

Element 2 Reflective log

Brief description of the activity

A science activity looking at the growth of plants by allowing the children to plant their own sunflowers was carried out by myself and 3 other teaching assistants with group of 7 children aged 14-16 years old with Special educational needs including Autism and ADHD. Pupils will then track the progress of their sunflower by keeping an Ipad book containing pictures and text.

Aim/Objective of the activity

The main objective of this task was to look at the life cycle of a plant and to understand the correct anatomy of a flower. John Dewey (1952) believed that the curriculum should be relevant to pupil's lives and saw learning by doing and development of practical life skills as crucial to children's education. This theory allows practitioners to teach educational lessons to children through the use of life skills. The pupils will not only be learning about how plants grow they will be experiencing the process first hand, as well as learning the skill of how to plant seeds and care for plants.

Your role

Within this activity I was the role of teacher and had the support of 3 teaching assistants. Myself and teaching assistant number 1 were working 2:1 with a challenging pupil whilst the other 2 teaching assistants had 2 key pupils each to work with whilst the 7th child was given support but allowed to participate in this activity independently because of their ability. We worked as a team following my direction to successfully complete the task. For students to achieve a comprehensive, well-rounded education, integrated teamwork on several fronts is vital. To be effective practitioner's good communication and teamwork between the adults is vital to ensure that students are getting the time, attention and levels of instruction required. (McQuerrey, 2018).

Positive aspects and why

The main positive aspects of this task were the use of real life experiences for the children to learn through doing. When you combine activities that require movement, talking, and listening, it activates multiple areas of the brain 'The more parts of your brain you use, the more likely you are to retain information' (Cleaver, no date).

The use of the outdoors was another positive aspect of this task as pupils could engage in an outdoor activity and get messy which always makes the activity more enjoyable. For pupils with ASD they can really enjoy messy activities as it allows them to get hand on with an activity and learn through their senses Messy play can be calming to children. It is not just about making a mess and getting dirty; it is an essential component to learning that encourages exploration and discovery through play. (Kitsti,2010) . The foundation phase's use of the outdoor environment complements the ideas and theory surrounding pupils with and with out ASD using the out-door environment. 'By providing a space for outdoor learning and enabling experiences in a rich, natural environment'. (Foundation phase, 2008).

What knowledge was demonstrated?

To be able to successfully carry out this activity I had to ensure I demonstrated a high level of knowledge to allow the pupils to be able access the activity in a safe and enjoyable way of doing so, my knowledge of the foundation phase and learning through the outdoors, my personal experiences of gardening and science aswell as my up to date knowledge of health and safety.

What skills were demonstrated?

My skills that allowed me to carry out this activity are my ability to communicate with both pupils and staff as well as the introduction of social skills. This is supported by Scholastic (no date) that suggests that by capturing a child's imagination and creativity whilst they are working or playing you are creating the ability for them to plan, create

their own focus, and strive for an end goal. My skills of good communication and pupil engagement allowed me to capture and engage the pupils in the activity which has then given them the opportunity to develop their skills for later in life.

Which values were demonstrated?

My values of an all-inclusive approach could be observed during this task as I ensured regardless of the pupils, ability or disabilities the activity was accessible for all and was adapted accordingly to their needs. This may have been through the level of support the pupils received or the tools they used (chunkier handled tools are available for pupils with poor motor skills). The pupils took themselves to sit on the grass outside but were then asked to sit around a picnic bench so that a pupil in a wheel chair could also participate and work at the same level as his friends. The special education guide (2013-18) believes that if a teacher models respect and inclusion in school setting you are celebrating who the pupils are as individuals. This appreciation then transforms your classroom from a meeting place to then having a genuine community feel about it.

What could have been done differently?

If I was to carry out this activity again and reflect upon things that could have been differently the main differences I would identify would have been to maybe carry out the activity with smaller groups. Having some pupils to do the planting whilst the others completed a relevant activity and then swapped over. This would have allowed staff to engage with pupils on a deeper level and then introduce the topic buzz words whilst creating a calming sensory atmosphere.

The importance of reflective practice with in early years.

This briefing paper is aimed at practitioners with in early years settings and will highlight the importance of reflective practice as a means of maintaining quality services for young children.

What is reflective practice?

Reflection and reflective practice are some of the core values for professionals with in education, early years and health and social care. For reflection to be purposeful for early years practitioners it needs to be meaningful and therefore it needs to relate to their work with young children and their families. (Brock, 2015). If a practitioner is able to reflect upon different events or situations it allow them to grow as individuals and professionals as they are trying to adapt and work on the said incident or event to then be able to progress forward and adapt for the next time the event arises.

Reflection can sometime be an unclear area with in education and care and everyone's interpretation is slightly different. Ryan (2011) believes that there can be a lack of clarity in the terminology and definitions used during reflection, because of this uncertainty, reflections can sometime be superficial, and Ryan feels that it should be taught in a systemic way. Schon's (1983) reflective model of In and on action is supported by this statement as he uses short to the point phrases that are simple to understand and therefore can be used by all practitioners to reflect. Reflection on practice helps teachers make wise and righteous decisions. By ensuring that reflections are carried out it ensure that children and families are receiving a highest possible service as it ensures thought and consideration has gone in to the activity/ situation and where possible the practitioner has adapted from their previous experience to ensure a strong quality service is being delivered.

Why should we reflect?

Ghaye and Ghaye (1998) believe that engaging in the reflection process is about admitting that your practice can always be improved in some way. Dewey (1933) argued that if you do not operate as a reflective practitioner, then you risk basing your practice on prejudice or out dated thinking. Through critically reflecting on practice you are using your observational skills and are allowing yourself to change the way you work to ensure that the children are receiving the best care and education whilst ensuring your practice is up to date and relevant. It can often be difficult to reflect upon yourself as practitioners often don't like to criticise or be negative towards themselves and admit that something went wrong or could have been done differently.

Reflection on practice is not a tool box to 'get you through'.

It is a blend of practice with principle. It is not always 'safe' but can be threatening as you question your practice.

(Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998: 3).

Self-assessment and reflection in all areas of practice can contribute to an effective and quality improvement to a service when

- Practitioners consider different perspectives of all involved such as, staff, children and families to ensure that everyone involved has the opportunity to speak honestly about current practice and must be willing to make a change.
- When difficult questions are asked- for example, why do we always do it this way? Who is advantaged / disadvantaged by us working this way?
- Practitioners consider Is this practice in the children's best interests
- Practitioners embed a cycle of review and reflection on practice.

Gujer (2012).

All these points together with the use of effective reflective models with in education and care will ensure that practitioners main a quality service for the children involved.

Element 4-Personal development plan

Area for further development (provide further details)	Why?	How?	Who/Where?	When?
1. Knowledge Re sitting my GCSE's in maths and English.	To update my knowledge and raise my current grades to a B or above to enable me to apply for the GTP in September for the year 2019/20.	I will apply to take part in the GCSE equivalency tests with UWTSD. If you already have a C grade and have passed the other questions during the interview process you can be considered.	This is offered by UWTSD for students who wish to apply for the initial teacher education. I will need to email Lara Williams Evans to apply. There will be no charge for the workshops, but the exam resit will cost £75.	Keep looking on the UWTSD website as dates will be published <u>in the near future</u> .
2. Knowledge Applying for my graduate teacher programme (GTP)	I aim after this course will be to progress on to the GTP whilst using my current job as my placement.	I will apply via the application form provided on the discoverteaching.wales website.	I will ensure that my school is still willing and able to pay me as a non-qualified teacher which is currently £16,626.	I will start looking to apply during the middle of my second year. I will keep checking for more specific details about when the applications open.
3. Skills Stage 8 Makaton	I am currently trained up to stage 4 in Makaton which is adequate for my level of my current level of teaching but as I am hoping to progress on to a GTP in a special needs school I will need to progress my signing ability.	I will continue my Makaton in my current role as my school placement has qualified Makaton instructors that carry out in house training.	This training will take place in my school. I am down on the list for progression and will hopefully be on the next intake of participants.	I should be on this training with by the start of the next academic year.
4. Skills Leadership	To successfully work as a teacher, I will have to be responsible for managing a team of staff. This can sometime be difficult if the staff under you are older in age, as respect and taking direction from someone younger than you can sometimes prove difficult.	To develop my skills of team management and leadership I will observe other members of staff <u>through the use of</u> the trust trio observation groups. I will then be able to identify positive examples of leadership.	The trust trio observation are carried once a year as a chance to see good practice being carried out across the school. If the trios are not up and running when I need them I will ask I can shadow a newly qualified teacher (NQT) and a longer serving teacher.	I will start observing staff at the next available opportunity but will also observe different teachers that I work with daily.
5. Values Self wellbeing of pupils	The wellness of all pupils and a happy sate of mind is something that is currently a big push with education to ensure that all pupils are happy and are in a place where they can learn.	I will request to be put on the Thrive approach training which is currently being driven out across our school. The training equips teachers and school staff with the knowledge and tools to support children who are facing difficulties in school because of their home lives.	The school will send and pay for me to go on the training as part of the whole school approach towards the thrive programme. It is provided by external providers.	The school will send me on the next training programme that is the closest situated to us.
6. Values Non-discriminatory behaviour towards ASD pupils.	To ensure that I teach in an effective way I need to ensure that I never develop a discriminatory attitude. By going on an Autism and communication course.	The Autism and communication course is an online course provided by the National autistic society. This is also an accredited certificate.	The course is £30 and is accessed via their website.	As this course is available online it can be accessed at any time. I am hoping to complete this training during the summer holiday's 2018.

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