



Play
School

Story Time

PlayWorld

Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Ryan McNaught (Brickman) shares 'The Imagineer' by Christopher Cheng & Lucia Masciullo.



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Pedagogical characteristics

Selecting a story for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*

Story: The Imagineer

Written by Christopher Cheng and illustrated by Lucia Masciullo

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Pedagogical practices

- Select a story that is enjoyable for children and adults.
- Build drama for the characters in the story.
- Build empathy for the characters in the story.
- Choose a plot that lends itself to introducing a problem situation.
- Be clear about the concept(s) and its relation to the story and play plot to be developed.
- Choose adventures or journeys that spring from the plot.

Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- **Story summary:** This story about a girl named Penny who is very good at imagining. She invents machines to help her Grandpa. It brings forward the concepts of design and technologies.
- Develop the drama in the story e.g. the annual funfair is coming to Grandpa's town.
- Develop empathy with Penny who doesn't have enough space, tools or materials to invent all of the things in her imagination. Penny visits Grandpa for the very first time, he has lots of gadgets and gizmos. They share a love of design and technology.
- **Problem situation:** Design and create an amusement park/town funfair.
- **Concepts:**
 1. Design and technologies - materials, tools and equipment.
 2. Meeting personal and social needs in a local setting e.g. funfair rides.
 3. Simple and complex machines - lever, wheel and axle, pulley, inclined plane, wedge, screw.
- **Possible plot extension:** Penny is visiting Grandpa. The annual funfair is coming town. Penny is excited because there are rides and games. She is curious to find out how they work.

A partnership between



Pedagogical characteristics

Designing a *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

Pedagogical practices

- Find a space in the classroom or outdoor area suitable for an imaginary *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story.
- Design opportunities for child-initiated play in ways that develop the play plot further or explore concepts and make them more meaningful.
- Plan ways for children to represent their ideas and express their understandings.

Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- Turn an indoor space into 'Grandpa's Shed' where Penny, Grandpa and children can draw up plans, gather tools and turn sketches/plans into new creations. An outdoor play space could be turned into a funfair where children can try out their rides.
- Pretend to be the characters Penny, Grandpa, their dog or another relative. Will you see fireworks and parades at the funfair?
- Pretend to be an 'Imagineer' asking investigative questions - *How does the ferris wheel work? Who will use the train ride? What do you like about the 'Spin the Wheel' game? Have funfair rides changes over the years?*
- Invite children to draw their design ideas for funfair rides and games. Research slides or a mini plane ride and find out how they fly around. A roller coaster uses inclined planes, screws, wheel, and axles. Explore how a wheel and axle makes the ferris wheel ride work.

Entering and exiting the *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

- Plan a routine for the whole group to enter and exit the *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story where all the children are in the same imaginary situation.
- Children choose characters as they enter into the imaginary situation.
- Educator is always a character in the story.

- To signify entering and exiting the imaginary situation (e.g. Grandpa's Shed) wear a toolbelt for tinkering, hold a pen & paper for planning or wear some safety gear.
- Children and adults can pretend to be Penny or others at the funfair e.g. you could meet people selling art, craft and food or people wearing costumes in a parade. Or pretend to be the person who hands out tickets for the rides. Is there a maintenance person on hand?
- Pretend to be designers like Penny, and engineers / inventors like Grandpa. They are all needed to design and make a ride, otherwise there won't be any rides at the funfair for the town members to enjoy.
- I wonder who designed the merry-go-round? You could meet expert funfair ride and game designers.

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

- Problem scenario is not scripted, but a general idea of the problem is planned.
- Problem scenario is dramatic and engaging.

- Penny sends the children a letter, such as "*Dear Children, I'm so excited to be visiting Grandpa. The annual funfair is coming to town BUT the committee just told us that the rides won't get here in time! The committee have asked me and Grandpa to help. So we need your help because we can't imagine, design and build all of the rides on our own. Please come to the funfair to help us design, make and celebrate.*"



Pedagogical characteristics

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

(continued)

Planning educator interactions to build conceptual learning in role

Pedagogical practices

- The problem invites children to investigate solutions to help the play in the *Conceptual PlayWorld*.
- Be clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation, through children's play.

- Educators are not always the same character. Roles are not scripted.
- Plan who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem. Educators can take on different roles for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*. Plan your role to be either **equally present** with the children, or to **model practices** in a role, or to be **needing help** from the children. Your role can also be **together with** the child leading, where educators support children to act out the role or solution together.

Conceptual PlayWorld in action

You can meet Grandpa, my dog and have a turn on the rides. Love from Penny”.

- Fairs, rides and games are fun! Penny and the children can create their own amusement park, but remember they need to be ready before the fair.
- Children can imagine, create, play, share, and reflect, empathise, define, ideate, prototype and test.
- They can ask classmates what types of rides and games they like. Or invite a real-life engineer to talk to the children about simple mechanical devices and how they are used in machinery like rides. Can they help you draw, model, and make your ideas? Investigate the scientific concept of force and how it makes rides move.

- Plan for your role in the *PlayWorld* by choosing one of the following:

1. **Be equally present with older children** - e.g. *“Let’s research funfair rides and designs. What simple machines do they need/use?”*
2. **Model practices in a role** - e.g. *“Look at the gears in the merry-go-round”*.
3. **Seek help from the children** - e.g. *“I’m on the funfair committee. Can you show me your exciting ride designs?”*
4. **Act out the role together with the child leading** - e.g. *“Let’s pretend to go to the fair together. Shall we buy some fairy floss?”*

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