

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Thinking creatively and critically: Thinking

A Unique Child: how a child is learning

Having their own ideas (creative thinking)

- Thinking of ideas that are new and meaningful to the child
- Playing with possibilities (*what if? what else?*)
- Visualising and imagining options
- Finding new ways to do things

Making links (building theories)

- Making links and noticing patterns in their experience
- Making predictions
- Testing their ideas
- Developing ideas of grouping, sequences, cause and effect

Working with ideas (critical thinking)

- Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal
- Checking how well their activities are going
- Flexibly changing strategy as needed
- Reviewing how well the approach worked

Positive Relationships: what adults might do

- Use the language of thinking and learning: *think, know, remember, forget, idea, makes sense, plan, learn, find out, confused, figure out, trying to do.*
- Model being a thinker, showing that you do not always know, are curious and sometimes puzzled, and can think and find out. *I wonder?*
- Give children time to talk and think. Make time to actively listen to children's ideas.
- Encourage open-ended thinking, generating more alternative ideas or solutions, by not settling on the first suggestions: *What else is possible?*
- Always respect children's efforts and ideas, so they feel safe to take a risk with a new idea and feel comfortable with mistakes.
- Encourage children to question and challenge assumptions.
- Help children to make links to what they already know.
- Support children's interests over time, reminding them of previous approaches and encouraging them to make connections between their experiences.
- Help children to become aware of their own goals, make plans, and to review their own progress and successes. Describe what you see them trying to do, and encourage children to talk about what they are doing, how they plan to do it, what worked well and what they would change next time.
- Talking aloud helps children to think and control what they do. Model self-talk, describing your actions in play.
- Value questions, talk, and many possible responses, without rushing toward answers too quickly.
- Sustained shared thinking helps children to explore ideas and make links. Follow children's lead in conversation, and think about things together.
- Encourage children to choose personally meaningful ways to represent and clarify their thinking through graphics.
- Take an interest in what the children say about their marks and signs, talk to them about their meanings and value what they do and say.
- Encourage children to describe problems they encounter, and to suggest ways to solve the problem.
- Show and talk about strategies – how to do things – including problem-solving, thinking and learning.
- Encourage children to reflect and evaluate their work and review their own progress and learning.
- Model the plan-do-review process yourself.

Enabling Environments: what adults might provide

- In planning activities, ask yourself: *Is this an opportunity for children to find their own ways to represent and develop their own ideas? Avoid children just reproducing someone else's ideas.*
- Build in opportunities for children to play with materials before using them in planned tasks.
- Play is a key opportunity for children to think creatively and flexibly, solve problems and link ideas. Establish the enabling conditions for rich play: space, time, flexible resources, choice, control, warm and supportive relationships.
- Recognisable and predictable routines help children to predict and make connections in their experiences.
- Routines can be flexible, while still basically orderly.
- Provide extended periods of uninterrupted time so that children can develop their activities.
- Keep significant activities out instead of routinely tidying them away, so that there are opportunities to revisit what they have been doing to explore possible further lines of enquiry.
- Plan linked experiences that follow the ideas children are really thinking about.
- Represent thinking visually, such as mind-maps to represent thinking together, finding out what children know and want to know.
- Develop a learning community which focuses on how and not just what we are learning.
- Setting leaders should give staff time to think about children's needs, to make links between their knowledge and practice.

Statutory ELG: Managing Self

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Set and work towards simple goals, being able to wait for what they want and control their immediate impulses when appropriate