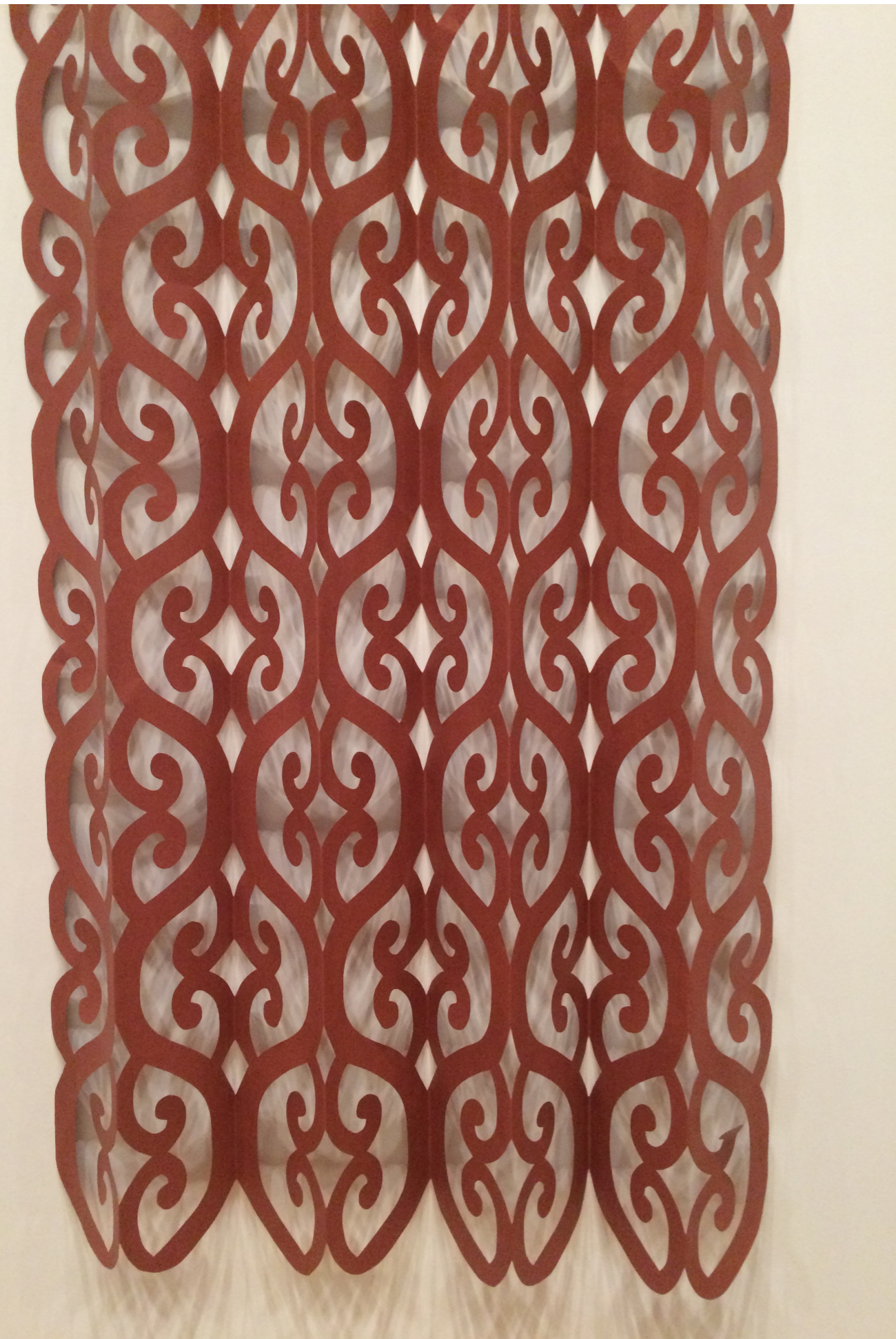
IMPACT OF CURRICULUM APPROACHES ON EQUITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD:

Taking a Closer Look at Learning Stories

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TAKING THE SCENIC ROUTE – OUR SCHEDULE

- History of Te Whariki
- Image of the Child
- Funds of Knowledge
- Learning Stories
- Concluding Comments



THE HISTORY OF TE WHARIKI

- Similar to the tradition of early childhood education in Canada, Carr and May (1993) describe kindergarten as having the “oldest curriculum heritage” (p. 7) in New Zealand.
- Significant shifts in the 1980s & 1990s prompted the development of Te Whariki in 1996:
- Kohanga Reo (Language Nests movement)
- Childcare services regulated by the Ministry of Education
- Forums for debate on early childhood education curriculum
- Before Five childhood policy reforms giving early childhood education the same status as primary and secondary education



WHAT MAKES TE WHARIKI SO SPECIAL?

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- recognizes infants and toddlers along side young children in its understanding of learners
 - alternative conceptions of learning domains
 - based on broad principles and values that are open to interpretation
 - reflects the belief that every child in New Zealand should be immersed in learning environments that provide a window in to “two world views, and share the responsibility of protecting and nurturing Maori languages and culture” (Carr & May, 1993; p. 8).
 - features English and Maori texts that are “parallel and compliment each other” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.10)

WHAT IS THE 'IMAGE OF THE CHILD'?

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- The '*image of the child*' is a term developed within the pedagogical approach of Reggio Emilia's municipal schools used to define the possibilities of *who* we believe the young child to be (Moss et al, 1999; Rinaldi, 2006).
- Some curricula understand the young child from a linear developmental model of growth and consider the purpose of early childhood education to be preparatory for future educational experiences - this promotes an image of the child as a knowledge, culture and identity reproducer (Moss, et al., 1999).
- Te Whariki understands children's development as a complex, multi-layered process, supporting the image of the child as a co-constructor of knowledge, identity and culture.

WHY IS OUR 'IMAGE OF THE CHILD' SO IMPORTANT?

- It is a value-laden construction (Moss et al., 1999; Rinaldi, 2006) that is specific to political and cultural contexts of each society; and varies according to the socioeconomic conditions such as race, class, and gender, resulting in multiple images and understandings of the young child and childhood within a given society (Moss et al., 1999).
- These understandings influence the types of education offered to young children and beliefs about the role of early childhood education.
- They are further perpetuated and promoted in dominant discourse through legitimized sources of power such as a curriculum document, influencing pedagogical approaches used in the classroom, beliefs about how children develop, and what constitutes legitimate knowledge (Carr & Kemmis, 2003; Dhalberg & Moss, 2004; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002).
- Educators bring with them into the classroom, their 'image of the child', which directly influences the construction of the learning environment, interactions with young children, and their relationships with families and educators who also participate in early childhood settings (Malaguzzi, 1993; Rinaldi, 2006).



So what is Te Whariki's 'image of the child'?

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: FRAMING LEARNING IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Moll (1992) describes funds of knowledge as “the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive” (p.21).



FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE: THE STARTING POINT FOR EARLY LEARNING

- Funds of knowledge serve as a valuable resource for educators as they influence children's interests, offer authentic learning opportunities, and frame learning in cultural and social contexts relevant to young children and their families (Hedges, et al., 2011; Moll, 1992; Riojas-Cortez, 2001).
- Their consideration and inclusion in the educational experiences of young children form a platform for meaningful dialogue and the democratic inclusion of families and communities in early childhood education institutions.
- Funds of knowledge as a starting point for early learning is in contrast to curricula that frame learning in traditional areas of learning such as Personal and Social Development, Language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Health and Physical Education, Arts, which are based on developmental domains.

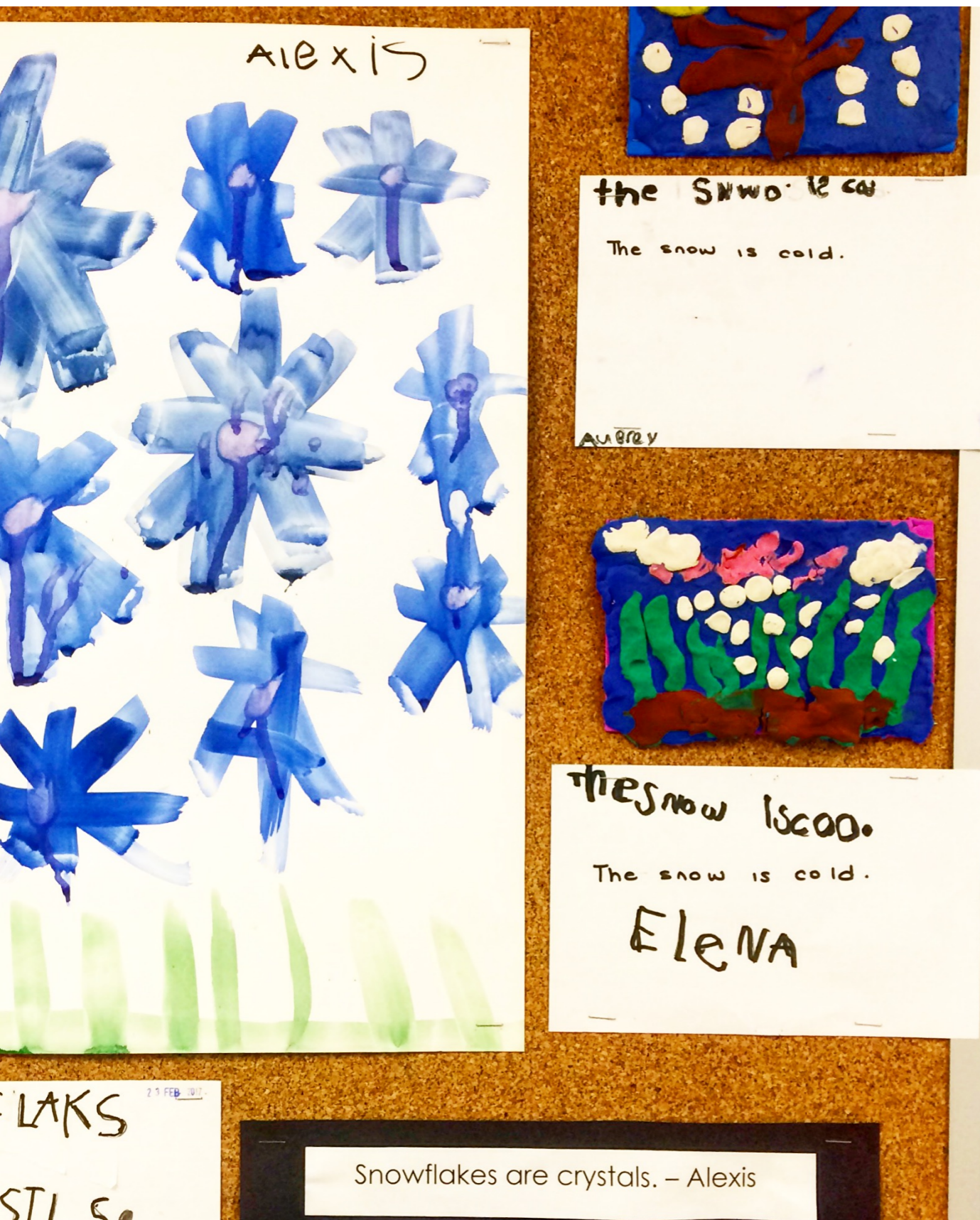
Assessment is arguably the most powerful policy tool in education.

Not only can it be used to *identify* strength and weakness of individuals, institutions and indeed who systems of education; it can also be used as a powerful source of *leverage* to bring about change.

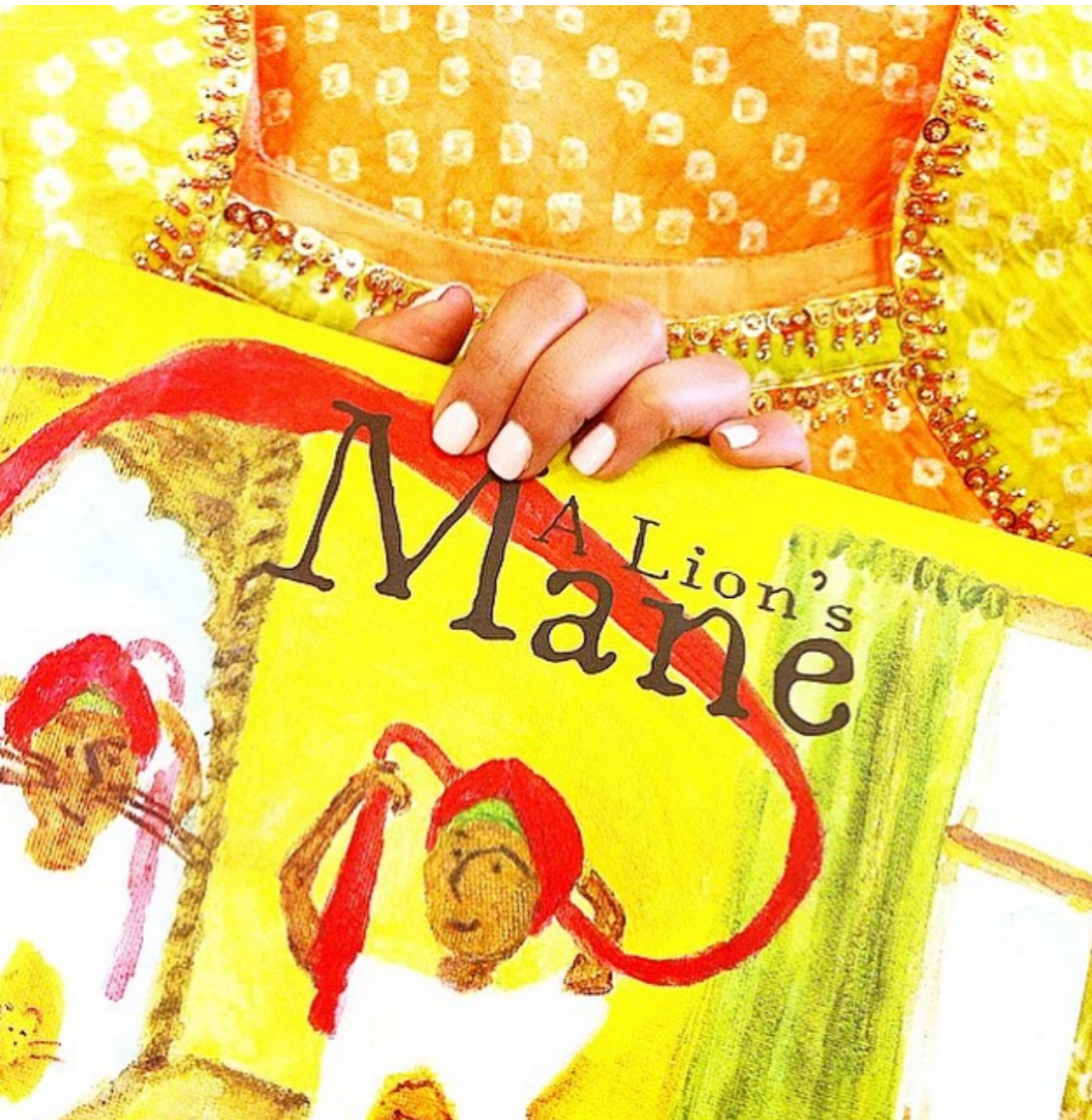
(Broad foot, 199a, p. 21; emphasis in the original)

LEARNING STORIES

- Te Whariki promotes the assessment framework of Learning Stories, a collaborative process shared with young children, their families and educators which is rooted in the unique and individual interests of the child.
- Learning Stories communicate the narratives of children's working theories and learning dispositions, thereby positioning assessment as a highly individual and contextualized process (Ardnt & Tesar, 2015; Carr et al., 1998; Rinaldi, 2006).
- Attentive listening forms the foundation of pedagogical documentation.



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- ▶ Learning Stories are revisited as a site for future exploration, and consider children's narratives to be a "living record of educational practice" (Edwards et al., 2011, p. 228).
 - ▶ They are available to for educators, young children and their families to revisit and review, each time creating new interpretations and reconstruction of children's learning.



BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

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- Children's learning is greatly influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they experience identity (Bernstein, 1975; Carr & May, 1993; Rinaldi, 2006).
 - The contexts within which families participate in the early childhood curriculum is of great significance.
 - Over time, beliefs about family engagement have shifted from activities designed for family involvement to a desire to build relationships based on feelings of trust, mutual respect and belonging (Chan & Ritchie, 2016; Rinaldi, 2006).

“We suggest that a useful approach for teachers, is to view their role as being that of cultural workers (Freire, 2005), who are prepared to recognize and operate within and across different cultural boundaries.” (Chan & Ritchie, 2016, p. 15)

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