Early Years Twilight Seminar

14 August 2019 video transcript

Video 4: Excursions

SUSANNE GARVIS: A large part of the Swedish way as well as being outside is the children will go on excursion, and you might have seen this where the children will go out. As part of the safety features, they will wear these little workmen's vests. The number of the preschool is actually on the back of the jackets, and the idea is that the children are learning from the natural environment as much as possible. But the role of excursion is also part of equivalence for all children. So the children may decide to go to the library for the day. They may decide to go to the beach for the day, and the children are learning how to get there, how to navigate things in the natural environment as well.

When the children are very much interested in the seasons, they will go outside, they will look at what's happening with the trees, the leaves, and they will actually start to bring this then into their own learning back into the physical preschool side. Excursions as well can be based on going to concerts, museums. There is also – when children go on excursions people are often – often interested to know how can they make such large groups of children actually walk there, and the children learn that there are invisible boundaries. And what I mean by that is that they know that they can walk with the group but they can't go more than 2m from the group as part of these invisible boundaries. Likewise, when they're out in the forest, they can play in the forest but there are invisible boundaries, such as ‘you will go not any further than the rock that's over there or the tree that's over there’. Children can engage in risky play, but they also know the invisible boundaries associated with risky play.

So there are particular strategies that work really well for the teacher and the teaching team throughout the day. So this includes finding the moments that the child is particularly interested in and building on these throughout the learning processes that are happening. And the great thing is that because it is multi-age as well, all the children can participate at different times and in different rates. Project-based learning is very popular, and the great thing about project-based learning is that parents will become involved in this as well. So it creates a community then of learning, and because there is this multi-age that happens, children who have been in the classes in previous years can also bring in that knowledge of what they've done earlier and engage and share this with the younger children who are coming into the preschool as well.

So it operates very much as a learning cycle across the time that the child's in preschool. Some teachers as well will actually used all of the material that the child has created or asked the child to select material that they would then like to reflect on in their final year of preschool and talk about their journey across preschool. And children are saying amazing things and it will be things like, ‘You know, initially I couldn't tie my shoelace. Now, at age five, I can tie my shoelace, and I have also taught the 3-year-old in the class how to tie their shoelace.’ And so these type of learning portfolios as well are then shared with the families, but also with schools sometimes. And the idea is to show that children are very capable and they are always learning things, and sometimes they are learning things in different ways to how adults actually see them.