

## 4.3 Creativity and Critical Thinking

When children have opportunities to play with ideas in different situations and with a variety of resources, they **discover connections** and come to new and better understandings and ways of doing things. Adult support in this process enhances their ability to **think critically and ask questions**.



### Making connections

- Being creative involves the whole curriculum, not just the arts. It is not necessarily about making an end-product such as a picture, song or play.
- Children will more easily make connections between things they've learned if the environment encourages them to do so. For example, they need to be able to fetch materials easily and to be able to move them from one place to another.
- Effective practitioners value each child's culture and help them to make connections between experiences at home, the setting and the wider community.
- It is difficult for children to make creative connections in learning when colouring in a worksheet or making a Diwali card just like everyone else's.

### Transforming understanding

- New connections help to transform our understanding but this can often be a long process.
- For example, children may need to run, jump and walk through puddles many times to check out what happens. In this way they begin to understand more about the effect of force on water (KUW). They learn how to stay steady on their feet on a slippery surface (PD). They might create a little dance about splashing (CD) or say a rhyme such as 'Doctor Foster' (CLL).
- Effective practitioners record the processes that children go through. This will help everyone to see how the children's thinking is developing. Both children and adults can then talk about the learning that has taken place.

### Sustained shared thinking

- In the most effective settings practitioners support and challenge children's thinking by getting involved in the thinking process with them.
- Sustained shared thinking involves the adult being aware of the children's interests and understandings and the adult and children working together to develop an idea or skill.
- Sustained shared thinking can only happen when there are responsive trusting relationships between adults and children.
- The adult shows genuine interest, offers encouragement, clarifies ideas and asks open questions. This supports and extends the children's thinking and helps children to make connections in learning.



## Effective practice

- Value what parents tell you about the way in which children behave and learn at home.
- Allow children to move equipment around your setting, indoors and outside, to extend their own play and learning.
- Ensure that there is a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities.
- Document children's learning through photos and words. Use these to talk to children and parents about the learning that has taken place.
- Model being creative, for example, "I wasn't quite sure how to join this wheel on the car but then I thought about what we did last week. Can you remember what Kanisha did with her bus?".



## Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring freedom for children to access resources while ensuring that they develop their understanding of the importance of tidying up and putting things back where they belong.
- Giving very young children opportunities to express their ideas in all sorts of different ways – valuing movement and dance as highly as drawing and writing.



## Reflecting on practice

- What open-ended activities do you provide for children in your setting?
- Do you give children the experience of playing with paint and glue before expecting them to use them to make a product such as a Christmas card?
- Have you ever taped your interactions with children to see how you support the development of creativity and critical thinking?

## What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.

