

Thinking about the curriculum in the early years

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Share your thoughts
#NewhamEY23

Child poverty

Covid-19

CONTEXT.
**THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM**

The 'Matthew Effect'



Disadvantage: child poverty

- It's not just about early years
- We need a bigger change
- BUT there are things we can do now



Jason Strelitz
@strelitz_jason

Over 10,000 food and supply parcels and 3,000 prescriptions delivered in 5 weeks to Newham homes that needed support – absolutely amazing effort by 100s of HelpNewham council staff and volunteers [@NewhamLondon](#) – including over 1000 today





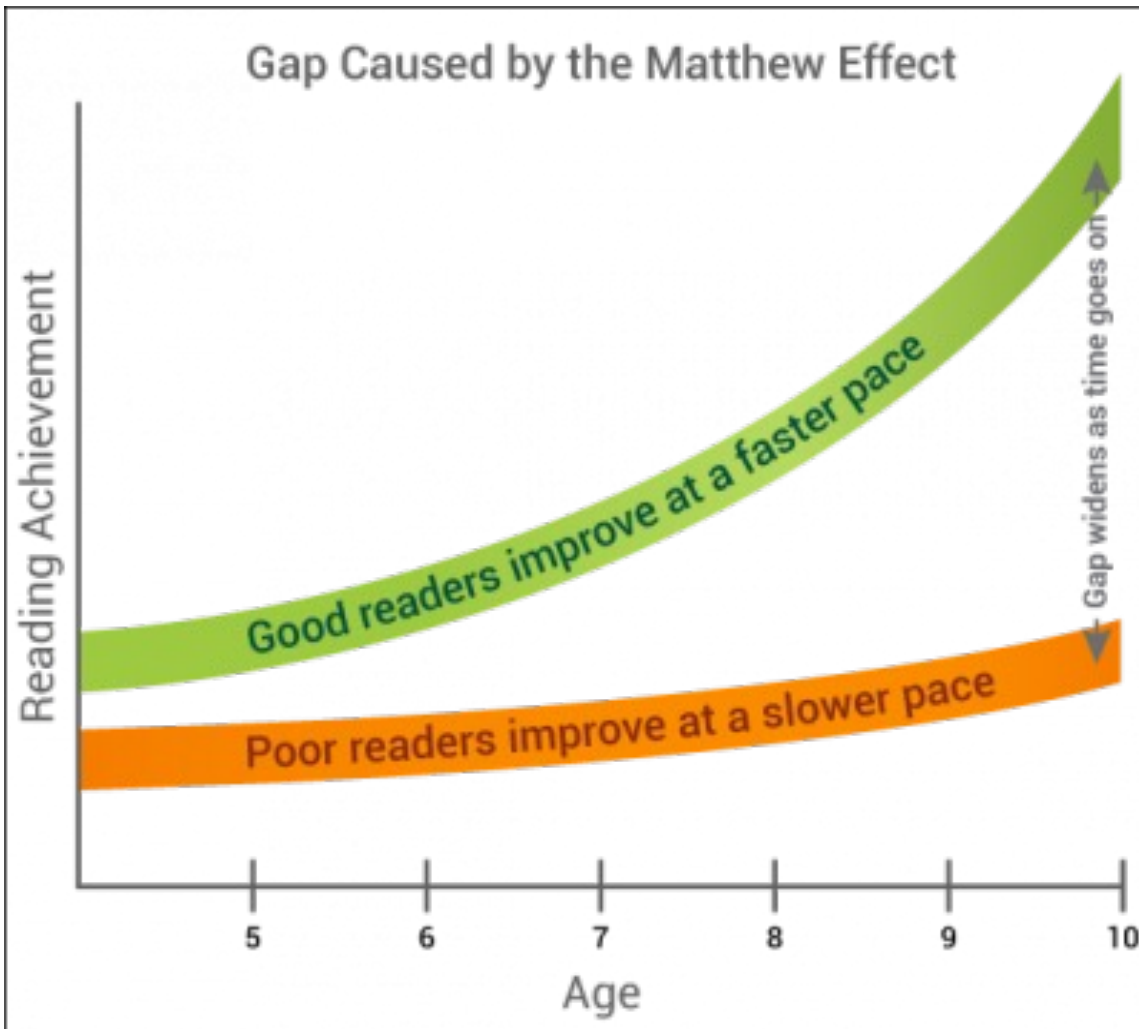
Gaps double

- By the end of the EYFS, the gap between children eligible for free school meals and all children is 4.6 months.
- That gap doubles by the end of primary, and doubles again by the end of secondary schooling
- Children with SEND are 10 to 15 months behind other children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, according to the Education Policy Institute's annual report.



Mirror





The Matthew Effect

- ‘The concept of Matthew effects springs from findings that individuals who have advantageous early educational experiences are able to utilize new educational experiences more efficiently’

- Stanovich, K.E., 1986. Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21(4), 660-687.





Impact on early communication, physical development and emotional well-being

Children and families left without support

Different families and communities affected differently

COVID RECOVERY. EARLY YEARS

Unmet and undiagnosed needs

Children who have missed important early experiences and probably don't have longer-term needs

Intentional teaching

CHOICES.
THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM

Curriculum choices

Are we doing the best for every child?





AMBITIOUS GIRL



WINDOWS AND
MIRRORS.
THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM

MEENA HARRIS

Illustrated by
MARISSA VALDEZ

CAN
YOU
SEE
YOURSELF
HERE?



Not Quite
Snow White



written by Ashley Franklin
illustrated by Ebony Glenn



Let children develop in an
enabling environment

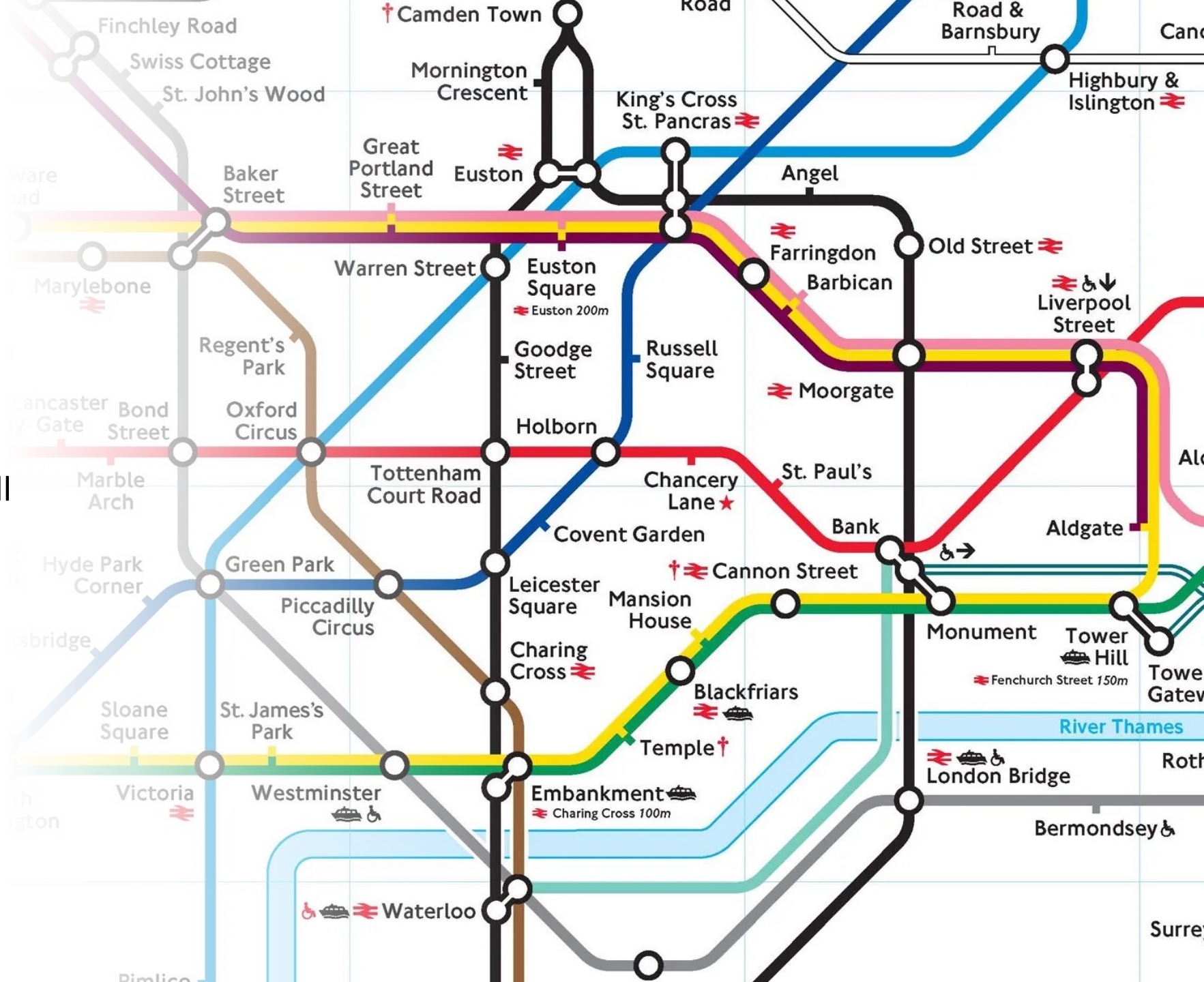
**CHILD DEVELOPMENT.
THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM**

Small steps

Track children's development
from one step to the next

- Unique child
- Unique journeys
- At the top level: an overall direction and pace

- Unique child
- Unique journeys
- At the top level: an overall direction and pace



You're on a bus
in central
London heading
out to the
countryside



As you head
out of London,
what looks
different?





Where are
you?

Child development

- We have an overall picture of where we are heading
- But we can't just look and make an instant judgement
- It's the same with the children we are working with: we can't just observe and find the 'next step' on a drop down list from a tracker
- Children's learning and development **doesn't** just 'unfold' with us tracking and celebrating each stage
- We need a mixed approach to early years education: a 'mongrel curriculum'

Why we need a mongrel curriculum in EYFS

In the early years, curriculum shouldn't be either play-based or adult-led, but a mixture of both, writes Julian Grenier

23rd September 2022, 6:25pm



- It's not just about enabling children to develop freely.
- It's not just about learning small steps, one after the next
- Smith (1999, p.86): “models of development which emphasise the child's natural and spontaneous development from within or of development as being shaped entirely through learning processes have been strongly criticised.”



Teaching

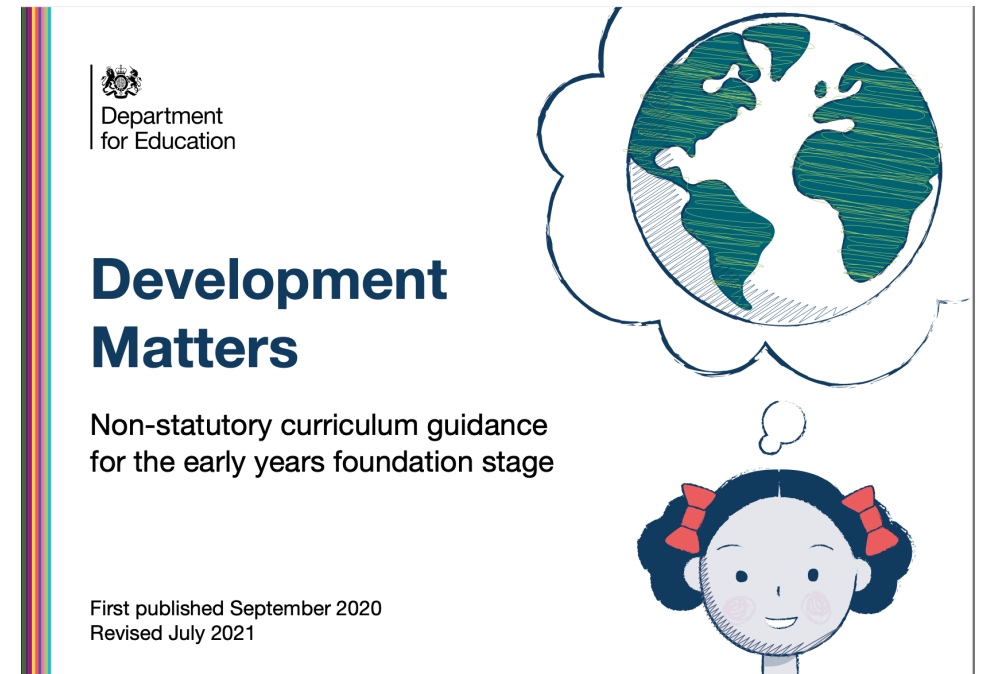
As the adult has more knowledge and experience, the encounter is necessarily unequal; but it is understood by the participants as a process of giving more agency to the child, rather in the manner that Bruner (1995, p.6) describes – “adults treating the child as an agent and bent on ‘teaching’ him to be more so.”



3. The curriculum: what we want children to learn

- The curriculum is a top-level plan of everything the early years setting wants the children to learn.
- Planning to help every child to develop their language is vital.
- The curriculum needs to be ambitious. Careful sequencing will help children to build their learning over time.
- Young children's learning is often driven by their interests. Plans need to be flexible.
- Babies and young children do not develop in a fixed way. Their development is like a spider's web with many strands, not a straight line.
- Depth in early learning is much more important than covering lots of things in a superficial way.

What choices will you make?



The importance of language development

30-million word gap

**COMMUNICATION.
THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM**

Challenges

A broader and richer vocabulary



The challenge

‘Preschool settings are often dominated by teacher talk and this talk has been criticized as being overly directive and unresponsive, often focusing on procedural or management information which is associated with restricted and less complex language use by the children.’



The challenge

‘In contrast, where children receive frequent examples of language models, development is enhanced.’

[Supporting early oral language skills for English language learners in inner city preschool provision](#)

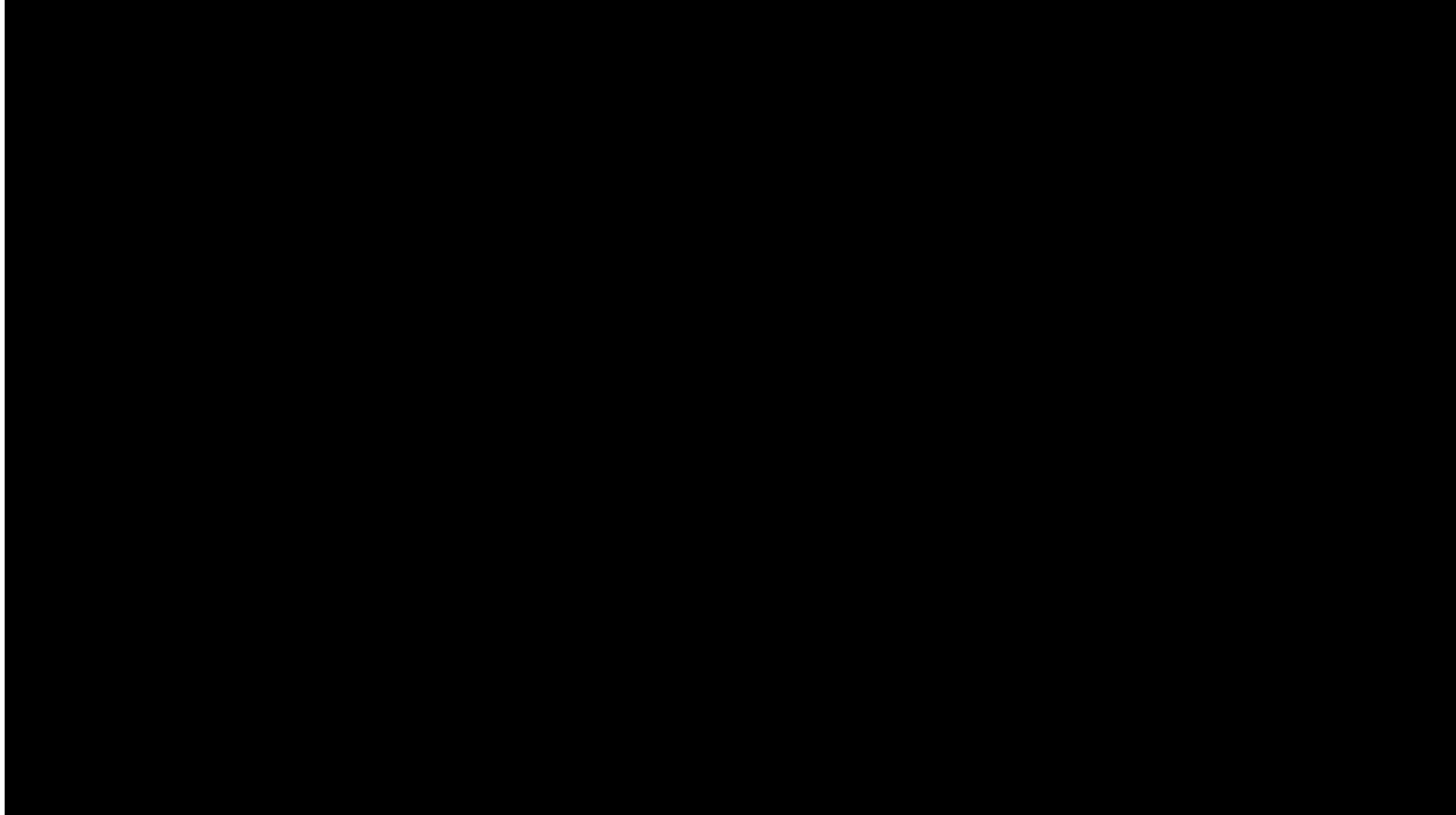


Prioritising high quality interactions

- There is lots of evidence that emphasises the importance and power of high-quality interactions between children and adults.
- Siraj et al (2017) state: *“There is an increasing recognition that the relationship a child has with a teacher or caregiver that is both **sensitive** and **stimulating** is the central and most critical component of early care and education.”*
- Conversation matters!



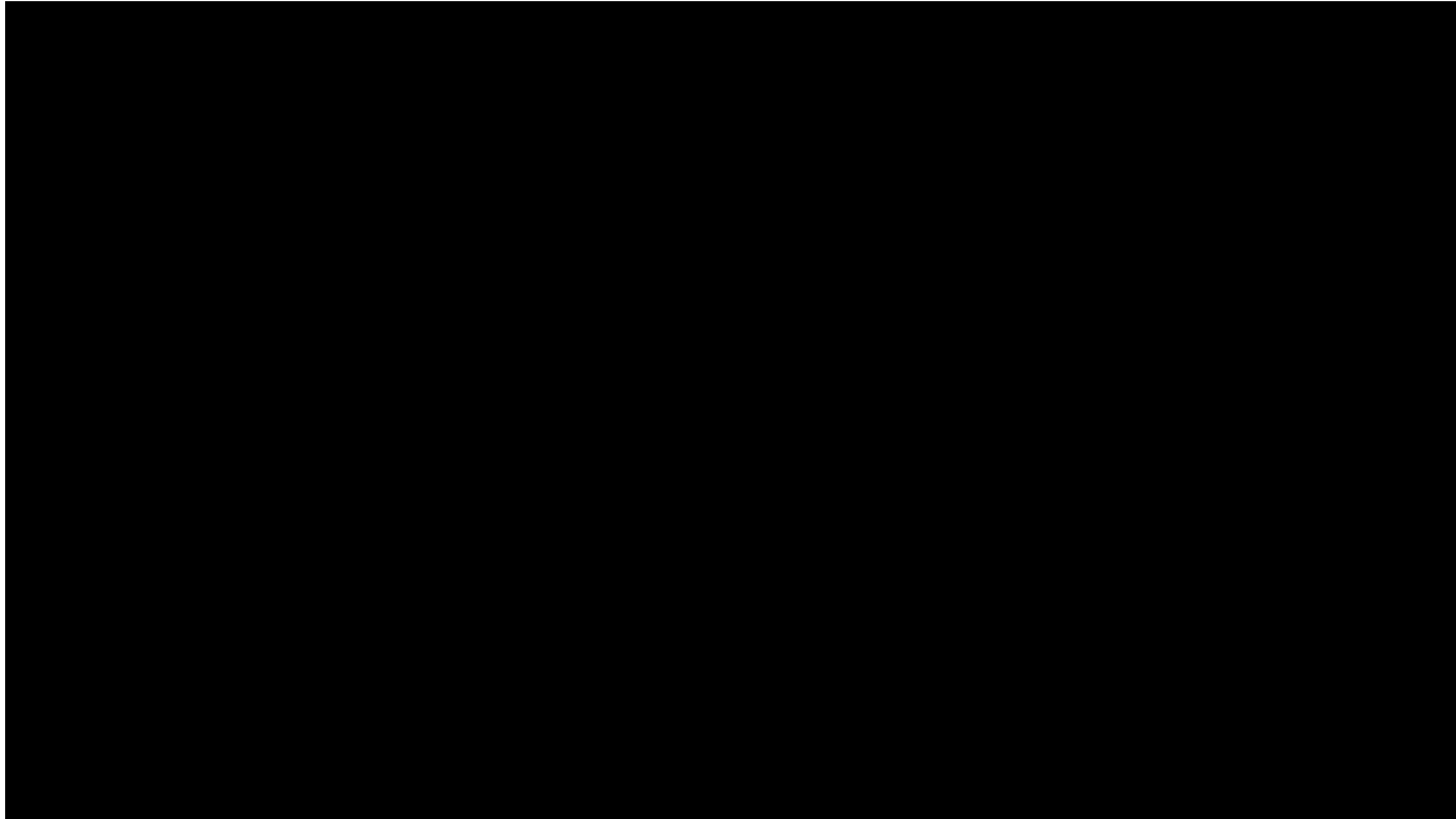
Beyond the 30-million-word-gap



The power of everyday conversations and interactions

- Reflect on the importance of language-promoting strategies in naturalistic, everyday situations for modelling new words.
- Make the most of routines such as getting dressed, snack and mealtimes and tidy up time.
- Consider how to intentionally dedicate space and time to have rich, sustained back and forth conversations.
- **Use books as a focus for conversation: not just 'reading to' children**








Sensory needs

- Many children have unidentified needs that could be easily remedied
- around 13% of children in the U.K. may have an undiagnosed need
- these issues can affect all children, but those from disadvantaged backgrounds and certain ethnicities are more likely to be affected
- the NHS funds eye examinations and glasses for children, yet many families do not use this service



Reading to or reading with
children?

CHOICES.
**THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM**

Helping every child
to develop their
communication

Are we doing the best for every child?

Putting the EYFS Curriculum into Practice

Julian Grenier & Caroline Vollans



 SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

- A chapter on each of the prime and specific areas of learning to help you reflect on the choices you're making
- Each chapter is consistently set out, with clear examples of practice as well as exploring leading-edge research
- Specific chapters on inclusion, English as an additional language, professional development, supporting disadvantaged children and vertical curriculum design
- Professional development
- Weaving through everything: equalities
- Weaving through everything: research and evidence



Early Years Toolkit

Should we stop doing things which are good for our children?

**FINAL THOUGHTS.
THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM**

Brains are built,
not born

Find out more

The Early Years Toolkit



Presents 12 approaches for **improving** teaching and learning summarising:

- its average **impact** on attainment;
- its **cost**;
- the **strength** of the evidence supporting it.


Good starting point for professional conversations

CHOICES.
THINKING ABOUT
CURRICULUM

Early Years Toolkit

An accessible summary of educational research for early years teaching

Toolkit Strands	Cost	Evidence	Impact
Built environment No impact for low cost based on very limited evidence	£ £ £ £ £	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	0
Communication and language approaches Very high impact for very low cost based on extensive evidence	£ £ £ £ £	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+6
Digital technology Moderate impact for moderate cost based on limited evidence	£ £ £ £ £	🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒 🔒	+4



Brains are Built, Not Born

**Dr. Jack Shonkoff
Harvard Center for the Developing Child**

Find out more



Development Matters

Non-statutory curriculum guidance
for the early years foundation stage

First published September 2020
Revised July 2021



Progress check at age two

Non-statutory guidance
for the early years
foundation stage



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