

Natasha Wood

fantastic ideas for children with EAL

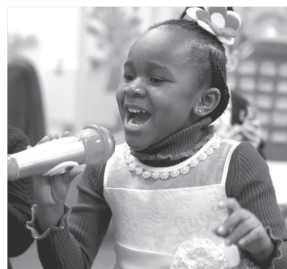


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FEATHERSTONE
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK

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First published in Great Britain 2018 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

This electronic edition published in 2019 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-4729-5263-9; ePDF: 978-1-4729-5262-2

Series design: Lynda Murray

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About the author

I have been working in education for 13 years and as an Early Years Co-ordinator for eight.
I am also the SENCO, Safeguarding lead and Forest School Leader at an outstanding
primary school in Southwark.

I have recently begun writing articles for a number of Early Years magazines and am hoping to
further my love of writing into the field of children's literature.

I am passionate about children's development and hope to inspire others to embrace all things
Early Years and continue to share and promote outstanding practice.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the staff and children of St Patricks Montessori Nursery School, London,
for their time and patience in putting this book together, including the use of a number of
photographs.

Also special thanks to Sarah Corray, Shakira Wood and the Gregory's.

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Introduction

Each year, more and more children are starting in the Early Years with English as an additional language (EAL). There is plenty of advice available on how to support children with EAL in the Early Years but there are limited resources that also include practical ideas that have proved to be successful in enriching children's own language and understanding of a new language.

This book gives practitioners clear, fun and engaging activities to do with children who are either new to English or have English as an additional language. It includes: simple speak and repeat games; visual ideas to support learning new words and phrases; activities that reflect home environments to make children feel welcomed and part of the school's diverse community; traditional games that will help children to bond with their peers and feel they can contribute to the learning of others, and, finally, it features activities that teach children about global awareness, which will allow them to reap the benefits of the increasing diverse world they are to inherit. Many of the activities in the book require an adult to lead, support and guide the children, however they can also be tailored to suit the needs of specific children.

When a child with EAL joins your setting, your primary concern is always (as it is with all children) to ensure that they feel safe and happy in their new surroundings. You want them to quickly integrate into their environment, make friends and over time be able to use English as confidently as they use their first language. To do this successfully you need to provide lots of opportunities for them to play and communicate with their peers.

Although it is important to remember that there is no set pattern or way for children to learn an additional language, there is a general guidance that you can have in mind to support them in the early stages.

1. Many children who are learning English for the first time will pass through a silent phase; sometimes, this can last for a long time. However, this doesn't mean that they aren't developing their language skills, it just means that they need more time to absorb their surroundings. At this stage, children should not feel pressurised to talk but adults should continue to involve them and pick up on any non-verbal responses, e.g. pointing, nodding, smiling.
2. In addition to or alongside non-verbal responses children might echo single words or repeated common phrases. When they demonstrate this, continue to praise them and offer encouragement.
3. Children may start to join in with songs or stories and start to develop 'formulaic' language, e.g. 'my turn', 'home time', 'I go toilet'.
4. They will soon begin to use simple questions, names and responses, e.g. 'yes please', 'no thank you', 'I feel fine'.
5. Next, they will develop independent phrases that reflect their wants and needs and begin to use adjectives, nouns and verbs in their speech.
6. Finally, children will become confident in using longer sentences, although a few errors may still be apparent.



The structure of the book

The pages are all organised in the same way. Before you start an activity, it's important to read everything on the page. Sometimes you may decide to change the order in which you do the activities or just pick and choose a game from the middle – that is allowed!

What you need lists the resources required for the activity. These are likely to be readily available in most settings and homes or can be bought/made easily.

Top tips give a brief word of advice that could make all the difference to the successful outcome of the activity, so make sure you read them!

What to do tells you step-by-step what you need to do to complete the activity.

What's in it for the children? lists some of the benefits the children will gain through the activities and how it will contribute to their learning.

Taking it forward helps you consider what else you can do to extend the learning experiences. It gives ideas for additional activities on the same theme, or for developing the activity further.

The **Health & Safety** tips are often obvious, but safety can't be overstressed. In many cases, there are no specific hazards involved in completing the activity, and your usual health and safety measures should be enough. In others, there are particular issues to be noted and addressed.

Tasha's top tips

Here are some additional things that I believe are important to understand when planning for children with EAL:

- If possible, find out as much as you can about your child before they start. Home visits are great for this!
- Make sure parents understand how the school day works, e.g. timings, uniform, lunch menus.
- Explain that it is important that their child continues to speak their home language and that research shows that a child is likely to learn English better if they go on developing the language they know best.
- Assess their language acquisition levels so that you are clear where you need to pitch your support.
- Be sure to let them listen and observe without any pressure to join in but do give lots of praise when any sort of attempt is made.
- Buddy your child with a nurturing and articulate partner who will act as a great role model and friend (don't forget to reward your buddies too).
- Be aware of cultural differences, e.g. in some cultures children don't like their heads being touched as they are considered sacred, and some children avoid eye contact as a mark of respect for authority.
- Remember, children with EAL have an additional need that is temporary! They should not be automatically categorised in planning as in the same grouping as children with special educational needs or in a lower ability set.
- Children with EAL may be coming to you with many potential strengths. Think about how they can contribute to enhancing what you are teaching!