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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt9BpFbYNwE&feature=youtu.be>



WORKSHOP : OBSERVING CHILDREN AND SCHEMAS

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WHAT MATERIALS?

Children need meaningful experiences with materials, nature and people who are warm and affectionate towards them, so that they feel loved and that they matter and are appreciated. During this workshop you are introduced to a range of materials for babies, toddlers and young children. Practical examples and opportunities to interact with these will help those working with and spending time with babies, toddlers and young children to observe children as they play. Discussion about observation and schemas will help adults to see how to help support and extend the play and communication between children and between adults and children.

Learning through the senses and feedback from the physical movement of the body is central to learning throughout life, and is the main way of learning for babies and toddlers. What children see, hear, taste, smell, touch and physical feedback cannot be given too much attention.

When we observe children, it often seems as if they are 'flitting' from one activity to another. But in fact a closer observation might reveal that they are using the same schema (repeated action) wherever they go.

Treasure baskets

These were developed by Elinor Goldschmied, a Froebelian educator, and they are used in many European countries now.

You need a basket that won't tip when a sitting baby leans on it. Two or three babies can sit at the basket and play. It must be of a width that the baby can reach in and take an object they choose. The object will, of course, go straight into the baby's mouth, so if an adult thinks something might be unsafe, it should not be put into the basket.

The objects in the basket should be of natural materials (no plastic if possible) because they have texture, smell, and natural qualities. They should ideally be collected at no cost, and each object should be carefully chosen for the babies. And as much as possible the objects should be selected because the adult has observed the baby and believes, in the light of the observations, that an object might interest the baby

Heuristic play

For crawling, cruising and wobbly walkers!

Once sitting babies begin to crawl the treasure basket is no longer what they enjoy most. They want to be on the move!

Children need to explore objects which help them to fit things inside, take them out, tip and heap and scatter. Boxes, tubes and other recycled and found materials are ideal, and low or non cost. Practical examples will be given. The materials can be stored in a sack hanging on a peg on the wall.

Children can be encouraged to participate in the clearing up, which they often enjoy as it involves putting objects into the sack.

HOW TO USE THE MATERIALS WHEN OBSERVING PLAY AND SUPPORTING THE SCHEMAS

Treasure baskets

The adult sits close to the babies on the floor, observing, smiling encouragement if the baby needs the adult, or wishes to show them an object. The adult should not take over the play of the baby. Instead the baby should be supported to play with the objects in the basket. Some babies like an abundance of objects, and others like a few. Observation will tell you what is needed for a particular baby.

Heuristic play

The same approach is taken. Observing a sitting baby at the treasure basket, or a crawler, cruiser or wobbly walker engaged in Heuristic play, the adult observes and adds materials next time based on the observations. The adult tries to identify the child's schema cluster so as to support and extend the play. Be a good companion. Sit with the children without crowding them or taking over. Encourage them to help you tidy the bag of materials away and hang it up ready for next time.

WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING AS THEY PLAY – SCHEMAS

When you are spending time with babies and young children you will be able to observe their schemas and use your observations to support and extend the play and learning that is part of play as the main way of learning in early childhood. They are learning to be imaginative and creative, to problem solve and investigate. In fact, they are engaged in all the ELDA (Early Learning and Development Areas) in the National Curriculum Framework Birth to Four.

- Wellbeing
- Identity and belonging
- Communication
- Learning through the senses
- Exploring mathematics
- Creativity and imagination and play
- Knowledge and understanding of the world

Reading

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