

## Misunderstood: Provocation vs. Invitation

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In Early Childhood Education, we talk about provocations and invitations – both terms that are used for how material is presented to children. They are terms we use when we talk about inviting children to engage or to provoke their thinking. Often, they are used synonymously which results in confusion to the students.

My analogy for the difference can be explained by thinking of our role as educators similar to the role of caterers. A caterer for a dessert buffet event will provide a variety of desserts – all displayed very nicely on pretty dishes, with icing and fruit on the side to make them look attractive. These are the invitations – as educators we provide material that invites children to engage and is attractively displayed. Like the caterer, we account for differences in taste/ interests.

A good caterer notices which desserts are most popular, and which are not taken or left on the plates. As an educator, you notice which materials you put out results in interesting conversation, lots of wonderings and collaborative conversations.

If you are catering for the same group another time, you will refer to your notes about what they liked and didn't like and provide more desserts similar to those that they liked. As an educator, you notice which activities brought forth the most learning, and provide activities to provoke even deeper thinking in those areas – these are the provocations.



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