



Play
School

Story Time

PlayWorld

Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Waleed Aly shares 'How to Catch a Star' by Oliver Jeffers.



Pedagogical characteristics

Selecting a story for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*

Story: How to Catch a Star

Written and illustrated by Oliver Jeffers

Publisher:
HarperCollins
Publishers, 2005

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 is a story about a boy who loves stars in the night sky. It brings forward opportunities for children to learn all about stars, e.g. star types, life cycles.
- **Problem situation:** Children experience the drama of the boy wanting a friend, who dreams that the Star in the night sky might become his friend.
- Develop empathy with the boy who wants a friend.
- **Concept:** Stars are far away suns.
- **Possible plot extension:** Have adventures being a big ball of gas in the solar system! Be the child in the story and travel to the solar system in a spacecraft.

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 area into a solar system. Pretend to be a star and meet other stars.
- Role play being the child in the story, or an astronomer using a telescope to see your new friend the Star in the night sky.
- Interview the Star about its life, or make a stop motion video showing the stages of the star life cycle - some are new, born out of giant gas clouds, and some are at the end of their life cycle, exploding, supernovae!

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.

- Signify entering and exiting the imaginary, *PlayWorld* by travelling in a spacecraft to visit the stars in the solar system.
- Pretend to be the child in the story travelling to the solar system, or you could be the Star waiting to meet the child. You could also be an astronomer observing stars in the solar system.
- Pretend to be different types of stars. What size and colour are you? You could be the sun, a dwarf star, or a supergiant star in the solar system.

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.
- The problem invites children to investigate solutions to help the play in the *Conceptual PlayWorld*

- The children receive a radio wave message such as: “*Dear Children, I’m a star but I don’t know what type, and I need your help. Please come on a space adventure to meet me and my star friends (there are billions). Please help me figure this all out. Love, The Star With No Name*”.



Pedagogical characteristics

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

(continued)

Planning educator interactions to build conceptual learning in role

Pedagogical practices

- 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

- The children can choose a star and investigate e.g. How old is it?
- Travel to the solar system to meet the Star (a big ball of gas) and her friends. Investigate how there are different star types, sizes, colours, temperatures, luminosities and life cycle stages.

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

1. **Be equally present with older children** - e.g. "Let's explore the solar system together. What kinds of stars are there?"
2. **Model practices in a role** - e.g. "I'm a Red Dwarf star. I'm reddish, small, cool in temperature and dim compared with the other types. I'm hard to observe in the night sky".
3. **Seek help from the children** - e.g. "Can you show me how a star is born?"
4. **Act out the role together with the child leading** - e.g. "Let's pretend to travel to the solar system together. I wonder what stars we'll meet?"

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