

Teaching and Learning

Characteristics of effective learning - Playing and exploring



Play acts as a catalyst for active learning, creating, and thinking critically and it is often through play that children will choose to engage at the edge of their ability, thus challenging themselves and further developing their learning power.

Play allows us to support and encourage children to - find out and explore, play with what they know and be willing to 'have a go'. The 3 subheadings of play and exploring.

Task 1

Consider the bullet points below with your team to help you reflect on your environment. Does it encourage exploration, curiosity, flexibility, and freedom?

- First-hand experiences of changes in seasons i.e., to feel drizzle, the snowflakes falling, the wind and experience natural changes in light and temperature etc.
- Chances to explore natural materials, a range of textures, smells, sounds etc. through hands on real experiences.
- Encourage free exploration of new materials before suggesting that they are used in a particular way.
- Provide a rich, stimulating, and irresistible environment with open ended resources. Be aware of unintentionally restricting children's imaginative use of materials and objects – develop an ethos of permission to use resources in different ways.

- Ensure sufficient uninterrupted time when children are fully engaged - develop flexible routines.
- Consider modelling novel uses of materials, for example, for den making.
- Provide a range of resources that match children's current fascinations and interests.
- Develop the environment to become a flexible space with ample opportunities for free exploration.

Task 2

Reflect on the adult's role. Does all of your team think about the bullet points below. Challenge each other by observing one another's practice. What evidence do you see? Note and share feedback in a professional discussion.

- Declutter the environment, look with fresh eyes and ensure that each area is interesting, enticing and resources are refreshed and readily accessible.
- Ensure experiences link to children's fascinations and interests as these will motivate them to try new things and engage positively with risk taking.
- Model and talk about having a go yourself.
- Sensitively support more reticent children to develop their imaginative stories and roles.
- Demonstrate and discuss learning through mistakes.
- Show interest in discovering new things.

- Engage in children's own interests, allow them to lead and then discover new things together.
- Model pretending an object is something else.
- Encourage children's enthusiasm and growing confidence.
- Talk about how effort and practice will help with developing further skills.
- Become expert in judging when children need help and when they can be supported to keep trying through sensitive encouragement.
- Develop the sensitivity to judge when to intervene to guard against a child becoming too frustrated and when to allow children to encounter challenges and overcome them themselves.
- Support children to manage appropriate risk and to believe they CAN achieve.
- Support parents, carers and families to fully understand the vital role of play and exploration in children's learning.