

# Chapter-By-Chapter Study Guide for *Learning Stories and Teacher Inquiry Groups*

If you are reading this book on your own, consider using this study guide to support your thinking about each chapter and the potential application of the chapters' ideas and strategies for your work.

If you are reading this book as part of an inquiry group, professional learning community, or book club, consider using this guide both for your own thinking and for making contributions and suggestions about implications for practice for your group.

## Getting Started

1. Read the Book Introduction and write down five or six professional goals that you have for reading this book.
2. Decide on a plan for reading this book. Will you read it and reflect chapter-by-chapter or read through the book completely?
3. Review the rest of the study guide for ways to engage with each chapter. Decide if you will take notes on your computer, phone, or on paper.
4. Consider colleagues or other early childhood education professionals you might collaborate with in reading and discussing this book and its potential application to your work.

## CHAPTER 1

# The Power of Teacher Inquiry Groups: Linking Inquiry, Documentation, and Reflection

### Exercise: Goals for Inquiry, Documentation, and Reflection

1. On a blank piece of paper, create a web of words and terms that you associate with inquiry, documentation, and reflection in early childhood education. Your associations might apply to children, yourself, colleagues, or families.
2. Review your web and circle or mark three to five words or terms that you find of most interest and that you'd like to learn more about.
3. Consider how this condensed list connects to the goals that you wrote down in the exercise for the Introduction. What are some connections? Are there some gaps? Keep in mind both these connections and gaps as you continue engaging with this study guide.

### Exercise: Successes and Challenges Using Inquiry, Reflection, and Documentation

1. How have you used reflection or inquiry in your practice? What supports have aided you in reflecting on your practice?
2. How have you used reflection or inquiry with the children in your center or classroom? What have you noticed about these experiences?
3. When you have tried to reflect or participate in inquiry, what obstacles have you encountered? What has puzzled or confused you about the process?

## CHAPTER 2

# Learning Stories as an Approach and Framework for Authentic Assessment and Critical Pedagogy

### Exercise: Writing Learning Stories

1. Think of a story about your teaching—about something you tried, about something a child did that impressed or puzzled you, or about your reaction to something that happened in your classroom. Share the story with a teaching friend or colleague.
2. Try writing the story that you have told, using the basic components suggested in the chapter. You could begin by focusing on Part 2 (What happened? What's the story?) and Part 3 (What does it mean? What learning do I see happening?). If you have had experience with Learning Stories, what does the story you told tell you about the children's learning in that story, and/or about your own teaching? Discuss these ideas with a colleague.
3. If you have not had experience with Learning Stories, reflect on your story. Is there something in the story you've told that you can identify as telling you something about either your own teaching or the child/children you are describing? Share your thoughts with a colleague.

### Exercise: Using Photographs to Prompt a Learning Story

1. Take some photographs of your classroom and the children doing activities in the classroom.
2. Choose a few of these photographs to share with a colleague and *tell a story* about what is happening in those photos.

Consider the following...

1. What questions are raised for you about what is going on in the classroom from looking at these photos?
2. Try writing the story that you have told using the basic components suggested in the chapter: You could begin by focusing on Part 2 (What happened? What's the story?) and Part 3 (What does it mean? What learning do I see happening?).
3. Try writing a Learning Story in *your* home language or the home language (if you speak it) of the children in your classroom. Again, you could begin by focusing on Parts 2 and 3.

## CHAPTER 3

# Identifying and Creating Learning Stories

### Exercise: Forming Inquiry Groups

Invite several teachers from your site to join you in looking together at photos of your teaching. The teachers could be colleagues in your classroom or at your school. If you are working alone (e.g., a home-based family child care provider) see if you can find other people working in similar contexts. Invite them to bring photos, too.

1. Tell your fellow teachers why you selected these photos to share. What interests you about the photos? What questions do the photos raise for you?
2. What questions do your colleagues have for you about the photos? What do they find interesting in the photos?
3. Tell a story about the photos that you selected. Listen to the stories the others share about their photos.
4. If this format feels comfortable to you and your colleagues, find another time to meet to share photos and stories.
5. Next time you meet, bring a written story. Be sure to include “What is the story?” and “What does this mean?”, but feel free to include some of the other parts of Learning Stories, such as Opportunities and Possibilities or Family Perspectives. If you haven’t yet shared your stories and photos with families, consider doing that. Talk with your colleagues about how you might do so.
6. Try to set up a regular time to meet with your colleagues and discuss what a regular meeting means and will entail. If you have been meeting regularly, consider adding some reading suggestions that you can discuss together to extend your learning.

## CHAPTER 4

# Integrating Inquiry and Learning Stories for Socialization, Play, and Language

### Exercise: Writing Social and Emotional Learning Stories

Share a Learning Story that focuses on social and emotional learning with your inquiry group. Explain why you chose this particular story and what it tells you about both the child's learning and your own learning and teaching. Discuss the next questions as a group.

1. How do these stories you are sharing help you to understand your children's learning and development? What questions do they raise for you about your teaching and your context?
2. How do these stories help you to think about access, diversity, and equity with regard to children's social and emotional development? How do they help you to think about how to interact with your children's families and to confirm the validity of the different perspectives brought into your context by the families you are serving?
3. What emotions and reactions do you and your fellow teachers have to the emotions and social learning illustrated in these Learning Stories? Discuss these, and how these feelings impact your writing of the Learning Stories.

## CHAPTER 5

# Integrating Inquiry and Learning Stories for Equitable Learning Opportunities

### Exercise: Creating Equitable Contexts for Learning for All Children and Their Teachers

Examine the story “Solving Puzzles, Finding Answers.”

1. In what ways does this story address issues of equity and access for all children? How does Kelly present and interpret Jacob’s story?
2. Think about contexts within your own setting where you have thought about equity and access, for your children and for your teachers.
3. Try writing a Learning Story that directly addresses these questions. Share the story with other teachers and with the children’s families.

## CHAPTER 6

# Family Engagement and Learning Stories: Inclusion of Diverse Voices

### Exercise: Writing Learning Stories from Different Perspectives

1. Try writing a Learning Story in your home language and the home language (if you speak it) of the children in your classroom. Include What is the Story?; What Does It Mean?; Opportunities and Possibilities; and the Family's Perspective. By writing in the home language of your families, you invite them in to share their own perspectives. Writing in your home language also makes the process more inclusive of you.
2. Experiment with a range of strategies for including the voices and perspectives of families:

Strategy #1: Whether you are in an inquiry group or not, ask your colleagues for their ideas on optimal ways to share the Learning Story with the child and their family, and to invite a response to the Learning Story from the child and the family.

Strategy #2: Read the Learning Story out loud with the child featured in the Learning Story and the child's family. Discuss the Learning Story with the child and the child's family, and ask the family if they would like to dictate a response to you.

Strategy #3: Ask the family if they would like to write down a response in their language of choice. Ask the child if they would like to respond to the Learning Story with comments or questions.

Strategy #4: Ask the child if they would like to add a response to their family's initial response.

Strategy #5: Ask the child and the family if they would like to contribute more photographs and visuals to the Learning Story as part of their response.