



Owning the Curriculum – What does this mean in the Early Years?

Dr Sue Allingham
Early Years Out of the Box

Aims

- The word 'curriculum' has gained a currency in the sector, that was not known previously. This has confused many people
- The aim of this session is to give an understanding of the what, why and how of 'curriculum'
- What does it mean?
- Why do we need to understand this?
- How do we do this? Creating a curriculum is based in what we already know, our practice and provision. We will look at how this is done –

Now is our chance to own it and claim the word 'curriculum' in a developmentally informed way





**Children are not a distraction from
more important work,
They are the most important work.**

DR JOHN TRAINER



The Three Lenses

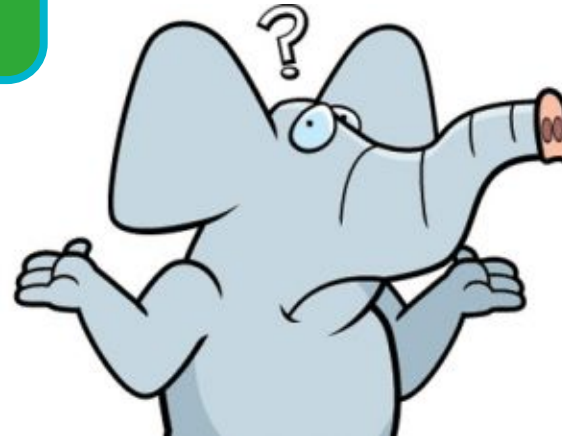
- What?
- Why ?
- How?



The Five Filters

**EXPECTATION
S**

**PERSONAL
FEELINGS**



ASSUMPTIONS

**OUTSIDE
INFLUENCES**

**OTHER
PEOPLE**



How are you feeling?



What?



The curriculum as an onion



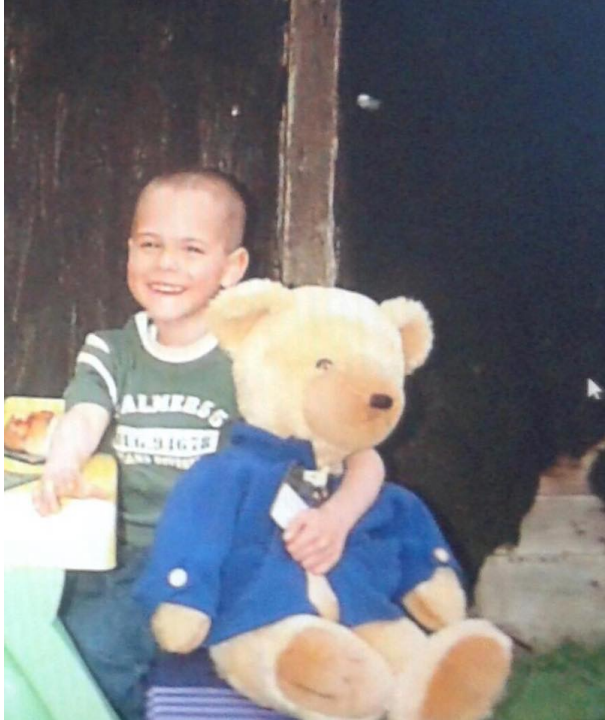
What?

The layers of the onion

- First layer – The Families
- Second layer – Other people
- Third layer – The physical environment
- Fourth layer – The emotional environment
- Fifth layer – The Curriculum
- Centre – The Children



Cultural capital



What?

Some children arrive at an early years settings with different experiences from others, in their learning and play



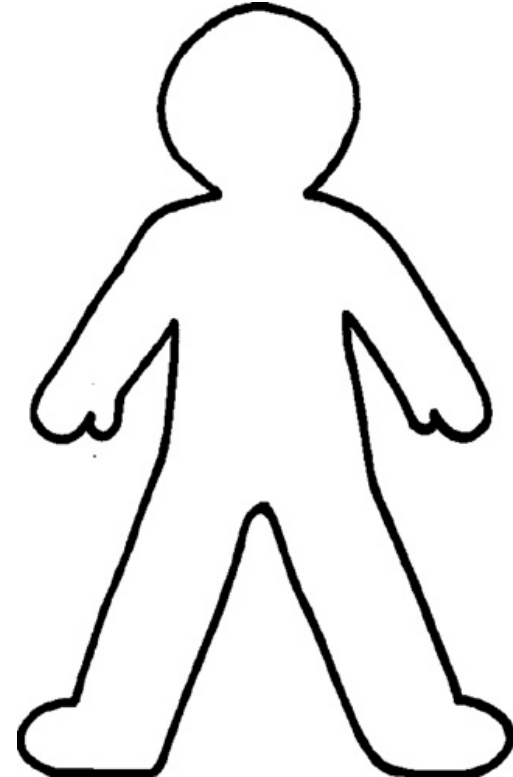
It is the role of the setting to help children experience the awe and wonder of the world in which they live, through the 7 areas of learning.

What a setting does, through its EYFS curriculum and interactions with practitioners, potentially makes all the difference for children

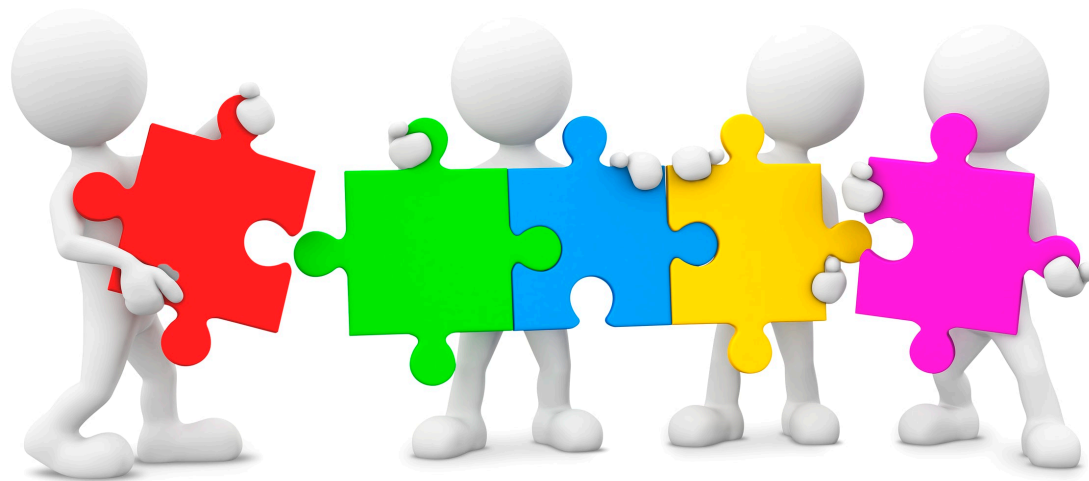


What? The First Layer

What do you already know about the child and their family?



What?



What?

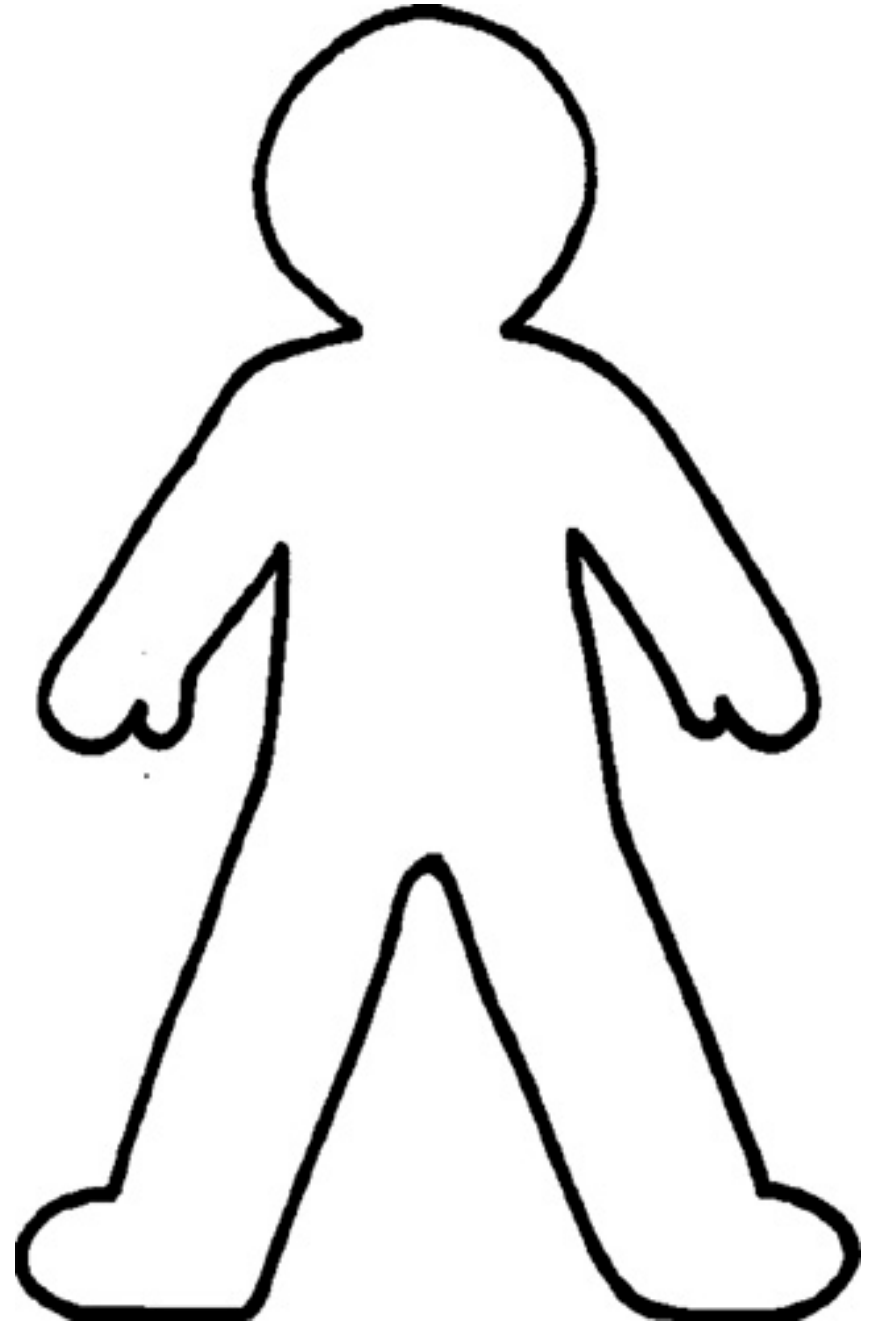
The layers of the onion

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What?

*What is your role as a
'teacher'?*

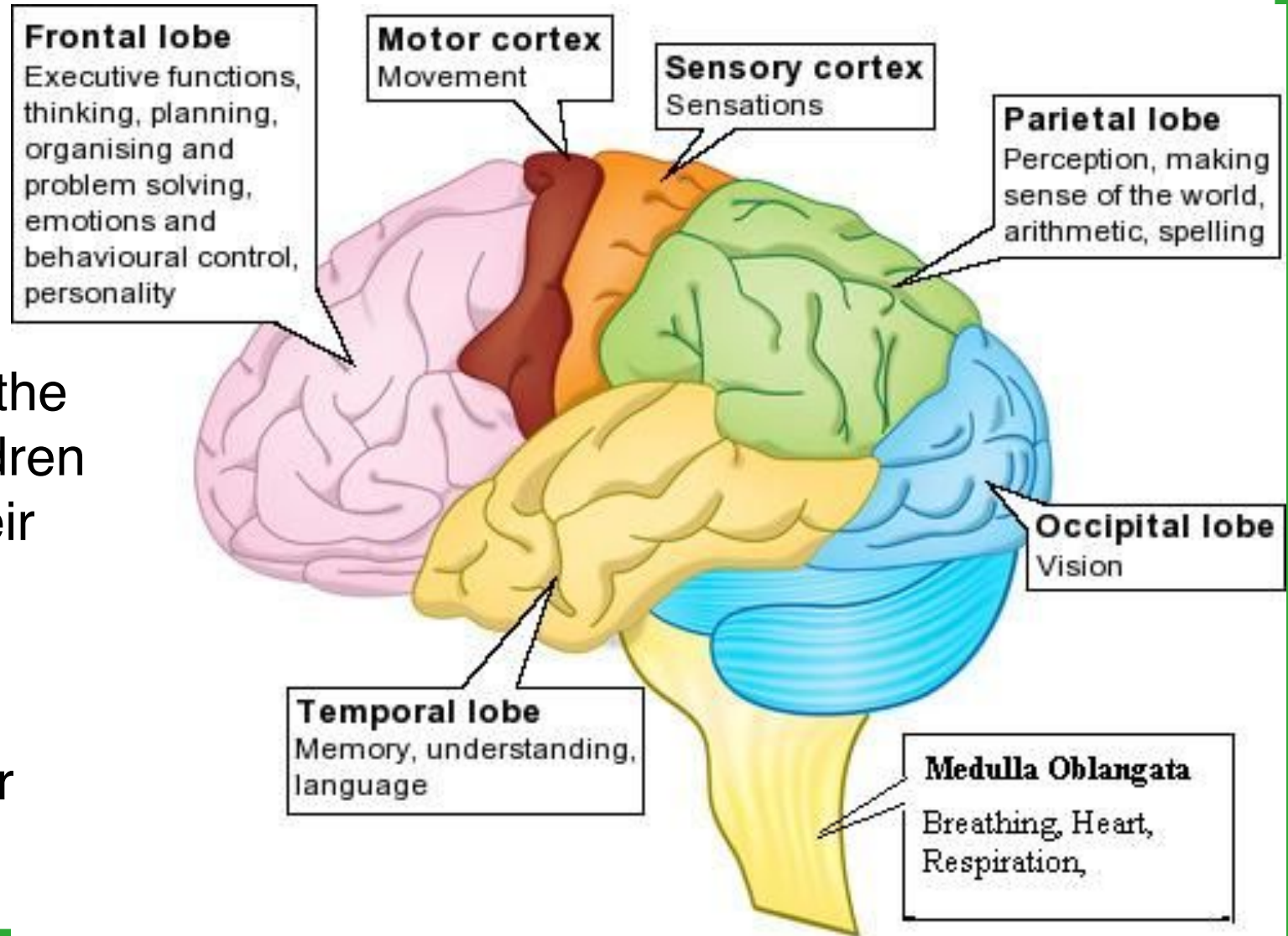


What? Why? How?



Research tells us that the early experiences children have will impact on their ability to learn.

This may be positive or negative.



What?

The layers of the onion

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What? The Third Layer

The Physical Environment



What?

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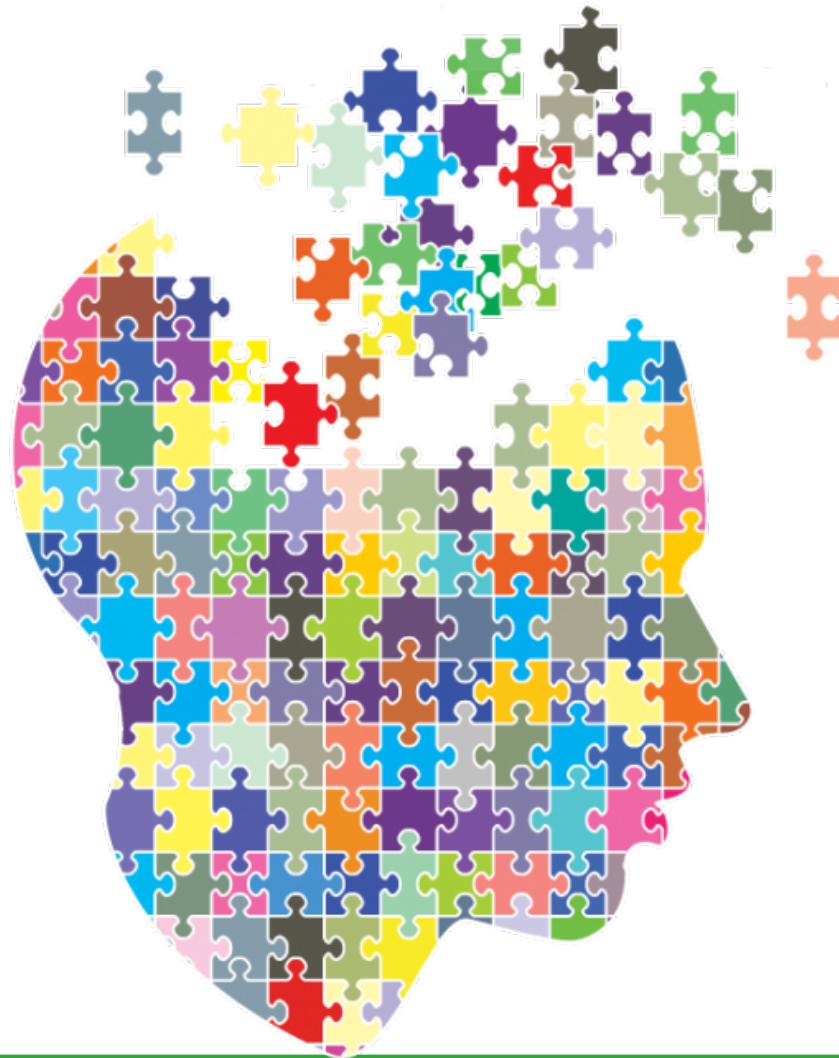
Why?

The environment you construct around you and the children also reflects this image you have about the child. There's a difference between the environment that you are able to build based on a preconceived image of the child and the environment that you can build that is based on the child you see in front of you — the relationship you build with the child, the games you play.

(Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins by Loris Malaguzzi)



How? The Cognitive Jigsaw



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Put your hand up



Lining up

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How?



Sit cross legged



What?

The layers of the onion

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What?

The emotional environment



How?

The Enabling Environment –

Emotional

+

Physical



How are you feeling?







Check reality against assumption s



What?

The layers of the onion

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What?

The content and specifications of a course or *programme of study* (as in ‘the history curriculum’); or, in a wider sense, the totality of the specified learning opportunities available in one educational institution (as in ‘the school curriculum’); or, in its very widest sense, the *programme of learning* applying to all pupils in the nation (as in ‘the national curriculum’).

It has been observed, with some irony, that the word is the Latin term for a track around which competitors race for the entertainment of others. This metaphor is an interesting one in that it suggests a Darwinian view of formal education as a competition in which there are winners and losers.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/> (my italics)



What?

Consider this comment from a teacher –

I personally really dislike the use of the word curriculum. For me it conjures up a prescriptive approach to teaching and learning with the distinct possibility of narrowing what is offered to young children.

If we believe in offering children experiences and interactions which are in tune with their individual needs, if we believe in offering children experiences and interactions which are in tune with their individual needs, preferences and abilities, then a defined curriculum potentially restricts this approach.



So What?

It's about what we perceive to be teaching. And learning
There are three lenses through which I feel it is important to view this way of constructing a curriculum –

- *What is the purpose of each part of the of the curriculum design?*
- *Why has this particular design been decided upon, and who has been involved in the development?*
- *How will impact be assessed and by whom?*

Once we start to view 'curriculum' in this way it begins to look different.



What it isn't...

- A curriculum isn't one size fits all
- A curriculum isn't a progression model where everyone moves through the same teaching, in steps, at the same time
- A curriculum isn't about what the adults think is important
- A curriculum isn't downloaded, copied or bought in a series of books
- A curriculum isn't about what social media says
- A curriculum isn't set in stone
- A curriculum isn't dictated by someone else





What it is...

What makes your setting unique?

Because that is what informs your curriculum



This?



Or these?



Teaching is not the ‘what next?’, but the ‘what now?’

It is the role of the knowledgeable and listening adult, the teacher, to understand what has been before and what must happen now for future learning to embed

We know how important play is, but we forget how important play is



How?

There are three core sets of people who have a vested interest in the curriculum that is provided at your setting –



These are the 'top level' influences for the 'top level' curriculum statements



How?

David Wright ('Mr Paintpots) writes -

Our children should engage with the awe and wonder of life and new experiences. We need to support individual paths of discovery, providing space and opportunities to learn and experience the richness of their world first hand.

Every day is an opportunity to challenge, provoke, excite, stimulate, teach and investigate together with our intrepid explorers through the widest fields of study. As adults we can ask 'What if?' questions.

We can collect resources together. We can arrange to visit our local community and interact with our neighbours. Above all, we can instil in our children the values of appreciation, respect, tolerance, compassion, inclusion and acceptance.

(https://connectchildcare.com/blog/some-thoughts-on-pedagogy-and-curriculum/?utm_campaign=some-thoughts-on-pedagogy-and-curriculum-what-do-we-want-our-children-to-learn)



What?

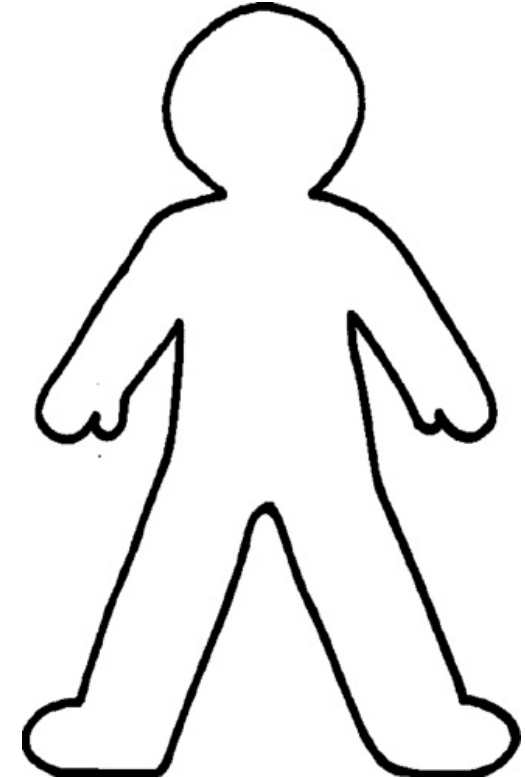
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What?

*What is the role
of the child?*





Developmentally appropriate practices result from the process of *professionals making decisions* about the *well-being and education* of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/dap/3-core-considerations>

How?

- P** - Physical
- I** - Intellectual
- L** - Language
- E** - Emotional
- S** - Social





1. What is known about *child development and learning*— knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be *safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and also challenging to children;*



2. What is known about the *strengths, interests, and needs* of each individual child in the group to be able to adapt for and *be responsive to inevitable individual variation*; and



3. Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that *learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful* for the participating children and their families

Why? Alex's Story

'I want to know how water makes electricity...'



How does the sky turn blue?



How do fish swim?



How?

Inform your teaching in all areas by what you have observed the learning needs and interests of the children to be.

Remember that not everything is theme based – that is just one part of your teaching

A curriculum outlines how you make sure that all children are entitled to knowledgeable, interested, proactive adults who listen and notice.

Knowledgeable, and
listening, Adults



How?

Don't set the bar too low

Ask the children what they want to find out too and make sure to include it in teaching

Look at local frameworks to establish the elements that can be covered specifically in any theme that emerges, but don't forget that there will be a great deal covered incidentally in the everyday occurrences in an 'enabling environment'



Knowledgeable, and
listening, Adults

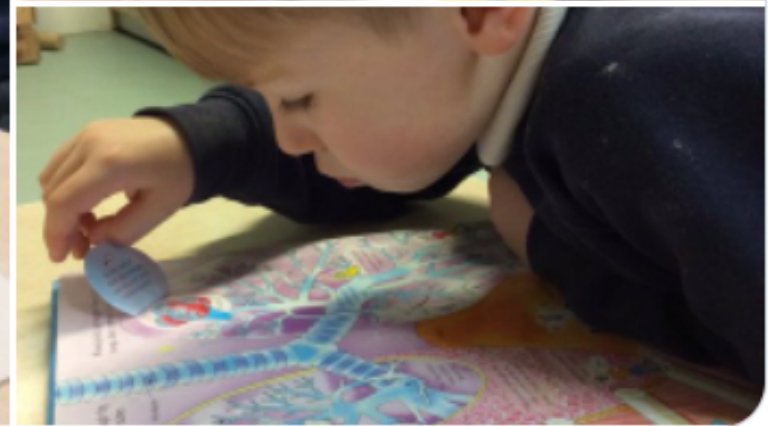
How?



Oakwood Foundation @oakwoodEY · Mar 9



For anyone who has read Rainbow Birds, this is how the curriculum is being driven by I, now in Reception. He is comparing the insides of humans with the insides of other animals. We are all learning together about the similarities and differences!



What? An effective curriculum model includes everyone...





How?

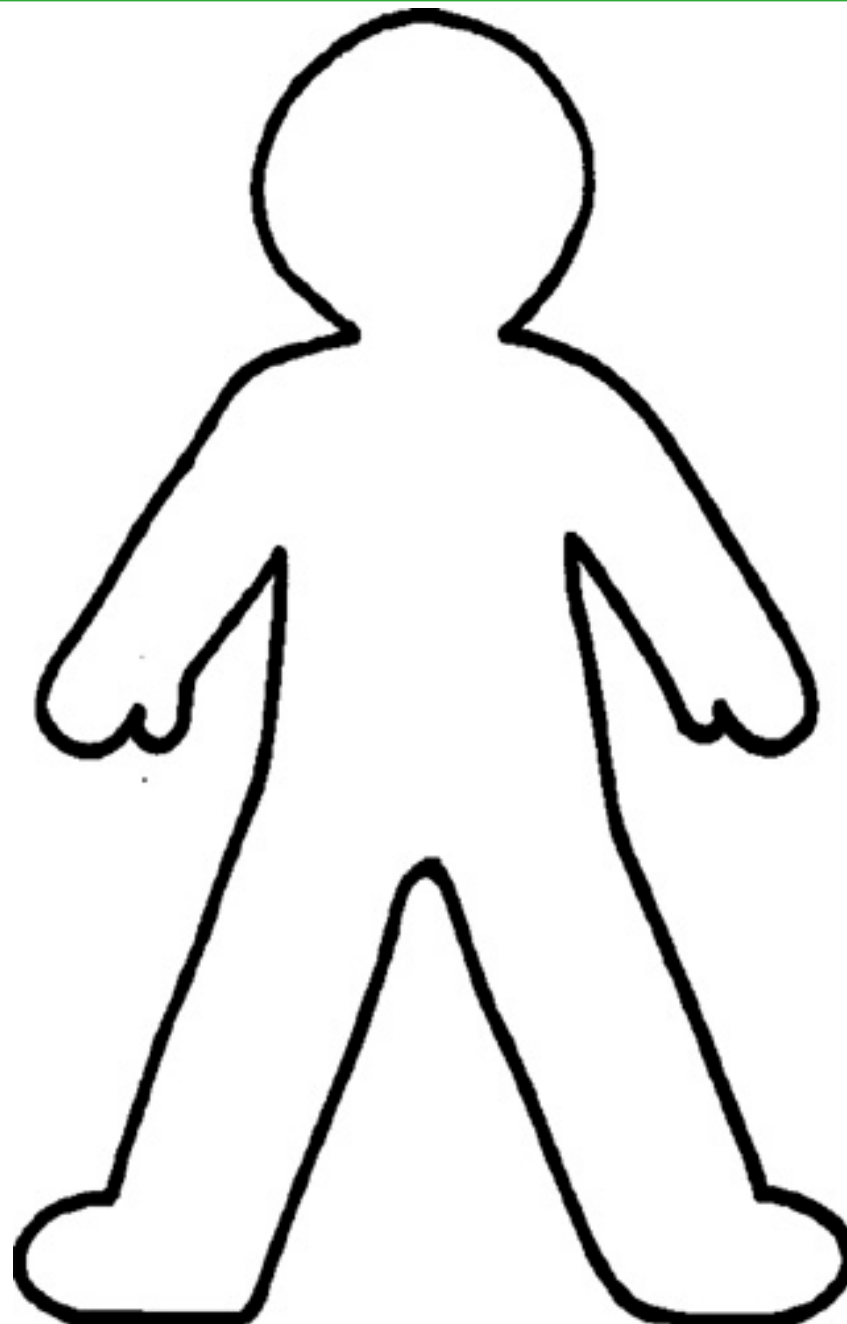
The sky is the limit...



What?

*What is your role as a
'teacher'?*

Have you changed your mind?



The Three Lenses +

- What?
- So what?
- What next?



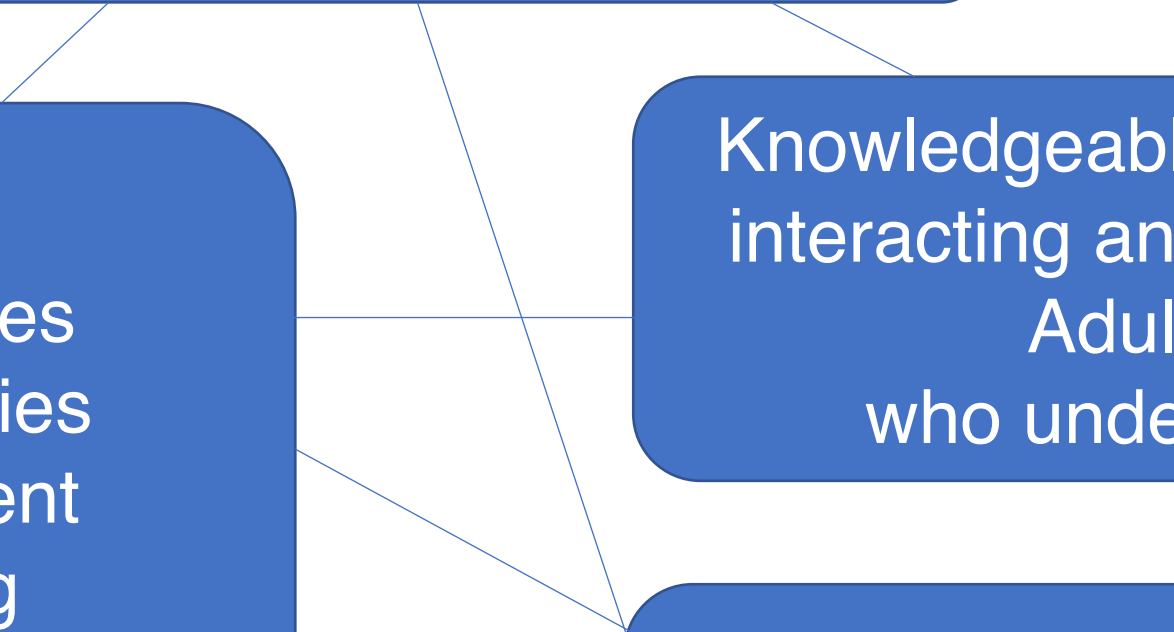


Play
Experiences
Opportunities
Environment
Teaching
Learning

The Unique Child

Knowledgeable, noticing,
interacting and listening,
Adults
who understand

Effective and meaningful
curriculum



How? Questions for Reflection

How often do we take the time to look, listen and notice?

Can we all talk about the what, why and how of our curriculum?

Have we considered how the emotional and physical environments underpin and embed learning?

Do we all understand the needs and interests of the children and how our teaching is planned?

How often do we pause to check reality against our assumptions?

How well do our environments and our teaching really reflect all of us and the families?



How? Questions for reflection

Are we all secure in our knowledge of the key learning we need to teach?

How much do we know about individual interests and hobbies?

How often do we follow a child's lead and add to it?

What do we know about sustained, shared thinking?

Do the children know that we are interested in their thinking? How?

Do we share our own interests and hobbies and make time to talk?

Is 'curriculum' the same as knowledge? Who decides what is taught?



When we work with children we connect ourselves to the future - through the inspiration, guidance and wisdom that we provide, and through the influence and impact we have on children's lives, their understanding and their perceptions of themselves and the world around them

(Dubiel, J. 2014 Effective Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage. London. Sage Publications)





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They are the most important work.**

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Thank you

Connect with me



@DrSue22



@EYOutoftheBox



sue@eyoutofthebox.com



Early Years
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