

Learning Together

Co-construction

From the very beginning of Learning Together, co-construction has been a significant approach to working with families. Initially broad outlines were set for Learning Together, including the aims, the use of a strengths approach and a focus on literacy and learning. Beyond this, educators were encouraged to work with local agencies and families to construct programs to meet community needs and interests.

Co-construction is very different to consultation, although the two are aligned. Consulting with families can be open and broad but is often after the fact and might include asking opinions on something that has happened.

Co-construction requires working with families in order to create something together which then meets the needs of both groups.

Opportunities for co-construction include programs, group norms, excursions, materials and resources.

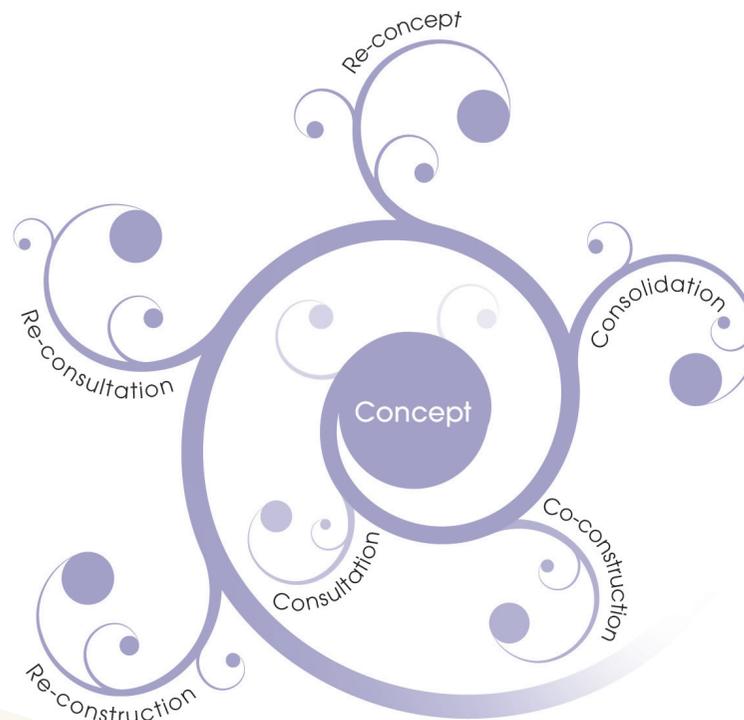
The co-construction spiral shows how the process works.

1. **Conceptualise** – A concept is formed. This might be an idea, an area of work or a possible resource
2. **Consultation** – Consultation is carried out usually through talking to others who may be involved
3. **Co-construction** – This occurs through open discussion or a more formal but wide ranging process
4. **Consolidation** – The original concept is consolidated from the previous phase
5. And the spiral continues.

The benefits of this process are many. Working with families in this way ensures that programs or materials reflect their needs, interests, understandings and strengths.

It is also a way of enacting the principle of partnerships with families in an open and genuine manner rather than in a perfunctory and mechanistic way.

Co-construction of local understandings is another feature of Learning Together. Through working with families in playgroups and second level activities, it is possible to develop understandings that are relevant for that particular group of families at that time.



Co-constructing Companions Together

1. An opportunity arose to work with **Dr Rosemary Roberts** to develop companionable learning as a universal resource and a workbook to work with families
2. Educators were initially consulted as to the viability of the idea, and this was followed up by visits to programs and families in three areas of the state where the idea was further discussed
3. A wide range of families in three settings were engaged to work on the draft materials. After 6 months they reported back
4. The resources were rewritten and redesigned using the parents' ideas. A DVD was produced in which parents talked about how they engaged with the concepts.

