

Sharing Observations with video

At **Beeches Pre-School, Peterborough**, video footage is taken of children playing in session. This is then shown to parents in a regular series of workshops, led by the pre-school supervisor, in order to support and share an understanding of learning through play.

Once the child begins attending pre-school, the families are offered regular weekly workshops, timed for the start of each part-time session (9.00 and again at 12.15).

The workshops focus on different areas of learning and include: play; early writing; early numeracy; speaking and listening; and using books with children. The content has been developed to help answer the local parents' most commonly asked questions.

Video footage, shot each week ready for the workshop, focuses on the particular area of learning to be discussed.

Parents are attracted into the session because they are interested in seeing their own children on the video, and word soon spreads that this is happening.

The sessions are very short, just 20 to 30 minutes, so that busy parents don't have to give up too much time. Younger siblings are welcome to come along. An interpreter for the main community language is provided.

Inexpensive activities are suggested, for continuation at home, and the ideas are repeated in handouts given out at the end of the session.

An added incentive, for anyone attending at least three workshops, is a free 'mark making' pack to take home. These contain simple, attractive writing implements, notepads and paper supplies for children.



“Using video of children playing helps to break the ice in parent workshops. Parents love to see their own children on screen.”

“All parents are interested in how their children learn and want them to do well.”

As the pre-school works in partnership with its local Sure Start Children's Centre, books are available for loan through a weekly book library, and parents attending workshops can have access to free titles.

They can also borrow from a stock of story sacks and treasure baskets. The treasure baskets contain a range of equipment such as: small construction sets, natural materials for exploration, reflective and shiny objects.

The pre-school has two digital video recorders. Although no computer equipment is available, the videos are simple to use, connecting to a television via a plug-in cable. Film can then be played back immediately and easily.

The pre-school is beginning to develop the use of video cameras further. Footage has been taken while children are settling in, to reassure parents that they have been happy and busy at play.

They are also starting to lend out the digital video cameras to families so that parents can show children playing at home; and share special occasions such as weddings, birthdays and holidays.

Running the workshops and exchanging video observations can serve to improve relationships and understanding between parents and practitioners.

Confidence in listening and talking to parents is increased. Parents attending workshops have more understanding of how to use the equipment they borrow from the setting, feel more at ease in talking to practitioners and gain confidence in using everyday routines to enhance learning.



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