

An A to Z of enhancements

V is for Voting

Letting children vote on matters such as resources gives them a sense of ownership, among other benefits. By **Amy Jackson**

Creating opportunities for children to vote for outcomes in their setting is a way of promoting democracy, one of the 'British Values'.

Through voting, the children can be made to feel that their opinions are deemed as important by the adults and that they can have a say and make a difference. This can raise children's self-confidence and give them a sense of ownership over their environment. Children in our nursery have voted for what they would like to see in our snack selection or what resources they would like to have in the continuous provision, for example.

Discussions can arise from the voting process where children are encouraged to listen to and respect other people's opinions.

EXPRESSING PREFERENCES

As well as voting for outcomes in the nursery, there is value in children voting to express their preferences out of a selection. Through making choices about their favourites, children can develop their communication and language skills, as well as boost their self-esteem. We often use the book *You Choose* by Nick Sharratt and Pippa Goodhart, along with the others in the series.

The children enjoy selecting items on each page and we prompt them to talk further about why they have made their choices. Voting is another way children can select their favourites out of a selection and be encouraged to talk about them. We often display votes on a chart in our large collective learning journey floor book.

The vote might be for a nursery rhyme, snack, toy, or our favourite colour. On the double page in the

book, children will take their name and put it under the option they like the best, talking to adults and their peers about why they have chosen it.

Children often will make their own name cards for the voting, which is a great way of showing writing progress as you flick through the floor book. Children love to look back through the book and talk about what they have selected in the past. When we have our 'stay and play' sessions with parents, the children will proudly show the parents all their learning in the floor book, including their votes for favourite things.

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Voting can take place in various ways with many different potential learning outcomes. At our nursery the children vote daily for the book they would like at the end of the day through our self-registration table. We have two book options and a basket next to each. There are wood slices with the children's name and photo on for them to select and place in the basket of their choice, which also helps with their name recognition.

Just before home time we count the votes. When the results from a vote are shared, it ties in mathematical development opportunities in counting and comparing quantities, using language such as 'more than' and 'fewer than'.

Children will sometimes vote to choose the enhancements that we get out in the environment. We show the children a blank tuff tray next to the small-world toys and tell them that we need their help to decide what special world we can set up in it. The choices may be



A child interacts with a voting chart at the setting

between 'dinosaurs', 'animals' or 'fairies', for example. We set up a voting chart stuck onto a whiteboard at a height that they can all access, and on a table next to it we will have a sample of all three toy selections, plus some strips of paper and pencils for children to write their names on for the vote.

Our children have a range of abilities when it comes to writing their name. Some are at the mark-making stage; others can form recognisable letters for part or all of their name. Making these name cards for voting gives children an opportunity for purposeful name-writing practice.

When the votes are in, we will discuss them during our 'Together time' and find out which theme for the tray was selected. We then set up the tray with the children, discussing ideas of what could be added to it; for example, if the fairies have been chosen, we might collect some natural items from outside such as leaves and pinecones. Children will have added interest and engagement with the enhancement tray after their valued contributions that led to creating it. ■

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➔ **Further reading:** 'All about...consent' by Annette Rawstrone (Nursery World, June 2024)