Transcript – Promoting the Skills of Communication

KEY:

N: Narrator
LM: Lesley McComb
BC: Barry Conroy

N: Science and Technology provides a relevant context to support the development and application children's communication skills. Talk and practical activities requires dialogue, for example: as the teacher facilitates enquiry with pupils, stimulus for rich discussion is provided, laying the foundations for wider talk and thinking.

LM: Enquiry-based Science certainly does support the development of communication skills. The children are encouraged to work together, to share ideas. They have to articulate their learning, and it gives them an opportunity to do it in a relaxed, practical way. And it's not all based on what they can write, what they can read, a lot of it's verbal. It extends their vocabulary and encourages them to think, and to think about what they're saying because they're having to explain it to other children in their groups.

N: The ongoing nature of this type of talk between teacher and children supports collaborative learning, as they talk to each other, listening and responding to what others in the class have to say.

Successful talk requires explicit teaching. You need to prepare children to work in groups by repeated experience of sharing, explaining, justifying, and acknowledging other points of view. As they progress, they will adapt, refine and modify their own ideas and opinions based on what they have heard and said.

BC: The enquiry-based approach, by its nature, means they're working in groups with, with their peers and they have to work with the other people their group, and sometimes children… Traditionally may have been used to working on their own and completing activities on their own and completing activities on their own. Whereby we try now to work in groups of, groups of children: four, five, six. They have to communicate with their groups, and that brings on their talking and listening skills and it means that they are learning from the experiences the other members of their group have had.

And they… They're… Realising that there are certain skills to working in a group, and… At times those have to be learned, we don't just always have

the… Naturally fit into a group, sometimes we have to learn that our ideas are good, but somebody's idea might be better, and it's, it's weighing up as a group whose idea would work best in this situation.

N: With enquiry-based activities, and once there has been lots of talking and listening, there is an opportunity to consider a variety of appropriate forms of writing. Engage the class in written work that mimics the format of real scientific writing. For example: explanation, procedural, and report writing can all allow children to demonstrate their learning effectively. If it's still early on in your class' experience of doing this sort of writing, you could begin with a writing frame that sets children off with a series of prompts.

Reading opportunities implemented effectively within themes can be valuable to learners.

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Fiction books act as engaging springboards for scientific enquiry, while non-fiction texts and other media-based resources can support science reading, engaging children in relevant and meaningful science-based issues. The key is purposeful opportunities for talking and listening, reading and writing, that unlock rich possibilities for the transfer and application of children's communication skills.