



The Learning Institute

The recovery curriculum

Overview

The debate around the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for children and their education has been at the forefront of concerns over recent months. Many children have not attended their setting for over three months and are not set to return until September. The Government have pledged funding to help children 'catch up'. But, the question is what will this programme of 'catch up' look like? What is meant by missed learning? What considerations should be taken to enable a positive transition into the new environment, routines and whatever the 'new normal' will be? This poses the question of what do children need? Is it curriculum subject catch up or social and emotional recovery?

The concept of a Recovery Curriculum for all settings is unprecedented. Practitioners need to be aware of the relevance and value of the considerations that need to be explored to support children's social and emotional mental health. With a heightened state of anxiety (perhaps caused by change of routine and environment) some children may find it difficult to feel safe and secure. Psychologist Maslow, way back in 1943, argued that children need to feel safe and secure and their basic emotional needs met before effective learning takes place.

Target audience

Early Years, Primary and Secondary Leaders, Governors, Teachers, Teaching Assistants, and other adults involved in supporting pupils

Duration

Approximately 1 – 3 hours depending on choice of tasks - each task approx. 1 hour

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Introduction

Professor of mental health in education, Barry Carpenter, has recently opened the debate of supporting children and young people returning to schools and settings following the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown. His article, Think Piece - A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and Life for our children and schools post pandemic (available at www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum) poses a response to current concerns about the impact on children's mental health and wellbeing when the time comes for return to school.

He questions whether children can be expected to pick up the curriculum at the same point they left it on the day school closed. He argues for provision to meet children's emotional and social needs, at this unprecedented time, to be recognised.

“What must be going through children's minds at this strange time? Is school to be always transitory, when for you as a child, it has always been a constant, love it or hate it? Can I trust you again, as my teacher, to not abandon me? We were walking a path together, and then this 'thing', this virus, sent us on different journeys. Can our lives reconnect? Can our relationship be re-established? School is no longer the safe, constant place we thought it was. We must be ready to understand, to reframe their perceptions, and show that we are trustworthy.”

Carpenter and Carpenter, 2020

Professionals will be striving to ensure students return to a safe, and secure environment with not only adherence to Government guidelines but consideration towards providing a curriculum that will aid pupils to 'catch up'. But what is meant by missed learning? Is this as Brooks (AUK, 2020) suggests, a concern that children will not have made progress through subject areas ultimately to lead to exam/test attainment? She suggests we need to begin where children are rather than where we would like them to be. Jonathan Baggaley, CEO for the PSHE association, suggests that to prepare children for the unknown future we must recognise the seriousness of what is happening to children now. He goes on to add PSHE has never been a more vital part of curriculum provision as it is now.

Both Carpenter and Baggaley are emphasising the need for all settings to plan for and provide a recovery curriculum that will take the child through a process of re-engagement with learning. At the forefront of this process must be to ensure that children and young people are provided with opportunities to nurture the trauma and loss encountered, in varying degrees, by individuals over the past few months.

“The children will be so far behind academically when they return.” Such statements are incompatible with the process of recovery from loss, trauma, anxiety, and grief. It is more about the results culture so many Headteachers are steeped in. Now is the time to return to more humane approaches concerned with the fundamental wellbeing, and secure positive development of the child. Without this there will be no results that have true meaning and deep personal value to the child in terms of their preparation for adulthood.”

Carpenter and Carpenter, 2020

The Government have issued guidance for full school opening schools, which is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools (Department for Education (DfE), 2020) to assist in children's return to settings. This document includes guidance on catch up of academic learning, and gaps in children's learning. It also includes guidance on children's mental health and wellbeing, under the sub-heading *Pupil wellbeing and support*. A free webinar for school and college staff is available from 9th July, and recorded for availability thereafter, titled *DfE- Supporting pupil and student mental wellbeing*. There are also a range of links and further training resources available from this publication under this section.

The following tasks may help professionals reflect upon provision and consider what children and young people may need to help through this transitional period. All settings will be different, and children will have individual experiences to bring to the mix. There is no one plan, strategy or intervention to fix all.

Objectives

- To gain an understanding of issues around a recovery curriculum, and provision for children's return to school/settings
- To explore and reflect upon strategies and support to assist children's return

Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic [think piece], available at www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/
- Department for Education - Guidance for full opening –schools [document], available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools
- Learning Shared Ep 1: A Recovery Curriculum [video] available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvx0-mjT9Tc
- EYFS Unique Transitions Guidance [document] available at <https://www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk/unique-transition-guidance-for-the-eyfs/>
- Education in the time of Covid-19 [video] available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBWjMXQ-Nw8

Task 1: What is the recovery curriculum?

In the first episode of the Learning Shared video series [duration 58:41], available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvx0-mjT9Tc, the principles of a recovery curriculum are explored.

Watch the video to find out more about the origins of recovery curriculum and the five levers from which to build the relationship-based recovery curriculum. Make some notes as you watch.

Note: There are currently eleven episodes of the Learning Shared series on this subject matter – you can view other episodes at www.youtube.com/channel/UCZdoq07yvQp673MA-BJ_dTg.

The following table considers the Five Recovery Curriculum Levers (Carpenter and Carpenter, 2020):

Lever 1: Relationships - we cannot expect our students to return joyfully, and many of the relationships that were thriving may need to be invested in and restored. We need to plan for this to happen, not assume that it will. Reach out to greet them, use the relationships we build to cushion the discomfort of returning.

Lever 2: Community - we must recognise that curriculum will have been based in the community for a long period of time. We need to listen to what has happened in this time, understand the needs of our community, and engage them in the transitioning of learning back into school.

Lever 3: Transparent Curriculum - all of our students will feel like they have lost time in learning and we must show them how we are addressing these gaps, consulting and co-constructing with our students to heal this sense of loss.

Lever 4: Metacognition - in different environments, students will have been learning in different ways. It is vital that we make the skills for learning in a school environment explicit to our students to reskill and rebuild their confidence as learners.

Lever 5: Space - to be, to rediscover self, and to find their voice on learning in this issue. It is only natural that we all work at an incredible pace to make sure this group of learners are not disadvantaged against their peers, providing opportunity and exploration alongside the intensity of our expectations.

Consider how these Levers could be addressed by you as a practitioner, and within your setting.

What are the time factors? Should activities be planned for to accommodate the above Levers or should there be an agreed holistic approach?

Some settings have already planned for time in the school to develop these relationship-based principles, such as start and end of the school day, circle time, assemblies. There are clearly opportunities for the start of each teaching session to engage in discussion, time to talk and reflect.

Above all there should be a shared understanding that students need to re-join, re-connect, and recover.

Note: Application of the Five Levers can be found in Episode 10 of the Learning Shared series, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGFCmxhXyyc

Task 2: What could a recovery curriculum look like in practice?

Consider *The EYFS Unique Transitions Guidance*, collated by the Bristol Early Years Teaching School Alliance in June 2020, available at www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk/unique-transition-guidance-for-the-eyfs.

Although specifically written for Early Years and Key Stage 1 practitioners, it is also extremely useful for other practitioners to gain ideas and activities – and to gauge the level of detail that could be added or included in curriculum planning.

Key themes from this document detail ideas of best practice and what this may look like in practice. The section headings are *Leadership, Relationships and emotional well-being, Provisions and curriculum (characteristics of effective learning, prime areas, and environments), Assessment, SEND and Supporting families through unique transitions*.

Activity

From this document, take three ideas to develop and use within your setting. If you are a teaching assistant, this could be something you do in an intervention group or one to one with a child, or with your daily interaction with children. If you notice any impact, try to use or adapt other ideas from the document. Share good practice with colleagues.

Task 3: PSHE planning for a recovery curriculum [leadership task]

Watch the video of Jonathan Baggaley, CEO of the PSHE organisation, talking about education in the time of Covid-19, available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBWjMXQ-Nw8.

Baggaley discusses the importance of developing PSHE as a central curriculum focus. From September 2020 PSHE becomes a statutory teaching requirement in English schools.

Consider the key themes for a PSHE curriculum. Develop a mind map, taking the Five Levers as a starting point.

Consider the format from the EYFS transition document that you looked at in Task 2 – could this be applied to your planning of a recovery curriculum?

Task 4: Reflection on learning

Note down your responses to the following questions:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- How can I apply what I now know to my practice?

Sources

- Bristol Early Years Teaching School Alliance (2020) *EYFS Unique Transitions Guidance 2020*. Available at: <https://www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk/unique-transition-guidance-for-the-eyfs/> (Accessed: 5 July 2020)
- Brooks, R. (2020) 'The myth of 'catching up' after Covid-19', *Adoption UK*, 12 June. Available at: <https://www.adoptionuk.org/blog/the-myth-of-catching-up-after-covid-19> (Accessed: 5 July 2020)
- Carpenter, B. and Carpenter, M. (2020) *A Recovery Curriculum: Loss and life for our children and schools post pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum> (Accessed: 5 July 2020)
- Department for Education (2020) *Guidance for full opening: schools*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools> (Accessed: 5 July 2020)
- Evidence for Learning (2020) *LearningShared Ep 1: A Recovery Curriculum - Loss & Life for our Children and Schools Post Pandemic*. 1 May. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvx0-mjT9Tc> (Accessed: 5 July 2020)
- The PSHE Association (2020) *Are we OK with this? Education in the time of Covid — Jonathan Baggaley, PSHE Association CEO*. 23 June. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBWjMXQ-Nw8> (Accessed: 5 July 2020)

Further reading

- Restore Our Schools (2020) *How we plan for the return to the classrooms, playgrounds and corridors of schools*. Available at: <https://restoreourschools.wordpress.com/>.
- SSAT (2020) Professor Barry Carpenter describes how a recovery curriculum could be implemented in schools. 6 June. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkAkGIQtDwE>
- Young Minds (2020) *Coronavirus: the impact on young people with mental health needs*. Available at: <https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/reports/coronavirus-impact-on-young-people-with-mental-health-needs/>

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