

'In the moment' planning in early years

Find out what 'in the moment' planning is and how you can implement it at your nursery.

What is 'in the moment' planning?

'In the moment' planning is a child-centred approach, which encourages children's natural desire to explore and learn.

It's about letting the children choose what to do, while adults join them in their play, observe what children do and support their development at the time of children playing and then writing an observation which includes what the child was doing, how the adult supported their learning and the outcome of the engagement.



One of the main principles of in the moment planning is an enabling environment, rich in natural everyday resources available to the children at all times. For example, pots, pans, buckets, water bottles, tyres, pallets, crates, etc.

The observation, assessment and planning cycle is one that is familiar to early years practitioners. However, all too often, writing observations to provide evidence that children are progressing well in their learning and planning their next steps takes practitioners away from their important role of interacting with the children.

Could you already have in the moment planning at your nursery without realising?

Some settings use the term 'spontaneous planning' too. So yes, you may well already be doing this without realising.

Experienced practitioners would probably be planning in the moment without thinking about it as it's about being tuned into children and their developmental needs and going with their interests.

What does 'in the moment planning' look like?

Paula Lane, manager of NDNA member setting, Oak Hill Community Nursery in Brockley, told us about an example for when they have used in the moment planning.

Two boys were running around in the garden playing with a 'sword'.

"I am a pirate and I am going to take you!" said one of the boys.

A practitioner then got into character and they talked about where they were going to be taken to.

The practitioner then suggested making a map with drawings and letters, making treasure out of boxes and other materials then sharing out the loot.

This simple activity covered the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) areas of communication and language, literacy and maths.

Does in the moment planning reduce paperwork?

Oak Hill Community Nursery in Brockley is relatively new to the concept but has already stopped short and long term planning with their two to four-year-olds. They still carry out observations on 'wow' moments and developmental achievements but have cut out unnecessary, repetitive and often meaningless observations.

Paula told us that her practitioners are now spending more time building relationships and encouraging confident and independent children, while still being able to assess needs and implement next the steps.

For Paula, in the moment planning was bringing their priorities back to where they should be; for highly qualified, experienced and passionate practitioners to provide excellent care, learning and development opportunities to the families and children who they work with.

Find out more

Contact our training team for on 01484 407070 or email training@ndna.org.uk