

# Where are we from?

People and communities are the subject of the last part of our series on resourcing for Understanding the World. By *Nicole Weinstein*

**T**he 'People and communities' element of Understanding the World seeks to support children's developing sense of identity, and the best way to introduce them to this strand of the EYFS is to start with what's familiar to them. By exploring, observing and finding out about people, places and the environment, children can begin to make sense of their physical world and their community.

Ann Langston, director of Early Years Matters, explains, 'For me, the whole purpose of this strand – 'People and communities' – is about helping children to recognise themselves as members of families who together with other families make up the community. It's about understanding how you and other people fit in.'

'Through this aspect, young children are supported to develop a sense of time through hearing stories and seeing pictures and objects which have meaning for them and their families, by encouraging them to connect their own lives with those of other family and community members and significant past and present events and with people and places.'

## WORKING WITH PARENTS

Relationships with parents are the key to success when it comes to fulfilling the outcomes of this early learning goal. 'Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions,' Ms Langston says.

Where relationships with parents

are strong, parents can be invited to the setting to share information about their homes, families, cultures and traditions. Some settings invite parents in to share cooking and food preparation techniques.

Ms Langston says, 'You have to be willing to learn about other ways of life, accept diversity and recognise that differences enrich people's lives. Also, practitioners need to try to be very resourceful. They shouldn't feel that everything has to be done on a grand scale with a day trip. Many things are fairly at your fingertips; it's just about galvanising them.'

## THE WORLD

'People and communities' inevitably overlaps with 'The World', the aspect of Understanding the World that focuses on nature and the environment. Here, the goal is for children to know about the 'similarities and differences' in relation to places and talk about the features of their 'own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another'.

Ms Langston advises, 'Encourage children to connect with the environment by inviting them to look out for things on the way to the setting. Get parents involved in this too. Create a noticeboard and put up photos of things to spot on the way to nursery – buses or buildings, or unusual things like a hot-air balloon.'

'It's also important that children recognise that the environment can change depending on the season. For example, on the way to the setting they might see Christmas trees for sale or Santa at this time of year.'

## HOW TO SUPPORT

To support children's developing understanding of 'People and communities', try the following:

**Right: At Holcroft Community Nursery, the children marked World Food Day by tasting dishes from each other's countries of origin**

**Below (from top): LEGO DUPLO Our Town from Hope Education; Tolo First Friends at Home Set from Cosy Direct; and Social Sequences – At Home, from Hope**



- Work with parents to find out as much information as possible about children's home experiences and their experiences beyond the home.
- Request and display photographs of families in order to help children understand that while every family is unique, there are many similarities as well as differences between families. For example, some families might include a mum and dad, while others may have two mums; some may have only one child while others might include stepbrothers and sisters. Considering the make-up of families will help children to understand that family units can be constructed differently but all form part of the wider community.
- Photograph some of the things that children might see in their locality, such as the gates of a park, a block of flats, a McDonald's, supermarkets and places of worship. Print the photographs on A4 sheets and introduce them to the block or workshop area. Talk about each of the pictures and which ones the children prefer. As well as helping children to articulate their views and preferences, this activity also provides a basis for children's understanding of geography.



- When practitioners focus on children's interests when planning the curriculum, children can begin to make connections between and build on their experiences. If a child is interested in a family celebration, such as a birthday or wedding, practitioners can seize the moment and provide related enhancements around the nursery. For example, if children

are interested in baby-naming ceremonies and celebrations, practitioners can provide party food in the home corner and wrapping paper, gifts and Sellotape in the creative area so children can wrap gifts for the baby. A book of photographs recording how the event unfolded would help children to remember and consolidate their learning.

- Work with parents to provide photos and information about key events, such as birthdays. Find out children's birthday rituals; for example, waking up to a breakfast table prepared with all the gifts and cards. Perhaps the children will have a birthday party with their friends at the cinema or a soft-play venue. Ensure that the setting has plenty of high-quality books about significant events in a child's life, such as the arrival of a sibling or pet, moving house or starting at a new nursery.

What is important is that practitioners enable children to connect with who they are, contribute to their sense of identity and give them a narrative to describe their experiences.

## RESOURCES

Here are a selection of resources that will help support children's explorations of 'People and communities'.

## Technology

- TTS stocks a huge range of early years ICT, including Tuff-Cam 2 Digital Camera, £79.95; TTS Sports Camera with WiFi, £59.95;



## MORE INFORMATION

- Ann Langston, [www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk](http://www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk). Her book, *Facilitating Children's Learning in the EYFS* (OU Press, 2014) contains a chapter dedicated to 'People and communities'

**Below (from top):**  
**TTS's Kidizoom**  
**Twist Child Friendly**  
**Recordable Camera;**  
**and its Bee-Bot**  
**Rechargeable Floor**  
**Robot**



Kidizoom Twist Child Friendly Recordable Camera, £49.95; Recordable Talking Clipboard, £10.99; Rainbow Talk-Time Recordable Cards A6, £29.95; Talking-Point Recordable Buttons, £29.95; Bee-Bot Rechargeable Floor Robot, £49.95 – all from [www.tts-group.co.uk](http://www.tts-group.co.uk).  
 ● School 8MP Camera, including 8GB SD Card, £49.95 – from [www.digitalblue.org.uk](http://www.digitalblue.org.uk).

## Small world

- Real Life – Community Places (17pk) photographic pieces, £16.49; Tolo First Friends at Home Set, £65 – both available from [www.cosydirect.com](http://www.cosydirect.com).
- Home, a PlanToys wooden home set, £32.99; LEGO DUPLO community people Set, £39.99 and LEGO DUPLO Our Town, £93.39; What Goes Where Mat Community, £16.99 – all from [www.hope-education.co.uk](http://www.hope-education.co.uk).

## Games and puzzles

- Real Photo Jigsaws – Modern Families, £23.10, <https://www.ypo.co.uk/product/detail/816583>.
- Social Sequences – At Home, £21.99; What Goes Where Mat Home, £16.99 – both from [www.hope-education.co.uk](http://www.hope-education.co.uk).

## Other

- Our School Playground Signs – Aerial Photography, £149.95; Our School Playground Signs – OS map, £149.95 – both from [www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk](http://www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk). ■

## CASE STUDY: HOLCROFT COMMUNITY NURSERY

Children at Holcroft Community Nursery in Great Portland Street, central London celebrated World Food Day by tasting dishes from their friends' countries of origin. Homemade samosas, Icelandic flapjacks, Polish salads, donuts from Kazakhstan, French baguettes and cheese and a plantain dish from the Caribbean were among the foods that parents brought in.

Naomi Blackwood, manager of the 32-place nursery, part of the LEYF chain, says, 'We have children from France, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Germany, Arabia, Kazakhstan, Iceland and India, as well as the UK, and sharing these national dishes together was a great way to celebrate different cultures and traditions.'

'This was a planned activity. We emailed the parents and invited them to make a

national dish for the event. They provided us with a list of the ingredients, which we checked for allergies, and we asked them for information about the dish.'

'In the morning, we laid out all the dishes and wrote out the name of the dish and the country it was from. We then invited children to taste them and we talked about the flavours; for example, if it was spicy, sour or sweet. In the afternoon, we laid out the food again and we asked them if they remembered what countries the food was from. It was surprising how much information they had retained. We found that some children were more open to trying new dishes the second time around, after having time to reflect, especially when the staff sat down with them and talked about the flavours they could taste.'

'We've since extended the activity by putting up a display of a world map and plotting the different countries that children are from. We've asked all the parents to fill out a mini-passport which we will add to the display, stating the country that the child was born in, a photo, any famous landmarks and the national dish. The children will colour in their country's flag with their own idea of what it's like. When the children go on holiday, we will ask them to send us a postcard and we will look at where they have gone on the map.'

'It's very important that we discuss the fact that we might all live in London but many people were born in other countries, and that there are many communities outside the nursery but the nursery is a community in itself.'