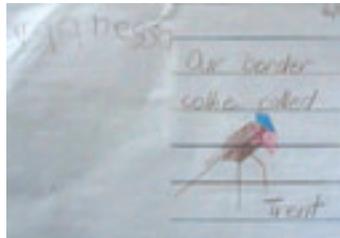


Vanessa's dog, Trent

This story began one day when Vanessa told me that her family were going to get a puppy. A conversation with her mum revealed that Vanessa was “breaking her neck” to get the puppy. She just loves animals. The day came when the puppy arrived. Vanessa was bursting with the news when she came to kindergarten and with great delight told all the teachers. And so the beautiful pictures of Trent began with this one.



Day after day Vanessa drew or painted pictures of Trent. The pictures became more colourful.



Vanessa began to add more of the environment and the flowers that she loves to paint into her pictures.



The more pictures Vanessa drew, the more complex the content became. Here she is skipping with Trent.



Vanessa explored and used a range of colours and media, the image of Trent still being central to her work.



Vanessa brought real life situations into her paintings. Trent still had to be walked, even in the rain!



As the paintings progressed, so did Vanessa's images of Trent. He began to get more features – ears, nose, tail, often a collar and lead, and always two bright eyes.



Vanessa went on a school visit. The children were asked to draw a picture and write a story. Vanessa chose Trent as her topic.



Over the months, we frequently heard about Trent – what kind of dog he was, what his parents' names were. One day he visited kindergarten with Vanessa's mum so that Vanessa could show him at news time and talk about him. He was a star!

Then the day came when we heard that he had gone to obedience class. Vanessa knew all about it. He had to go so he could learn to sit, come, and do as he was told.

With this news we thought it might be fun to show Vanessa what a well-trained dog can do, so we invited Constable Fraser from Glen Innes police station to bring his dog to the kindergarten. Vanessa sat transfixed, right up the front. Sadly, Constable Fraser and his dog, Sin, were called to an emergency and had to leave when we had only seen a few tricks.



This didn't dull Vanessa's enthusiasm. She went straight to the painting easel and painted her image of Sin.

This is a wonderful image of Sin. He is indeed very tall. He has big ears and a long swishy tail.



Vanessa takes Trent for a walk. She told us that he has his own special lead and collar.



Such was Vanessa's enthusiasm, her friend Zoe began painting pictures of Trent for her. Now these two friends engaged in "doggie" play. For some time each day, one or other of them would be the dog. A lead would be tied to either their waist or around their wrist and the "dog" would crawl around on all fours, frequently yapping like a puppy!!



Vanessa and her family went on a holiday to Canada for five weeks. Trent had to go to friends. On her first day back at kindergarten, a picture of Trent was high on Vanessa's priority list. Trent is so loved by Vanessa.

What learning was happening for Vanessa

Through this series of paintings and pictures, Vanessa has shown that she can maintain interest and be involved for a sustained period of time. At present Trent is the centre of her life. She has a great understanding about caring for her pet and about his background. She spoke knowledgeably about his parents and pedigree. Her communication skills have been extended by her speaking in front of the children and to individuals about her dog. As Vanessa developed, so did her observations of Trent and her representations of him. I loved the way his features – ears, nose, and tail – developed.

The police dog representation is very interesting as it shows that Vanessa is developing an awareness of mathematical concepts. The dog is indeed very tall and has a very long nose and tail. These are represented in proportion in Vanessa's painting.

I have never witnessed passion about a pet from someone so young. I think Vanessa has a great love of all animals. Her first year at kindergarten was dominated by play around our toy wild animal collection.

What's happening here?

This exemplar begins with Vanessa telling the teacher that her family are going to get a dog. It goes on to illustrate the development, over time, of her communication of her interest in this dog, through painting, talking, and dramatic play.

What aspects of noticing, recognising, and responding to learning in the arts does this assessment exemplify?

Teachers immediately recognise that Vanessa's interest in her dog, Trent, is very important to her. They respond by providing a range of art materials so that she can express this interest through art, and they recognise and comment on the increasing complexity of Vanessa's paintings of Trent. These paintings become more colourful, and she begins to add other elements to her paintings, as well as increasing the detail in them. Her teacher writes, "The more pictures Vanessa drew, the more complex the content became."

In response to Vanessa's interest in Trent's obedience class, the teachers arrange a visit to the kindergarten by a trained police dog. Following this visit, Vanessa paints "a wonderful image of Sin", accurately noticing and recording features that distinguish him from Trent. Her interest continues and broadens into other areas of the programme, including dramatic play. This exemplar documents Vanessa's use of a range of symbol systems and technologies for making meaning (oral literacy, painting, drawing, drama, and writing). The teacher supports her explorations and her passion for animals.

What does this assessment tell us about learning in the arts (using a *Te Whāriki* lens)?

The teacher comments on Vanessa's ability to "maintain interest and be involved for a sustained period of time". She also acknowledges Vanessa's strong learning dispositions by commenting on her ability to communicate her ideas and knowledge to others. This exemplar illustrates some characteristics of a child being a competent and confident learner and communicator. Vanessa continues this interest over a long period of time. Throughout this period, her powers of observation are increased as is her ability to record and express what she is learning. While her oral literacy develops, so too does her competence in the languages of art, drama, and mathematics. Vanessa shows her increasing competence in symbolic, imaginative, and creative thinking.

How does this assessment exemplify developing competence in the arts?

Vanessa is part of a community that enables her to discover and develop different ways to be creative and to express herself. Vanessa's artwork shows increasing complexity and attention to detail over time. Her paintings become a springboard for developing dramatic play with her friend, Zoe, while her interest in her dog, Trent, increases her knowledge about dogs and encourages her to share this information with her peers.