CLICK HERE: access the Emerging Literacy Yammer site: including resources from the Emerging Literacy networks

Emerging Literacy Local Networks – August/ September

The first round of Emerging Literacy Networks took place in August and September in 30 different locations across the Northern Alliance. Our group of 35 Lead Practitioners supported the delivery of these in a number of the locations.

The networks explored:
- Getting started: Taking developmental approach to Emerging Literacy – **CLICK HERE**
- The Early Level Literacy and English Progression framework – **CLICK HERE**
- Resources which support pre-handwriting development – **CLICK HERE**

The second round of network sessions are being delivered between October and November. Year 1 practitioners will further explore elements of language development and Year 2/ Year 3 practitioners will look further into pencil control and writing development.

At the network sessions there were some themes which practitioners identified would be useful to share wider across the Emerging Literacy Network.

The Ongoing Assess-Plan-Teach Cycle
The foundational literacy skill screening and tracker tools have been created for teachers to identify children's strengths and gaps in their foundational skills. We recommend that practitioners use the tracking tools to support their short term planning of learning, teaching and assessment of these skills. Donna explains her approach to this in **Part 4 of the video** shared in Network 1.

~~Phonological Awareness or Phonics~~ = Phonological Awareness ALONGSIDE Phonics
A question that those new to taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy sometimes ask is "Should I be planning for phonological awareness or phonics?" The research from Shapiro and Solity (2008), which is shared in the **introduction training video** highlights the benefits of planning for phonological awareness alongside the teaching of phonics. Further evidence in the **reference list**.

The findings from the use of the phonological awareness screen allow practitioners to plan for classroom phonological awareness, both universal and targeted, based on children's strengths and gaps in phonological awareness. Some phonics programmes contain work on phonological awareness, and the screen and associated materials will help practitioners judge whether and which children need more work on phonology. Others do not, and will need more supplementation.
In phonics teaching, practitioners focus on two sub-sets of skills:
- **phoneme/ grapheme correspondence** – linking the sound (phoneme) to the corresponding letter(s) (grapheme); through phonics teaching practitioners plan for opportunities for repeated exposure to the phoneme/ grapheme correspondence to support recall
- **phonemic manipulation** – applying knowledge of phoneme/ grapheme correspondence to read (decode) and spell (encode) words. Children who have gaps in earlier phonological awareness skills may find phonemic manipulation challenging. It is recommended that phonological awareness is planned alongside phonics instruction. Through phonics teaching practitioners plan for a variety of opportunities to practise decoding and encoding skills.

Through using the **Northern Alliance – Principles of Effective Phonics Teaching**, practitioners are encouraged to plan for pace and application of these skills, appropriate to the needs of the children in their class, using the assess-plan-teach cycle to adjust pace and application accordingly.

Pencil Control Skills Toolkit

The Handwriting – Foundations and Building Blocks area of the blog includes information for early years practitioners and those in the early stages of school to support children's movement and coordination skills through to early letter formation. When supporting children's motor development, we recommend practitioners engage with this information and the resources included within.
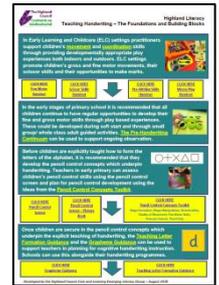
Before children are explicitly taught how to form the letters of the alphabet, it is recommended that they develop the pencil control concepts which underpin handwriting. Teachers in early primary can assess children's pencil control skills using the pencil control screen and plan for pencil control development using the ideas from the **Pencil Control Concepts Toolkit**.

At the first round of local networks in August and September we explored:

1. **The Pencil Control Screen and Accompanying Picture/ Resource Book**
   At the networks practitioners shared how and when they feel they may use the pencil control screen. The pencil control screen has been developed between education and occupational therapy to provide an overview for practitioners of children's strengths and areas for development in the seven pencil control concepts of: shape formation, shape manipulation, directionality, fluidity of movement, fine motor skills, pressure control and pencil grip. Some possible ways in which practitioners identified they may use the pencil control screen are:

   o prior to providing opportunities for pencil control skill development in early primary, universally or with identified children following pre-handwriting observations, to help inform the planning of pencil control skill development through play and direct instruction;
   o once children have had opportunities to develop pencil control skills through play and direct instruction in early primary, universally or with identified children following observations of pencil control skills, to identify individual strengths and gaps to help inform planning of early letter formation;
   o with individual children who have had previous handwriting instruction who are displaying difficulties.

   The seven sections of the screen can be used independently. Teachers can use their professional judgement as to how best to use the screen to inform their short and medium term planning.

2. **The Pencil Control Resource Toolkit**
   For each of the seven pencil control concepts there is a resource with suggested activities to support the development of the skill. This is done initially through thinking-looking-doing activities, and then further consolidated with a pencil. Practitioners identified different ways they may use the pencil control resource toolkit:

   o using the various activity suggestions for each of the pencil control skills to plan out their early handwriting programme universally for children prior to the formal instruction of letter formation;
   o creating a targeted early handwriting programme for individuals/ groups of children by identifying the areas of development through the use of the pencil control screen.

We will be further exploring and developing these resources during the 2018/2019 session through the networks. If you have any feedback on the resources, let us know by emailing emerging.literacy@highland.gov.uk.