

# Compasses and Tools

*Values, Images and Characteristics in developing Environments of Enquiry (and of the ReFocus Network)*

### Shared perspectives ...

Around the network and internationally, preschool educators are considering what it means to be an educator; more than that, are working hard in examining and transforming their environments and practice.

It seems that we are developing towards being able to describe the characteristics of an identifiable pedagogy which reflects the values that attract us but we're not quite there yet.

From the Refocus advisory we'd like to provoke a re-look at our characteristics and values, as part of this work of creative articulation.

### Why?

We've currently a rather long and rambling, if worthy, list: our 'shared perspectives'. The initiating group spent quite some time in the development of the idea of the ReFocus network.

However, in the spirit of permanent transition, it is high time to dig around, invite discussion and play. Without re-evaluation, the dangers are: it could be received and accepted rather passively ('yes, we agree to all of that'); it may not be clear or forceful enough; it might not carry with it a clear enough expectation of (or prompt for) action and change.

### What might be better?

To present key features graphically and in an interrelated way which reflect the complex dynamic of things, and with the expectation that the representation can be a key, nationally and internationally, for professional development for network members, students, new colleagues, professionally interested onlookers (e.g. ofsted), individuals, groups, and a key in helping shape

seminars and CPD support. We are looking for a format which encourages active engagement, and has an expectation and compass of action.

So we invite you to use this sheet as a starting point for discussions in your groups, your schools, in the evening with the sunset and a glass of wine.

How might we be describing our vision of 'an environment of enquiry'? What are the key features and characteristics

from your point of view? How can we describe the interrelated facets? Copy, scan, scribble on this page, use it, tear it up, take photographs, make a sculpture, a film and send it in to us.

We will circulate other's comments to you. In the summer we'll revisit everything that's been contributed, as part of our Summer School development work. Happy doodling, animated discussion and cloud-gazing.

**Dialogue is a value and a tool.**  
Without dialogue and reflection educators can only transmit prior assumed knowledge. Sociable exchange is a principle of the learning space. Regular and detailed reflection processes are vital in the co-construction of sociable learning journeys.

*Values & principles*  
Education is the creative process of exchange and relationship and understanding of oneself, others and the world.

**Children are rich in curiosity and competence and potential.**  
They are innately sociable and seek exchanges. The desire and predisposition to be curious, to enquire, to make hypotheses, to be in relationship is a basic human characteristic.

**The schoolspace needs to be a studio** for the exploration, exchange and examination of ideas.

*Images & Understandings*  
We use all of the senses and capacities of our bodies and minds to explore and communicate.

Humans have an **innate disposition to enquire, explore, interpret and make sense** of our experiences.

**Space**  
One of the three basic tools of educators in shaping educational environments

**Things, people and experiences are always in relationships.** We look for skills to be in relationship and to explore relationship.

*qualities & tools*  
**Time**  
One of the three basic tools of educators in shaping educational environments.

**Dialogue is of absolute importance** in everyday practice. It demands its place and time. Ideas develop and are transformed through exchanges.

We are born with a disposition to be sociable. And our learning space needs to be imbued with the characteristics of sociability

**Attention**  
One of the three basic tools of educators in shaping educational environments.

Documentation is a vital tool for making visible the thinking of children, educators and communities. It is an intrinsic component in the essential and complex dialogues between educators, children and families.

The school-as-studio is a **place where we bring all the tools of our senses to the business of learning, exchange, relationship.**

**'Listening and exchange'** is the dominant idea in developing our pedagogical practice. Before offering, educators need first to listen in order to see and understand children's competences and questions.

**Uncertainty**  
The awareness of constant possibility is a **quality, not a limitation**. Our knowledge as educators is in a state of permanent change, re-appraisal, as is the children's.