

WORKSHOP: Storytelling and early literacy

SARA STANLEY AND NOLUBABALO MBOTSHWA 16.3.17 Cape Town ECD Education Conf.

WHAT MATERIALS?

This workshop will focus on the development of literacy through imaginative play and exploration of picture books and stories in the early years setting. Imaginative play is often given scant attention in a busy timetable where structured adult-led teaching is seen as a priority. However, successful education is enhanced by the development of life skills such as critical thinking, negotiation and independent learning opportunities.

In order for children to read and write for enjoyment we have to create an environment where play is seen as purposeful. We bring stories and play together to create Storyplay. During this workshop we will explore how bringing a story to life includes the skills and competencies children need to become thinkers, talkers, readers and writers.

Imaginative play allows adults and children to create a world of learning together, where reading, writing and talking happen within the meaningful context of a shared story experience. The creation of such a Storyplay world is constructed through shared communication between adults and children. This is underpinned by the practice of listening to and respecting children's ideas, thoughts and questions.

The Storyplay collection

You will need a large box or basket to keep materials safe and dry. You will need to collect items such as large pieces of fabric, (saris, headscarves, net curtains, printed cloth, old bedsheets are ideal) clothes pegs, string, rope or nylon washing line. These can be used to create imaginative play spaces. You will also need to collect natural materials such as pebbles, shells, seed pods, bark, moss and sticks. Recycled materials such as packages, boxes, shiny objects, tubes and food cartons can be used to create props and characters for telling, developing and creating the stories inspired by the book you are sharing.

Create excitement around the collecting of Storyplay materials and encourage children and parents to hunt for and donate these items as well.

Using Storyplay for early literacy learning

We are using picture books to help guide Storyplay and inspire children to want to bring a story out of the physical boundaries of the book. Practical methods are explored in the workshop using a South African retelling of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*.

The contents of the Storyplay collection allows us to create spaces that represent one or more of the settings from the story. Any book used should present interesting storylines where exciting things might happen. They should also be set in a place that can be recreated, for example; an island, a kingdom, a village, desert, jungle, beach or forest. (see suggested book list) Children use materials from the Storyplay collection in collaboration with an interested adult to create these story landscapes, build models, puppets and print related props. The story book becomes the springboard into both shared and independent reading and writing opportunities. These strategies will be shared in the workshop.

HOW TO USE THE MATERIALS

Workshop participants will be involved in recreating the story using a variety of play based activities.

Participants will then be encouraged to join us in a shared reading and writing demonstration to extend *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* story world and developing the Storyplay approach of letter writing to encourage whole class and independent literacy opportunities.

WHAT ARE THE CHILDREN LEARNING?

Through shared exploration and development of a story, children learn that their ideas are valued by adults. They understand that they can work together to create a shared space where imaginative play happens in context. Children become absorbed into the story and are more able to consolidate memory, empathy, problem solving and exploration of moral and ethical dilemmas that present challenges in life outside the classroom as well. Vocabulary, use of rich metaphorical language, story sequencing and other language skills develop in this meaningful context.

Early childhood is a time when children are naturally playful and use imagination, curiosity and wonder to make sense of their expanding universes. This is recognised in the ELDA (Early Learning and Development Areas) in the National Curriculum Framework Birth to Four.

- Communication-Children record their ideas through language, the arts and writing. Children make meaning by “reading” what they see, hear, feel and touch.
- Creativity and imagination and play- Identifying, searching for and creating solutions to challenges through play and make believe, and through problem solving.
- Knowledge and understanding of the world- Children explore and investigate their life world. Children explore and investigate time and place.
- Identity and belonging- Children have a sense of group identity. Children are aware of themselves as capable and confident learners.

Suggested book list for Storyplay with titles available in all 11 SA official languages.

Di Stewart and Joan Rankin-Lyle the crocodile

Leo Lionni- Frederick

Leo Lionni- An extraordinary egg

Leo Lionni- Fish is fish

Leo Lionni- Swimmy

Margie Orford - The Little Red Hen

Carole Bloch-The three billy goats gruff

Zukiswa Wanner -Refilwe

Carole Bloch- Hyena and the seven little kids

Sindiwe Magona-The ugly duckling