

The settings and schools that achieve the most for children intellectually are likely to have a member of staff who leads on parental involvement. They have a clear policy on parental involvement and the team work to share information on children's progress pro-actively and regularly and encourage parents to make active observations and decisions about their children's learning. The more frequently this sharing takes place, the more effective it is. These settings work hard to build trust and develop shared understandings about learning. Activities and materials are shared with the home in order to complement learning in the setting. The impact of the work to involve parents is monitored and evaluated to ensure that all families can benefit and engage in regular dialogue. These settings know their families well, and access additional support services effectively (Sylva and others 2004; Siraj-Blatchford and others 2003).

In the second half of Session 6, examples of practical, working ideas are introduced aimed at helping participants develop positive, ongoing two-way communication with parents – a real partnership in learning. A presentation and video describe three pieces of partnership work with parents from the Camden Foundation Stage Advisory Teacher team. These projects are detailed as Practice Examples in the PEAL pack under the following titles.

Sharing observations: Treasureboxes®

Stop! Look! Listen! Sharing observations with parents

Drama and movement through stories and music

All three projects followed a similar process in involving parents. Showing a video taken of children in the nursery proved a great attraction, as parents came to watch their own child at play. This promoted interest in getting more involved and gave practitioners the opportunity to explain planning and demonstrate how children learn as they play. Parents became involved through borrowing equipment, joining in music and dance workshops, and making observations of their children at home, which they exchanged with their child's key person regularly. Practitioners in all three settings remarked on how much their relationships and communication with parents improved as a result of involvement in these projects and how much more confident they felt in talking to parents.