

The role of the Adult



What are the main duties of our job role?

- Care 
- Education = Teaching 

Priorities:

- Critical Importance of Communication & Language*
- Time spent with children to interact with them by Talking, Listening and Responding

* Vocabulary at age 5 predicts how well children achieve at GCSEs and whether children from socially disadvantaged homes are able to escape poverty in later life

We cannot talk with our children enough. It is central to our role as educators



Teaching should not be taken to imply a 'top down' or formal way of working. It is a broad term which covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn.

It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities:

communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges.



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Communication & Language

Foundation for other curriculum areas
Independent of Specific Areas
Time Sensitive – harder to acquire after 5 years

What are the purposes of language?
Build strong relationships
Communicate ideas and feelings
Think creatively and critically
A tool for learning
Become confident with the written word



Meaningful Conversations

- Children's CL development comes from engaging in conversations that are meaningful to the child.
- What is a meaningful conversation for a child?
- What does this look like for the children we work with?



How many interactions per day, on average, does a practitioner have with children in an Early Years Setting?

1,000



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What does a good interaction between an adult and a child look like in an early years setting?

- Body Language
- Tone
- Listening / Attention
- Sensitivity "tuning-in"
- Language

"The Dance of Interaction between caregiver and child is crucial to learning speech."
Kathy Hirsch-Pack



Teachable Moments

- Adult's agenda vs child's interest
- Responding to children's thinking vs interrogating it
- How much do we adults talk?
- How much of this is questioning or controlling?
- Focus on maintaining threads of thinking between adults & children rather than risk breaking them with questions



Reflection: Adults as Educators

Did the child gain something positive from this interaction that he would not otherwise have had?

Sensitivity to -

- the child's current state
- level of communicative ability
- immediate interests
- meaning intentions he is endeavouring to communicate

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Tuning In

What does "tuning in" to children mean?

- Children asking the questions and adults answering them?
- Joint interest and involvement in experiences that are often 'of the moment'

=> Sustained Shared Thinking



Modelling Language

What is our role in modelling language?
How do we correct children's mistakes?

Modelling Thinking

How can we give children confidence to have another go / to keep trying?

Commentary, suggestions, questions, encouragement
Opportunities for practising, repeating, revisiting and rehearsing

Giving Children Time

'Practitioners missed opportunities to encourage children to explain and extend their thinking.' Practitioners 'simply did not allow time for children to think' OfSTED 2011

How do we know what a child is thinking?
Do we allow time for a child to think?
How do we add to a child's thinking?
- Helping her think more deeply or differently about the world.

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When are children most relaxed?

- Following their own agenda
- When we are relaxed – not stressed or under pressure
- Choosing to speak to an adult, not when made to do so



**TLC—
Talk, Listen, Chatter**

What are our stresses in dealing with children?

- Being interrupted by other children
- Pressure of “tasks” – snacks, nappies, resources, tidying up...



**Nappy Chatter
Really Matters**

Equality

- One: One interactions are more effective. How do we achieve this?
- “Talk to someone, not everyone”

What is the priority?

- Routines, activities, tasks, our agenda, each child?



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Observing Children

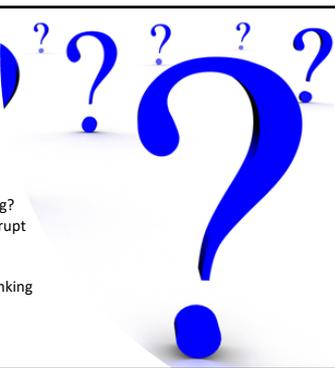
- What, when and whether to intervene.
- Ask ourselves the questions that we might feel tempted to ask the child?
- Can interaction sometimes involve not talking?
- 'People respond positively to silence'
- We don't need to feel pressured to always respond or intervene.



Questions

- Who asks them? Adults or children?
- Why are we asking that? Is it helpful?
- What are the dangers of adult questioning?
Could dismiss, side track, muddle, interrupt children's thinking

'It is more effective to ask what a child is thinking rather than what he knows'



Involving ourselves in children's learning journey

- Are we 'Fascinated' by children?
- Do we Stop, Get Down, Listen and Tune In with our attention focused on them?
- Do we find their thought processes too interesting to ignore?
- Do we 'look at their faces, not their hands?'



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Children who find it difficult to interact

- Why might they not want to or might not be able to?
- What works in encouraging them?
1:1, Joining in songs, rhymes, using puppets, playful activities – plenty of smiles, laughter and fun, physical activities.



So, what might spontaneous interaction look like?

The Piano Lesson



Effective Practitioners Are –

- Attentive Observe & Listen
- Sensitive Tune-in
- Responsive Get Down, Engage
- Respectful Believe the child's voice should be heard
- Genuine No adult agenda
- Good role models for language, behaviour and dispositions
- At ease with children fascinated by them, follow their lead, relaxed, interested in the journey not the destination.
- Free and Spontaneous

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References / Resources

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Twitter: @Mr_Paintpots
Email: david@paintpotsnursery.co.uk
