

curriculum for excellence

supporting the early level

Active learning

A CPD activity for practitioners

Introduction

Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by spontaneous play, planned purposeful play, investigating and exploring and focused learning and teaching. It should be supported when necessary through sensitive intervention to support or extend learning. All areas of the curriculum can be enriched and developed through play. (Building the Curriculum 2)

Active learning is important because it:

- provides learning experiences which are meaningful, purposeful, appropriate, challenging and enjoyable
- motivates and engages children
- involves children in planning and reviewing their learning
- improves transitions and continuity in children's learning
- enables children to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

The purpose of this activity is to allow practitioners to develop their knowledge and understanding of active learning in pre-school and primary settings.

Time required

This activity will take approximately 1 hour.

Outcomes

- Staff will gain a greater knowledge and understanding of good practice in active learning.
- Staff will agree on action(s) for improving active learning in their setting.



Preparation

This CPD activity is based on staff using video clips to identify features of good practice and reflect on their own practice. In advance of the session, it will be helpful to organise facilities to watch the appropriate video clips and record your discussions.

Activity 1

In a group

- Discuss examples of active learning in your own setting.
- How do these examples challenge and motivate children?
- How do these examples allow for personal choice, independence and opportunities for decision making?

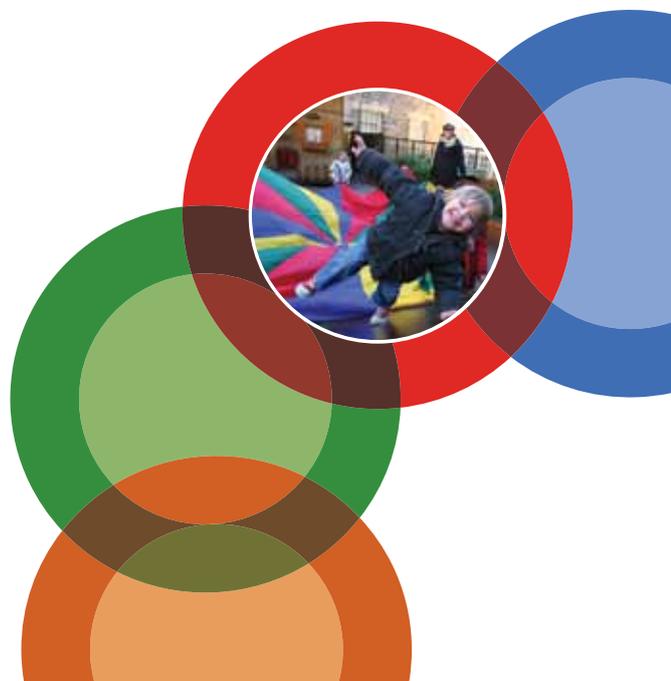
Activity 2

As a staff team, watch at least two of the following videos

- As you watch these videos, note down all of the features of good practice in active learning.
- Compare your notes with others in your group. Do you agree on the good practice you observed? What do you notice about the children?
- Comment on the role of practitioners.
- What do you think are the main benefits of these experiences for the children?
- Supporting the Early Level DVD resource – the section on 'Active learning' (8.55 mins)



- The Journey to Excellence 'Outdoor play' (7.46 mins)



- The Journey to Excellence 'New ways of expanding young minds' (7.00 mins)



- The Journey to Excellence 'Smoother transitions' (3.32 mins)



- The Journey to Excellence 'Learning through imaginative play' (4.41 mins)



- The Journey to Excellence 'Encouraging learning from a younger age' (4.06 mins)



Reflecting on practice

As a staff team

Having considered your own practice and that shown in the videos:

- identify an aspect that, as a staff, you intend to improve in your setting
- discuss what steps you will take to develop this
- how will you know that this approach is successful in motivating and challenging children?

Useful online resources

(click on title to view file)

There are a range of resources to support this topic available online and on the accompanying CD-ROM.

- **Building the Curriculum 2**
- **Learning and Teaching Scotland** Early Years website
- Examples of good practice in active learning approaches can be found on the **HMIE** website and on **The Journey to Excellence** website
- Interesting **case studies** of active learning can be found on the LTS website
- **Learning about Learning**

