

Teaching and Learning

Characteristics of effective learning - Creating and thinking critically



Creating and thinking critically refers to children creating ideas, thinking flexibly, and drawing on their previous experiences and then using a rational approach, or thinking critically to choose the best idea to solve a problem. This is why it is essential for children to have opportunities to play and explore with resources and ideas in a range of contexts so that they are able to discover connections and develop better understanding.

Task 1

Work through the bullet points below with your team. Do the statements happen in your setting, how can you make improvements?

- Provide prompts in the environment that remind children of their previous experiences for example photographs of models in the construction area and displays of child initiated creative work.
- Avoid activities that involved children reproducing other's ideas.
- Ensure that opportunities are open ended so that children are required to draw on previous experiences or learn from each other.
- Use visual prompts for the routine so that children are able to accurately predict and make connections with previous experiences.

- Challenge children's thinking through providing new and inspiring resources and giving children opportunities to explore these freely and make connections.
- Plan activities that don't repeat but link to previous activities to ignite children's interests and curiosity.
- Take a series of photographs of children thoroughly engaged in purposeful activities so that you can display learning stories to discuss or to spark future ideas.
- Ensure there are rich opportunities for children to engage in imaginative play.

Task 2

Reflect on the adult's role. Does all your team think about the bullet points below? Challenge each other by observing one another's practice. What evidence do you see? Note and share feedback in a professional discussion.

- Talk to parents and observe children to gather key information about individual children's interests and fascinations and include relevant and stimulating resources in provision.
- Model being a thinker yourself, through verbalising as you solve problems and through sharing your own everyday experiences of problem solving.
- Support children to develop a range of strategies through open questions or comments.
 - I wonder how you made that.
 - Do you think there was another way of doing it?
 - You really tried something different that time.
 - I can see you really worked hard.

- Allow children to lead conversations and join in with thinking about things together.
- Encourage children to talk about the problems they encounter and how they have overcome them.
- Seek time for in-depth shared conversations to support children to connect ideas and develop their thinking.
- Encourage children to talk through and bounce ideas around as they play and engage in activities.