Play School

Story Time

PlayWorld

Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Tanya Hennessy shares 'A Little Bit Different' by Claire Alexander.

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Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices	Conceptual PlayWorld in action
Selecting a story for the *Conceptual PlayWorld* **Story: A Little Bit Different** Written and illustrated by Claire Alexander Publisher: Quarto UK, 2021	• 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.	• **Story summary:** This story is about characters called *Ploofers*, who do everything the same, like making clouds. But one day a *Ploofer* does something different and makes a coloured cloud. • Develop empathy for the *Ploofer* who is different from the others. At first the others don't accept him/her as part of the group. How will we make the *Ploofer* feel welcome even though s/he makes coloured clouds? • **Problem situation:** The children have been asked to put on a light show for the new *Ploofers* who visit their town. • **Concept:** This story brings forward the concept of light. • **Possible plot extension:** Plan an adventure for the new *Ploofers* in town and explore if they have a special talent. Do they create colour?

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Designing a *Conceptual PlayWorld* space	• 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.	• Turn the indoor space into *Ploofer* land, where it's dark. • Create the dark imaginary play situation by covering the windows or crawling into a huge box that has been painted black on the inside. • Role play with light, exploring wave lengths, direction and colour. Or put on a shadow puppet show for families and explore light and shadows. • Design a lightshow by inviting children to draw or paint their ideas about light e.g. What is the light source? What colours will we see?
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 existing the imaginary situation, *Ploofer* Land, use a torch to help everyone see amongst the darkness. • Children and educators choose to be characters from the story e.g. a mother, father or baby *Ploofer*. Invite other *Ploofer* family members to join in e.g. Uncle, cousin or visitor from out of town *Ploofer*. • Pretend to be a scientist who investigates light. Children can take on different roles to collect admission tickets or make popcorn for the lightshow.
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 phone call from the *Ploofers* such as "*Hi Children. There are new Ploofers in town. The Ploofers heard that you are experts in light. Can you put on a lightshow to welcome them to town?*". • Children can pretend to be scientists or light show technicians.

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Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario *(continued)*	• Be clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation, through children's play.	• You could explore: What is light? What is a light source? For example, the sun or a lightbulb. Can we see without light? How does light travel? Will there be shadows? Will you use mirrors to reflect light? • Conduct experiments to explore the concept of light. Set up a darkened box for children to sit inside and control the amount of light that enters using a torch. Investigate how light can: (i.) travel in a straight line; (ii.) be blocked by forming a shadow; (iii.) be reflected with mirrors; (iv.) be absorbed when using black fabric; (v.) be refracted into the colours of a rainbow.
Planning educator interactions to build conceptual learning in role	• 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.	• 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 what happens to light when we use this mirror"*. 2. **Model practices in a role -** e.g. *"Did you know that without light we can't see?"*. 3. **Seek help from the children -** e.g. *"Show me how you make a shadow in the puppet show"*. 4. **Act out the role together with the child leading -** e.g. *"Let's pretend to be Ploofers together. We could make coloured clouds. What colour shall we be?"*.