

# Our learning journey together

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## Key Points

- Camden Early Years Learning Cluster – Lesson Study action research
- One participant's experience in Early Years lesson study

## Purpose

### What were your reasons for doing this development work?

**Camden Early Years Learning Cluster**, initiated by the Thomas Coram Centre and including Camden schools and children's centres and the Institute of Education, benefited from the Camden Partnership for Excellence in Education (CPEE) project funding. **Rationale for the project:** There have been significant improvements in Camden's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results and a renewed focus on effective pedagogy in early years settings. However there is still a significant gap between outcomes for certain groups of Camden children. Only 12% of early years settings in Camden have been graded as outstanding. This suggested that investments needed to be made in the professional development of practitioners across Camden, in order to improve outcomes for all children.

My reason for joining this project and doing this development work was to help promote language and learning with children who have English as additional language. I also joined the group to improve on my practice and learn new things.

### Who were the identified target learners?

The target learners in the Camden Early Years Learning Cluster project: Early years pupils in Children's Centres and Primary schools. White British children entitled to free school meals and black and minority ethnic groups.

My target learners:

Child A has special needs and has a statement. She is not always confident to speak out in small or large groups. We have been encouraging her to take the lead and play teacher in a small group, then when she is more confident encourage her to take the lead in a large group.

Child B has English as additional language. She is not confident to talk in a group and is still learning English. She did a lot of pointing when she wanted something.

Child C has English as additional language. He finds it hard to concentrate in a large group.

### What were your success criteria?

**Success criteria – CEYLC Project** In collaboration with partner settings, the approach and a formal evaluation of the project is facilitated by early years and evaluation experts from the Institute of Education. Key indicators include

- Evidence of research/ lesson study techniques informing practice
- Evidence of change in teaching practice
- Evidence of project resulting in change in confidence/knowledge and improved teaching

**Success criteria – target pupils** For target children to be willing to have a go, keep trying, choose ways to do things, express their own ideas in a small and large groups.

### **What did you do? (What success criteria did you use?)**

For my first Lesson Study session (October) I planned a structured activity where the children sat at the table. I showed them picture cards as a time table so they knew what was coming first, next and last. They did a sharing game of passing the box around the table to each take an object out and explore what they have taken out the box. They each in turn had to show their friends what object they had and what you could do with it. One child had a ball with lights inside; they explained it's shiny and can roll. We finished the session with a book. In the post-lesson discussion we talked about how the children will be focused on the routine picture to help them understand and help with concentration but to put a surprise element to the activity. This was my first activity.

The second Lesson Study session (January) was retelling *Rosie's Walk*. I had read the book to the children each day. I photocopied the book and cut the pictures out, then asked the children to retell the story by choosing what they would like Rosie's walk to be. I had 4 children and 2 glue sticks; the idea was for the children to turn-take and talk about who's turn was next with the glue sticks. The children chose how they wanted the story to start and finish. I wanted the children to take the lead and for me not to ask them too many questions. The activity was repeated through the week with different groups of children and the outcome was different each time. I talked in the post-lesson discussion how I had wanted to sit back, not ask too many questions, let the children take the lead and work together to retell the story. I found this difficult as I knew how the story was structured and wanted to put my input in, but I managed to sit back and let the children enjoy the activity.

My third Lesson Study session (April) was a story activity about a bus going on a journey. I read the story then ask the children if they would like to build their own bus or transport from community blocks. The children took the lead and built a bus; they put chairs in the bus, and they found a circle shape for the steering wheel. The children first built a bus, then an aeroplane. They were discussing where the bus or aeroplane was going. They took turns to be the driver. They talked about numbers and destinations of different bus routes that I never knew they had the knowledge of. I asked them questions from time to time without interrupting their play. I was a passenger on the bus and when it was time for me to leave I asked to get off, and told the children to carry on their journey. They carried on the activity for another 30

minutes after I left. In my pre-lesson study discussion I had said I wanted to set the activity up then let the children take the lead and for me not to ask too many questions. I wanted the activity to carry on once I had left, so this worked really well.

### **What specific teaching resources did you use?**

Lesson plans, Picture cards and props. Rosie's Walk by Pat Hutchins Books about the characteristics of learning. Books about pedagogy.

## **Outcomes and Impact**

### **What has been the impact on pupil learning and teaching?**

The biggest impact for me is to let the children think more for themselves rather than the adults always helping them. For example, when I set the play dough table I would have normally put the play dough in 4 heaps each with a rolling pin and some cutters. Now I put the play dough in the middle of the table with the rolling pins and cutters in a container so the children need to share out the play dough and choose what they would like to use with the play dough. When the children are at an activity I observe a lot more rather than keep asking questions. I think a lot more about asking open-ended questions without interrupting their play or disturbing what they are doing.

My target children have learnt much more English and become independent in their play. They are able to problem-solve more for themselves without the adults stepping in to help most of the time. All of the children have become more confident and are able to express themselves in large groups as well as small groups. They enjoy taking the lead at activities, 'being the Teacher' as they call it. Child A is now confident to take the lead in a large group. Child B has lots more English words, can talk using sentences and likes to share what she has done at the weekend with her friends. Child C is now more confident to express himself in English and in a small group. He still benefits from small group work.

### **Evidence of impact on pupil learning and teaching/leadership**

A new planning sheet is being made for September to include the characteristics of learning and a little about pedagogy.

My evidence of impact is through observing the target children's progress over the year.