

How useful is it to look for schemas?

Schemas can be useful as an observation tool. They provide another way of looking at children, by giving a focus to details which otherwise might seem disconnected. Identifying a schema is the first step, the next step is to use the observations to decide how best to extend the children's learning.

What do we do with this knowledge?

When children appear to be paying attention to a particular pattern, they can be provided with a range of experiences or materials which extend their play and learning along that particular path. This can provide opportunities for further learning, for example a child with a trajectory schema can be involved in a game in which they take turns throwing bean bags at target mats with numbers on.

References

'Again! Again! Understanding schemas in young children'
Louis, Beswick, Magraw & Hayes, 2008.

'Threads of Thinking' Nutbrown, 2006

'Involving Parents in their Children's Learning' Whalley, 2007

Little Acorns Pre-School:
Information leaflets for families

Schemas



An introduction

Schemas

Schemas are 'patterns' of action/play that children demonstrate when they are exploring the world, trying to find out how things work.

Children may try out the same action on a variety of different objects. These repeated actions help children to construct meaning in what they are doing.

Observing schemas in children's play can give us insights into the ideas and concepts children are currently exploring and help us to support their learning.

Some common schemas;

Trajectory enjoy watching movement, or making movement happen. Throwing and dropping objects, rolling items down an incline, playing with flowing water, swinging.

Transporting an interest in moving themselves and items from one place to another. Finding and gathering things to move and using bags, buggies, containers and trolleys to transport them.

Enclosing building boundaries around themselves, or their play area. Using boxes, dens, or other containers to enclose items or themselves. Enjoyment of ordering and organising things and spaces.

Enveloping covering and hiding themselves or objects. Filling and emptying bags and containers. Wrapping items up, posting items and putting one thing inside another.

Rotation & Circularity turning, spinning, twisting or rolling themselves or objects. Children exploring this pattern might enjoy playing with wheels, balls, cogs, rollers or hoops.

Connecting an interest in joining things together or tying things up. Children exploring this pattern might want to play with construction toys, jigsaws, gluing, string or sellotape.

Disconnecting taking things to pieces and/or scattering the parts. Children exploring this pattern may be seen building and knocking down, cutting or emptying.

Positioning lining things up, categorising, careful positioning, experimenting with order and sequence.

Transforming exploring how substances and objects can change. Mixing, mashing, disassembling. Interested in cause and effect.