



“Let’s talk about the Early Years Conversation Project”



Caroline Vollans is the lead writer and editor for Sheringham’s SPH. Caroline is a psychoanalyst and writer. She writes for Nursery World, family and the Foundation Stage Forum, and is author of Wise Words: How Susan Isaacs changed parenting (Routledge 2018) and co-editor of Putting the EYFS Curriculum into Practice (Sage 2023).

I’m Dini Beveridge and I have been working in Early Years for over 20 years. I currently work in Charles Dickens Primary School and Nursery as room lead for the 2-3 year olds. The favourite parts of my job are reading stories and finding out fascinating facts, going on nature hunts and looking after our pet axolotl!



A conversation with an EYCP Champion

“It’s so inspiring to see how we can reach children when we tune into their interests.”

Dini Beveridge, EYCP Champion

This is the third post in a series of blogs focussing on the experiences of participants in the Early Years Conversation Project. The [Early Years Conversation Project](#) (EYCP) is a programme designed and delivered by the [East London Research School](#) (ELRS) and funded by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) and the DfE through [A Brighter Start - East London’s Early Years Stronger Practice Hub](#). It aims to develop the interactions of practitioners with children, to improve the communication and language skills of two and three year olds.

Dini Beveridge is an EYCP ‘champion’. As a champion Dini is the practitioner in her setting who receives the majority of the professional development. With the support of her early years lead, Dini then shares this learning with her team, supporting them to make changes to their practice too.

I wanted to get a feel of how Dini is finding her work. We talked ...

As EYCP Champion, Dini, can you say a bit about how your role is working out?

I've thoroughly enjoyed all the training. I particularly benefit from having the [videos](#) that show the [ShREC](#) approach in action - I know that the other practitioners find them invaluable too.

A useful tool is the Padlet- this is a digital platform where all the training and videos are kept. It's a great way to revisit the training and share it with my team. I have found it easy to use and so beneficial. Soon I'm going to be introducing it in my setting as a way of sharing information with our parents.

I've put a buddy system in place- this is where I pair up team members so they can support each other. It's working well and helps keep everyone on board, as well as ensuring that we have consistency across the team.

I'd say my main challenge is to help my team feel as passionate as I do about it. They are enthusiastic, so I think we're getting there!

Can you say the main ways that the EYCP training has changed your (and other staff's) interactions with children?

I now reflect a lot more on how I talk to children. For instance, I make sure I give them time to process and share their thoughts- I try not to jump in too soon.

I've been working with my team to ensure that the children who need 'a bigger slice of the cake' get it- the beauty of the EYCP approach is that it works for every child no matter where they are on their learning journey.

We've changed our daily practice- rather than having a whole group story at the end of the day, we have small group conversation time. This helps to ensure that every child is having those all-importance back and forth conversations. It's so lovely to look around and see every child interacting.

Dini, how does your mentor influence your work?

Ah, my mentor is a joy to work with- she's so supportive with the whole process. I find it especially useful and insightful when we film our interactions and discuss them. It's a perfect way to be reflective and fine tune my skills as a practitioner.

She's also helped me not be so hard on myself! I was struggling with having large groups of children all wanting attention and was finding it overwhelming. She reminded me that it's a team effort, not all down to me- this was just what I needed to hear.

So, yes, such a positive influence.

Can you give an example of an interaction with a child that would sum up your enthusiasm for the EYCP?

I think I'll have to give an example of [interactive reading](#) – it's a wonderful context for using the ShREC approach.

Recently we were looking at a book about tigers and a child came over and joined the group. He's a child who is usually self-directed in their play and prefers the company of children to adults. On this occasion his eyes lit up when we started to look through the book: he started to point to the pictures and talk about what he could see.

By the end of the book, he'd talked about how tigers can swim, how people kill tigers and that his mum's friend has a rug made from an animal! His mum later contacted us on the family app and said, "Oh that's why he's been talking non-stop about tigers!"

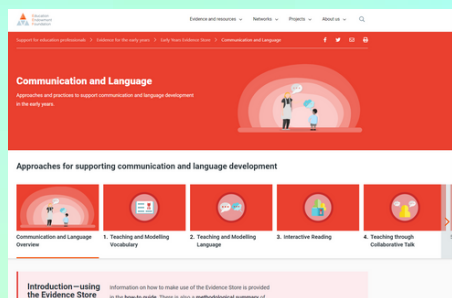
It's so inspiring to see how we can reach every child when we tune into their interests.

By Caroline Vollans



Further reading:

EEF Early Years Evidence Store: [Interactive Reading](#).



[‘Interactive reading - the power of sharing books’](#) a blog by Fliss James, Director of East London Research School



Details of the [ShREC approach](#): 4 evidence informed strategies to promote high quality interactions.

