

Excerpts from

Children's Comments on Learning Groups and Group Learning

Five and six year old children from the Villetta and Diana Schools, Reggio Emilia, Italy

Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., & Krechevsky, M. (2001). *Making learning visible: children as individual and group learners*. Reggio Emilia, Italy: Reggio Children. Pgs. 322-329.



- 1 Teacher Olimpia [another teacher] and I often suggest that you work and play in groups, or form groups with different children. What do you think about that?
- 2 Angela V. I like working in groups, because it's faster. When you work alone it takes longer... We can decide on things together. In a group you can do things together, so it's more fun for us and for everyone else.
- 3 Teacher How do you decide on things?
- 4 Anna C. You've got to agree first, and to do that you have to talk and talk until finally you decide.
- 5 Athina When you agree on something, you can do something that's even nicer.
- 6 Anna C. Because your brain works better. Because your ideas, when you say them out loud, they keep coming together, and when all the ideas come together you get a gigantic idea! You can think better in a group.
- 7 Teacher In your opinion, do you always think better in a group?
- 8 Anna Sometimes no. Sometimes it's better to do things by yourself. For example, I'm learning how to jump rope. When I practice I have to think really carefully about the jump and the

rope. No one can be around or else I get confused and I do it wrong.

9 **Angela V.** It's better when there are friends in the group who know how to do different things, because otherwise you'd always learn the same things!

10 **Teacher** We often ask you if you want to work in a group. Sometimes we form the groups but sometimes we ask you to choose the children you want to be with in a group to work on a project. What do you think about that?

11 **Andrea** We're in a group now—a small group. See? There are five of us [including the teacher].

12 **Francesco** You work better in a group.

13 **Nicola** You think better.

14 **Francesco** You can help each other better. For example, if you have to make a plane and you don't know where a piece goes, your friend can help you figure out where it goes, and so you learn better.

15 **Teacher** So you think that you work better and learn more in a group?

16 **Andrea** Yes, because you become even more of an expert.

17 **Luca** We're learning how to do a lot of things and when you learn a lot, you become an expert, too, and even more... a

super expert! If you build stuff a lot, you turn into an expert builder because you've learned a lot of times how to do it. You can even do it with your eyes closed. I know how to do some things, but not everything.

18 Francesco When you work together, you learn things from your friends. When you choose a group, you have to choose friends who know how to do things but not the same things as you, because then you'd all know how to do the same things.

19 Teacher So what you're telling me is that you learn more in a group? That maybe you have to choose your friends, too?

20 Nicola You have to know how to do different things, because if everyone knows how to do different things the whole group knows how to do everything. Even the best things.

21 Luca But you don't need fifty people in the group—a little bit less. You don't need very many...

22 Francesco In a class you don't need just one group of kids but a lot who do different things.

23 Luca Sure, but if there are a lot of you, you can do things faster.

24 Andrea But if you don't agree first, you end up fighting.

25 Nicola You argue, and then you don't know what's going on. You don't know what you're supposed to do and then you get tired of it and go and do something else.

26 Francesco If there are a lot of you, you don't know what's going on, but if there are only five of you, like us, you can really think. If I don't have any more ideas about something, someone else does...

27 Andrea And that way the one who doesn't have any more ideas gets another one that goes on top...

28 Luca And another one on that one, and another one on that one...

29 Andrea And then all the ideas go together.

30 Teacher Ideas go together?

31 Luca They go together like when you're building. You hear them come out of our mouths and they go here [in the middle of the table] and they hook up to Francesco's and Nicola's...

32 Nicola But ideas don't have any glue.

33 Andrea It's like... something you have inside of you.

34 Francesco For example, when you're with a group you feel like you don't know some things, because you're not an expert, and someone else helps you and that way you learn stuff... and the thing you learned sticks inside and it never comes off because it sticks to the other ideas you've already got.

35 Teacher So where are all of these ideas?

36 Andrea They're in your head.

37 Francesco For example, our ideas are in our head. Now we know more than before—all the ideas are stuck to each other and we all know them. We're friends who know different things.

38 Nicola Sometimes you do some things alone.

39 Teacher What kinds of things do you do alone?

40 Francesco When you have to do something with your memories that only you know, or when there are things you have to think about by yourself.

41 Andrea Okay, but you can't always do things by yourself, because the world would be stupider and no one would know anything.

42 Luca If you do things together, you feel how nice those things are. You feel a feeling that you like and you say, look at this nice thing we did. Do you want to do something else?

43 Michele Let me ask a question: It's not fun to be alone when you're playing, but what about when you're writing something that's hard? ... if I write it when there's other people, it's kind of hard for me.

44 Caterina It's easier to share ideas with your friends, and you get new ideas. If someone doesn't understand something, the other person helps her. It's better when the ideas are all different; a group is for learning other things, not the things you already know. Friends can have different ideas. Being friends means always being happy about the ideas we said. When there are kids in a group who don't know each other, the hardest thing is to explain so that they understand.