***Report on Workshop "The Role of Forest Schools in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability"***

***facilitated by Paulette Luff and Sara Knight.***

After introductions and a brief discussion about a definition of sustainability, and what that means in early childhood education, we looked at then 7 Rs (Pramling Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008: 12):

Reduce – decreasing consumption of food, materials and resources

Reuse – using materials many times and for different purposes

Recycle – awareness of alternatives to discarding rubbish

Respect – nurturing understanding of and reverence for nature and natural processes and reducing the extent to which they are violated; showing consideration for people and other animals

Reflect – a habit/skill of being thoughtful, asking questions, and wondering about experiences

Repair – restoring places and things, fixing/mending broken objects

Responsibility – being trusted to take care of something or to do something worthwhile

Agreeing that Forest School encourages all of these we broke into groups to think up examples to make it explicit, and therefore easier to express to others as one of the values of Forest School. These are listed below. Paulette and Sara undertook to write this up as a paper. Some discussion took place about the headings – refuse was suggested, as was rethink and recover.

***Reduce –***

Have "litterless lunches". Create/find local sites to save transport consumption. Purchase ethically – eg large pot of raisins to share, not individual boxes.

***Reuse –***

Change the mindset from one use to another, reframe the object as something different. Returning natural resources back into the environment. Coppicing and replanting. Using durable tools, not plastics. "Loose parts" are more creative for play than one-use plastic immitations.

***Recycle –***

Healthy eating of fruit leads to composting - looks at natural recyling. Using fallen tree materials to make dens, fires, etc. Found objects may be treasure to some, rubbish to others – discuss.

***Respect –***

Leaving the site as it was found. Considering the impact of our footfall on the site, and asking the forest for permission to enter from a different route/direction. Respecting other people's creations when sharing a site. Modelling respectful behaviour. Developing children's understanding of the vulnerability of trees, bugs, etc as living things, possibly through use of magnifiers. Put bugs back where they came from.

***Reflect –***

"Sit spots" – time to reflect on surroundings, to listen and to observe. Reflecting on experiences at the end of session (with magic stick?). Model reflecting. Use photos to revisit events and discuss. Respect their quiet spaces and give them time.

***Repair –***

Helping children to take responsibility for breaking things. Supporting children to repair equipment/toys. Engage all in maintenance and care. Put logs back after looking underneath. Restore fire sites to original state.

***Responsibility –***

Creating connections with environment, e.g. a big tree, develop attachments with stories about trees, foster personal responsibility by linking the destruction of trees to wasteful use of paper. Children carry own rucksacks with snacks, etc., and ensure they bring all they need into the wood, and all they have brought out of the wood. Caring for habitats and the environment. Assign tasks to children, i.e. caring for new child, carrying particular item. Choosing one child to be the leader into the wood.

References:

Delors, J. et al., 1998, Learning: the Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. Paris: UNESCO

Pramling Samuelsson, I & Kaga, Y., 2008. The Contribution of Early Childhood to a Sustainable Society. Paris: UNESCO [online] <http://www.oei.es/decada/unesco_infancia.pdf> [accessed 22nd September 2014]

Pramling Samuelsson, I & Kaga, Y., 2010. Early Childhood Education to Transform |Cultures for Sustainability. In State of the World 2010: Transforming Cultures from Consumerism to Sustainability. 27Th Editiona. London, New York: Worldwatch Institute