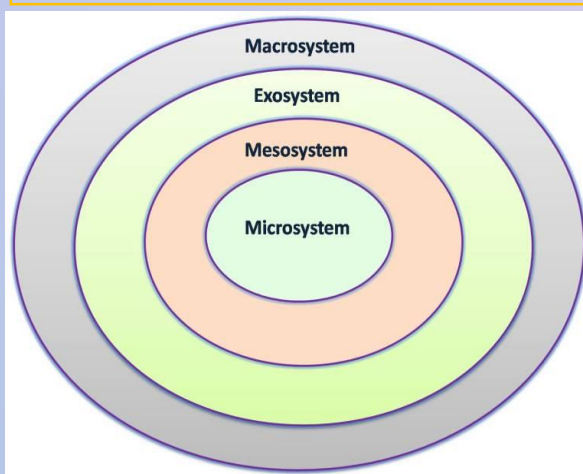


Start At Your Feet

1. The Importance of Community Involvement

The vast majority of teachers and parents would all agree that the involvement of the community is essential to a child's learning. Learning from the community can help to influence learning on culture, history, and many other aspects. As Sara Knight (2011) put it, "children need diverse experiences to draw on". Giving children real life experiences is one of the best ways to teach them about their local community, and the outside community. This idea of building links to the community can be linked to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (1979). In this, as shown in the diagram, Bronfenbrenner displays 4 systems, with the child being in the centre. The microsystem would involve the immediate contact with the child, such as their parents and school. The mesosystem extends to the local community, such as the town the child lives in. The exosystem would be the county that the child lives in, for example, and the macrosystem would usually refer to the country the child lives in. Involving children with their mesosystems and exosystems from a young age will help them to develop skills that will be essential to them as they grow up. For example, trips to forest schools can be very beneficial, as children are taken out into a place in the community, and given the chance to develop real life experiences. As Sara Knight goes on to say, "Tactile play is a staple of Early Years settings." Allowing children to develop skills from a young age in an environment other than the classroom. Forming these early community links is essential for developing skills in young children.



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory Model, 1979. (Image Jessica O'Keefe, date unknown.)

2. The Influence of Parents on Learning

As referred to in the previous section, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory displays how the closest connections to the child can be the most influential on learning, so getting parents and family involved with their school life can be very beneficial. My placement school displayed this very well. Each child, from Year 1 to the later years, is given a home-school communication diary, where their reading progress and other notable news is recorded from both ends, so the parents know how to help their children progress with their learning at home. This appears to be an effective method of involving parents with their child's learning, as it gives them direct support to help them. This is a consistent method to help parents get involved with learning. As well as this, the school has hosted numerous events for parents to attend in order to get involved with their child's learning. For example, book cafes, playgroups for much younger children, and days for parents to come in and talk about their careers as "local heroes". All of these examples show how getting parents involved in learning is useful for developing skills in children. As their parents are likely the most influential people to them, involving parents in their learning makes it a more personable experience for them.



University of Nottingham, 2015

3. My Placement School

The school which I attended for the bridging cycles has shown a very clear and admirable way to demonstrate community involvement and relationships between the parents with the school. As this school is positioned in an area near the local general hospital, many of the children who attend the school are from families who have moved here from other countries to practise in the hospital. This means that the school has children from many different cultures attending. The school also has a high number of pupils from MOD families. These two factors have helped the school to demonstrate how links between the school and the community can be made. For example, the Year 3 pupils held a "Local Heroes" day during their Superheroes topic. The parents of the pupils and many local people in careers such as the police and other emergency services were invited in to the school to talk about how they serve the community and the importance of their roles. Examples such as this show how this school can provide a good basis for how to involve the community in education.

4. Good Practice

One of the main questions that can arise from learning about community involvement in school and "Starting at your feet" is how to implement it into the classroom. Estyn have provided a report on how outdoor learning can be very beneficial to children in the Foundation Phase (Estyn, 2011). Taking this, and extending it to Forest Schools, field trips, etc. (given the resources are available). Following the advice from Estyn may make it easier for foundation phase teachers to get involved with teaching in the community. Starting "at your feet" when it comes to education can be seen as one of the most essential methods, in order to introduce children to multiple skills and access to knowledge. From developing gross and fine motor skills outdoors and around the community, to learning about the history of their local area and how it can impact their lives today, the impact of starting "at your feet" can be immeasurable.

References

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