

Local Area Early Years Partnership: A collaborative approach to 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential' by improving outcomes in Speech, Language & Communication for disadvantaged Early Years pupils: Aiming to 'close the word gap' in EYFS,KS1 phonics & beyond, utilising evidence based intervention

Overview

The project aimed to support 53 high-priority primary schools in the local area. Using attainment data, a need was identified for more effective strategies to improve progress & attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Speech, Language & Communication (SL&C) to impact upon on outcomes in Early Years (EY),Y1 phonics and beyond.

The EYFS cohort is a local priority and closing the word gap is a key recommendation of 'Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential' (DfE,2017). Research shows delayed SL&C skills creates significant barriers for disadvantaged pupils in accessing education with impact until age 16 (Communication Trust, Feb17). They also report 10% of pupils have language deficit on entry to school, rising to 50% in disadvantaged cohorts. 'Early Language Development', (EEF, Oct17) provides further strong evidence that high quality SL&C interventions in EY is highly impactful in narrowing the gap for disadvantaged learners indicating that rates at which children develop language is most sensitive to high quality input from adults around the child.

Scoping of target schools reveals an additional need to improve school leadership & governance to support effective implementation of new strategies. Our support will improve provision, leadership and governance using evidence-based approaches with TSA expertise in system leadership embedding sustained improvements in teaching and learning. Disadvantaged pupils will achieve improved outcomes at end Foundation Stage & in KS1 phonics via complementary approaches supported by evidence from the EEF toolkit:

- 1) Nuffield Early Language Intervention
- 2) Easy Peasy App
- 3) Quality First Teaching for disadvantaged pupils

10 lead schools will act as centres of EY excellence, managed by two local teaching schools, supported in delivery by local partners. Strong local collaboration will promote Joint Practice Development (JPD), underpinned by effective coaching/mentoring.

Good practice to share with others interested in running school improvement projects to ensure projects deliver the intended outcome.

The use of the ECERS document to carry out audits of current provision in the Early Years settings, to identify areas for development and improvement has been extremely positively received. Early years practitioners have seen huge benefits in being able to use such a comprehensive document to identify areas for their own internal action plans and have continued to use to target specific areas for improvement.

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) has seen a substantial improvement in children's confidence to take part in small group discussions, practice and confidence in using new vocabulary and transferring this into day to day conversations and interactions and it is providing a sustainable and successful intervention for closing the vocabulary gap. Early Years practitioners are continuing to use NELI in their new reception classes this year.

The '50 things to do before you are 5' intervention has again seen huge success. This initiative has supported parents in providing ideas and information for easy and free activities to engage in with their children. This intervention can be used again and again and consequently will benefit families far beyond the reach of the project. The application, which is downloaded onto mobile devices, can be accessed by parents across the local areas and is now available in a number of other cities across the country.

What the project may do differently in the future

Nothing stated.

Sustainability measures taken by projects to ensure improvement are sustained beyond the funding period.

Provided all schools included on the project with a copy of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) document to carry out their own internal audits to develop their own action plans to target specific areas for improvement.

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) resources have been provided to all schools included on the project to be used in schools. Early Years practitioners are continuing to use NELI in their new reception classes this year.

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