

Teaching and Learning

Sustained shared thinking



“Sustained shared thinking” occurs when two or more individuals “work together” in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate an activity, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend the understanding. It was more likely to occur when children were interacting 1:1 with an adult or with a single peer partner and during focussed group work.

The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project (2004)

Task

How do you support children's sustained shared thinking in your setting?

Observe an interaction between a member of staff and a child taking part in an activity. Mark the interaction on a scale of 0-5, with 0 being low and 5 being high, using the bullet point themes below.

Encourage reflection with the staff member and hold a professional discussion about what was done well and what could be developed further.

This observation of the adult may include:

- tuning in: how well did the practitioner listen to what is being said, observe body language and what the child is doing
- showing genuine interest: did the practitioner give their whole attention, maintaining eye contact, affirming, smiling, nodding
- respecting children's own decisions and choices inviting children to elaborate: did the practitioner demonstrate a sense of really wanting to know about the child was doing?
- inviting children to elaborate: Did the practitioner ask; 'I really want to know more about this'
- re-capping: Did the practitioner confirm; 'So you think that...'
- offering your own experience: Did the practitioner share own experiences, 'I like to listen to music when I cook supper at home'
- clarifying ideas: Did the practitioner clarify 'Right Darren, so you think that this stone will melt if I boil it in water?'
- suggesting: Did the practitioner make own suggestions? 'You might like to try doing it this way' • reminding: 'Don't forget that you said that this stone will melt if I boil it'
- using encouragement to further thinking: Did the practitioner offer praise to motivate the child, 'You have really thought hard about where to put this door in the palace but where on earth will you put the windows?'
- offering an alternative viewpoint: Did the practitioner offer alternative perspectives, 'Maybe Goldilocks wasn't naughty when she ate the porridge'
- speculating: 'Do you think the three bears would have liked Goldilocks to come to live with them as their friend?'

- reciprocating: 'Thank goodness that you were wearing wellington boots when you jumped in those puddles Grace. Look at my feet they are soaking wet'
- asking open questions: Did the practitioner ask questions such as, 'How did you? Why does this...? What happens next? What do you think?'
- modelling thinking: Did the practitioner vocalise their own thoughts and ideas, 'I have to think hard about what I do this evening. I need to take my dog to the vet's because he has a sore foot, take my library books back to the library and buy some food for dinner tonight. But I just won't have time to do all of these things'

How did the practitioner score?

Did the practitioner agree with your review?

What strengths were identified?

What areas for development were noted?

Has this heightened your awareness of sustained shared thinking and how it impacts on practice?