

Case Study: Using a Film to Promote Early Years as a Career

- Young people often have misconceptions about working in early years.
- A short film focussing on degree qualifications at Roehampton University made a significant and positive impact on young people's views.
- As a result of seeing the film, the students understood that early years practitioners were qualified and could be teachers.
- At the end of the session, some students were willing to consider early years as a career and/or seek work placements in the sector.

Introduction

The Wandle Early Years Hub collaborated with Roehampton University in the production of a video to promote early years education as a career. Roehampton University was ideally placed to participate in the exercise since it is internationally renowned for its work in early childhood studies. It offers both undergraduate and post-graduate courses in the early years. Hence, the video was able to reflect the experience of students still undertaking studies and those who had graduated and become early years teachers.

The students and graduates in the film describe their pathway to early years teaching and talk about their enjoyment in the work that they do. They also cover the importance of early years education to children's development and how much of a contribution you can make to this as a teacher.

You can watch the five minute video at www.london.gov.uk/hubs-careers

The impact of the film

A focus group was held with a group of Year 10 students from a Wandsworth secondary school. The aim was to test their views on early years as a career before and after they had seen the film.

Views before watching the film

- The group had some positive views mainly focussed on "taking care" of children and teaching them "the basics". The students also mentioned the children gaining skills and confidence as a benefit.
- There was a total acceptance that both men and women could do the work.
- The students did not think that an early years practitioner needed many qualifications. They only mentioned GCSEs in Maths and English, child psychology and health and safety, or experience of children, as being required.

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- The participants in the group had no knowledge of early years specific qualifications.
- The students were emphatic that there was no career path in early years. They saw the job as one people only did because they were dedicated.
- There were no differences in the views of the boys and those of the girls.

“I think it’s just a job that you just have to like. It’s one of those jobs where you’re interested in doing it and then you just do it throughout the rest of your life. So, I think you can’t build a career out of it.

Views after watching the film

- The students’ views had shifted significantly.
- They understood clearly that early years practitioners could be qualified at university level.
- They had grasped that early years practitioners were not simply “looking after” children, but supporting their learning at an important developmental stage.
- They were impressed by how much early years practitioners enjoyed their work and how rewarding it could be.
- They said that early years as a career was important and was often overlooked because of a lack of understanding of what was entailed.
- Some participants would now consider early years as a career option for themselves. This group included boys who had previously said it was not an option they would contemplate.
- One girl was immediately interested in pursuing a work placement in an early years setting.

“I didn’t know you needed a lot of qualifications and I didn’t know you could work your way up. I thought you were just looking after them.”