

# Early Education

The British Association for Early Childhood Education

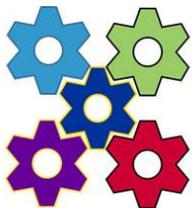
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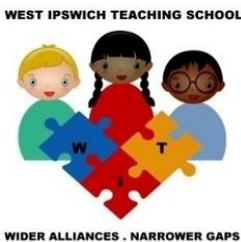
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## Early Years Teaching Newsletter March 2018

**Welcome to our monthly teaching news to bring you pedagogical food for thought.**

As I write, the snow is falling outside and I keep wondering about the children experiencing the magical flakes for the first time. Here are some blogs for now or next time for snow play ideas, along with other adverse weather play inspirations to encourage you outside in ALL weathers

- Creative star's [Snow fun](#) ideas
- [Snow such thing as bad weather](#) blog
- Interaction Imagination's blogs from Sweden about [Playing on ice](#) and [Puddle play](#)
- Play Scotland's [Snow and ice play](#)
- [Child and nature alliance of Canada](#) blogs about embracing the elements and [Winter](#)
- [Emergent curriculum across the seasons: let nature be the invitation](#) by Diane Kashin

### Reflecting on play

The TES podogy [Why all teachers \(secondary level included\) need to take a second look at play](#) might help stimulate your thinking around play. From 10 minutes in, the EYFS is discussed and the content is rather thought-provoking. I have included this link because it might help you as an individual or in your team reflect about play and what it means to you.

As you develop or reflect on your pedagogy and play ideals, this article [The value of play 1: the definition of play gives insights](#)

which might help to further extend your thinking around the value and definition of play and its characteristics.

You may know that the Scottish Government published their [National strategy for play](#) in 2013. This link takes you to their resources and documentation including their loose parts play materials. Their Play Strategy for Scotland vision is a rich and wonderfully worded document about the value of play and the right of children to play, stating

*"Play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development – not only for individual children but also for the society in which they live." (page 12)*

Their page also cites the research paper [Pedagogy: the silent partner in early years learning](#) and you can access the whole paper through this link.

### **Informing our pedagogy**

It is important that we challenge and feed our pedagogy and teaching through reading journals and research articles. If you are a teacher, you may have already joined and discovered the resource from the [Chartered College of Teaching](#) which enables you to access journal articles free of charge. I have made use of this many times in my work.

Being members of Early Education introduces us to new research which informs our pedagogical thinking. This month for example, I am finding out about [Dr Kathy Hirsh-Pasek](#) and her work around language development, early learning and play.

Kathy is an author, researcher and developmental psychologist. Her video [Play: rethinking how we educate our children](#) (Sept 2017) introduces the six Cs of a playful learning environment in the early years: collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation, confidence. Approximately 16 minutes in she defines two types of playful learning: "free play" and "guided play" and shares her thoughts and findings around "playful learning". Kathy is speaking at our [Annual National Conference](#) in May.

For further reading about play, Tina Bruce's crucial 12 features of play and other definitions and theories are in an informative article available on [Diane Rich's archived resources](#) (scroll down to the Importance of Play December 2005 link).

If you are keen to develop and enhance your enabling play environment and provision further, the [Learning through play in the early years](#) (scroll to bottom of page for link) resource book from Northern Ireland is full of practical ideas and information.

Lastly, you could reflect on the contents of [Teaching and play in the early years, a balancing act](#) (2015) which is [one of the 'suite' of complementary reports](#) that Ofsted state should be read in conjunction with Bold Beginnings.

### **Leadership and research**

If you are interested in further deepening and embedding your awareness of research in teaching and learning, here are some ideas

- Evaluate the extent of your evidence informed practice using this [self-assessment tool](#) and look up the Education research concepts poster from the Chartered College of Teaching.

- Follow the [Doing your own action research project](#) guidance for ways to get children moving outside.
- Nathan Archer, a doctoral researcher based at the University of Sheffield and an EE member is currently issuing a [call for participants in a study on “Agency and Activism in early childhood education: exploring constructions of professional identities”](#); your participation is welcomed.
- Listen to the podcast [Support a student’s sense of autonomy and they thrive](#), about research in helping school children to engage and be motivated – something that we are very focused on in EYFS through the characteristics of effective learning.
- If you are doing any innovative, inspiring work around either ICT or reception teaching do get in touch to be included in some current projects I am working on ([cathy@early-education.org.uk](mailto:cathy@early-education.org.uk))

### Reception and Bold Beginnings

In response to some of the more contentious elements of the Bold Beginnings report, the [Sheffield Branch of Early Education](#) has designed a survey to capture the impact of play-based, child-centred practice and provide a wider perspective of the impact of learning and teaching in the Reception Year. They state

*We are focusing on gathering data which is required as part of the usual evidence of children’s progress and achievement at the end of the Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1 through their newly released [survey](#). Your time and contribution to the survey will help to build a broader more informed picture of the impact of the EYFS and the Reception Year and will enable us to promote and defend the practice that best supports children’s learning and development. Please respond to the survey*

if your approach to the Reception Year is play-based and child-centred and you are willing to share your school’s data.

### Think pieces on pedagogy: reflecting on how you teach

The handwriting debate continues. [We should stop teaching children joined up handwriting – it’s no longer a necessary skill for life](#) is a good think piece (the link is free but requires you to log in).

Early Education does not support the early introduction of joined-up, cursive writing. Our [pedagogic pages](#) series on this subject have been shared far and wide (some open to the public and others for members). They explain more and present much evidence on this issue.

[Julie Cigman](#), one of our Associates makes these excellent points against the teaching of cursive and joined up handwriting in the EYFS

- It places the emphasis on transcriptional writing over compositional, and the finished product is prioritised over the process of “becoming a writer”.
- It puts too much pressure on children too young, especially children who don’t have the fine motor skills to form conventional letter shapes
- It’s very hard for children to read their own writing, so children can’t make the link between reading and writing
- Handwriting has to be taught in adult-focused sessions, taking time away from child-led learning
- What’s the rush? We don’t stop children crawling because they’ll have to “unlearn” crawling when they start to walk. Becoming a writer is a developmental process, from mark making to conventional writing and spelling.

You can find these points included in [part two](#) of our cursive writing series on our pedagogic pages. On this aspect of EYFS, the Bold Beginnings report aligns with our principles, stating

*“Headteachers in the schools visited agreed that children needed to be able to form all letters correctly and consistently before joined-up handwriting was considered. Nearly all were unanimous that they did not teach a cursive or pre-cursive script in reception. These headteachers believed that it slowed down children’s writing, at a point when they already found manual dexterity tricky and the muscles in their shoulders, arms and hands were still developing.” (Bold Beginnings, p23)*

A Nursery World best practice supplement just out is [All about literacy](#) (you will need a Nursery World log in to access this). It helps to inform the debate with opinions of teaching phonics, and the teaching of reading, with an opinion from Michael Rosen.

Finally, a useful resource for literacy and reading is [Love my books](#) website which helps you find books for different ages, for certain themes and lots more related information and ideas.

## **Come and be inspired at our annual conference**

Our upcoming [Annual National Conference](#) in May will further support your pedagogical development around literacy, specifically, language development. [Experts in early years and language](#) will speak on the adult role, interactions, sustained shared thinking, research in practice, action research and enabling high quality language rich environments. I hope that you can join us!

Keep up your great work and do keep in touch with your thoughts and news.

*Stay well and warm, Cathy Gunning*

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Follow Cathy on Twitter [@earlyed\\_cathy](#)

This newsletter is designed to be read on screen so you can click through to the links (underlined in the text).

Don’t forget we also upload lots of it into our EE member’s pedagogic pages so that you can look it up there at a later date if you don’t have time to read it all now.

**We welcome your feedback on the content and design of this newsletter.**  
Please email [cathy@early-education.org.uk](mailto:cathy@early-education.org.uk)

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*This newsletter was produced by Early Education, in association with the following Early Years Teaching Schools:*

*Acorns Early Years Teaching School Alliance, Barnet Early Years Alliance, The Birmingham Nursery Schools Teaching Alliance, The Bradford Birth to 19 TSA, Bristol Early Years Teaching Consortium, Durham Primary Teaching School Alliance, Early Foundations Teaching School Alliance, East London Early Years and Schools Partnership, Foundations for Learning, Foundations Teaching School Alliance, North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership, Oxfordshire Teaching School Alliance (OTSA), Peter Pan Teaching School Alliance, Scarborough Teaching Alliance, South Thames Early Education Partnership, Warwickshire Consortium Teaching School, West Ipswich (Early Years) Teaching School Alliance.*

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