

How does Continuous Provision support mathematical learning?



Now you have built an obstacle course, can you accurately map a route through it for us to follow? How long does it take to complete?

The environment in which children learn has the power to act as, what is referred to in the Reggio Emilia pre-schools, the 'third teacher' (Hewitt 2001) <https://reggioemilia2015.weebly.com/sources.html>. Continuous Provision provides children time to consolidate their learning and engage in open-ended tasks that challenge them, along with opportunities for adults to observe and assess where children have understood concepts well, as well as where children may need more support.

Transition is an on-going process rather than an one-off event and extending Continuous Provision into Y1 plays an important role in effective and smooth transition from EYFS into KS1 (Fisher 2020). Continuity throughout KS1 is an important consideration. Investing our time in supporting rich, relevant Continuous Provision rests on an approach to mathematics learning that integrates adult input and direction with child-directed learning. Skene's meta-analysis of evidence states that such guided play, with child agency at its heart, has a greater positive effect than direct instruction on early maths skills (Skene 2022). The [EEF \(2021\) report on evidence into improving mathematics for 3-7-year-olds](#) recommends both dedicated mathematics time and opportunities to integrate mathematics throughout the day. Continuous Provision can be an effective vehicle for the latter.

In well-prepared Continuous Provision children are more likely to:

- become absorbed and engaged
- become creative
- develop communication skills

- develop problem solving skills
- engage in collaborative projects
- be confident to explore without fear of being criticised
- be motivated to practice developing skills.

Teachers can

- spot misconceptions
- identify next steps in learning
- develop children's learning in context.

Consolidation

Continuous Provision gives children the opportunity to consolidate and extend their mathematics by practising taught skills and applying their developing knowledge in a wider range of contexts, for example, a creative area or a block area which also contains rulers and tape measures will stimulate comparisons and measurements of heights, widths and lengths, the loose-part area might contain dice, containers and ten-frames to play a collecting game.



STA 2014

Standards & Testing Agency (2014) *EYFS Profile exemplification ELG 11*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/360535/ELG11___Numbers.pdf

Extending and deepening

Over time, Continuous Provision provides the space and time for children to develop increased independence as they begin to plan ahead, to collaborate and develop ideas. With maturity and experience, older children have an enormous amount to bring to Continuous Provision, with rich opportunities for mathematical collaboration between children as well as between children and adults.

Designing and maintaining Continuous Provision can be an important part of our overall KS1 mathematics provision. Adults in KS1 need to plan time to regularly:

- observe
- challenge
- model, and
- support.

Learning behaviours and attitudes

Continuous Provision is particularly useful for continuing the development of the [Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning \(DfE 2021\)](#):

- Playing and exploring - Engagement
- Active learning - Motivation
- Creative and critical thinking.

These Characteristics are statutory in the EYFS and play an important role throughout school for establishing learning behaviours such as self-regulation, engagement, planning how to approach a task, reviewing progress, resilience, exploration and risk-taking in mathematical learning.

These 'Mathematical Moments' from our website illustrate Continuous Provision in action with KS1 learners:

<https://earlymaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Mathematical-moments-56-number-game-56.pdf>

<https://earlymaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Mathematical-moments-adding-56.pdf>

<https://earlymaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Mathematical-moments-measuring-56-.pdf>



Can you make these gears work? What would happen if you move one of them?

References

Fisher, J. (2020). *Moving on to KS1: Improving transition into primary school*. 2nd edition. Oxford: OUP

Hewitt, V. (2001). "Examining the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education". *Early Childhood Education Journal* 29 (2): 95-10.

Skene, K., O'Farrelly, C. M., Byrne, E. M., Kirby, N., Stevens, E. C., & Ramchandani, P. G. (2022). Can guidance during play enhance children's learning and development in educational contexts? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Child Development*, 00, 1–19