

Reducing Educational Disadvantage: Interaction and Experiences Matter
Penny Tassoni

The Background....

- The successes individuals achieve during their adult life can be predicted by the level of cognitive and non cognitive skills they already possess on their first day at school. These differences in skill levels have been noted after as little as 22 months of life, and are shown to widen within the toddler population by the age of five.

(Frank Field report 2010)

Social Mobility

- 'Families with greater means at their disposal, financial and otherwise, are assisting their children to accumulate skills, particularly those which are valued in the labour market. We observe this through improvements in cognitive skills (maths especially) by age 10 and a greater likelihood of gaining a degree.'

(Downward mobility, opportunity hoarding and the 'glass floor', Abigail Mc Knight, June 2015 Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission)

Early Years matters

- Reports produced by Frank Field, Graham Allen and Dame Clare Tickell stressed the importance of early intervention
- High quality provision can make a difference
- Funding is in place for two year olds from low income households
- Universal 15 hour offer for three year olds

What do 'lucky' children have?

- Strong relationships
- Opportunities to talk and think
- Varied experiences
- Opportunities to share books
- Rich play opportunities

Relationships

- Secure key person relationships affect children's willingness to communicate and engage with new activities
- Good settling in systems are essential to supporting children and their families
- It is also important to monitor the depth of children's relationship with key adults in the setting

Why language matters...

- By 22 months – a child’s language development can predict outcomes at age 26
- By ages 3-6 years - a child’s narrative skills are a powerful predictor of literacy skill at 8-12 years
- By 4 years – the difference in the number of words children from disadvantaged backgrounds hear is 19 million
- By 5 years – a child’s vocabulary will predict their educational success and outcomes at age 30.

Early language: Facts and Stats, ICAN, August 2014

Five ways to make a difference

- Precise assessment
- Focus on language development and activities that support this
- Focus on early enjoyment of books
- Recognition of varied experiences and widening horizons
- Strategic approach to planning play opportunities
