A few months ago, as a facet of my ever-evolving responsibilities as a Community Engagement Consultant for the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (SCGLR), my colleagues and I were asked to participate in one of the many SCGLR sponsored Mind in the Making (MITM) workshops being offered throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties.

"If you want to raise a reader, be a reader."

Did you know the number of words an infant is exposed to has a direct impact on language development and literacy?

Luckily, when children are
I was curious and excited at the prospect of taking the course. However, I must admit that I also felt a wave of trepidation when I assessed the time commitment involved. Even with a generous roster of dates and blocks of time to choose from, I still found myself stepping back to take a long contemplative pause. To be frank, having to decide just when this would actually be a viable option for me was a bit disconcerting. Sixteen hours of required instruction over 2 days, 2 weeks, 2 months or any practical combination that fell within the 16-hour requirement still seemed like a big, and possibly drawn out chunk of time to commit to without a lot of preplanning. I finally opted for the path of least resistance, and simply followed the voice in my head saying, "JUST GET IT DONE!"

...drumroll... I did it! With 16 hours of the MITM course completed and with all decorum aside, there are a few things I would like to say:

I am so excited for and proud of myself for showing up and allowing something this cool and awesome to color my world. I am even more excited for and proud of our facilitators and my teammates whom after very long days at work with our children, showed up every single week, shining brightly with their hearts open and their wisdom intact, ready to give, receive, learn, and offer even more. I am so excited and proud of the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading for ensuring that this vitally important information be made available to anyone in our community who is open and willing to receive it, and to the immense generosity of The Patterson Foundation for funding every penny in order to help create this new path for generations of children to come.

I also want to say that,

I miss my Mind in the Making workshop.

Seriously, I really miss it.

I miss my MITM facilitators - full-time teachers themselves, Leigh and Holly. I miss their bright smiles, dedication to the subject matter, unwavering kindness, and personal generosity every minute we were together, week after week.

I miss my MITM teammates made up of approximately 20 teachers, school counselors, parents and grandparents, volunteers, homeschooling parents, and special needs instructors, who again, all came from the classroom to join us for an additional 4 hours each week.

I miss the Mind in the Making curriculum. The videos. The projects. The discussions. All of it.

I miss wondering what we are having for dinner especially as I realized that I could trust Leigh and Holly with my finicky palette. I miss the discussions that were uncomfortable.

I miss disagreeing with someone's point of view and then taking a new look at it through an entirely new lens.

I miss the smiles, eye contact, and transforming body language flowing back and forth across the room as we all began to really see and experience each other from a place of trust and honesty.

I miss the connections we made and the obvious personal healing that took place around our own childhood learning challenges (many
of which sadly fostered unfounded beliefs about our own abilities) as we learned about the learning challenges children face today.

I miss the group projects and the interactive sharing.

I miss our facilitators coming around to see how we were doing and the hearty laughs we would share as it became apparent that one or more of us completely misunderstood the directions.

I miss the pure moment when I shifted from just being tolerant to truly supportive and patient when I wasn’t initially that interested in what someone else was saying... and how it felt to experience that same genuine support and patience flowing to me from others.

Honestly, I miss all of the layers of this journey I had with these complete strangers and how we really did create a VILLAGE. I miss MIND IN THE MAKING. This was not a course, this was an experience. This was a lesson in building community from the ground up. This was recognizing our individual strengths and watching what happens when we weave them together with the Village at our center.

What a difference a month makes.

Feeling so Grateful.

Each Mind in the Making workshop provides participants the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and practices, learn what researchers have discovered about how children (and adults) learn best and discuss how to apply the knowledge. This program is an excellent way to improve communication, become a better role model, and demonstrate the essential life skills, so children can be ready to learn.

Childcare and food is provided.

**If you want to experience this, click here to LEARN MORE or SIGN UP.**
When reading with your child, involve them in the story. Have fun with your words and how you use your voice. When your child makes comments, follow up and encourage them to tell you more. Help your child make connections between what they see in the book and what's around them. When you make story-telling fun, you are helping your child develop a lifelong love of language. - Vroom