

Becoming a friend, becoming a learner

Learning story

Becky usually chooses to play by herself at our centre. We have noticed that another child at the centre, Lauren, who also chooses to play by herself, has taken an interest in Becky.

We have tried to support this interest by sitting the two of them next to each other at lunchtimes and pairing them up in music activities.

Becky appears to be responding to Lauren's interest in developing a friendship. When she arrives in the morning, she first settles by herself in the book corner and before long moves on to see Lauren.

Short-term review

Becky is responding to Lauren's interest in developing a friendship. She is becoming involved in Lauren's play and is developing trust in her.

Becky obviously still feels more secure with starting her day with something that is familiar to her but is beginning to enjoy the unfamiliar that is evolving with Lauren.

What next?

Continue to encourage this friendship by pairing Becky and Lauren up in group activities and sitting them beside each other.

Observe their play, and tune in on an interest that the two may share and extend on this.

Learning story (three months later)

Becky and Lauren spent the morning playing in the family corner. They were involved in a lovely game of mother and baby. Lauren was the mother and Becky was the baby.

They played their roles beautifully. Becky would cry and Lauren would become the nurturing mother and pat her back and tell her she was all right.

At one stage, Lauren tried to pretend to feed Becky, but Becky told her she was not hungry. Becky would then pretend to cry again. "Put me to bed," she said to Lauren.

Becky then climbed into the dolls' cot and curled herself up to fit in. Lauren tucked in the blankets over her. Lauren then began to rub Becky, and Becky pretended to fall asleep.

Later that morning, I noticed they were still in the family corner, but this time Lauren was in the cot and Becky was the mother.

Short-term review

Great example of co-operative play and turn taking, using knowledge Becky and Lauren have of babies and mothers to act out their roles.

Demonstrates high levels of interest and involvement by (Becky) being playful with Lauren and being involved for a sustained period. Becky developed her ideas and interests by using different equipment and materials. Becky often carries on playing in the family corner after Lauren goes home. She then becomes the mother to the dolls. She feeds them, dresses them and tucks them into the cot for a sleep. This is a huge area where we can extend for Becky by providing her with different props in different areas of play.

In music, they will often pair up together and dance around holding hands. Both girls have really opened up and become a lot more confident in their abilities. This friendship has been great for their self-esteem and security within the centre environment.

What's happening here?

The teachers recognise an opportunity to encourage the friendship of two children who often play by themselves.

What aspects of holistic development does this assessment exemplify?

This exemplar illustrates the integration of children's social development with other aspects of their learning. In the first story, the teacher notes "Becky obviously still feels more secure with starting her day with something that is familiar to her but is beginning to enjoy the unfamiliar that is evolving with Lauren." The friendship appears to provide an entry to more complex learning in wider contexts, such as communicating with adults, joining in group discussions, collaborative role play, and music.

How might this documented assessment contribute to holistic development?

The learning here is documented by one teacher, but other teachers will also support Becky and Lauren in their learning. Having this developing relationship on record means that the other teachers can read this record and may consider other ways to nurture Becky and Lauren's friendship. The other teachers may add to the record.

Families read the assessment record, too, and this entry provides reassuring evidence that Becky is making progress in a number of areas.

What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

This teacher is responding to a perceived opportunity to extend Becky and Lauren's learning by encouraging their friendship. The initial plan is very specific: to observe their play and encourage an interest that the two may share and to pair the children in group activities.

The teacher acknowledges Becky's right to be by herself but perceives the advantages of the growing friendship between the two children.