



Out My Window

By Chris Carducci

April 6, 2020

This story begins on Friday March 13, the day I realized that everyday life was about to change. And change it did – in a big way. My sister and I had planned a trip to visit our parents in Nevada.

Friday, March 13 we cancelled our visit due to scare of coronavirus and wanting to be cautious of being in public social settings such as airports, lyft rides and inside the retirement community where our parents reside. That left me home.

On Monday March 16, Six SF Bay Area counties were ordered to shelter in place - advised not to go out except for “essential business” and told “Wash your hands. Don’t touch your face, Don’t get close to other people.” It was all very scary and surreal. I went to bed and stayed there.

A few days later, as the shock, uncertainty, and disequilibrium settled a bit, I decided I needed to snap out of it, get out of bed, get up, get dressed. I was one of the fortunate who could work virtually from home, so I took action. I moved my home office from the back part of my apartment to the front room by the window. Here I discovered joy out my window.

It was the sounds of children laughing. Families were taking walks in the neighborhood.

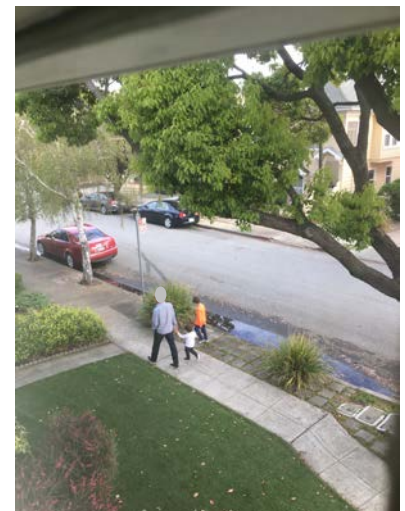


Children who would otherwise be driven to child care or spent their days in school were out on my street. I first noticed one day after a morning of rain, children wearing bright yellow rain boots and splashing in the lake-sized puddle out side my window.



As parents captured the moment on cell phone, I grabbed my camera also to retain the joyful moment and share via text with my friends and family 😊

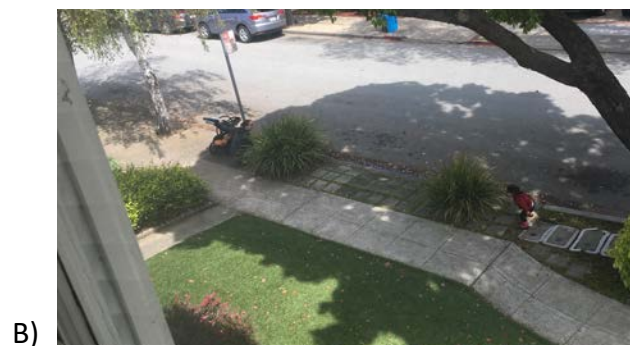
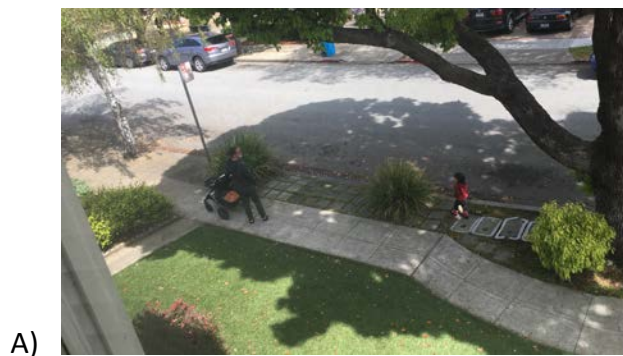
After this first experience, I came to welcome your presence in my day. Many times, I would hear and see you walking by my window. Dad and boys; calling out, running, laughing, walking together hand in hand.



Over time, I noticed more families outside my window. These children discovered my neighbors 'fake grass' was the best place to drive a remote control car. I wondered to myself, how often you actually played with this toy? Was it a long forgotten gift now pulled out of a closet because of the shelter in place order? Or were you drawn to bring it along on a walk because the house was getting too small for driving cars for a distance at high speeds? I fondly recalled the days when my now teenage nephews used to play in such ways.



One day I noticed a little toddler enthralled with the classic "peek-a-boo" hiding game in the bushes outside my window. It touched my heart to watch your adult play with you in this way for quite awhile until you moved on down the sidewalk and she followed pushing the empty 'just-in case you need it' stroller. Nature offers such an abundance of opportunities for spontaneous interaction and play. I wondered if this was your first time down my street or if this spot was a part of your routine walk and it was my first time to notice you because I didn't often spend time looking out the window when working from my home office seated in the back of the apartment.



What Learning is Happening?

I recognize how much I relate to children's development and learning through everyday experiences. The educator part of my brain is reaching to label my observations of the children in the context of assessment. Both New Zealand's Te Whariki strands and CA DRDP outcomes are evident in these observations. Without going into details of what learning may be happening for the children, suffice it to say that there are many, many connections to child assessment happening in everyday experiences at home with family and neighborhood walks.

We are all learning about how resilient we can be in the face of extreme difficulties. These families are doing the best they can to cope. They are making time to get outside and offer the children a change of environment and some exercise. This is significant to mental and physical health. I do not know any details of the families' context or situation that brought them to be walking down my street when they did – I only know that I am extremely fortunate to live in the neighborhood that I do, where it is safe, clean and welcoming for families to walk. I do not take this for granted and I recognize the privilege of my social class status and to be living in this way.

Opportunities and Possibilities

My first thought is to respond in a more global perspective. I pose the inquiry question: *What good may come out of living through an international pandemic?* After the shock of change more or less resolves, and people come to feel a 'new sense of normal' what behaviors, values, routines, and practices can be kept which promote more humanistic practices and policies?

What about the environment? With fewer cars on the roads and factories not producing materials in abundance – has the earth been given a respite from environmental pollution?

What about technology and education? Where there was great inequity of access to digital devices and internet – some companies and government stepped up to provide to many (though not all) who did not have such. This was the solution to the problem faced because of the decision to close physical schools and from pre-school through college, virtual schooling from home was initiated. Many educators were faced with really questioning the purpose and practices of their curriculum structures. Thus, another inquiry question: *What good might come from an intentional 'pro-active' look at this re-active solution to create more effective and equitable education structure in the 21st century?*

It may be my desire to stay positive and optimistic in an outlook of a hopeful future resisting against the news and negativity of dread coming at me from television, radio, internet and e-mail boxes. The joy of the children walking down my street, which I see out my window, gives me hope. Writing this learning story has helped me to be reflective and thoughtful and for that I am thankful.

Perspectives of others: As I share this Learning Story with friends and colleagues I will include their thoughts and reflection here. I am most interested to hear others' thoughts on connections from the children outside my window and their stories to the larger global issues of equity, humanity, and sense of place in these trying times.

Multiple Perspectives come from sharing and dialogue:

Hi Chris,

May 7, 2020

Thank you for sharing your lovely, thoughtful Learning Story. Your Learning Story about your encounters watching from your window the children and families from your neighborhood, was so insightful. I felt as if I was a fly on the wall of your apartment. The photos provided an aerial view. I really appreciated your thoughts and reflection about what you witnessed.

Also, the addition of the inquiry questions is great. I haven't seen this before and I think it added a lot to your analysis and offers opportunity for dialogue with others which is something we saw happen often with the educators in NZ.

I wanted to respond to your question of inquiry, *"What good may come out of living through an international pandemic?"*

I think families having the opportunity to slow down and spend more time with children has been a gift. This has been my experience. The slower pace has allowed for more time to just be together, lingering walks, noticing the small things in nature, enjoying stillness, the sounds, light and shadows that surround us.

Ariana is more aware of small creatures, the silk worms, the caterpillars, the alligator lizards, butterflies, new plant shoots, the pollen on the window, the smells of the flowers, the dirt on the path, and the one lone newt left in the ditch water.

I think before the pandemic, we were moving so fast from place to place that we were missing the sense of the place. We were not really experiencing the places we were hustling and bustling to get to, but rather, we were experiencing them as a blur in the wind from the trail we left behind. Now, we are more present, more in dialogue about the things we appreciate, the gifts that surround us. We can hear the birds more distinctly. Have they gotten louder or has the wax from our ears started to melt away?

I am finding we have a renewed sense of wanting to protect the creatures with whom we share this land. There seems to be more harmony. For example, last night we had two deer roaming in our yard, near to where Jim was working, and they were not afraid. They were so close together, as if it was natural to coexist. The tempo of our existence has slowed down.

Also, I think this pandemic is making families more visible. The learning in the home is more visible. This experience is providing opportunities for educators to see families in their context. Today, I learned that Educa is seeing a big increase of parents writing Learning Stories. How fabulous for us to see children in their homes and communities with their families.

Parents voices are central. What a precious gift. I hope that when this is over, they will stay central and not go back into the shadow of teachers' big presence and great intentions. I hope they do not get lost, their voices fade, or the birds be silenced. I hope that the orchestra of voices continue, in a new space, perhaps this pandemic has brought us into a third space. I will look forward to meeting you there.

Annie

Thank you, Annie for sharing your heartfelt thoughts. It is hopeful to hear how your family, like many around the globe have become closer to nature and to one another. Yes, let's seek to retain the 3rd space created where slowing down heightens our senses and brings us together.

Best, Chris

Thanks Chris

May 10, 2020

the beautiful learning story I really found it interesting to see the perspective from your vantage point in the window looking down on the street and the sidewalk. That is not a vantage point that we have in most early childhood centers in the United States, but it might be in some places like in China which are very large and multi story early childhood centers. So I was struck by how changes in our physical relationship with others and also the physical landscape might change and influence our powers of observation as well as her faculties for

documentation and reflection. It also made me think of other early childhood areas in the US and globally where they are more or less sheltering in place much of the time and these barriers of physical movement. So thank you very much for sharing this very timely and important learning story, and like Michael's learning story it certainly provides food for thought for your audience.

All the best Daniel

Thank you Daniel for your thoughts and for reading my story. That is a good point you make about considering the impact of the physical space in the learning that happens within. I recall early education centers I have visited over the years and now recognize two things: how far we have come as a field in ECE when historically the 'babysitting room' was often located in a dark basement without windows. Not much thought put into learning only to care. Sent a message that we were isolated and separate from the world.

In contrast, the intentionality and value of learning demonstrated in the schools of Reggio Emilia where 'environment is the third teacher' and each school has very much a sense of place and it's own identity and the thought put into what might be seen out a window - both windows to the outside world and windows inside from one space to the next. An invitation to look and see.

I remember when I taught at DeAnza we had half a year where a construction project next door and our view became, at first, a plywood sheeting but we advocated for our toddlers desire to see and was able to get one construction worker to cut a window and place plexiglass at toddler height, so there became a huge part of our curriculum that year to watch the world of construction outside our window.

I wonder now, if it's not so much the actual view out the window as it is what goes on in the mind of the viewer and how they think about themselves in that moment.

Be well, Chris

May 11, 2020

Thank you Chris, for the inspirational learning story.

It is at this very moment that we have opportunities like this to observe, reflect, and be in the present moment without much distractions. Our worries and concerns about the future will not cease but at least we can quite that down for a moment to indulge in the present time as we think and write with a learning story lens.

I can only speak for myself but I find myself highlighting my days with a "can this be a learning story" filter. I, too, began to write narratives about a group I created recently and Chris's story and Isauro's reply resonated with the "work" I am trying to unleash.

Recently, 2 bike rides in and 7 riders strong – I created a fb page where I share my narrative with the group.-(biking group to promote cycling in the next generations and move our bodies in space and in nature). Others from different parts of the country have posted about the bike rides they have taken and as I posted my first narrative I encouraged others to do the same about the person they rode with.

So, I am super excited for all this continued work and love for learning stories and I agree if we could share stories on SALSA website during this time it certainly would be heartwarming to say the least!

Much love, Lorena

Hi Lorena, Thank you for sharing this.

I agree that being present in the moment opens us to see, and then think and feel, about life and relationships with others and with nature in new ways. That is admirable to step up with a common interest - cycling - and then build upon the experience through narrative. I have not been a fan of facebook but if it is used in this way, that may be a space where shared understanding can grow.

Chris

May 8, 2020

Hello dear Chris,

Thanks for sharing your “My Learning Story” which with its unhurried cadence or flow, for lack of a better word, evoked in me the image of a slim stream of water running down a hill. It is fascinating to see how the quick pace of life that we are used to live by in America has suddenly been brought up to a slower pace by Covid-19.

Your learning story reminds us of the strength of the human spirit to find hope amid the feelings of fear, uncertainty and worry about ourselves, those we love and who might be far from us, and those we don’t even know, but we feel close to our hearts.

For me, the takeaway of your story is that physical distancing for safety and health reasons, does not necessarily mean breaking away or disconnecting from the outside world. I’ve learned that the hard way! Your learning story reminds me that despite so much heartache, suffering and lives lost to the corona virus, there are signs of hope, joy, and life all around us in the most ordinary way, if we choose to see them; such as a toddler playing peek-a-boo with his mom in the bushes down the street, or kids jumping in puddles wearing their bright yellow rubber boots on a cool day. Perhaps, the questions will always be there, what learning is taking place? What did I learn about myself that I didn’t know? How I can stay connected with those I care about or those I’m getting to know?

Encouraged by the photos you took from you window, I took some from my rent-controlled apartment window in the city. I don’t have a view of the street, but I see a tree in the back yard where sometimes wild parrots perch to squawk and gurgle, although quite honestly; I never see them I just hear them. And I also peeked a sliver of blue sky through the branches that move the breeze this balmy afternoon. And because I am taking a little break from doing homework, I also noticed that the cover of my notebook has a message that I never paid attention to before, a gentle reminder to focus on “life’s little rules” and which I’m including here to illustrate my response. Perhaps it is true that sometimes an image says more that words can ever do.

Gracias, Chris.

Isauro M. Escamilla

