

June 27, 2010

“I rarely paused to listen to the narrative blooming everywhere in the garden of children in which I spent ignoring the delicate web being constructed by the children in their constant exchange of ideas the moment I stopped talking and they resumed playing”. (The Necessity of Inquiry, p. 1)

This quote, directly from Vivian Paley, describes how she viewed herself as a teacher and how she soon recognized and viewed the students in her classroom. When she says that she “rarely paused to listen to the narrative blooming everywhere in the garden of children”, she is referring to the children are like a garden, all different and beautiful in their own way. She is saying that she never really took the time to listen to what the children were saying when they were playing. When the “narrative is blooming”, she is referring to the stories that the children are telling are growing and changing, or blooming, as they continue to play and interact with one another. When she refers to herself as the “bestower”, she is referring to herself as being the owner of the classroom and children, when in fact, the children are the owner of the classroom and the stories that they create. They are the ones that are teaching Paley to incorporate “play” into a curriculum driven classroom. In the next part of the quote, “ignoring the delicate web being constructed by the children in their constant exchange of ideas the moment I stopped talking and they resumed playing”, she is referring to a story is a delicate web that the children created and that it was not in relation to the “traditional curriculum” that she may had been teaching from. The second part, “the moment I stopped talking and they resumed playing”, she is referring to the way that the children communicate with one another in creating their stories as soon as they are allowed to play and be creative. Play is a very important part of Paley’s teaching-inquiry and she was quoted in *Finding Meaning in Reading It: Adults Among Children*, p. 2, “Let’s face it, what school usually does is continually interrupt any attempt on the part of children to recapture the highly focused intensity of play. What we need to do is help them—and ourselves—get back on track.” This briefly sums up her beliefs in education and the importance of play. However, do the children in her classroom look at play as a way of learning? What are their families views on play and the relationship it has to education?

In *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, Paley proves that she no longer wants to be the “bestower of the place and belonging” and she wants to be a part of the garden with the children in her classroom. She proves this by the way that she observes them in their interactions with one another, the way that she records and writes the stories that they tell her and the way that she interacts with them. She does not tell the students that what they are thinking is incorrect or that their stories are incomplete, but instead she asks them questions to clarify the meaning behind each one of them. An example of this is when she takes the time to observe Walter as he draws in his notebook. She makes the connection with Walter and the book *Pezzettino* and how Walter is an important part of the garden, even though his way of interacting with the children is different from the others, and how he “blooms” at the end of the book when he shares with the rest of the children in telling stories and acting them out. In reading *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, one could say that the children were allowed to play and Paley sat back and observed and took part in when it was necessary. She watched the children grow from a tiny seed into a full, beautiful garden, each with their own uniqueness, all because she allowed them to play as they learned.