



CPD Wales

Sue Benbow – Individual network member

Network to develop multi sensory approaches to learning including the use of multi sensory rooms as a teaching and learning space.

Bio -note

Sue Benbow's current role is that of a specialist teacher in Autism in a large mainstream primary school, to which is attached the county Primary Autistic Centre. As part of her further professional development she is undertaking an assessment of pupils' needs and beginning to develop a sensory curriculum.

The network activities

I have attended a series of network days which has enabled me to develop contacts in both primary and secondary sectors throughout the county. The activities which the network has undertaken have been diverse and looked at a range of multi-sensory settings and experiences. The network days provided the opportunity to participate in activities related to music therapy, massage and play skills. The visits included observing whole school approaches to multi sensory learning and visiting local provision to exchange ideas.

The network has enabled me to share ideas and to draw on the experiences of other professionals within the county to generate ideas for a sensory curriculum. It has had the added benefit of promoting an interconnected approach throughout the county. The visiting speakers were able to provide many ideas for discussion and suggestions for activities with the children, such as techniques for musical interaction to promote communication through musical exchanges. The practical demonstrations of the benefits of massage and aromatherapy for children with Autism, to help them relax and calm down and to build relationships, addresses some of the fundamental needs of the children in the Centre.

Outcomes

I have been able to improve my teaching by incorporating simple tactile routines into the "white room" sessions. Interactive play skills giving ideas for play routines addresses the "triad of impairments" (Wing, 1991) common to children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The development of language acquisition through play and social understanding improves the learning for pupils by promoting turn taking and conversational exchanges.

A benefit of belonging to the professional network means resources have been shared, for example literature on different multi sensory approaches. Resources have also included the purchase of blankets and covers in different textures to promote relaxation. This has been particularly important for several children experiencing high levels of anxiety.

As a result of the work I have engaged in, I have delivered an INSET session to the Learning Support Assistants who access the sensory rooms. This focussed on structuring the sensory sessions, assessing the children's preferences and recording the outcomes. The development of a sensory curriculum and ideas for teaching through topics and subject areas will enhance the learning for the SEN pupils throughout the school.

Evaluation and reflection

The impact on my professional development of the range of experiences afforded by the network can be illustrated by the visit to a PMLD school in South Wales. A lesson was demonstrated using sensory stories. After returning I was able to produce a sensory story for my class using a multi sensory approach, utilizing the resources in the dark room such as the ultra violet light and glow board. This lesson I delivered during the recent Ofsted Inspection. The resources and approach gave a greater impact to my teaching and focused the learning of the children more effectively.

Participation in the network has enabled me to expand my knowledge and skills and promote the use of a multi sensory approach within the school. I have also been able to use the knowledge gained in part of a Masters degree I am undertaking at Birmingham University.

References

WING, L (1991) "*Asperger's syndrome and Kanner's autism*". In FRITH, U (Ed) *Autism and Asperger Syndrome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press