



Collaborative

Being social and co-constructed. Children and educators work together to identify ways of learning and understanding through sustained shared thinking and action.

Teachers recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and make deliberate, well planned decisions to support young learners' learning through social interactions with a range of partners. Supportive teacher-child conversations and young learners' active involvement in decision-making helps to build positive dispositions to learning.

Collaborative partnerships with adults and peers are built through classroom experiences where the learning is co-constructed. The concept of co-constructed learning recognises young learners as powerful partners in their own learning. When teachers work from this perspective they value each individual's knowledge and experiences and use these contributions to inform decision-making.

Murdoch and Wilson (2008) recommend that teachers explicitly teach children the skills of working collaboratively with a range of partners using the following steps:

- Build team spirit and encourage a culture of cooperative behaviours by promoting a 'we can' attitude.
- Lead by example, modelling collaborative behaviours with staff and children.
- Minimise clutter and create flexible working spaces where children can work together.
- Explicitly teach the skills for collaboration so children understand the importance of individual contributions and take responsibility for their actions when working with others.
- Create visual cue charts with children, focusing on the positive behaviours expected in group work.
- Include informal and formal reflection about working collaboratively in groups to increase children's awareness and understanding of the processes involved, for example ask:
 - How well do you think your group worked today?
 - How do you know you/your group worked well?
 - What is one thing you think you did really well to help your group?
 - What is something you would like to do better next time?¹

*Sustained shared thinking is a pedagogical practice 'where two or more individuals work (often playfully) together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or extend a narrative.'*²

Collaborative planning with young learners

When used in classroom interactions the following strategies support young learners to problem solve, to question and contribute their ideas. These strategies can be used to support all aspects of learning.

Tune in: Listen carefully to what is being said, observe body language and what the young learner is doing.

Show genuine interest: Give young learners your full attention through non-verbal behaviours including eye contact, smiles and nods that affirm your interest in young learners' contributions.

Respect young learners' decisions and encourage young learners' to elaborate: 'I really want to know more about this.'

Recap on young learners ideas: 'So you think that...'

Offer your own experience: 'When an idea sometimes doesn't work one way I...'

Clarify ideas: 'So Katie, you think that all egg layers live on land?'

Offer a suggestion: 'Try doing it this way and let's see what happens'

Remind: 'Remember you said that...'

Offer encouragement to further thinking: 'I can see you really thought hard about the design of your puppet. How will it stay upright?'

Provide an alternative viewpoint: 'Maybe the three little pigs could have shared their food with the wolf and then he wouldn't want to eat them?'

1 Murdoch, K., & Wilson, J. (2008). *Creating a learner centred classroom*. Taylor & Francis: Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 27-28.

2 Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2012). Curriculum, pedagogy and progression in sustained shared thinking *Every Child*, 18(3), p.34.



Speculate about ideas: ‘Do you think our bean plants would be taller if...?’

Reciprocate: ‘David, thank goodness you were wearing your raincoat when you arrived. Look what happened to me. Without my raincoat, my jacket is very wet!’

Ask open questions: ‘I wonder what might happen if...?’
‘What do you think might happen next?’

Model thinking: ‘I have to remember to take my daughter to buy soccer boots, cook a cake for Mrs Smith’s birthday and take the dog to the groomers tonight. I think I’d better make myself a list to remind me.’³

3 Adapted from Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2005). Quality Interactions in the Early Years. *Keynote Address at the TACTYC Annual Conference, Cardiff, 5 November – Birth to 8 Matters! Seeking Seamlessness – Continuity? Integration? Creativity?*
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