



Play
School

Story Time

PlayWorld

Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Moana Hope shares 'Amira's Suitcase' by Vikki Conley & Nicky Johnston.



Pedagogical characteristics

Selecting a story for the Conceptual PlayWorld

Story: Amira's Suitcase

Written by Vikki Conley and illustrated by Nicky Johnston

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Pedagogical practices

- Selecting a story that is enjoyable to children and adults. Summary of the story.
- 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 is about a girl named Amira who has a suitcase and inside a plant is growing. It brings forward the concept of pollination (the life cycle of a plant).
- Develop the drama in the story e.g. "keeping the treasures [seeds] safe". The magic and excitement of watching a plant grow and change.
- Develop empathy with the character Amira. Look closely at the illustrations. Why do you think Amira has a suitcase? The plant becomes Amira's friend. The children in the story share a curiosity about plants. Her new friends Nala and Tien also have seeds.
- Amira knows that her plant needs soil, sun, and water to grow. I wonder where seeds come from?
- **Concept:** Pollination.
- **Problem situation:** The plants need the children's help to find bees. Pollination is essential for the ecosystem.
- **Possible plot extension:** Introduce new characters e.g. bee characters "the pollinators". Did you know that bees carry pollen on their legs and body from one plant to another?
- Perhaps you could meet birds, bats, etc... who also help the pollination process.

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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 a section of the outdoor play space into a beehive (the nest of a bee colony). This is where bees house their eggs and store food e.g. honey, honeycomb and pollen.
- Pretend to be a beekeeper or an Apiologist who studies bees. Meet Amira and her friends.
- Role play being a worker bee flying from flower to flower. How do they communicate where the pollen is? Do they have wings? How far do they fly?
- Draw the life cycle of a fruit tree. Is there a bee in your drawing? It's important for pollination.
- Role play the life cycle of a fruit tree. How does a seed sprout? What role does a bee play?

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. beehive), pretend to fly like a bee. Make wings or antennae to signal you are in character.
- Children and educators can pretend to be Apiologists to learn more about the important work of bees for the life cycle of a fruit tree.
- Pretend to be the characters Amira, Nala or Tien gardening. Climb “up, up, up” the tree, as in the story.

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 plants send a message, such as “*Dear Children, I’m so excited because it’s Spring. I’m an apple tree and I can’t grow fruit for Amira and her friends until bees bring the pollen from the blossom of another tree. Can you please find the bees? They might be in their beehive. Love from the Plant in the Suitcase*”
- Visit the bees and tell them there is a new fruit tree.



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

- Pretend to be a bee and learn about the bee dance (the "waggle" dance). Communicate the direction and distance of the pollen.
- Pretend to travel from flower to flower. Without bees we wouldn't have fruit to eat. What other plants do bees pollenate?
- Plan for your role in the *PlayWorld* by choosing one of the following:
 1. **Be equally present with older children** - e.g. "Let's investigate the role of bees in the ecosystem".
 2. **Model practices in a role** - e.g. *I'm an Apiologist and I love bees! Did you know that bees have hair on their bodies to collect flower pollen?*
 3. **Seek help from the children** - e.g. "I'm a plant. How do I grow fruit?"
 4. **Act out the role together with the child leading** - e.g. "Let's pretend to be bees and fly from one plant to another".

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