

Element 2

Brief description of the activity.

The activity was carried out with a group of 8 3-year olds and 3 practitioners. The children went on a nature walk around the local village to collect natural materials including leaves, twigs, pinecones, bark, moss, stones and conkers. Following the walk, they took the materials collected to the outdoor classroom where they could use the materials to make 2D and 3D shapes.

Objective of the activity.

To give the children the opportunity to develop their mathematical skills and knowledge and understanding of shapes. To meet the Foundation Phase (2014) outcomes, count up to 5, compare sort and order two objects in terms of size, recognise and use the names for 2D shapes, use and build with 2D and 3D shapes. Understand and use a range of measures and recognise and use shapes within play and structured activities. Investigate and combine natural materials to create 2D and 3D shapes. To give children first hand experiences in the natural environment. To have a multi-sensory experience of using natural materials.

Your role

As room leader my role was to plan the activity to meet specific learning outcomes. I was responsible for carrying out the risk assessment and making sure the documentation was filled in correctly. During the activity myself and colleagues were responsible for dynamic risk assessments. It was my role to carry out the activity with two colleagues, We were there to support and scaffold the children's learning.

Positive aspects – Why?

The activity followed the Foundation Phase (2014) pedagogy as it gave the children opportunities for holistic learning although the activity was primarily for mathematical development it also covered knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and communication.

Dewey cited in Mooney (2000) states that it is important that practitioners plan learning activities based on observations. This allows practitioners to plan for children's next steps and build on children's experiences as every time they revisit an experience it expands their knowledge. Carrying out the activity in a small group gave me the opportunity to gain valuable

observations. The children were engaged in the activity and all seemed to be having fun. They benefited from being outdoors. The children learnt to respect the environment and to not pick living plants and flowers. They enjoyed being able to take responsibility for their own play.

Challenging aspects – why?

It was a challenge to keep some of the children engaged during the collecting of the natural materials because they wanted to run around and were not looking for natural materials to collect. My colleagues had been briefed on the activity before hand so knew what we were hoping to achieve from the activity. When it became apparent that some of the children were running around rather than collecting materials one colleague became frustrated and told the children off for not following the activity.

I had a very clear plan of what I wanted to achieve from the activity. I wanted the children to produce 2D and 3D shapes however the children had no interest in making shapes. A small group made bonfires and talked about toasting marshmallows. One girl mentioned making faces and the rest of the group followed. I tried to gently direct them back to shapes showing them examples of shapes they could create but they were more interested in directing their own play.

What knowledge was demonstrated?

I demonstrated my extensive knowledge of risk assessments before and during the activity.

I demonstrated my knowledge of outdoor learning and the importance of using the outdoor environment as an extension of the learning environment as emphasised in the Foundation Phase (2008).

I demonstrated my knowledge of Individual Learning Needs and Additional Learning Needs the activity promoted inclusion and was accessible to all children.

I demonstrated my knowledge of child initiated learning by adapting the activity to allow the children to follow their own interests when I realised they were not engaged with my plan. In line with the Foundation Phase (2008) I observed carefully to monitor and assess the children's individual progress and how further planning is needed to move the children on to the next stages of their development.

What skills were demonstrated?

I demonstrated team working skills. I had to communicate in a professional manner with the colleague to explain that we needed to adapt the activity and allow the children to take lead the as her intervention was not appropriate. I demonstrated communication and listening skills. I listened to the children and adapted the activity to suit their individual interests.

What values were demonstrated?

I demonstrated respect for the environment. I explain the importance of not breaking twigs from trees or picking flowers. The children were only allowed to collect materials that were already on the ground.

I demonstrated respect for children and their rights to be listened to UNCRC (1989) article 12 even though it meant I was not going to be able to gain what I wanted from the activity I had to respect the rights of the children. Through reflection of the activity there are a number of other learning outcomes that were achieved from the activity.

I valued the children's safety by carrying out effective risk assessments. I valued the children's independence by facilitating them to take control of their own learning.

I demonstrated patience.

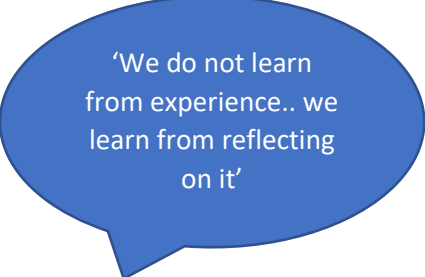
What could have been done differently?

I should of explained to my colleagues before the start of the activity that if the children were not engaged they should of reflected on the experience and their practice and adapted the activity to follow the children's individual interests and needs.

On reflection I think that I should have planned and carried out more activities around the theme of shapes as the children had no interest in shapes. On the morning of the activity I could have read a story about shapes during the morning story time this may of helped to gain the children's interest. During the walk I could have spoken more about shapes and pointed out shapes in the environment.

Element 3

Why Reflective Practice is important for maintaining quality services for young children.



'We do not learn from experience.. we learn from reflecting on it'

Dewey (1938)

Being a reflective practitioner shows a willingness to learn and be an effective teacher. Without reflection individuals adhere to habitual behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, biases and assumptions without questioning (McGarr and McCormack, 2016)

Vygotsky cited in Mooney (2000) the zone of proximal development is the gap between what a child can achieve without support and what they can achieve with assistance. Through reflective practice the practitioner can identify the zone of proximal development and plan learning activities that are suitable for the child's level of development progressing their learning.

Reflective practice is so important that The Foundation Phase (2008) state that reflective Foundation Phase teachers are essential for facilitating learning and supporting children's individual needs.

Bishop and Blake (2007) Reflective practice is good for problem solving. It helps practitioners to identify problems and any key features, to identify solutions or possible outcomes, it allows practitioners to take responsibility for problems that have arisen during their practice and to plan a course of action to improve practice and prevent problems arising in the future.

Dewey cited in Allen and Gordon (2011) reflective practice is advantageous for children with additional needs as it allows the practitioner to assess and adapt their practice based on the child's actual level of development.

Care Inspectorate Wales (2018) state that to gain an excellent rating the service must demonstrate that they are continuously improving. The inspector evaluates how effective the practitioners are at self evaluation. Examples of good practice are practitioners reflecting on their performance on a daily basis to assess outcomes and plan for improvement. The inspector states that it is good practice to seek feedback on practice and use the information to improve performance to benefit children using the service. Admitting practice needs to improve shows commitment to working to the best of ones ability.

Johnston and Nahmad-Williams (2009) support children taking ownership and being individuals by reflecting on their achievements. It builds confidence, motivates them and encourages them to keep developing their learning. If practitioners are to support children to reflect on their learning, then they too should be practising reflection. The Foundation Phase (2008) pedagogy agrees practitioners should be willing to learn alongside children and should be motivated to be continuously developing and learning. They should understand reflective tools and be using appropriate methods to continually reflect and improve on their practice.

There are many models of reflection available to early years practitioners two of which are:	
Gibbs (1998) reflective cycle consists of 6 stages Description Feelings Evaluation Analysis Conclusion Plan of action	Rolfe et al. (2001) is a more simplistic framework consisting of 3 questions. What? So what? Now what?
Both are effective models of reflection that can be used as tools to support practitioners to reflect on their practice in order to improve (Trodd, 2012).	

Johnston and Nahmad-Williams (2009) claim that practitioners that embed reflective practice in their professional lives make a difference to the people they work with because it allows them to grow and develop their practice. It empowers them be confident enough to critically reflect on themselves which is a difficult task, to identify what they need to change to provide a better service.

Element 4 Personal Development Plan

Area for further development (provide further details)	Why?	How?	Who/Where?	When?
1. Knowledge Knowledge of the Foundation Phase	Better understanding increase confidence, support children within the setting to reach learning outcomes.	Complete BA Early Years Education and Care. Meet with Foundation Phase practitioners. Visit other settings. Attend training courses.	Foundation Phase profile update training Llanwern High School 7 th September 2018 9-12 am no cost Manager to release to attend training	July 2019.
2. Knowledge Outdoor learning	To learn how to plan, prepare and deliver outdoor learning. To understand the benefits and safety issues related to using the outdoors for learning. Gain knowledge of sustainable use of natural resources. To cover curriculum subjects in engaging and real life ways.	Complete level 2 Award in outdoor learning practice. Complete Certificate in leading Forest School level 3.	Carry out activities with the children in the setting to collect evidence required to complete my qualification. Manager to release me to attend training days. Mentor Angie Rekers to support me to complete the qualification. The fee is £900 to be paid by my employer.	15 th July 2018. September 2018 – June 2019.
3. Skills Improving my Welsh	To support bilingual children in my setting. To work with children whose home language is Welsh. To show children and staff my commitment to the Welsh language and bilingualism.	Enrol on Welsh lessons. You tube videos. Online support groups. Help from colleagues. Use Welsh as much as possible within my setting to build confidence.	Ysgol Y Bedol 9am to 11am every Monday. Speak to manager about having time off every Monday. Ask Welsh colleagues for support with homework and practicing etc	Classes start September 2018.
4. Skills Confidence to manage a team and people skills	To create a good rapport with my team. To create an effective and manageable work environment for my team.	Shadow the manager. Ask for feedback from staff and management. Keep a reflective journal.	Support from staff and management.	Continuous

	To build assertiveness and negotiation skills.			
5. Values Respect	Equality and fairness to all children and adults I work with. Be anti-discriminatory	Create an ethos of respect and inclusivity within my setting. Abiding by the UNCRC to protect children's rights.	Shadow another person. Speak to manager. UNCRC training at UWTSD Carmarthen campus no fee.	6 th July 2018
6. Values Patience	Young children respond better to patient adults It is important to be a good role model as children imitate actions of adults.	Being mindful of my own practice. Being aware that the perception of children is very different from that of an adult and I may have to adapt my practice to the needs of individual children.	Ask colleagues for support if patience is being tried. Use a reflective log to identify ways of adapting my practice.	Continuous

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