BUILDING knowledge together...
Learning to make more readable drawings...

Drawing is a very complicated language and is used in many ways to help the artist express his or her ideas. Drawing is used to help us understand thinking, symbols, ideas, and observations. Within our inquiry around our school’s identity, we have chosen the language of drawing as a way for children to become better at symbol making, observing, and reading their environment.

As I have said before, these are key skills in being able to think critically and speculate, e.g., if the room has these objects in it, what might this room be?

In our beginning experience with drawing, we first walked around school and children drawing what they thought was important in different spaces around campus. This experience gave us a window into every child’s thinking and ideas. We looked for the specific attributes they had draw from their own unique perspective.

Above: an old map of our school in the maintenance office; the H-shaped building was the second Wilcox building, which was knocked down to make our elementary school.

At right our school’s seal. Notice the different renderings from the different children.
Understanding that every child has his/her own perspective...OUR SCHOOL FLAGS DRAWN by Different CHILDREN

This child shows us that the MPI flag is what stands out to him. He includes a symbol: the circle to represent our school seal.

This child draws all three flags, including the details of what makes each one different.

This child draws all three flags and adds the pillars of the middle school as a point of reference.

At right this child also shows us the specific attribute that stands out to her, the “MPI,” but she adds the detail of the middle school as a point of reference.

These perspectives are all unique. Moving forward, we developed a way for children to expand their ideas by reflecting together in order to build more readable drawings. For example, if you would put all these drawings and ideas together, it would make for a more readable drawing to represent this place.
WITHIN OUR SCHOOL’S “IDENTITY “INQUIRY emerges the idea of the community of our school
The children had come up together as a group for a specific charge: **HOW DO CHILDREN LEARN? HOW DO TEACHERS TEACH? WHO ARE THE PEOPLE THAT HELP OUR SCHOOL?**

The children’s questions indicated to the teachers that they had peeled back the layers of the identity of our school to reveal that the people who are here is what makes our school what it is at this moment. **For our next experiences, we used drawing to help children build knowledge together.** They first observed specific classes or offices looking at their specific charge, and drew on their own, looking for specific symbols to help represent their ideas. Then they checked in with a teacher so they could write down their specific ideas (below a child checks in with Ms. Adams) This allowed for each child’s ideas to be valued and heard.
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TOGETHER...making more readable drawings.

After observing specific classes, the children returned to the studio and shared out to the group. One child might have observed one thing, but as a group they could create a list of things that they observed to capture a whole.

With new knowledge that they had built together, the children would go back and re-draw their first drawing with all of the ideas.
After our reflection S adds:
-more children to show that it's a class
-she also adds a child taking pictures
-she tells the teacher they are “learning to work together”
-she also adds MPI, which is a clever reference point to let you know this is our school
-she adds the teacher again another reference point children are also learning from the teacher, she adds that the teacher has drawn a picture of a plant, water and roots. This addition shows the viewer that the teacher is using the strategy of drawing to help his students learn as well as what the children are learning.

This second drawing is a testament to how much a child’s ideas can progress and become more complex by the addition of the child’s peer’s perspective.
J’s first drawing shows one idea that the child is learning a specific movement.

AFTER REFLECTION WITH HIS CLASS:

-adds more dancers to show that they are learning multiple ways to move
-also adds the child that is filming the movement so they can have further reflection
-he also tells the teacher that the children are “learning about their bodies and what they can do” so not just about their bodies but what they can “do” this word adding an additional complexity to his understanding.
As we continue in this process we notice that the children have begun to make more readable symbols on their first observations. They are looking for ways to represent very abstract ideas like hearing and listening, gestures, movement, sound, and symbols that would give the viewer a point of reference of where they are. This progression of the child becoming better at observing, communicating their ideas and at representing them is crucial in the next steps of our project wherein the children will have to conceptually express these ideas through sculpture and multimedia.