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**Title:** Learning to teach in the early years: what matters?

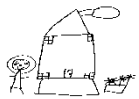
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# Learning to Teach in the Early Years: What matters?

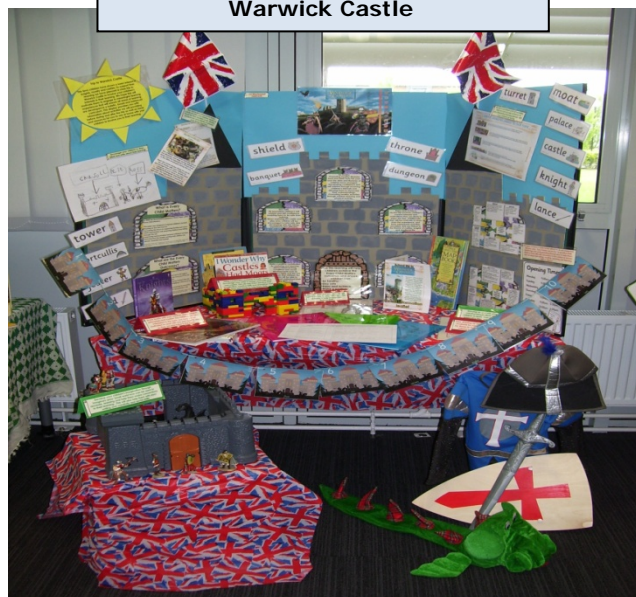
## A 'Sharing Practice' Poster

Jane Murray and Jane Badger



**Introduction:** In an English context where the role of Early Years teachers is a focus for policymakers (DfE, 2010; Nutbrown 2012), Early Years Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students at The University of Northampton (UoN) train to teach children aged 3-7 years, splitting their time between university taught sessions and placements in settings.

Warwick Castle



The nature and scope of the EYs students' experience differs from that of their Primary colleagues who train to teach children aged 5-11 years. Alongside required 'subject knowledge', the Early Years programme emphasises:

- Integration of care and learning (Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010)
- Starting from individual children's interests and learning needs (Fisher, 2008)
- Safeguarding (Powell and Uppal, 2012)
- Meaningful, holistic curriculum across two English statutory frameworks for children aged 3-5 and 5-7 years (Kerry, 2011; Moyles, Georgeson and Payler, 2011)
- Child development theories (Nutbrown, Clough and Selbie, 2008)
- Observational assessment (Sharman, Cross and Vennis, 2007)
- Parent partnership (Whalley, 2007)
- Multi-professional work (Siraj-Blatchford, Clarke and Needham, 2007).

Element in Thomas Land display



Willow Farm



**'Sharing with Parents' Projects:** In a second year curriculum module – Children in Their Worlds - EYs student teachers follow ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011) to engage in a case study with a child aged 3-7 years. They liaise with primary carers and children (Whalley, 2007) to focus observations on their child's development, learning and interests (Fisher, 2008). EYs student teachers then use their findings to plan further meaningful learning experiences for their child (Moyles, Georgeson and Payler, 2011), which include an educational visit (Salaman and Tutchell, 2005).

Manchester United



During this process, EYs student teachers produce high quality observation and evaluation documents (Sharman et al., 2007), cross-curricular planning and risk assessments. They then include these documents with relevant resources and explanatory notes in an information-sharing display for parents, demonstrating how planned provision may support their child's progression. EYs student teachers critically evaluate each other's displays, offering colleagues new ideas for further development (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

**Conclusion:** This experience scaffolds EYs' student teachers' experiences of observing, assessing and planning meaningful curriculum in partnership with young children and their families. Student teachers' perspectives include:

'I learnt to build on and develop provision which would reflect the child's interests in all areas of learning.' (Jenny)

'Knowing theories behind practice enabled us to understand fully why and how we need to provide meaningful opportunities for young children.' (Lauren)

'Really beneficial project, lots of learning achieved - thank you for the opportunity.' (Lois)

Birdworld



### Some Questions:

1. What values (should) lie at the heart of Early Years teaching?
2. What is your view of a 'meaningful curriculum' for children aged 0-7 years?
3. Is university-based or setting-based Initial Teacher Education best for the EYs field? Why?

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