Newsletter March 2024

Welcome to Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub March newsletter. Look out in this newsletter for half day twilight and Saturday morning conferences that are taking place across the region in March. Look out for our CPD offer which is both face to face and online for Early Emotions and Beach School and Forest School linked to the sustainable goals and research. See our local and national websites for more details. You can find more details on the national website
https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/nw/liverpool-city-region-and-beyond-eysph
We also have information on Everton Nursery School and Family Centre website under the stronger practice hub tab. If you haven't already please subscribe so you can keep up to date of CPD we have on offer online in the day, evening's live and recorded, Saturdays and face to face.
https://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org/strongerpracticehub

Please email sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk if you wish to book on any CPD session or conference.

March 2024 issue

Welcome, Conferences, CPD, National Hub information, Talking Time, Dingley's Promise, Spotlight Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School, Physical development and utilising your local woodland sites Blog, IFF Research, Childminding Drop In, *FREE Resource bags*, EEF Personal and Social and Emotional development, Early Years Evidence Store.

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub Continual Professional Development Opportunities

All conferences are open to all early years practitioners across the Liverpool City Region and Beyond area, they are not specific to one area so if you wanted to have a visit to another area to attend a conference you are very welcome.

CONFERENCES

Saturday 16th March,10a.m. – 12 noon. The Mazuma Stadium, Morecambe Football Club, Christie Way, Westgate, Morecambe, LA4 4TB

Friday 22nd March, 2.30-4.30p.m. Lakes College, Hallwood Road, Lillyhall Business Park, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 4JN

Saturday 23rd March, 10a.m. – 12 noon Learning Gateway lecture theatre, at Fusehill Street campus, University of Cumbria, Carlisle, CA1 2HH

See below the format for the conferences:

Registration and receive your FREE conference bag of resources such as a plantable book.
Welcome and information about Liverpool City Region Early Years Stronger Practice Hub and what the Hub can offer practitioners who work with children 0-5 years.
Diane Boyd – Keynote on Sustainability in the Early Years linking to Communication and Language. Diane will share practical ways of looking at sustainability when working with young children.
Break with refreshments of Tea/Coffee/Biscuits and an opportunity to look at books and resource bags as suggestions for practice.
Networking with opportunities to share practice about role and share practice of present sustainability activities.
Question and Answer Panel.
Close of conference.

EARLY EMOTIONS

Online - An introduction to early emotional health, the issues children face and links to socio-economic backgrounds.
Online with ZOOM for one session on:
Thursday 14th March 5pm – 7pm

LEARNING WALKS

Ganneys Meadow Nursery School Wirral
Communication and Language Approaches
Tuesday 23rd April 9.15 - 11.15a.m.

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School Warrington
Wednesday 24th April 8.45 - 11.45a.m.

Rainhill Community Nursery School, Rainhill, Prescot
Thursday 2nd May 2024, 12.45 - 3.45pm.

If you wish to offer your setting for a learning walk to share practice especially linked to research in communication and early mathematics, let us know via email on sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

3 DAY FOREST SCHOOL TRAINING
FOREST SCHOOL – explore with other practitioners on:
Forest School session 1 on Wednesday 15th May, 2-4p.m.
Forest School session 2 on Wednesday 12th June, 2-4p.m.
Forest School session 3 on Wednesday 26th June, 2-4p.m.
Face to face training at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool. L6 2WF

3 DAY FOREST SCHOOL TRAINING
BEACH SCHOOL – explore with other practitioners on:
Beach School session1 on Wednesday 22nd May, 2-4p.m.
Beach School session 2 on Wednesday 19th June, 2-4p.m.
Beach School session 3 on Wednesday 3rd July, 2-4p.m.
Face to face training at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool. L6 2WF

SEND training re the sensory curriculum online in March. Recorded session available from Wednesday 27th March, 12 noon.

MATHEMATICS ONLINE
Exploring Mathematics training in the early years online in March. Recorded session available from Wednesday 27th March, 12 noon.

Look out in May, June and July for Exploring Rhymes and Mathematics face to face linking to EEF Early Literacy and Early Mathematics.
To book on any CPD session email: sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

All CPD sessions are open to all Early Years practitioners in the Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub Local Authorities.

National Hub information

A new website www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk has launched to support regional networks of early years practitioners in England to share knowledge, effective practice and evidence-based approaches.
The Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs programme is part of the Department for Education (DfE)'s £180m Early Years Education Covid-19 Recovery Package and is delivered on behalf of the DfE by the National Children's Bureau (NCB).
The 18 Hubs (two in each of the government office regions in England) provide advice, share good practice and offer evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners.
The new site will allow early years practitioners to find their local Hub from a drop-down list or by navigating a clickable map of England and access the latest information from that Hub on upcoming events, programmes and resources.
The site will also feature information about the programme itself as well as access to other related DfE programmes and the Early Years Evidence Store created by the DfE's evidence partner on this project, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).
An exciting new module has been added to the DfE's Early Years child development training.
Module 6: Mathematics is now available and covers:

- Nurturing mathematical development from birth
- Number including verbal counting, object counting and subitising
- Patterns and relationships
- Spatial reasoning, including shape, space and measures

This module is available along with 5 other modules including child and brain development, personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development.
We let you know earlier in the year that a new feature had been added to the training which enables users to access the modules in any order. However, the DfE do recommend that the modules are completed in consecutively as the training has been designed to build on previous modules, starting with child and brain development underpinning all the others.
https://child-development-training.education.gov.uk/

Talking Time

Are you in Pendle and Hyndburn in Lancashire, Sefton, Liverpool or Knowsley, then Talking Time is for you if you are a school or pvi setting. Please sign up to take part in this research project, with an opportunity to make an impact on your own professional development. Please email sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk or look on http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/talking-time if you require any further information.

Dingley's Promise

Are you aware of Dingley's Promise - Transforming the Early Years for child with SEND?
If not have a look on https://dingley.org.uk/dingleys-promise-training/
If you are based in Liverpool and wish to access any courses, let us know as these are free and we can provide you with a code to access the website and courses. If you are outside of Liverpool and are interested in Dingley's Promise, either contact Dingley's Promise directly and reference our Stronger Practice Hub or our sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk email for more details.

Spotlight

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School, Warrington

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School (SLNFS) is Warrington's only Local Authority Maintained Nursery School, which supports children and families with the highest levels of deprivation in the Local Authority. Being a maintained nursery school means, like primary and secondary schools, they have a head teacher and all rooms are led by fully qualified teachers. Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School is rated as an outstanding school.
SLNFS includes provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, as well as dedicated specialist provision for children with SEND. The school aim to provide high quality and well-resourced, safe, exciting and inclusive environments for children, full of stimulating, inspiring learning opportunities, which includes an on-site Forest School, delivered by level 3 qualified Forest School leaders.
Headteacher Marcia Atherton spoke to me about one of her recent school priorities.
After looking at the current cohort and trends in learning outcomes for children, Marcia and her leadership team felt that there was an importance to raise the profile of early mathematical learning, especially in daily routines and everyday activities.
Marcia found an appropriate course, through the Maths Hub, for one of the class teachers to attend, that would look at raising the profile of mathematical learning and development through specific strategies and simple adaptations of routines and learning opportunities. Marcia felt that this would fit perfectly with the needs and priorities for the children.
Jamie, the Nursery Teacher, signed up to the NCTEM course 'Specialist Knowledge for Teaching Mathematics-Early Years Teacher' (The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics NCETM was set up in 2006 to provide maths-specific school and professional development for schools, colleges and teachers.)
This programme is designed to improve the subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for all practitioners teaching and supporting children to demonstrate a positive attitude towards maths, be willing to have a go, persevere, and share their mathematical ideas.
The programme consisted of 4 day training events over eight months, with tasks between to apply learning. The course was fully funded by the Maths Hub.
As part of the course Jamie was asked to explore and increase the use of a range of pedagogic approaches that support children in engaging with and developing their maths. To understand how maths opportunities can be developed across all areas and in everyday routines and to develop her understanding around how children progress in their learning of early maths. Jamie identified several areas for development. An action plan was created for each one. Here is an example of how one question was used to improve practice at SNLFS. Other questions that were worked through include: Can the use of track games develop more opportunities for children to make sense of number? Can developing children's finger gnosis support numerical abilities?
In order to include more maths into the daily routine Jamie asked the question:
Can self-registration develop more opportunities for children to make sense of number?
Jamie recognised that self-registration time was not used for developing number sense and had more of a mark making/ literacy development focus with children using large wipe boards to mark make or attempt letters from their names at the start of every session. Children were used to this routine and parents were aware of supporting them at this time to find names and represent these at their own level. While not wanting to remove the Literacy aspect of self-registration Jamie highlighted the opportunity to provide more maths opportunities within this time.
Possible barriers identified for the children with limited speech and language or EAL were known to have no dialogue for maths available to them.
Having a high percentage of children that were achieving lower than expected level for Maths was cited, therefore lots of practitioner support and modelling was explicitly used to begin with. Parents were also heavily included in this support.
Staff made a list of the specific mathematical language and the mathematical learning that come out of enhancing this part of the children's daily routine, slightly adapted for each group across the nursery school.

What does this approach look like?
The first step Jamie took to finding solutions to this question was to talk to the team about adapting the self-registration time and to share ideas on how to do this, based on what the children needed and could already do.
The team decided to use tens frames as a way to promote number sense, counting and subitising skills. They created identical tens frames for each key group in the provision and decided to encourage inclusion by creating small images of each of the children that would be added to the tens frames as an additional way to self-register every session. The tens frames were then taken into key group times for the children to discuss and identify how many were in or not in for their key group.
The new routine and the changes were established and shared with parents verbally, in the newsletter and through school social media.
Practitioners slowly introduced the new self-registration process, differentiated for groups e.g. some focusing on value to verbalise and understand the terms 'lots' or 'more' and some children subitising or counting amounts by using the tens frame at registration time and again at key group times.
This process was modelled to all parents, carers and children for several weeks.
What impact has this approach had?
After implementing this for a term staff reflected on the impact this adaptation has made.
The whole team agreed that they had successfully provided further mathematical opportunities for children to develop number sense.
Practitioners have seen children's number language and vocabulary develop including those with EAL or low levels of language and have observed children noticing amounts and numerals more confidently beyond this activity.
Children are becoming more aware of changes to amounts and are developing confidence in
representing with numerals as this is modelled daily in key group times.
Children with EAL are able to demonstrate abilities in a non-verbal way by pointing to numerals or images.
Parents are using more mathematical language with their children.
The team will continue to use data and observations to gather feedback from keyworkers on how this is impacting on individuals and groups in the longer term.

What can you do?
Use simple five or tens frames in counting activities, games or in self-registration.
Be clear about the mathematical language that your children need to know and understand. Make these explicit to practitioners so that there is a consistent and graduated approach that is appropriate to each age or stage.
Use more books and stories that have a mathematical content, beyond Goldilocks.
Find out more about finger gnosis and how you could apply this knowledge into your practice.
Links to research
Improving mathematics in the early years and KS1
EEF_Maths_EY_KS1_Summary_of_RecomImproving mathematics in the early years and KS1mendations[5448].pdf
Using story books fir mathematics
using_storybooks_high_quality_maths_resource_v0.1[5449].pdf
NCTEM early years mathematics course details
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/maths-hubs-projects/specialist-knowledge-for-teaching-mathematics-early-years-teachers/

Finger gnosis
Frontiers | Putting a Finger on Numerical Development – Reviewing the Contributions of Kindergarten Finger Gnosis and Fine Motor Skills to Numerical Abilities (frontiersin.org)

Physical development and utilising your local woodland sites.

Blog by Diane Boyd

The Covid-19 pandemic has raised multiple concerns about the impact on children's overall development (Ofsted 2020a and 2020b) and how these delays have impacted on early literacy and numeracy achievements and this blog hopes to stimulate your thinking! Additionally, there is increasing evidence that physical development is also an important predictor for young children of early numeracy and literacy outcomes (Pitchford et al, 2016; Asmussen et al, 2018; Macdonald et al, 2020; Vasilopoulos and Ellefson, 2021)as this new evidence draws attention to the use of the all-natural spaces and localities such as parks, woods, beaches as an enabler for young children's early numeracy and literacy. So how can we use these spaces effectively?
A key report by Natural England (2016) England's largest outdoor learning project reveals children more motivated to learn when outside - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) clearly demonstrated the multiple benefits for children engaging in the outdoors. The benefits not only included a motivational approach to learning, but it developed a strong element of resilience through satisfaction and positivity for all children. We all know how much better we feel with the sun shining and listening to the birdsong, children too feel happier outside and we must allow times of quiet reflection and to see the world from different vantage points. For example, lying flat on the woodland floor, looking up through the trees, and seeing the seasonal changes. How fabulous is that! When was the last time you did this and enjoyed the scent and sounds of outside. Remember aural discrimination is another precursor to early reading.

Without the skills linked to self-regulation, there is an inability to manage oneself and to control actions linked to strong emotions and feelings. This could lead to conflict with peers and adults, a brake down in friendships, and may become a barrier to learning.

By aligning with the National Nature Park initiative -Home | Education Nature Park the research Natural England (2016) demonstrates the importance of a having a flexible cross curricular and holistic approach to nature. The National Nature Park highlights that engaging in the outdoors will give children the skills, the confidence, the resilience, and agency to become activists or stewards for their world, resonating with the Governments Sustainability and Climate Change strategy (2022) Sustainability leadership and climate action plans in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Have you joined the Nature Park and added your setting to it? If not, please do so.
The Sustainable Development Goals UNESCO (SDG) (2015) provide a framework for practitioners, students, and young children to engage in activism through agency. For example, SDG 15 specifically targets Life on Land, encouraging children to support the protection and conservation of local ecosystems, their biodiversity, and to reduce the degradation and loss of natural habitats. We all know how much young children want to save the polar bear or the bees- so we need to build on this love and fascination. Therefore, there is an opportunity here to merge these mutually beneficial aspects of early learning together. If there is a relationship between nature and the child, they will want to care for and protect their world. Consider how carefully and lovingly your children observe their woodland environment. Reflect upon the language they use as they examine their habitats with fine motor skills, developing strength in the muscles of their hands.

The Natural England Access to Evidence Information Note EIN017(2016, p2) clearly states that children who have been physically learning and interacting outside "have higher achievement (in comparison to their peers or projected attainment) in reading, mathematics..." This further substantiated in the Young children's physical development in England (IELS, 2021, p12) with data showing a "significant relationship between children's physical development and oral language skills (emergent literacy) and emergent numeracy" EIN017_edition_1.pdf
The research (IELS,202, p14) also recognises two fixed risk factors regarding poor fine motor development. The first was being younger in the year group, and secondly being a boy. As we all know fine motor development is important for writing (Dinehart and Manfra, 2013), which is a key skill for children as they enter Year one. Boys love to be outside and so I suggest you provide lots of fine motor skill activities using natural products from the woodland such as leaves to thread, twigs to collect for creative patterns, scattering seeds onto bird feeders or using handheld tools. They will organically be developing their fine motor skills without even realising it! Better than a worksheet any day! All these activities engage with early literacy and early numeracy as well as developing physical dexterity. But I can hear the panic as you think hammers and drills, but with careful teaching and support, children can safely use real tools. Consider again the early literacy in the woodland (for example, "this is sooo heavy!" "Can I bang my nail in really hard?") and with numeracy comes with the effects of handling tools and the awareness organically of weight. If we only give children plastic tools to use, then they miss the understanding of how wood, steel and varied materials feel with weight and balance.

The natural environment of the woodland provides multiple opportunities for gross motor skill development, for children to move in all forms of physicality. There must be both non-structured and structured opportunities for running, walking, climbing, crawling, reaching up and down, stretching as evidence (IELS,2021, p 60) highlights the importance of "deliberate specific structured steps with adequate equipment". Adequate equipment must include the natural woodland environment- think tree stumps, trunks, and branches as well as building activities and swinging. Climbing along tree trunks, balancing, and pulling their bodies along the truck, provide gross motor skill experiences that also generate excitement and pleasure. Imagine the authentic language the child would share retelling these experiences as well as their core strength being developed!

The woodland gives the children opportunities to navigate themselves through the woodland, ducking down and manoeuvring themselves safely and developing an awareness of their own body in space. Just walking safely through tricky spots encourages gross motor control and core strength and these experiences generate early numeracy language such as up, above, beneath, under, below and high, key positional mathematical language.
You can also encourage them to build fences with experienced mentors from the woodland volunteers or rangers weaving and using natural twigs and sticks from the forest floor. Or manoeuvring tarpaulin sheets to make dens which incorporate both gross and fine motor skills together holistically! A pierce grip using pegs to make a fantastic den in the rain is far more exciting than a handwriting worksheet sitting in a chair! The difficulty of this task creating a den supports the research even further, identifying not only the relationship between persistence and children's developing physical attributes, but children who had greater fine and gross motor development had higher emergent numeracy and emergent literacy (IELS,2021). I would love to hear your woodland stories and I hope this has inspired you to use the locality and life on land to support early literacy and numeracy!

Ref - IELS thematic report: Young children's physical development in England Research report June 2021Megan Lucas, Chris Hope and Caroline Sharp, National Foundation for Educational Research DfE International early learning and child wellbeing study (IELS) thematic report: young children's physical development in England (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The IFF are undertaking research on the 18 Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs and wish to undertake this with us in the future and would like us to supply email addresses of settings that have engaged with us through CPD. If you don't wish to have your contact details added to this research please let us knowvia the Hub email at:

Childminding

June Cargill
Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, Strategic Partner, Childminder Lead

CHILDMINDER DROP IN

Every Monday 9.30-11.30a.m. at Deysbrook Community Centre, Liverpool, L12 4XF. and every Friday 9.30-11.00a.m. at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool, L6 2WF.
If you attend a drop in or meet up with other childminders in your area, please let us know so we can advertise, allowing local childminder colleagues to attend, join in and network.

Calling all SPH Network Members….. FREE Resource bags coming soon, funded by the SPH this is a fantastic opportunity for Childminders.

Each bag of carefully selected items will be a welcome addition to your setting which in turn supports your children's development.

Each resource bag is designed to be used individually, with a group of childminder colleagues and shared as a lending library.

In the next few weeks you can apply for resources that cover Communication and Language, Early Maths and Story Comprehension including a selection of various quality Story Sacks..

Also included will be Outdoor and Nature, Habitats and Musicical Instruments bags.

Look out for the launch coming soon….

https://www.evertonnurseryschoolandfamilycentre.org/strongerpracticehub

@EducEndowFoundn has published a new, downloadable and bite-sized resource that presents what the research evidence tells us about supporting personal, social and emotional development in the early years.

Download:Supporting Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) in the Early Years | Education Endowment Foundation (d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net)

What do we know about supporting personal, social and emotional development (PSED) in the early years?

@EducEndowFoundn 's @LGrocott_EY introduces a new resource that illustrates what the evidence tells us and provides actionable recommendations.

Read more: https://eef.li/m4g1sn

For more information about how you can support PSED in your setting, take a look at this theme on the Evidence Store: EEF | Personal Social and Emotional Development (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/eef-blog-what-do-we-know-about-personal-social-and-emotional-development-in-the-early-years

EEF blog: What do we know about Personal, Social and Emotional…
Introducing a new resource on supporting PSED in the early years
educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

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