



WHAT PARENTS DO IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT PARENTS ARE-EPPE PROJECT

LEARNING ABOUT LEARNING TOGETHER

Autumn Term 2015

REFLECTIONS

Discussion and Reflection

Early Years Practitioners from early years settings and children's centres gathered together at Ludwick Nursery School and Kingswood Early Years Centre on 30th September and 1st October. We met together to explore and reflect together. The focus was how best to engage and motivate parents and staff to work together so that they could **learn about learning together** improving outcomes for children. In particular we were interested in children who were eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium. (EYPP). This was the first of 3 sessions spread over the autumn term.

In between sessions practitioners will complete takeaway tasks to share at the next session.

- ▶ Session 1-Introduction and exploration, planning for action

Take away task 1

- ▶ Session 2-Sharing and learning together-case study starter

Take away task 2

- ▶ Session 3-Sharing impact of changes made-collection of case studies

We started by completing a confidence questionnaire which explored how confident practitioners were in working with the range of parents and carers in their communities.

Characteristics of effective learning

- ▶ **Playing and Exploring- engagement and learning how to learn**
- ▶ **Active Learning-motivation, involvement and sticking at it**
- ▶ **Creating and Thinking Critically-Thinking and Learning-knowing how to learn**

We discussed these characteristics and came to the conclusion that they were true for both adults and children alike. So if we wanted to engage better with parents, then we should consider how best to engage with parents and how to provide motivating activities, events and situations so that we were all ready to **learn about learning together**.

Ideas from the groups included:

- Stay and play sessions- opportunities for parents to play and explore

- Real life experiences e.g. cooking, messy play so that parents could experience what was being provided and link it to home experiences and learning without worrying about 'making a mistake' or 'getting it wrong.'
- Coffee mornings/workshops with a warm welcoming atmosphere to all developing relationships and building trust
- Provide section on registration form encouraging parents to share skills and talents (with examples that are not too scary!).

We then talked about what is needed for **children** to be able to learn

- ▶ I am welcome
- ▶ I am safe
- ▶ I know what is happening
- ▶ I know who will help me know what to do
- ▶ I have fun with someone who knows me and likes me and my family

One group added 'I am well', 'I am fed', 'I have slept'.

We discussed how we can ensure our behaviour does not give the message

that we do not like a child's parents however frustrating our interactions have been, as this has serious consequences for the child and our working relationship with parents.

What is needed for **parents** to be able to learn is really similar

- ▶ I am welcome
- ▶ I feel confident that someone cares about me and my child
- ▶ I know about what is happening
- ▶ I know someone who I like and likes me, who will help me know what to do
- ▶ I have fun with my child

What we need as **practitioners** to be able to create the conditions for **learning about learning together** is also similar.

- ▶ I feel welcome
- ▶ I feel confident that I can communicate with parents

- ▶ I know what is happening and what to do
- ▶ I know who can help me know what to do
- ▶ I have fun working with my children

We talked about the research behind the understanding that it is important to work closely with parents around children's learning.

The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (2003) project was a piece of research that evaluated the importance of pre-school experiences. This research found that these pre-school experiences were very important and the findings also highlighted how these pre-school experiences could impact home learning environments.

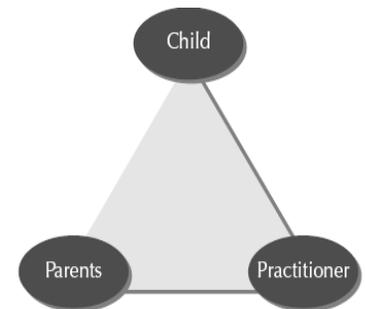
'learning at home with parents combined with high quality pre-school education makes a positive difference to children's social and intellectual development'

Regardless of background parental involvement was shown to improve outcomes for all children.

What parents **do** makes far more difference than what parents **are**.

If practitioners influence parents then we are supporting the home learning environment and improving outcomes for children.

This is a joint approach-we are not training parents to be EY practitioners



From PEAL materials

Preparing for the Journey

We looked carefully at all the activities and systems we already use to encourage **learning about learning together** with parents. We wrote a list, then rated activities using 1, 2 or 3 ticks to show which were most effective. We asked ourselves, were there any we could stop doing to make room for more attention on the most effective strategies? We then looked at which activities we felt were most effective with parents of children eligible for EYPP and shared these.

The groups felt that the most effective were: Home visits, baby rhyme time, wrap around care, open door policy-phone calls, availability, greeting every child and parent. We thought carefully about what the evidence was that they were effective.

Others that the groups felt were effective were: verbal handover to all parents, open evenings with activities on show, interest sheets, wow moments, support for behaviour concerns, inviting parents to come in to share their experiences, home learning, newsletters with ideas, flexible parent consultations, open access to learning journals, stay and play, Facebook/Twitter, planning on display on parent tables, calling parents by first name, having parents on committees, quick responses to phone calls and emails, relationships with key workers-ringring to reassure parents.

What Next?

Sharing all of these ideas and taking this activity back to our settings will help all practitioners to have a focus on this project.

The takeaway task is for each setting to agree on a positive change to make or something to try which has the aim of increasing parent engagement and motivation allowing **learning about learning together**.

By session 2, you will all have decided:

1. *What you are going to do differently.*

2. *What exactly you are going to do.*

e.g. Who is doing it? When will they be doing it? How often will they be doing it? How long will you do it for? Which children and parents will you be focusing on? How will you introduce this to staff, parents and children?

3. *How will you know if what you are trying is working/making a difference?*

e.g. What will you be observing that will tell you what is making a difference? Will you observe parents? Children? Staff? What are you looking for? How will you record outcomes/changes/differences for children/staff/parents?

Talk about all these things to all your staff and come back next time ready to share with others.

Dates for Session 2:

Ludwick group: Wednesday 14th October

Kingswood Group: Thursday 15th October

See you then!

Liz Stratton

LizStratton
consulting 