

Early Education

The British Association for Early Childhood Education

in partnership with:



Alfreton Nursery School
Teaching School Alliance
'Growing together'



WIDER ALLIANCES . NARROWER GAPS

Early Years Teaching Newsletter October 2018

Welcome to this month's Autumnal edition and wishing those of you with half term breaks, a restorative time.

Autumnal art

There is so much enjoyment and beauty in the outdoors in this season. Autumn's natural resources inspire me to think about transient art. This Teachwire article [Why you should try transient art](#) by Kirstine Beeley will give you creative encouragement to try this if you have not done so before.

Andy Goldsworthy has inspired art in natural surroundings. The film for BBC Two Bitesize Primary, [Andy Goldsworthy – art in a natural environment](#) (4.21 mins) is a fascinating watch.

If you do not know much about his work, here is a charming trailer for his recent film [Leaning into the wind – Andy Goldsworthy](#) and a recent [Guardian article](#) reviewing the film. It follows the highly successful film [Rivers and tides](#) made in 2002.

[James Brunt](#) is an amazing artist who works with natural materials in his art, often working with children too. His [Autumn leaves blog](#) will surely inspire you with pattern making using leaves outside.

If you find blogs useful for ideas and inspiration, here is an extensive list from Juliet Robertson from her [Creative Star blog](#), celebrating her favourite outdoor bloggers with all their links included.

Developing these ideas further might lead us to use more loose parts. [Loose parts:](#)

[inspiring play in young children](#) from Community Playthings is a useful article as is the [Loose parts information](#) from Play Scotland, including their brilliant toolkit which I have featured before (*to find it, scroll down to the bottom of the page using this link*). Our [Loose Parts pedagogic page](#) has additional links (for members).

Loose parts play is a brilliant way to resource cheaply to promote open-ended play. You will find that using loose parts can promote all the Characteristics of Effective Learning spontaneously and naturally (see [pages 4-6 in Development Matters](#)). The Characteristics are a statutory requirement, as stated in the Statutory Framework for the EYFS.

Our joint project with Learning Through Landscapes for LB Newham, [Newham outdoors and active](#), created free resources to support physical activity outdoors.

Lastly on the theme of Autumn, the Forestry Commission (England) features [Autumn in the forest](#) with information on their trails, Wales online shares [24 gorgeous walks](#). Visit Scotland has a [Leaf peeper's guide](#) and Discover Northern Ireland lists their [colourful Autumn walks](#). With these ideas, I hope that you get a chance be outside soon and feed your wellbeing - you might even want to explore the art of [forest bathing](#).

Play

[Play as a radical practice toolkit](#) is an inspiring resource that was shared on Twitter. It is a fascinating project using video, provocation and evidence to promote play, loose parts and early learning far and wide. It was produced by artist Albert Potrony for the Serpentine galleries in 2016, exploring with 2-4-year olds "the value and possibilities for free play in the school system".

[PEDAL: Play learning and narrative skills](#) research was completed in 2015. This link provides a practical handbook for teachers and the project video - it is wonderful hearing David Whitebread talk about play.

The Guardian article [Which is the only country to protect in law the child's right to play?](#) (Aug 2018) by Aditiya Chacraborty is about Wales' legislation, also featuring the [United nations convention of the rights of the child](#) giving every child the right to play.

This video [Article 31 and a child's right to play](#) by the International Play Association (IPA) gives a powerful message, and the organisation have written a [Declaration on the importance of play](#).

Handwriting, writing and mark making

There is ongoing contention over what is considered best practice for writing and handwriting in early years and education. October's *Nursery World* issue (no 20 pp17-21) includes the EYFS best practice feature [All about... Handwriting](#) by Annette Rawstrone. It is a thorough article presenting much opinion about writing and handwriting in light of an increasingly digital world and is worth a read (*the link requires a Nursery World membership sign in*).

Our most popular pedagogic pages to date are still the series about writing and cursive. [Cursive writing and the EYFS](#) is the opening page for the series which has gathered all the information and evidence on whether to use print, cursive or pre-cursive with children in nursery and reception. Members can access all the pages.

Note that cursive is not in the EYFS, and the controversial [Bold Beginnings \(2017\) report](#) does not support it either:

"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 in their view that they did not teach a cursive or pre-cursive script in Reception. These headteachers believed 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.” (page 23 of the report)

Sharing success: have you heard?

Bradford Birth to 19 Teaching School Alliance and SCITT, including St Edmund's Nursery School and Children's Centre Services have been successful in a £1m SSIF (Strategic School Improvement Fund) bid, which will roll out a [50 Things project](#) across 60 schools in Leeds and Bradford. It has now been commissioned by seven Local Authorities across the country, too. You can follow them on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#) and download the 50 Things app on [Android](#) or [iPhone](#).

Pedagogical pointers

Here are two useful links to feed your pedagogy and practice.

[Rhythm of breathing affects memory and fear](#) is an article in Neuroscience News that shares how breathing is now linked to brain function and behaviour.

The Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) research [High achieving white working class \(HAWWC\) boys research project](#) report (2016) provides very useful

practical, evidence-based resources to support our work in early years.

Finally

If you have been reading these newsletters for a while, you will know that I like to keep updated with Eugenia Cheng's work. From 2.23 minutes in, you can hear her interview [When logic steers you wrong](#) with Kris Boyd on the KERA Think podcast (you might wish to skip the first 2 mins preamble on American politics). This is a fascinating mathematical discussion about logic and truth which is a 48 min listen.

Please continue to keep us informed of your successes and research that we can share or features that you would benefit from. I appreciate receiving your comments and feedback.

All the best for the next half term,

Cathy Gunning

E: cathy@early-education.org.uk

Follow Cathy on Twitter [@earlyyed_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 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

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

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

Early Education

The British Association for Early Childhood Education
54 Clarendon Road
Watford WD17 1DU

T: 01923 438 995

E: office@early-education.org.uk
www.early-education.org.uk

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