

Childhood Development Initiative Ltd
ABC Oral Language Learning Community Meeting
14th March 2023

Minutes

Present: Grace Walsh, LGT; Katie Cluskey, PFL; Mary Potts, Better Finglas; Jennifer Harte; Caitriona O'Mahoney and Tom Costelloe.

Minutes and Matters Arising:

- Should the group be combined with the literacy group? Noted that the Literacy Learning Community was due to meet today and was cancelled because there was too much duplication. Marian noted that it has been agreed to keep them separate due to numbers involved and literacy being quite programmatic
- Alison was to share a link for Youtube channels on EASL resources.

Mother Tongues:

- There is still a common perception amongst those where children are growing with EASL, that English should be used where possible
- It's important that parents and professionals understand the value in using their own language of origin at home
- Early years services can celebrate diversity and bilingualism by sharing rhymes and songs in different languages
- Parents can have a lot of anxiety about children being prepared for ECCE, and having sufficient English
- Katie noted that they have developed a booklet on supporting children in bilingual development, and will circulate to all
- New primary schools curriculum was launched recently – is there anything in it on bilingualism?
- Jennifer found a nice resource at bilingualfamily.eu/peach
- Bilingualism is very new in Ireland, and we need to know what the research says about how best managed this, particularly where there are multiple languages used in the same home. Should we be using different signage and having books in different languages, to illustrate a culture of valuing difference, and making sure community buildings are welcoming
- Noted that the suggestion of having a drop box, or way of sharing resources, is being progressed by Niall from PFL.

Tom left the meeting.

- Potential themes for future sessions:
 - Children with additional needs: Covid has massively impacted on confidence with a lot of our educators
 - Celebrating neurodiversity – being inclusive and strengths focused language. Drawn from “meaningful speech” and the “celebratory framework” for early years
 - The REDI and Paths models from Penn State
 - Positive speak programme used by Barnardos – Tus Ma (?) – in early years settings. Mayr will circulate information.

Future Meetings:

- June: Wednesday 14th at 2.30pm
- Will focus on children with autism, and the things we use regularly
- Noted that there are changes in the language being used to define diagnosis, and a move to more generic rather than specific differentiated diagnosis

Francesca Lamonta from Mother Tongues joined the meeting.

- Parents of children being raised bilingual have more
- There is over referral of children with bi-lingual development
- There is also evidence of under referral of such children because delays can be dismissed as being the result of bilingualism. It's a global myth
- Parents can be worried about admitting they talk their own language at home – they feel they should be talking English
- The motivation for establishing Mother Tongues was to dispel myths, and to offer advice on how to raise a child with more than one language
- Research:
 - The stronger model and foundation you have in any language, the better equipped the child will be to develop a second (or more) language
 - The 'heritage language' is the one which children use to express their emotions
 - Sum up the child's competency by assessing, their capacity in each language, but that's very difficult.

Approaches used in ABC:

- Does the child understand and speak sufficiently to have their needs met?
- Reassure parents that they are not damaging their children by speaking their own language
- See the Mother Tongues website for a leaflet called "your language is important" – translated into ten languages, explaining the importance of using their own language, and ideas for how to do this in ways that enhance children's development
- Not being able to speak English can be very disempowering for parents, especially if it is associated with poverty, or asylum status
- The same principles apply where the child has autism or additional needs
- There is more research emerging about children growing up learning.

End of Meeting.