



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



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My name is Ewelina Middleton. I am a qualified Early Years teacher, as well as a qualified Social-Care pedagogis with nearly 20 years of experience in Early Years education. I currently work at Brookhill Nursery School.

I am passionate about working with young children and their families, where I can use my creativity, positive energy, and knowledge. I truly enjoy reading stories and engaging in fun, messy play activities with young children.



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Ewelina Middleton, EY Lead.

This blog is a part of a series 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.

Ewelina Middleton is a Lead Early Years Teacher. I wanted to get a feel of Ewelina’s participation in the EYCP programme.

We talked ...

As early years lead, how would you describe your experience of the EYCP?

It has been a great pleasure to be part of a big research programme.

I found the programme engaging and well-organised from day one. It was pitched at a good level- we could take valuable insights and knowledge from it.

Also, it's been such an enriching experience to work with different settings and mentors- sharing expertise and learning from others is invaluable.

In a nutshell, how would you rate the programme?

10/10: the quality of the content and delivery was exceptional!

The structure of the programme allowed ample time for reflection and practice. This has contributed significantly to us improving our practice and motivating us for the future.

How would you say the EYCP has impacted most in your setting?

The resources and ongoing mentor support enabled us to embed positive changes in our daily practice. It's something we continue to build on and develop.

I'd say the most important outcome of the programme is that it has motivated our team to reflect on the way they communicate with the children. This has led to us creating a more communication-friendly environment, benefiting children in both our baby and toddler rooms.

As a result of using the [ShREC approach](#) and [interactive reading](#), our children are truly enjoying the experience of sharing books with adults. They've become so much more confident in their communication skills – it's wonderful to see.

As EYCP lead, how do you work with staff to get them on board?

I took a slow and steady approach concentrating on staff reflection, engagement celebrating progress. This approach has had a positive impact, enabling change without much pressure.

The role of the champion has been huge, and I must commend Alberto, our EYCP champion, for being inspiring and positive, as well as a great role model for the team.

What would you say is the most important quality an EY lead needs for this programme?

I believe it's crucial for any EY lead to embody enthusiasm and an open-minded approach.

Can you say the main ways that the EYCP training has changed staff interactions with children?

I've noticed that staff interactions are more meaningful and positive. They are more confident during story time sessions and when playing and interacting with children.

Furthermore, I have observed that the staff are exceptionally tuned in to the children's individual communication styles and needs.

Most notably, they allow children to take the lead.

What is the main challenge you have faced?

Short deadlines for collecting permissions or evaluations from parents.

Given the chance, what changes would you make to the programme?

I would advocate for extending the duration of the programme, because it was brilliant!

I'd suggest considering alternative language assessment tools - the current ones tend to be time-consuming and too far long for young children.

Now's your chance to say one final thing about the EYCP – whatever you'd like to share.

I believe the EYCP program has helped us to foster a deeper connection between children, staff, and literature. We now celebrate a true love of books.

It is encouraging to witness such enthusiasm from both the children and staff, and I look forward to continuing this momentum in the future.

By Caroline Vollans



Further reading:

[Guide to effective professional development in the Early Years \(EEF\)](#)



[Interactive reading – More than just reading a book \(EEF\)](#)

