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Capstone 2023: The Bond of Learning

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Abstract

The learning that is done between the ages of 2-5 years old provides for lifelong learning. Basic knowledge of the alphabet, numbers, and colors used to be expected before a child steps foot into the public school setting, however as time has passed children have been increasingly behind in those steps. A recent study found that for every ten children that arrive at kindergarten each fall only four of them are prepared. Those six who are not prepared struggle in a continuous catch-up cycle (Livingstone, 2015). My capstone project was to show others who might be worried about the readiness of their children how to teach children who are young. There is an individualistic parenting style in the United States that expects caregivers to know how to teach children, but my project is out there to give ideas on how to build an education around the child.

Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

At the beginning of my Summer 2023 semester, I was hoping to be in a teaching position for the upcoming school year. However, my dream was not yet realized. I chose to pursue a project teaching, and then it hit me. I would teach my two-year-old nephew while I had this Summer off from my work within the school district. After some needed reevaluation from my professor, I decided to document the journey we would take together as a workbook for other parents or caregivers to use.

Section 2: Elements coming together

Teaching children can sometimes be a daunting task and with today's technology, many children slip through the cracks and arrive in public school already behind their peers. My project goes through some methods that would be used within the classroom to give children a step ahead. Even children who are mildly familiar with their alphabet are far more successful within the classroom and later in life. Other countries have been focusing on Early Childhood Education and offering programs that start children far earlier than here in the United States.

“If there's a lesson for the United States from the research and on-the-ground observation of the French experience, it's that 2 is not too young for children to enter the school building, but it is too young for them to start “school”—imposing the norms, structures, and expectations of even 3- and 4-year-old classrooms on 2-year-olds is a mistake. While 2-year-olds are capable of learning a great deal, they are also still very much babies”(Carr, 2017).

Not only are American children behind their peers here in our classrooms but also on a world stage because we focus on individuality. Although France has struggled with inclusivity and keeping their educational environments progressive to members of different economical

backgrounds, their goal has been offering education to all children free of cost (Carr, 2017). Our policies and culture have shied away from broadening our public schools to include Early Childhood Education because of the individualistic nature of Americans.

This is where I decided to base my project, on the work of teaching a child at home to give them that structure and development they might need for later in life. I chose to start teaching my nephew, Ewan, at the age of two because this is the perfect age to start introducing lifelong learning in a joyful way. The first method I wanted to introduce would-be flashcards with pictures and letters. Flashcards are used often within the public school setting and are a staple for younger children's education within America.

“Flashcard games can also be used as a means to bring children to children and children and teachers closer. Not only is the media approach between children and teachers but also one of the effective media in education which is a visual resource and an approach to ensure the learning process becomes meaningful learning for children or students,” (Harisanty et.al, p. 5).

Flashcards are tried and true because of the interaction they provide between the teacher and the learner. I definitely felt this was the most positive method while working with my nephew because he was able to provide what he knew (the pictures) and then I was able to add onto that in a scaffolding-like effect.

I chose this same scaffolding effect to start what I had predicted would be the hardest method that we took on next, sign language. Sign language is extremely useful to cross pathways within the brain for longevity and permanence. However positive the use of sign language is, it was the most difficult for my nephew Ewan to tackle. I chose to use Emotional Intelligence and let him have breaks and choose whether or not we continued. The benefits of this learning

combination have been proven to support long-term learning for young children with different modes encapsulating the learning experience. “Early childhood educators can plan ways to include mul- timodal literacy activities in their current curriculum to provide opportunities for children to develop their capacities for multimodal meaning-making” (Taylor & Leung, p.3). Children who use multiple sensory modalities develop better language skills and are more likely to retain information. Using singular modal learning is something that is honed as we become adults, children are more naturally capable of these learning types. Another multimodal example would be the third method that I chose to use with Ewan, the alphabet song.

“In the case of young children, printed words, spoken words, drawings, building blocks, gestures, numbers, alphabet letters, songs, music, dance, graphs, tastes, and smells are some of the different signs or modes that come together in various combinations during language arts activities in the early childhood classroom” (Taylor & Leung, p.2)

The use of these modes helps with the children’s short attention span but also provides learning that they will be accustomed to within a public school setting. In fact, the most valuable lessons within an early childhood education program would be those that combine these modes in innovative ways for children to learn. This is why throughout my work I creatively and innovatively combined methods and used different modes to keep Ewan’s interest over the last six weeks.

Section 3: Results

The end result of my project would be the workbook discussing how we have been able to work for the last month or so on a task that children his age should be experiencing in some capacity. The workbook is now published on a Google Site with open access for parents to look

at and gain ideas from. The great part of modes of learning is that there are a million different ones and the combination is endless. The current stakeholders of my nephew and his parents are far more excited about the process we have been sharing together, as I wrote about in the workbook some of the most satisfying benefits of this project is a flourishing relationship with the child. Through this work, Ewan and I have made tremendous progress in his learning and also in our bond as an aunt and nephew.

Section 4: Conclusion

At the beginning of this project, I was hoping for a larger online presence but was struggling to find places to publish my project for more hits online. Ultimately, I opted to make my own Google Site after repeatedly being turned down. This will make my site viewable when others Google search. I also felt that sign language might be the hardest method, but I personally believe that learning can be severely enhanced by using a physical medium. I felt that while Ewan might not find this to be his favorite, I have worked with many children who are on the Autism Spectrum and they enjoy sign language. Each child is unique and I wanted to provide ideas for children who might have neurological divergencies. However, I still feel that it is important to show others that not every method will be preferred and children are in fact still very young at the age of two. The learning they do as children can provide for a better outcome and I loved showing the world how this might be beneficial for the potential of other children.

Section 5: References

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Section 6: Appendix

<https://sites.google.com/u.boisestate.edu/young-learning-minds?usp=sharing>