



Bristol & Beyond
Stronger Practice Hub

Let's think about...

The Characteristics of Effective Learning

A 45 minute staff meeting template to use within your setting.

Before the meeting:

- Identify what you are trying to achieve from the meeting. What is the teams current knowledge on this subject? What would you like the outcome of the meeting to be?
- Reflect on how you are going to present the information. Can you provide visuals? Things to hold? Practical activities?
- Check the sources of information being presented with a critical eye.
- Plan your prompts for after the meeting i.e. posters, reminders, peer observations etc.
- Do as much pre-reading, watching and listening as possible.

You can find out more about planning continual professional development [here](#).

Meeting Plan

Display or read this quote about the Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL):

'The Characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviours children use in order to learn. To learn well, children must approach opportunities with curiosity, energy and enthusiasm. Effective learning must be meaningful to a child, so that they are able to use what they have learned and apply it in new situations. These abilities and attitudes of strong learners will support them to learn well and make good progress in all the Areas of Learning and Development.'

[Birth-5 Matters 2023](#)

Activity 1 - Refreshing our knowledge of the CoEL (10 minutes)

Set up an obstacle course for the group and ask staff to work in pairs. One person completes the course while their partner observes and narrates what they notice about how the task is being approached, for example: "I can see you're trying to..." or "You're figuring out how to..."

If appropriate and safely risk assessed, you could add an extra challenge by introducing blindfolds for the person completing the course and the buddy giving directions on how to navigate the course.

After 5 or so minutes once everyone has had the chance to have a go, come back together and ask the group to share what they noticed. Were there any CoEL prevelant?

Print the CoEL pages 52-54 in Birth-5 Matters and hand these out for people to reflect on.

Activity 2 - Let's watch a video

Depending on how much time you have for your meeting you might choose to watch the introduction or the full film.
 0-2:18 minutes - introduction to CoEL
 2:18- 10:36 minutes - exploration of the CoEL with examples



Activity 3 – Reflecting on the adult’s role in supporting the Characteristics of Effective Learning

You will need printed copies of pages 52–54 from Birth to 5 Matters to share, along with large sheets of paper, pens, and craft materials.

In small groups, use the purple column in Birth to 5 Matters to create a poster showing how adults can help children develop their (CoEL).

Once completed, turn the poster over and write:

- the barriers that can make this difficult in practice
- the factors that help practitioners provide this effectively

Each group should feed back to the wider team. Use this discussion to agree on actions you can implement to strengthen support for CoEL through your relationships and interactions with children.

Characteristics of Effective Learning

Children are powerful learners from birth. They can develop strong habits of mind and behaviours that will continue to support them to discover, think, create, solve problems and self-regulate their learning. Children need consistent lived experiences of autonomy alongside support for their growing awareness and control of the processes of thinking and learning. Play, time, space and freedom to follow their intentions, sustained shared thinking, and experiencing the satisfaction of meeting their own challenges and goals all contribute to development as curious, creative, resourceful and resilient learners.

Playing and Exploring: Engagement

A Unique Child: how a child is learning	Positive Relationships: what adults might do	Enabling Environments: what adults might provide
Finding out and exploring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing curiosity about objects, events and people • Using senses to explore the world around them • Engaging in open-ended activity • Showing particular interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with children. Encourage them to explore, and show your own interest in discovering new things. • Help children as needed to do what they are trying to do, without taking over or directing. • Encourage children to make decisions and choose their activities – what they want to do and how they will do it. • Join in play sensitively, fitting in with children's ideas. • Model pretending an object is something else, and help develop roles and stories. • Encourage children to try new activities and to judge risks for themselves. Be sure to support children's confidence with words and body language, and by introducing tools so that children can think about how to use them safely. • Pay attention to how children engage in activities – the challenges faced, the effort, thought, learning and enjoyment. Talk more about the process than products. • Modelling responding positively when things go wrong, and talk about learning from failure. • Always respect children's efforts and ideas, so they feel safe to take a risk with a new idea and feel comfortable with mistakes. • Encourage laughter and have fun. Happiness deepens learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide stimulating resources which are accessible and open-ended so they can be used, moved and combined in a variety of ways. • Make sure resources are relevant to children's interests and abilities. • Arrange flexible indoor and outdoor space and resources where children can explore, transform, build, move and role play. • Help children concentrate by considering levels of noise, and visual distraction. • Plan first-hand experiences and challenges appropriate to the development of the children. • Ensure children have uninterrupted time to play and explore. • Setting leaders give staff time to reflect on how they support children to play and explore through their interactions, and planning of the environment.
Playing with what they know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretending objects are things from their experience • Representing their experiences in play • Taking on a role in their play • Acting out experiences with other people 		
Being willing to "have a go" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating activities • Seeking challenge • Showing a "can do" attitude • Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences, and learning by trial and error 		



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Activity 4 - Learning Walk: Reflecting on the Enabling Environment and Characteristics of Effective Learning

For this activity, you will carry out a learning walk around both the indoor and outdoor environments to reflect on how effectively they support children's Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoEL).



You will need: your copies of the CoEL, clipboards or notebooks, pens, sticky notes or labels.

In pairs or small groups, walk around your indoor and outdoor environment and consider how the environment supports children to develop their CoEL.

As you observe each space, discuss:

- What opportunities are available for children to investigate, problem solve, take risks, and lead their own learning?
- How accessible and inviting are the resources?
- How does the environment encourage independence, curiosity, and sustained engagement?
- Are there differences between the indoor and outdoor provision in how CoEL is supported?

Make notes of; strengths within the environment, areas that could be improved and any changes that could better promote CoEL opportunities. Once the learning walk is complete, come back together as a team to share reflections and identify realistic actions to enhance the enabling environment both indoors and outdoors. **Finish the meeting with a final round of sharing one thing they are taking away from the staff meeting or one thing they are going to try tomorrow.**

Follow up prompts and activities for after the staff meeting:

- Share the [rationale for the introduction of the CoEL](#) and the [CoEL video](#)
- Create a display in a common staff area where everyone can celebrate their provocations and invitations to play they have set up to support development of the CoEL
- Follow up with individual staff members in supervisions, what was their take away or action from the staff meeting? What have they done since then?

Would you like a staff meeting template like this one about a specific topic? Get in touch to let us know what you would find helpful at your setting by emailing us on sph@beyth.co.uk