How to support and encourage children's learning

Spidergraph of Supporting Learning
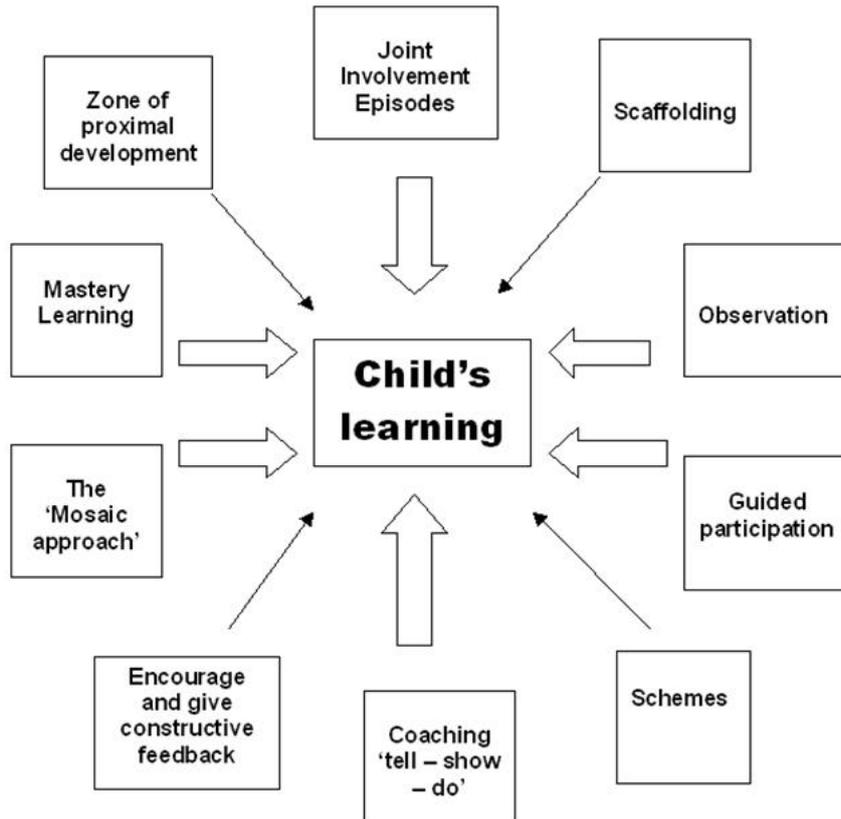
Role of the Adult

These are some of the ways in which a child's learning can be supported by an adult, The above are all strategies or approaches a practitioner may use in guiding a child to learn or practice skills.

Active participant
Organizer
Facilitator
Provider of resources
Initiator of ideas
Motivator
Observer
Encourager
Supporter
Listener

In supporting children's learning we need to stimulate the children and help them become engaged in the learning experience or activity. Learning experiences should be fun and versatile as well as being attractive to the children. Everyday situations can be turned into valuable learning opportunities, as learning can be promoted in a variety of contexts.

Simple activities such as cleaning, washing up, cooking and going for a walk can be used constructively without expensive resources.

Lots of learning can happen without children knowing!

The E Framework: A framework for the practitioner's role in supporting learning

Experience: Provide experiences, opportunities, resources inside and outside the learning setting.

For example: Inside: planned play areas, cafes, shops, literacy, numeracy, creativity areas. Outside: chalking boards, walks in the local environment, big toys, climbing apparatus.

Extend: Question, listen, intervene in, and extend children's learning where appropriate.

For example: Adult during a local walk – questioning and listening: 'What can you hear?' 'What sound do the leaves make when we walk in them?' adult in the home corner – intervening in and extending a child's play: 'Could you pour me a nice cup of tea please?'

Encourage: Praise and value each child's progress in learning. Help children to achieve tasks and activities they may not be able to achieve on their own.

For example: Adult writing with a group of children – 'I enjoyed your reading so far. What might the dragon do next? I'll help you with any long words you may need so that you can make your story exciting.'

Engage: Become involved in children's learning experiences. Provide for their individual needs.

For example: Adult baking with children – 'You've made some lovely cakes. I enjoyed making them with you. Johnny wants to ice them, so shall we do that, Johnny?'

Educate: Be a role model for children by demonstrating knowledge, skills and understanding.

For example: Adult at story time – 'Today I am going to read you one of my favourite stories. I hope you'll like it as much as I do.'

Explain: Listen to children and answer their questions. For example: Adult responding to a child's questions about where the water goes when the bath plug is pulled – 'The water goes down the plug hole into sewers, which are big tunnels under the street. It then flows along pipes to the sewage works where it is cleaned.'

Examine: Examine children's learning and development through observation and assessment in order to plan for their future development.

For example: Adults meet at the end of the day to review the observations of children they have carried out the day. This review informs planning of the next day's activities to meet the child's individual needs.

The E-Framework can be used in a variety of ways to support learning. As a guide it breaks down some of the strategies used within the Nursery to promote children's learning in a simple, concise way.

Observation

There are different types of observations that practitioners use within the setting. Observations range from long written reports of what the practitioner has observed over a period of time to short, brief notes stating an achievement.

The different observation techniques are:

Free descriptions: detailed objective recordings of what takes place over a period of time, normally under 5 minutes.

Event samples: recordings of a sequence of events, the frequency and occurrence. They may be used to track the number of times an action takes place within a given time. Typically they will be used as a means of recording the effectiveness of an intervention programme for modifying a child's behaviour.

Timed Observations / Time Sampling: recordings of a child's precise actions every 10 minutes. Also recording of language, communication and social interaction.

Duration Observation: recording accurately how long children spend at particular activities or using certain equipment.

Frequency Sampling: tracking incidences of particular aspects of behaviour in a child or group of children. Features of behaviour can be identified and the frequency and duration recorded.

Tick List or Check List: method of recording whether or not a child is capable of achieving specific age-related tasks.

Observations are used as evidence as of children's learning and development. They are used by practitioners to collate information on each child, and are used to assess further areas for development. Observations on children are confidential, and are only used by practitioners to create a 'picture' of how a child is developing.