

Capturing children's voices and thoughts in Early Years

Aims and rationale

The aim of my research project was to identify whether floor books can help support children's vocabulary and their understanding around the 'design, make and evaluate' process for D&T in a Foundation Stage 2 classroom.

Observations:

- The workshop area is a popular area of the Early Years classroom.
- Children were not using the correct vocabulary for tools and materials they were exploring and were not using them for the intended purpose.
- There was limited talk about their creations and how and why they were made.

The idea of a floor book was generated as children have previously shown an interest in looking at books that include photos of themselves from trips and displays.

Research

Floor books are used as a tool to document children's learning capturing their ideas and thoughts. They can be used in many different ways and there is no right or wrong way. Research has shown that floor books enable children to build on their previous learning, support deeper meta-cognitive understanding and provide opportunities for children to share ideas, resources and skills. (Hulme, K.2022)

My research

I started out observing children's learning from a combination of adult directed tasks, skill based activities and independent learning and used the floor book to showcase their learning. As the project developed, I began to use the floor book to track some of the children's learning and took opportunities to teach 'in the moment' by following their interests. The floor book became a tool for identifying weaknesses which were then developed through motivated learning.

Child A: "Can you help me with the sellotape?"

(She needed help to find the end of the sellotape)

Teacher: "Yes, I can, it's a bit tricky."

Child B: "Masking tape isn't."



Child A: "What's that called?"

Teacher: "It's a treasury tag."

I used the opportunity to revisit joining materials. I modelled how to join two pieces of paper together using a treasury tag. The children began to develop their joining technique from two pieces of paper into creative ideas of their own. Child A made a necklace. At first, she discovered it wasn't big enough but worked out she needed more pieces of paper which meant more treasury tags.

Findings

- The floor book allowed me to track the development of children's skills and techniques, from needing support to being mostly independent in their work.
- Children's ideas and creations started to be more detailed and they were making for a purpose.
- Children's language skills were developing via conversations with one another and adult guided discussions.
- The floor book highlighted children working collaboratively and supporting each other by contributing to each other's learning.
- The floor book identified and supported children's misconceptions. E.g. how to use treasury tags.
- When the floor book was shared with the children, they enjoyed talking about their learning. They talked more openly when the adult moved away from the discussions.

Conclusion

Floor books can support teachers to see how children learn through watching and listening as they play, trying to understand what it all means. With their knowledge of child development, it allows them to give the right support and teach in the moment or allows them to revisit their learning to support development.

References

- Hulme, K. (2022) *Documenting children's mathematical talking and thinking through observation, learning stories and floor books*, pp81-108
- Chilvers, D. (2022) *How to recognise and support Mathematical mastery in young children's play, learning from the 'talk for maths mastery' initiatives*. London and New York. Routledge.