

Supporting Transition into a school setting



Source: Google images, Nursery World

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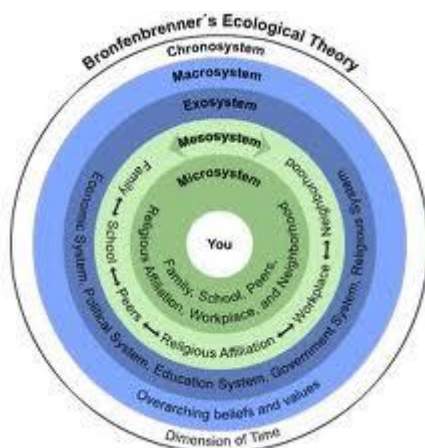
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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide knowledge and understanding of the transition 3 – 4-year-olds make, the importance of a partnership between practitioner and parent/carer and how positive contribution to a supportive transition will enable the child to access full opportunities available. Gateshead (n.d).

The Welsh Government (2021) provide up to 30 hours free early education and childcare every week for children age 3 – 4 years, of working parents. This consists of a minimum 10 hours education and maximum 20 hours childcare. A part time place in a nursery, whether that be a private or attached to a school can be accessed from age three, this placement will be part time for two terms before the child starts full time the term of their fourth birthday. For this age child the transition process of starting school is big, however, transition is inevitable throughout life and is an individual experience. Bronfenbrenner 1979 theory as cited in 'supporting Transition in the Early Years' book Brooker (2008) explains that positive transition comes from strong continuous communication links between all parties involved in the child's development. Hayes, N., O'Toole, and Halpenny, (2017) concur that strong productive links during transition periods can have minimal affect on a child's social, emotional, and educational development therefore, strengthening the connections in the mesosystem of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. A distressing transition and one as big as starting Primary school can have a detrimental effect on learning opportunities causing separation in the mesosystem.



Source from: Google images (2021)

The bioecological theory consists of the child in the centre, the Microsystem is made up of the people who surround the child, for example, parents / carers, school, peers and other close family members. These all have an influence on the child. The mesosystem is the relationships with these, how they are formed and sustained has a massive effect on the child's overall development. The exosystem is the cultural support system, macrosystem is the cultural environment and chronosystem is the change over time. Bronfenbrenner, (1981)

What is Transition?

According to Dunlop, and Fabian, (2007) Transition can not be defined by one meaning, however, in education it can be perceived as the move to a new setting, change to staff or peers. The move from stages of education through the school, which also includes the period from the initial visit to settling. The process of transition can be a positive experience and a very difficult one for adults and children.

The Needs of the Child

Piaget cited in Gray and Macblain (2012) believes that children should learn and develop through their own experiences and imaginative play in a natural setting. Learning through play with their peers enhances thinking skills. This is reflected in our setting, working under the foundation phase curriculum, a curriculum that has been in effective since 2010 (with a recent update in 2015), actioned by the Welsh Government, for children ages three to seven years. Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a range of learning experiences focusing on seven key areas, which are:

“Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

Mathematical Development

Welsh Language Development

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

Physical Development

Creative Development” (Welsh Government, 2015, P. 8 /

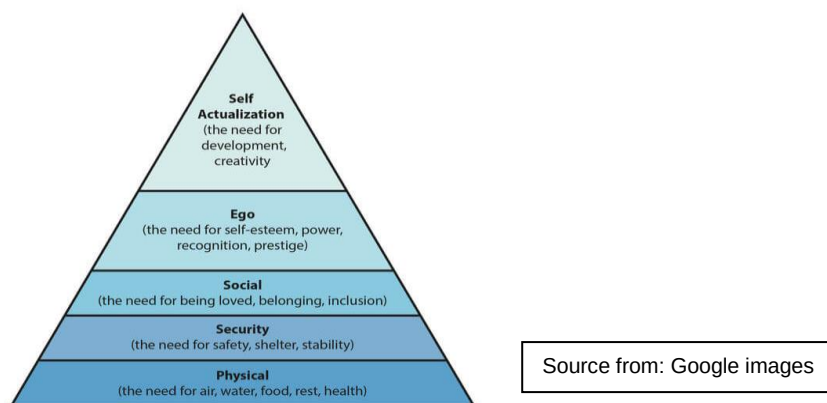
<https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/d5d8e39c-b534-40cb-a3f5-7e2e126d8077/foundation-phase-framework.pdf>)

With the setting providing these areas, thus allowing the children space and opportunity for the children to learn and develop through play. These areas are supported by staff to ensure good role models are seen, and observations of children’s learning and development can be carried out. Vygotsky, very similar to Piaget believes that children learn and develop through play however, He emphasises that children need ‘Scaffolding’. Scaffolding is support, role modelling from advanced cognitive development, usually a teacher or parent, however, this method should

allow the child to become more independent. This takes the child from what they already know, to the Zone of Proximal Development - What the child can now achieve with adult support.

Vygotsky was criticized by others, one for the focus on language development and not on reasoning and problem solving according to a publication by NurseryWorld.co.uk (2015).

There are basic needs that are required for every child to have and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs demonstrates this.



How to implement in practice

Maslow's theory starts at the base of the triangle, EVERY child needs air, water, food, rest and health. These **basic needs** must be attended to, in order for the child to progress to the next stage.

Children are encouraged to bring a water bottle, however, water and milk is provided for every child on a daily basis. A hot healthy meal is also available at lunch times and we offer a free breakfast club. We are part of the Healthy Schools voluntary scheme, this focuses on the child's health and well-being, and strategies we use to promote this. Even though this scheme is for children over 5 years, we still encourage all children in the school to take part, as this educates on food and physical activity. A survey is completed, and we are then rated Gold, Silver or Bronze, depending on evidence, the reward is then displayed on the school website stated on the Welsh Government, (2019) website.

The next stage is **Safety**. In practice staff must be open and honest with children at all times, offer emotional stability and protect them. If there are concerns about a child or the child has offered information that leaves you unsure or uncomfortable, we **MUST** follow our Safeguarding policy, Carmarthenshire County Council, (2021), **NEVER** tell the child that you will keep the details to yourself and report the concern on our system. We

use MyConcern which is available to all staff and volunteers to access. This is an electronic system that stores the important information that may be required at some point.

Social. Positive interaction with adults and peers can give the child a sense of belonging. The child's parent/carer must put their trust in us when leaving their child, however, trust is formed between a child and staff member over time. Making the child feel safe and secure, spending time interacting with them, getting to know them will build 'attunement' thus giving you the knowledge of the child's needs and wants without a spoken word according to Trodd, (2013).

Ego. Juntunen and Schwartz (2016) state that this can be an ongoing development stage, however, will begin in early childhood. There are many factors that contribute to this, ethic, racial, cultural to name just a few. Social and emotional are ones we can build on, in practice constant reassurance, introducing new skills and giving praise when making steps to accomplish them, encourage social interaction with peers in order to make friendships are some examples of ways we support children to help build confidence and independence which later develops to self-esteem.

Self-Actualization. When a person has attainment, this is the highest stage in the theory and occurs when you feel you have reached your full potential, establish a talent, confident with learning and discovering, achieving recognition for this.

Maslow's theory is one out of many and this information was according to Masterclass staff, (2020). A study was carried out in the same year and even though it was not solely on education there were some positive results.

This study by Crandall, Powel, Bradford, Magnusson, *et al.* (2020) On 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a Framework for Understanding Adolescent Depressive Symptoms Over Time' concluded that the theory moderately envisages and justifies depression in later years. However, one startling result was regarding 'neighbourhood', this would come under the 'Safety' stage. Children from a tough neighbourhood had lower depressive symptoms than those from a favourable one. The study suggests that this could be, as the child has developed from a young age, how to deal with a difficult situation, problem solving and survival skills, has enabled them to be more confident dealing with stressful situation later in life.

Holistic Approach

Foundation Phase Framework is a holistic approach to education in the early years, in 2022 the new curriculum will come in to effective where schools / practitioners create a curriculum for their learners. This will be a continual curriculum where learners can have their voice heard. A key point for learners and practitioners is, to have a clear understanding of the progression growth when creating this new curriculum stated by the Welsh Government (2021).

The Foundation Education in Australia (2018) posted a blog about Holistic approach and its importance in early education. There are many advantages and especially during transition periods, its helps build relationships, creates an inviting atmosphere, and can identify some needs and wants of the child.

Role of the Adults

According to Trodd, (2013) The effect transition can have on a child can be detrimental to their development, drive for learning or even cause regression. This should be our motivation to make transition an enjoyable, positive experience for all. In practice we invite parents/carers to bring their child into the class on four separate days, (this we call open days) the term before they are due to start. These days are for practitioners, parents/carers, and child to get acquainted and for the child to familiarise themselves with the surroundings and peers. Staff are rotated between the fun activities provided, therefore, giving opportunity for all parties to converse and interact. Key workers/carers are not allocated to a child unless there is a special educational or disability need. If a child is having difficulty with the transition period then steps will be made to select a key worker to assist the child through this change.

Adults need to appreciate the level of change a child can go through when starting part time school. Each child has their own idea, assumption, and adventure during the transition, therefore, during the open days all practitioners play with the children, this means taking an active part in the areas set out, to refrain from taking the lead, be reassuring and tactful as a co-player. This can build a strong honest relationship suggests Dunlop, and Fabian, (2007).

According to a study carried out by Wilson-Ali, Barratt-Pugh and Knaus (2019), Early years practitioners should have knowledge and understanding of 'Attachment Theory', this is vital to their professional development and the needs and development of a child. Their research explains that there are four stages of developing attachment,

pre-attachment

attachment in the making

clear-cut attachment

goal-corrected partnership

By the time the child starting our setting they should have a clear-cut attachment, this can be a secure attachment, however, we then need to make them feel safe and secure in the new surrounding with new adult faces. In practice we offer a Language and play session, this is where we

invite parent/carer and child into the setting once a week, for the six weeks prior to the start date, to take part in activities. Here we get to develop relationships. The parent/carer can gain an understanding about the class environment, toilet training, eating habits, reading, and talking about books with children. Practitioners can gain knowledge of the child from their parent/carer. An adult can form an attachment quicker than a child, the adult can become attuned with the child's needs and wants instantly with an emotional bond, however, for children it takes time to build that. They can form attachments with more than one adult, when they feel safe and secure. A child with a secure attachment can require more comfort during a transition period however, studies show that these children grow up to have developed good emotional and social skills. Children with attachment issues can be very unsettled, display bad behaviour, and can grow up unable to form positive relationships this is according to NSPCC learning, (2021). In practice we must follow steps and try our very best to help and support all children form healthy attachments, remembering that each child is an individual, and what they take for an experience can differ from the next child, learning about the individual can give us the understanding of what is relevant to their development according to Dewey theory cited by Gray, and Macblain, (2012). His theory is relevant to the way the Foundation Phase Framework is structured and the New Curriculum which will come into effect 2022.

Sustained shared thinking

Imperative strategy to support children's development. This is when both adult and child are captivated in the activity and both parties are contributing to the conversation. This can divulge the child's measure of development and teach social strategies. It can be used as a learning opportunity for both parties which will assist in the educational planning for the class suggests Essex County Council, (2021). The approach we use during transition, with the Language and Play sessions and the 'open days' are building towards sustained shared thinking with the children.

Role model

Bandura's Theory cited in Gray and Macblain, (2012) states that children learn from interaction with others, internalizing behaviours, communication, verbal and non-verbal and imitate them, they can collate

different habits from different people. The environment can also contribute to this, for example television programmes, computer games and social media. In practice we have a number of children with American accents, parent/carer have stated that this is down to what they watch on television or on the internet. We as professional practitioners are the role models for these children, therefore, control over our social and emotional behaviour, self-confidence and motivation are a starting point. We are reflective, professional practitioners with Continually looking to improve our Professional Development.

Neurological development

By the time a child starts part-time school (Age 3yrs) their brain is nearly fully grown. Neurons, which are the pathways to different parts of the brain are developed in billions, however, they do not touch. An impulse flow through the Synapses (the space between the neurons), these develop at a lively pace in the years early, nevertheless, they can be lost if not used. In the transition period we encourage parent/carer to converse with their child as much as they can, language, being active and engaging with others are all key elements in strengthening the connections in the brain which can lead to a solid base for learning according to Macblain, (2014).

Partnership / Interventions

During the transition period we provide parents/carers a One Page Profile form for them to complete with their child.

The form is titled 'My One Page Profile' and features a starburst graphic. It contains five main sections for a child to complete: 'What makes me happy?' (a large light blue box), 'Photo' (a small grey box), 'Things people like about me' (a light purple box), 'I might feel sad when...' (a light green box), and 'I need a little help with...' (a light blue box). The form is decorated with cartoon characters and a starburst.

The questions on this form are asked to the child at home and at school, this is so we can have a better understanding of the child's needs and wants. This can support transitions and learning and gives the child an all important voice. Pembrokeshire County Council, (2021).

Source: Google image

This Profile can open the discussions between practitioners and parents/carers on the initial visit. Any concerns about the child can be addressed. Our Carmarthenshire County Council, (2019). Booklet suggests that the child will be observed and if required early intervention support can be offered as well as individual targets set. If further support is required, then Our School's Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCO) will start 'School Action' which is additional programmes to assist the child. Parents of children with special educational needs or disability have the right to educate their child through mainstream school. In practice we had manual handling training for a child who was confined to a wheelchair. Specialist laptop was brought in, desks were adjusted, the child went all the way through the school included in the same way as the whole class. Parents, school, and outside agencies all worked together for a positive experience for the child.

Practitioner and parent/carer need to work in partnership to give the child the best opportunities for their development, boundaries and expectations can be set and demonstrating healthy relationships, resulting in good role modelling. If there is a breakdown of communication between the partnership and a lack of respect is shown then this can have an adverse effective on the child's behaviour and willingness to learn according to Macblain, (2014).

Outcomes

- Make a positive impact on both parent/carer and child within the first 15 minutes of their arrival. In practice an example of this is to welcome them and ask some open-ended questions in order to get to know them, If the parent/carer feels comfortable then it is more likely the child will.
- The child to have a positive transition, this can be the first major transition for a child and how they experience this will guide them for later transitions.
- A steady flowing transition so that a child can build on their learning, an uncomfortable transition can result in regression of the child's knowledge.
- To help the child gain Self-efficacy, this can occur when the child starts to feel positive about themselves, how they deal with transition is a good starting point into our setting.

These outcomes are suggested by Trodd, (2013) and ones we strive towards during our transitions.

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