

Working with artists to develop practice in Early Years along the Sussex Coast

Early Years Creativity Toolkit

Produced by Hastings & St Leonards Children's Centres and Arts Service West Sussex County Council in association with Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey.

© Hastings Children Centres and Arts Service West Sussex County Council

Design and layout by Playne Design
Illustrations by Chris Watson

Issue date December 2011

T 01424 726453

E hslcc@eastsussex.gov.uk





Contents

Overview 4
Context 6
How to use this book 8
Introduction 10
Top tips and photography 12
Approach 18
Case studies 20
Open Sesame! 60
Looking back to move forward 66
Resources and references 74

Overview

Creativity has been recognised by the Early Years Foundation Stage as a vital part of children's learning for some years and this has provided both a challenge and an opportunity to really understand what creativity looks like in nursery settings, and how children and adults can be supported to be creative.

Two projects in Sussex have been examining creativity in early years through working with artists and bringing them into settings to work alongside practitioners and children.

Although completely independent of each other, both projects have arrived at similar conclusions about why working with artists is an effective way to develop creative practice in early years settings – including professional development for staff and building better links with parents and the local community.

This publication takes you into the heart of these projects, showing you examples of artists working in settings and giving you top tips for trying out these approaches yourself.

In the final section we also look at what was learned from the two projects, why these approaches were successful and how ways of working with artists could be developed in the future.

Both projects would like to thank Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey for the support they have given through the Change School and Enquiry School programmes, and also Children's Services at East Sussex County Council, the Arts Service at West Sussex County Council, Early Childhood Services at West Sussex County Council and our other partners.



Tracey Rose
Childre's Centres Area Co-ordinator
Hastings and St Leonards
East Sussex County Council



Clare Halstead
Arts and Creativity Officer
West Sussex County Council

Context

The Hundred Languages of Children is an inspirational statement of the approach taken by Loris Malaguzzi, founder of what is known in shorthand as 'Reggio Emilia', or just 'Reggio'. More information about Reggio can be found on their [website](#).

The Hundred Languages of Children

The child is made of one hundred
The child has a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking of playing, of speaking.
A hundred always a hundred ways of listening of marvelling, of loving
a hundred joys for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds to discover
a hundred worlds to invent
a hundred worlds to dream.
The child has a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and at Christmas.
They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things that do not belong together.
And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.
Loris Malaguzzi

How to use this book

Sections 1-3

Case studies

The first three sections are practical examples of creative practice in early years settings that was devised by artists working with children and early years practitioners. They show how simple starting points and resources were extended through the children's interaction, and are not meant to be followed exactly, but used as examples of how you could develop your work.

- The sections are themed – working outside, working with materials, stories and feelings.
- There are examples of activities for different ages.
- They are designed to be like a recipe book with easy to follow stages. Choose one to put on the wall as a focus for a week's activities.
- Connect to a digital projector and use during a training session.

Section 4

Open Sesame!

Read a summary of the Open Sesame project to give another perspective on the work.

Section 5

Looking back to move forward

The final section is about the impact that these two projects have had on early years practitioners and artists. Our findings could be used to support a case for working with artists in your setting.

Resources

Check out the links and further info in the resources section.

Video

This button indicates that there is video content. Click to play.



Introduction

Hastings and St Leonards

Children's Centres

Change School Project 2008-11

Focus

To develop creative approaches for early years practitioners, focusing on a ‘Reggio Emilia’ inspired methodology; to implement these across a broad spectrum of settings over three years and increase visibility of this work in the local community

Scope

The project developed over three years, working initially with one artist and two settings in year 1, then three artists and three settings in year 2 and ten artists and twenty settings in year 3. The project included opportunities for parents to get involved, and a final exhibition of work held in a venue in St Leonards.

Partners

East Sussex County Council
Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey
Fellowship of St Nicholas

Project artists

Daniel Bernstein (creative agent), Jane Gordon, Sarah Yates, Tara Reddy, Phil Bedford, Jim Roseveare, Miranda Sharp, Amanda Jobson, Ben Fairlight, Deborah Sharpe, Fiona Pienkowska, Kate Murdoch, Tom Cook, Becci Kenning.

Participating settings

Greenway Nursery
St Nicks Nursery
Carousel Nursery School
Robsack Wood Community Primary School Nursery
Churchwood Community Primary School Nursery
The Bridge Children’s Centre
Maplehurst Nursery
Rainbow Playgroup
The Gables Nursery
West St Leonards Early Years Centre
Bexhill and Battle Under Fives Association
Silverhill Playgroup
Artemis Day Nursery
The Athelstan Nursery
Mini Moos Nursery
ABC Family Nursery
Beakys Nursery Bright Horizons
Redlake Primary school Nursery

Click the button to watch a Creative Partnerships video from Greenway Nursery.

Top tips

Here is a quick round up of the most useful things that we have learnt along the way and will be using to guide our practice in the future.

Reflective accounts

- Take your time to think about what you have observed/heard.
- Ask yourself the question why? Look for explanations.
- Take time to reflect often.
- Don't be afraid to act on the moment.
- Tune into children's play cues.
- Self-reflection is important – consider the impact you are having on the children and their surroundings.
- Ask yourself, what have I learnt? How will you develop this learning for yourself in the future?
- Be prepared and open to learn something new.
- Be prepared to be challenged and challenge yourself.

Planning

- Plan a starting point; not an end product.
- Have 20 things up your sleeve and be ready for wherever the children take it.
- Think carefully about your resources – make sure they are open-ended.
- Make use of cheap, recyclable and accessible resources.
- Allow time for children to explore and develop their play.
- Don't be afraid to try new things – come out of your comfort zone!
- Plan at the level of the child and from their real experiences.
- Provide activities/resources that do not limit children's exploration in using all their senses.

Documentation

- Include children's words – they are more powerful than our own.
- Use good images.
- Write about the actual event – do not surmise.
- Date it.
- Try not to interpret what you see or hear.
- Include children in the documenting.
- Take an active role when documenting – do not always be passive.
- Use different media to document and include the children – they are more creative than you think!

Setting up a project

- Nominate a named contact for enquiries.
- Plan dates for the year.
- Communicate!
- Develop templates so that everyone involved is using the same format for planning and reporting.

How long?

Many of the activities in the book have taken place over an extended period of time, across a morning and afternoon session, or over a number of weeks. The activities are broken down into steps, but you may find that one step takes a lot longer than you think, and from the same starting points you may choose to take different directions.

Use of materials

While there has been a theme or a process to explore that has been thought about in advance, and suitable materials or resources brought into the setting to facilitate this, the materials are often introduced in stages, allowing for decisions to be made along the way and for the children to take time to develop their interest in the activity. It's often a matter of having something up your sleeve, and judging whether or not to bring it out!

Being child led

The children don't always want to play with and explore the theme or materials in the way you have anticipated, and find their own interests to follow:

“One boy uses the materials and hoards them finding boxes and taping them up to keep them safe, they become ‘his’ things. When asked ‘Why are you doing that?’ He replies ‘I need to I am keeping it safe’. He often uses the materials in a different way, I have discovered, taking them completely away from their ‘proposed’ purpose and finding himself new props for imaginative play. I think it is a way of being involved without being told what to do, using the freedom with the materials as a way to create and explore, testing and pushing the boundaries.” Jane Gordon – Project Artist

In some of the activities there are examples of how the artist or practitioner has responded to this by supporting and extending that child's interest, and there are observations of the different ways that children have used the same activity.

Observing what the children are doing will provide you with the ideas for how to develop the activity.

Artists and practitioners working together

There are many examples in this book of where sharing ideas and information has helped the sessions to work better, or given opportunities for the work to be extended. Artists learn a lot from practitioners about children's development and about the needs of individual children in the setting. There are also lots of opportunities for practitioners to pick up ideas and skills from working with artists – Working with Technology being a prime example of this where initial fears about using computers with the children were quickly overcome.

Taking photographs

The Hastings and St Leonards project decided to develop the use of photography so that it enhances and simplifies the documentation process.



Starting points

Although we have had some fantastic and ambitious ideas about digital documentation including websites, blogs and the use of interactive computer screens, these ideas depend on having a lot of extra time, training and money to initiate. Also they are not suitable for each different setting. However, we realise that one of our most useful tools for documentation is the digital camera, which all of the settings have access to and are already using in some way or another.

Unfortunately the photos we are currently taking don't always say enough about what is happening in the picture, what the child is doing. We want the photos to tell a clear story of events and offer information about the processes the children are using in their play which are evidence of their learning.

We would like the children to be able to say more through the use of these tough cameras about the environment they are in and how they use it.

We have decided to compile a list of key points to think about when using the digital camera so that our photos have more content and are more useful in our documentation.

Next steps

We also decided to design and trial a camera 'bag' for adults and 'tabard/apron' for the children with pockets to contain a camera, notepad and pen, any small props for using in the photography and an easy guide to taking photos booklet.

To begin we had one bag and one apron in the setting.

This project was designed to be ongoing and organic, introduced one step at a time so that it doesn't interfere with the already busy day to day activity in the nursery. We hope that it will evolve into something that is developed by all of the staff together.

We would like to aim for an exhibition of some sort to celebrate our work on this project over the year. This could be on any scale.

Key points:

- **Less is more** – Don't try to fit in too much information in one picture. Focus on one activity.
- **Get close up** – The child's face does not always have to be the focus. You may want to focus on their hands or whole body if that says more about the activity they are engaged in.
- **Be quick** – Sometimes you may want to snap a few quick pics so that you don't impose on the activity that the child is engaged in with the camera.
- **Delete** – don't be afraid to delete pictures if they are not good. This is the beauty of digital.
- **Avoid posing** – Try not to make the camera the focus of the activity. Really we don't want the child to think about it being there at all. Don't ask them to stop what they are doing to smile!
- **Pictures from afar** – You don't have to be involved in the activity to take a picture. Observe from afar and photograph so that the children do not even know that you are there.
- **Think of the content** – What do you want your picture to tell us? Is it showing the intense conversation between two children and how they are communicating? Is it showing the development of fine motor skills when learning to use scissors for the first time?
- **Take your time** – Sometimes you have the opportunity to watch through the lens of the camera taking your time to frame the picture, make the most of this opportunity, it doesn't come along very often!!
- **Be invisible** – If a child/children are so absorbed in what they are doing, you can capture the intensity of the moment through the photo but you must make sure that the use of the camera doesn't impose on their activity.

Approach

The Creative Partnerships
approach and the 'new' EYFS

The proposed revised EYFS continues to have at its core the following three characteristics of effective teaching and learning:

- **playing and exploring** – children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';
- **active learning** – children keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and
- **creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.

Creative practice in early years supports all of these.

These characteristics must be adhered to through the 'prime' and 'specific' areas of learning and as research informs us children learn holistically. So creativity needs to be embedded across all areas of learning and development.

The EYFS recognises that every child is 'unique' and that every child's learning journey is different. Therefore, practitioners need to be creative in all the work they do with young children to ensure each child reaches their full potential.

The Creative Partnerships approach described creativity as the wider ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve and reflect critically, and recognized that these skills are demanded by today's employers.

They stated that... "Creative learning empowers young people to imagine how the world could be different and gives them the confidence and motivation to make positive change happen. This helps young people to engage with their education and to achieve."

Therefore, the 'new' EYFS and Creative Partnerships share a similar pedagogy and recognise that an environment that values creativity and expressiveness will equip our children for the future.

More information on the Creative Partnerships programmes:

[creative-partnerships](#)
[creativity culture education](#)



Section 1 — Working outside

Bringing the outside in 1	22
Bringing the outside in 2	24
Pulp to paper	26
Construction	28
Developing ideas with the children	30
Mark making	32
Dens	34

Working outside

Bringing the outside in 1

Starting points

We walked to the park and noticed things on the way:

‘The lake is deep, I can touch the bottom. It’s not as deep as me, that bit is not as deep as this bit.’

We played and we explored:

‘Things live in these holes!’, ‘I’m looking for spiders webs.’

‘There’s a monster that lives in here, I am feeding it’

We collected some natural materials from the park, then we returned to the nursery and took the outside in.





Step 2

Using the natural materials that we had brought in including sticks and moss we started to make a mini tree which turned into a mini forest, creating a space where some children absorbed themselves in imaginary and mastery play. We introduced insects and animals and small worlds were created where children played together and on their own picking up, copying and taking further ideas that they had seen.

Step 3

The spaces became larger, placing sticks in pots of sand and making a forest in the room. The children started to use the space for role play; camping, building fires and cooking.

'Fire comes out of the dinosaurs mouth, only grown ups can touch it.'

Putting sand on the bonfire – why?
'It's called 'Maleklan' We have to mix it, it's our dinner. We're cooking fish'

Resources:

- sticks, moss, leaves and other objects collected from outdoors
- toy insects and other small world play

Ideas for further exploration...

- explore further the idea of miniature worlds and how we interact with them
- make opportunities for mastery play – a child's exploration of the world around him where he has control, experimenting with the idea of death and destruction and the consequences of his own actions, rebuilding...

Working outside

Bringing the outside in 2

Starting points

To continue the project, we offered sticks, brushes and a large piece of fabric on the floor to give an opportunity for children to decorate the sticks.





Step 2

At first, the children carried on making forests and then they became giants, knocking the trees over, using them for 'firewood', and making a bridge to a garden wall for insects to use. The children used small world insects to hide in the wall and also looked for real insects.

When they found a real bug there was a lot of talk about whether to squash it or leave it alone, so we were able to pose the question:

'What do you do if you don't like something?'

A decision was made to place the bug in the gap in the wall so that it will be away from danger, although as soon as it was placed there, it was being hunted down to find it again.

Step 3

While we printed out photographs from the day, the children placed the toy insects on a blank canvas, then made insect footprints using some paint, and then developed this into a collage adding leaves, mud, sticks, and clay and drawing pictures of the bugs. This produced a visual 'diary' of the journey and gave an opportunity to reflect and talk, listen and find out more about what the children had taken from the project.

Resources:

- paints and paint trays
- toy insects
- large sheet or canvas to paint on
- clay

Ideas for further exploration...

- extend the opportunity to investigate insects by making bug boxes and planting that encourages insects to the area
- exploring different textures, shade and shadow, white and black
- give the children opportunities to extend their investigations without adult intervention by leaving a number of blank canvasses and a chosen range of mark making materials in the small room (away from other distractions/play)

Working outside

Pulp to paper

Starting points

A slightly more structured session with an aim in mind to make paper but with a playful and child led approach, we continued with the use of natural materials and explored the thoughts about knocking down trees from last week and what we use trees for.





Resources:

- for pulp making: potato mashers, sieves, spoons, pots, jugs, shredded paper and water, buckets
- for paper making: food blender, towels, J-cloths, leaves, petals, spices
- others that are useful; glitter, pipettes/turkey basters, food colouring

Ideas for further exploration...

- sculpting using paper pulp, making 3d shapes
- using coloured pulp to create an image
- flower pressing
- making curry (inspired by the smell of spices)
- leaf and petal decorating outside – see Andy Goldsworthy images of environmental art

Step 2

We first played with paper soaked in water, introducing the idea of recycling and making pulp. The first tools we used were potato mashers. The children understood that we were using paper and made the links to how paper is used in other parts of our lives.

'Is it what we draw on?'

'Look that bit has got drawing on it... This is a different colour'

Then we found some more equipment placed under the table ready for use. The pulp was poured into jugs and pots, and then through sieves, with the children realising that the water drains and the pulp remains. The more play that happened with the pulp, the finer and more pulped it became which is perfect for later.

Step 3

We created a collection of leaves and petals and grasses that were displayed on the table and children chose their own and created a colour palette. Once that was completed, we used the pulp that had been put in the pots earlier on. We blended it in a small food blender to pulp it up and we put our pulp into a tray. We mixed in our leaf palettes and mixed around and arranged the leaves.

Then we sieved our decorated pulp and blotted as much of the water out as possible using hands, feet and rollers. Others continued the decoration using spices. 'It smells like dinner!'

Working outside

Construction

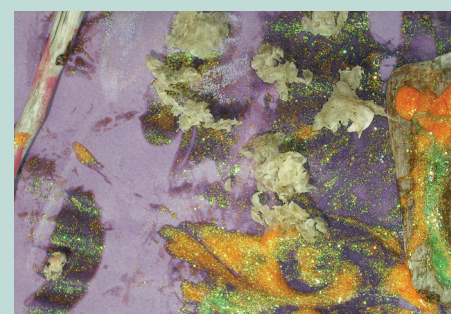
Starting points

To explore the ideas of construction with the children using their own real tools.



Resources:

- tools
- wood
- flat pack furniture!



Step 2

To begin the session, Jane introduced the idea of building on a larger scale. The first thing was to explore boxes, as a warm up. The children piled up boxes, building towers and knocking them down.

As the children got to know Jane a bit better, Jane introduced a small item of furniture that was in pieces. Not saying what it is supposed to be, Jane suggested putting it together. The children very quickly worked out how it slots together and how the pegs worked to fix it in place. Initially it was not in the right order, but still went together. Then the children took it apart and reconstructed it.

Then Jane introduced a dolls house, again in pieces. This time it had to be constructed using screws. With enough screw drivers for each child, they worked together over a long period of time and built the house. Even though it was a squeeze, the children all negotiated the space and made sure they could all fit in to build a bit.

After building the house, the children found toys to use in it.

Step 3

Moving out into the garden, Jane introduced some pieces of wood, with pre-drilled holes, some larger screws and screw drivers.

The children began constructing and fixing 2 or 3 bits of wood together.

They formed naturally into groups helping each other.

As their shapes got bigger, they decided to fix them all together. When all the pieces were fixed together, we placed it on the wall.

One child went and got some paint from the art area and then others followed. They painted the shapes that they had made.

The structure remains on the wall as the children's own work of art or sculpture.

Working outside

Developing ideas with the children

Starting points

To explore the outside space and get an idea of what the children want. To do this by first exploring mark making and looking at textures we find outside.





Step 2

We laid out clay and some natural materials in the garden. The children found the materials and began to explore them in their own way. They started to talk about the garden and they took the clay to their favourite places in the garden.

We made prints of the shed and the tyres among other things. The tree was a popular space and the children made a number of footprints in the clay and stuck them onto the tree.

They liked the idea of putting the clay on the tree and wanted to get it as high as possible. 'How can we get it all the way up there?'

'Shall we hang it in the tree?'



Step 3

As we talked about making things to go high in the trees, we thought we'd explore things that will reflect light and make shadows when hanging.

Working with the younger children, we spent a long time playing with glitter and watching the sparkle, how it changes when it moves, pouring the glitter and collecting it in one tray after another.

Once the glitter was exhausted, we sprinkled a pile of coloured gel paper in the soft play space. For a long time, the children leapt around in it, looked through it, threw it into the air and generally enjoyed the sensory experience. When the playing was beginning to slow down, we introduced a light box and layered up the colours. We captured the children's colours in between laminating sheets and laminated ready to be hung outside as coloured mobiles. We hung a string outside and also introduced a number of items that could be hung from the string that would make sounds or will last well outside.

Resources:

- clay
- glitter
- coloured acetate
- string

Ideas for further exploration...

- printing with the clay patterns that were made in the garden onto a large sheet of paper
- mud hand prints and patterns, and talking about clay also coming from the ground
- using water squirters to explore how the mud changes colour when wet and dry
- with the under 2's put clay on different surfaces to encourage them to notice it. For example, one baby only interacted with the clay when it was pressed to a table leg in front of her
- use all sorts of nursery toys to make marks in the clay

Working outside

Mark making

Starting points

Continuing our discovery of mark making with clay and cement, and to explore brick making.



Resources:

- clay
- ciment fondu *
- water
- spray bottles
- nail brushes and paintbrushes
- trays to put water into
- ice cube trays, other metal and plastic containers for putting the clay into

* ciment fondu is a type of cement that sets in about six hours but begins to become solid in a much shorter space of time.

Ideas for further exploration...

- although the nursery practitioners both commented on how they don't usually get so mucky with clay they really saw the value in exploring such a sensory material
- clay can be used again and again and will always produce a different result as it is such a free material without any limitations apart from our own imaginations



Step 2

Jane bought in some ready made cement patterns that had been cast from a welly boot footprint. This gave the children an idea of how their previous explorations of pattern making can be turned into something more durable. The children spent a very long time pressing on and peeling off the clay to discover the cement patterns underneath. The clay was put out onto the table so that the children could collect their own. We pressed and placed the clay into large trays and small ice-cube trays, ready to take impressions of objects.

Some put sticks and stones in their clay, others poked branches into the clay to make shapes and patterns. We named the children's trays.

We talked about how we got the clay ready and were collecting some patterns to turn into bricks for the garden.



Step 3

The next week, we rediscovered our patterns. Jane had poured cement onto the 'bricks' over the week so they came back hard and ready to clean up.

With some slightly soapy water in spray bottles, we sprayed and picked away at the clay using brushes and sticks to reveal the patterns.

Although this was a very slow process, the children were absorbed in finding the patterns they had created earlier on in the project.

Then come further discussions about how the 'bricks' will be used in the garden.



Working outside

Dens

Starting points

Using previously made triangles made from bamboo cane and gaffa tape the children explored the shapes and very quickly started to put them together to make bigger structures. We started with teepee shapes and took them outside.

Resources:

- bamboo
- gaffa tape
- broom handles
- string
- heavy bases (can be made from concrete in buckets)
- pegs
- fabric
- wire
- sticks
- chalks
- parachute

Ideas for further exploration...

- fix a baton of wood with a number of large hooks onto the wall so that it can be a multi purpose fixing area
- bring in a parachute to make a really large enclosed area, allowing the children to problem solve how to use it to make a den
- use the small triangular teepees to make private spaces for children who want to work on their own
- make a den by leaning stout sticks or poles onto a wall to make a lean-to
- the children might want to experiment with covering the den to make it dark





Step 2

We connected the shapes together, starting with smaller groups and children making their own tents until they realised they could keep joining them and make something bigger and bigger.

The initial triangle shapes made the structure strong. Using a big box of fabrics, we pegged them on to make the structure more enclosed.

A story began to emerge and the children came to and from the tent all afternoon.

We revisited the tents the following week. They had been played with since the last session and had changed shapes. Jane worked alongside a nursery practitioner and together they followed the children's stories and imaginations.

Inside the tent, children began to make rules and all the children that came in, listened to each other. No one claimed ownership of the tent, they shared and negotiated.

Some of the children began to decorate the tent and sticks.

'This is a ruler' said one, making lines spaced out along a stick.

Some fabrics were used to define spaces and the see-through fabrics became windows.

Step 3

We introduce a different den-building method using heavy bases on the floor each holding sticks. The children decided where the sticks were to be placed. We hung string between the sticks and began to enclose a new space, making a kind of washing line.

The sticks had holes in them that the children noticed after a while of playing. One small boy spent a long time threading wires and beads into the small holes.

Others played with a big box of pegs, using virtually every peg, hanging them on the string. Through this play a number of children learnt how to use a peg either by themselves or by being shown. By trial and error, they worked out they had to squeeze and capture the string inside the peg before letting go.

Even though the space was very open, the children still used their imaginations to turn it into their own space inside of the sticks and string.

WORKING with



Section 2 — Working with materials

Journey into space	38
From music to mark making – under 2's	40
Noise – under 2's	42
Post	44
Sticks and shells	45
Weaving	46
Clay	48

Working with materials

Journey into space

Starting points

The children were interested in rockets and space after a small group of them read a book together about space without adult intervention. We wanted to build on their interest – ‘Shall we make a spaceship? YES!!’

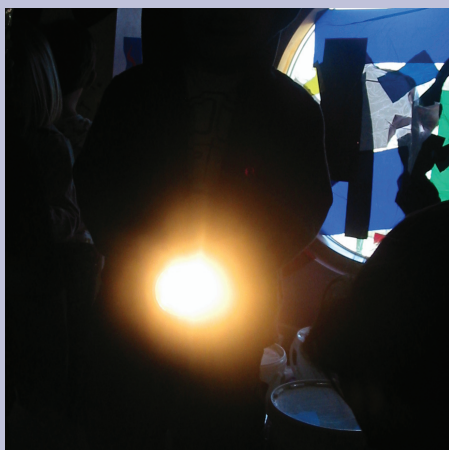


Resources:

- a small quite empty space (a cupboard, tent or under a table etc. can also work)
- coloured translucent materials – plastics, tissue paper, etc
- our button making materials were sticky back plastic offcuts from a scrap store – you could also use cut out paper or plastic bottle tops and blu-tack (in either case, check that it doesn't take the paint of the walls!!)
- coloured acetate – can be bought as sheet material, or saved from packaging and sweet wrappers
- pens and paper
- torches

Ideas for further exploration...

- the space idea came from the children's interest in a book. The same resources could be used to create other environments that they are interested in exploring.



Step 2

We used a small room in the nursery as a space to turn into a spaceship and began with a box of sticky back plastic in many colours that had been collected from the scrap store.

'Lets cover the window and make it really dark like space.' said one child. We peeled off the paper from the darkest colours and stuck them over the window.

'It looks like planet Earth' was one observation looking at the colours and shape of the window. The children used the plastic to make buttons for control panels that covered the walls, window and ceiling. They used their imaginations to talk about the intricate

details of space flight and about how the spaceship could work, as well as problem solving what to do if they met an alien.

The children then made seat belts with each one making a different design using different catches and straps. A white sheet was pegged in the centre of the room to create two spaces that became the control room and a sleeping cabin which the children made more comfortable by adding cushions and beanbags.

We introduced some coloured acetate and torches to explore further the ideas of colours changing using light sources. The children used the torches and acetate to play with light and shadow on the walls.

Step 3

When the spaceship was finished, the children became involved in making maps of the journeys that took us to many different planets with a variety of monsters and aliens. From this, the children brought in a number of items around the nursery incorporating them into their imaginary space explorations. This included paint pots as seats in the spaceship and teddy bears as aliens.

Working with materials

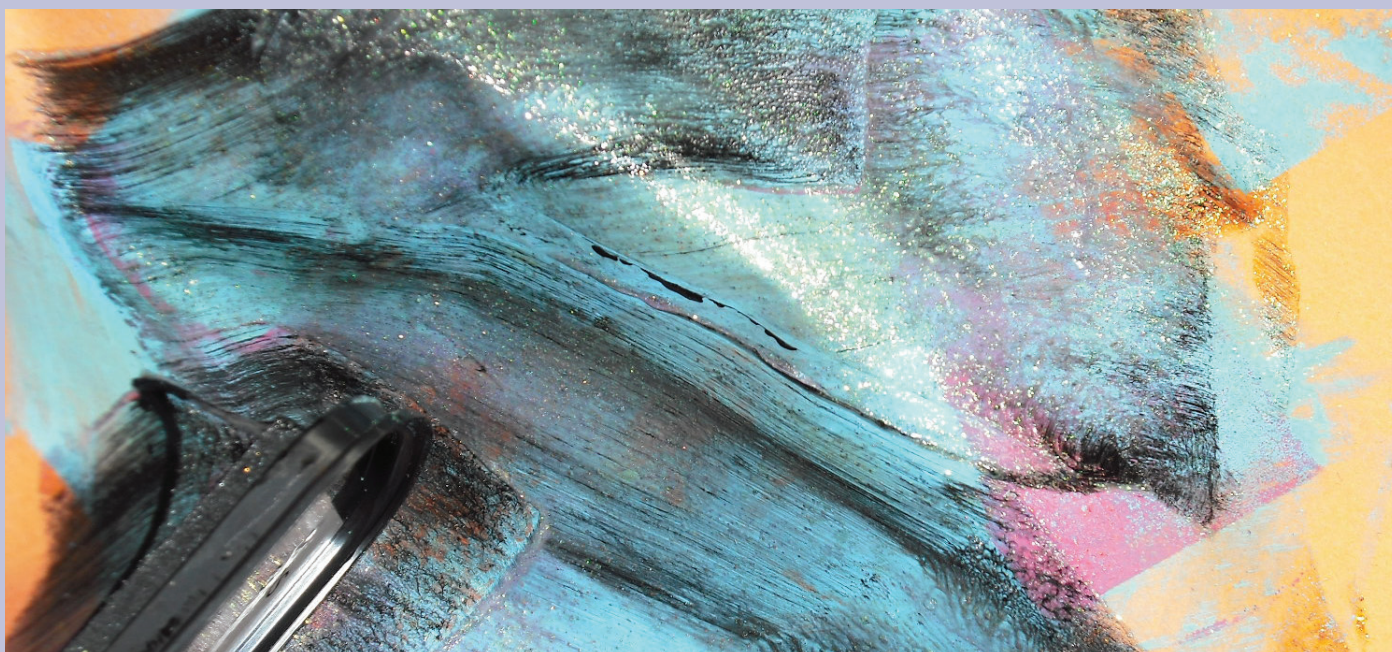
From music to mark making

Under 2's

Starting points

Working with the under 2's, we introduced a mixture of instruments so that they could explore the sounds and textures and their relationship with other items in the nursery.





Resources:

- collection of instruments
- other toys in the nursery – these children chose to use the cars, another day might result in different connections
- CD player and selection of music
- paper
- paint

Step 2

After about 20 mins of investigative play with the instruments with children coming and going, we introduced some paint alongside some small shakers and we also painted on a mirror so the children were able to see themselves while painting.

After some painting, we played some world music CD's and this prompted more interest in the instruments.

It became apparent that the toy cars became a way of exploring the instruments. Some children moved between playing with the cars and with the instruments, making sounds with the cars on the instruments and making journeys specifically to instruments never explored before.

The cars then became the main focus of play on the empty table. With music still playing in the background we covered the table in white paper and added some paint rollers joining in with the car wheels rolling over the paper. After this we added some paint dabbers and the children used these alongside their cars and started mark making.

Step 3

We took the painting outside after lunch and were joined by the older children. They were painting straight onto the board and so we tried printing by laying paper over the painted board and peeling it off. This proved to be a very popular and interesting activity and the children printed one after another for some time so we stuck every one up onto the fencing and found it hard to keep up with the speed of which the work was being passed to us!

Then the paint moved to the feet! And we got very messy. And even the cleaning up became a game. Some children washed – then painted – then washed their hands again and again

Working with materials

Noise!

Under 2's

Starting points

We started the day in the baby room, with an assortment of dry food ingredients – rice, quinoa, lentils, beans – and some pots and stepped back to see what happened.





Resources:

- pulses, lentils, rice etc
- tubs with lids, preferably ones you can see through
- funnels
- jugs and pots and vessels of different sizes
- sticks

Ideas for further exploration...

- put ingredients on a large white paper on the floor and make shapes, patterns and pictures
- mixing the ingredients with paint and glue
- weighing the ingredients using large scales with an easy to see dial

Step 2

The first thing to happen was **POURING**.

Pouring things out of the bags into pots, from one pot to another etc... This went on for some time.

Filling pots, putting the lids on then taking them off again.

Shaking the pots with and without the lids on!

Then pouring all of the ingredients onto the table and mixing them around with hands, making patterns in the mixture.

Picking up the ingredients and sprinkling them onto the pots, making a pitter patter noise, and sprinkling into a tray on the floor and then straight onto the floor.

Brushing the ingredients off the table into a large tub on the floor. And standing in the tub whilst continuing to explore!

Step 3

We took sticks outside and wrapped the ends of some with foam and tape to make drum sticks. We bashed things we could see and noticed the different sounds they made.

We also wrapped metallic foil wrapping paper onto sticks to make a rustle noise. And we found other objects to use as drum sticks such as whisks and spoons.

There was a tub full of metal bowls, plastic pots, saucepans and lids etc, which they took out and explored by bashing them, lining them up, grouping them, pouring water on them, balancing on them and throwing them onto the floor to make bigger noises.

The big tub was turned upside down and made into a drum, which led to some singing and drumming and a game of 'STOP' 'GO' where when anyone shouted stop, we all put our sticks in the air then 'GO' and we started again.

Some children waited until everyone was out of the way before going to play the drums.

Working with materials

Post

Starting points

We took the theme of ‘post’, offered the kind of materials you would normally use when posting anything and played with them. We didn’t prescribe what should be done with them but we watched the ideas the children came up with themselves.



Resources:

- bubble wrap
- string
- brown paper
- envelopes,
- stamps
- parcel tape and sellotape
- bags
- scales

Step 2

We popped, jumped on, cut, tore and wrapped ourselves in bubble wrap. Then we began to wrap other things, mostly books, and added more materials such as brown paper and tape. It’s interesting that even though the children played with the materials in their own way, they were also copying what they have seen people around them doing when they are getting things ready to post.

Conversations began about who they were creating parcels for – usually mummy or daddy.

We also introduced labels and stamps and bags and the children put the parcels in the bags and carried them around.

Step 3

We got a set of scales to weigh our parcels and a small group played together with the scales for about an hour weighing different things they found around the nursery like train track and bricks and cups and even using the scales upside down.

Working with materials

Sticks and shells

Starting points

We placed some beach objects on a table covered in a white sheet. We had driftwood sticks, shells, seaweed and some crabs legs. All of these things had been found on the beach.

Step 2

We explored some of the objects, finding out what sounds they make, banging the sticks, blowing into the shells and scraping the shells and sticks on rough surfaces, shaking the shells inside net bags.

We used large magnifying glasses to explore in more detail, including other toys that became part of the play too. The materials then became part of other play in the room, especially in the water where it was noticed that they change colour when wet, just like on the beach.

Resources:

- beach treasure – driftwood, shells, seaweed etc
- net bags
- magnifying glasses
- printing blocks
- glitter glue
- paper
- water based paint for printmaking
- ribbons
- beads

but this activity could develop in many different ways with other resources

Step 3

After some play, one child found a big tube of glitter glue which instantly changed the focus!

We also found some printing ink blocks and used them with the glitter glue to decorate the sticks.

We started by rolling the sticks on the blocks, but then the printing blocks became used as stamps for mark making on paper. The sticks were also used to print with, along with some of the other beach resources - the shells and seaweed.

We made 'stick sandwiches' between two printing blocks, and smeared the ink around on paper.

In the afternoon, we added ribbons and beads, wrapping and decorating the sticks further and making decorated ribbon necklaces which were then displayed on the fence.



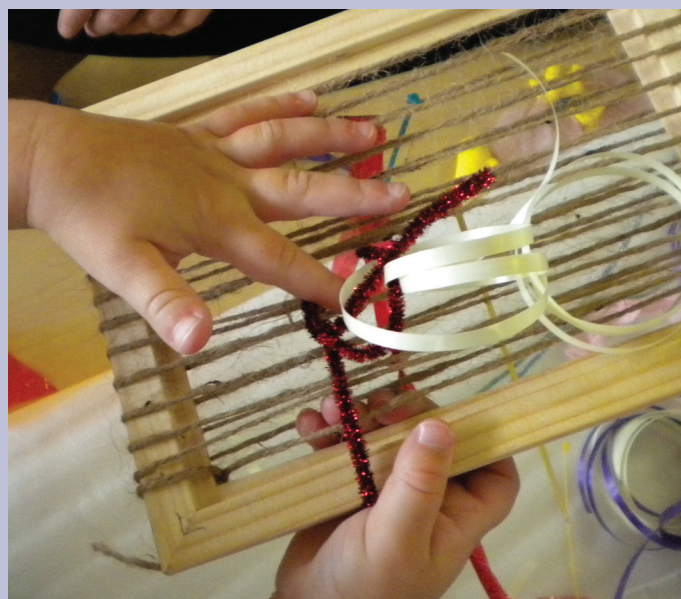
Working with materials

Weaving

Starting points

The day began with some small picture frames minus the glass wrapped in string to make a weaving 'warp', a few boxes with a choice of different long flexible things and some interested children.





Resources:

- assorted small picture frames with glass removed
- string
- strips of fabric, lengths of ribbon, scarves
- coloured plastics, raffia, rope
- coloured pipe cleaners, glitter thread, wool
- coloured paper, silver foil, plastic coated wire.

Step 2

We talked about going over and under, over and under – like a wiggly worm.

One girl decided to use a frame and decorate that, wrapping the materials around the edge instead of using the string to weave round.

'Look it's a mirror' she said holding it up to her face and we played some face copying games.

We also explored ways of cutting wobbly string because it is hard to do as it wobbles! Holding it tight between teeth and fingers seemed to work very well.

Some children didn't want to weave but instead played with the materials imaginatively using them as part of a game.

'Look, party stuff'

Others really enjoyed the activity as weaving and considered the way it should look.

'It needs some shiny thing on it doesn't it'

'I need some detail. That's what Mr Maker does. I like Mr Maker.'

Step 3

When we had finished the small pictures, we took our materials outside and wove on the fence, then later went back inside and wove some more but on a much bigger scale.

First we made a frame from a clothes rail and we stuck sticks onto it, then we found again more materials to weave in and out, getting very excited about using sellotape to wrap around the sticks like the dream catchers that we had seen in an earlier session.

Working with materials

Clay

Starting points

Exploring mark making and looking at textures we find outside. Thinking about how we can copy them into clay.



Resources:

- clay
- clean sand
- modelling cement
- any mark making tools found in the setting
- small tubs and pots (recycled containers will do just fine)
- anything to mix with, we used brushes
- pouring jugs and a number of large towels to mop up spillages (unless outside)
- paint
- water spray bottles
- brushes

Ideas for further exploration...

- use large magnifying glasses to find more interesting textures indoors and outdoors
- unwrap a large parcel of clay with the children and play with the bubble wrap before cutting open the block of clay and digging out your own pieces using our fingers and other tools



Step 2

Working with the under two's we first explored some natural materials that we might find outside.

We added clay and played with making marks in the clay using our hands and our natural materials.

We took our clay outside and explored the outside space. We put clay onto parts of the outside space such as the fence and the tree as a different way of exploring the material. Some children began to notice the clay when it was somewhere unusual, like on the branches of a tree.

We also dug mud and used our hands to form shapes like you would with the clay. We made balls and threw them!

Step 3

We chatted a bit about using cement to cover our clay patterns which will then dry and go hard so we can keep them in the garden.

When asked if they know anything that was made of clay, the children answered 'bricks and houses'

To begin with we started mixing the quantities of sand and water, which kept 8-10 children interested in mixing, pouring and sharing for 40 minutes.

We looked at a cement piece to get the idea of how ours will work.

'Are we making bricks?' one child asked.

I (the adult) mixed in the cement powder last and together we poured the mixture on top of our clay patterns, making sure we didn't put our hands in the cement mixture.

We put the pieces outside to harden.



STORIES

& Feelings

Section 3 — Stories and feelings

Starting a conversation session 1	52
Starting a conversation session 2	54
Starting a conversation session 3	55
Technology session 1	56
Technology session 2	59

Stories and feelings

Starting a conversation

Session 1

Starting points

Our aim was to explore conversations about feelings with puppets and to use images and colour to describe their feelings. Children could choose whether to join in or not.





Resources:

- calico puppet with blank expression, pocket for emotions, glove-style hands
- emotion cards
- colour cards
- big paper
- big chalks
- large floor space

Step 2

A large puppet made of calico with a blank expression, silently handed out pictures of faces showing expressions that indicate feelings. These faces were taken from a pocket from the puppets tummy. The children were asked what colour they thought 'matched' the faces... and the children chose from coloured paper strips.

One child said 'That face is grumpy, grumpy is brown'.

Another child 'Smiling is yellow'.

Another child ' He is worried – I don't want that card'.

Other reactions included anger at the puppet, pushing it and not wanting to play. Some children offered favourite toys to the puppet.

Another child who has difficulty joining in normally, stood up and leant forward and kissed the puppet, then added her hand into the glove hands alongside the puppeteer's hand, and smiled.

Step 3

We drew round each child on large sheets of paper on the floor. This can also be done outside on the pavement with chalks. The children coloured in how they were feeling and talked about how they felt whilst doing it.

One child said, 'This is my angry face.' When asked, 'Do you feel angry now?' they replied 'I have felt angry.'

Children focused on different parts of their bodies. Some chose not to use any colour on their faces at all. Others only concentrated on the face of their drawing.

Session 2

Starting points

To work with expressions and feelings using dolls and music. Continuing from an earlier session by using four dolls with four different facial expressions and hair colour.



Step 2

The children led the session. They named the dolls by their expressions: Crying/sad doll, Shouty doll, Happy doll and Giggly doll. The names they gave to the dolls were different to what we expected.

Two children claimed and adopted the two 'positive emotion' (Happy and Giggly) dolls and played with them for an hour and half and said they were 'theirs'.

The 'negative emotion' (Crying/sad and Shouty) dolls got emotional reactions from the children:

'It's crying because it's hungry and I'm going to get it to sleep by rocking it' and they took a role in looking after them.

One boy who only communicates using single words expressed that Crying doll 'has tummy ache' He went off and came back with stethoscope and started examining the doll. Tummy aches make you cry.

It was a very quiet and caring session.

Step 3

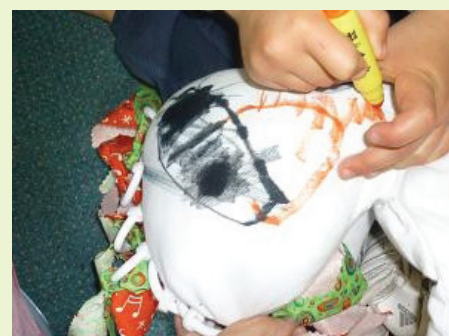
We took the dolls into the gym and used music, with a contrast between each track. The children could do what they liked to each track.

The boys were really physical to the music and with the dolls.

One girl was 'not sure' if she would join in, but after watching for a while, she really got into it and was very engaged with the dolls.

Many of the children showed the same reaction to Shouty doll, telling him off and what to do as if copying an adults voice perhaps using words they hear told to them.

It was good to use the gym space that was free from other distractions so the children could really concentrate on the dolls and the music.



Resources:

- emotion dolls / persona dolls
- variety of music to explore different emotions
- large clear space to dance/move to music
- CD player

Session 3

Starting points

With guidance from the practitioners about which children to work with, Becci used emotion dolls to develop a way of talking about emotions and feelings with children aged 2-4.



Resources:

- persona / plain calico dolls
- pens

Step 2

It was a slow start working with the babies using the dolls with made up faces. Crying doll was laid next to a boy who was crawling on floor. When he noticed it, he curled up and cried. He was picked up and cuddled. Whilst being cuddled, Becci gently showed him the doll again, He put his hand out to hide the dolls face. Becci took the doll away. Even though he is very young, he showed a strong emotional awareness and understanding of facial expressions.

Another girl was crying. She was clingy and suspicious of the dolls, but suddenly walked over to Becci. Becci asked 'Do you want me or the doll?' She tapped Becci's shoulder. Becci sat her on her knee and she cuddled in with Becci and Crying doll. She stayed like this for ages then when she settled, she picked Happy doll.

Some of the very young babies laughed at a game of peekaboo with Happy doll.

When playing with Sad doll, they didn't laugh but mimicked the sad face.

Step 3

Becci asked the older children 'Here they are, would you like to draw on them?'

One boy was very interested in it, really trying to talk about the colours and what it was he was drawing. His drawing was very considered. The doll looked happy on one side, sad on other.

Twin girls did very different dolls – one was happy and neat, the other was blue from head to foot and had no face.

'She wants to feel blue, she wants to feel silly all over, all silly'

A boy was scribbling with black pen on the face of his doll – 'black eye someone punched it, there is blood and lots of plasters'

Another boy asked if he can carry on a doll that had already been started. He made a very delicate mark on side of dolls tummy – 'what's that?' Becci asked

'It's where the blood comes out. Where it's cuttened, that is a bruise.'

His mum works at a hospital.

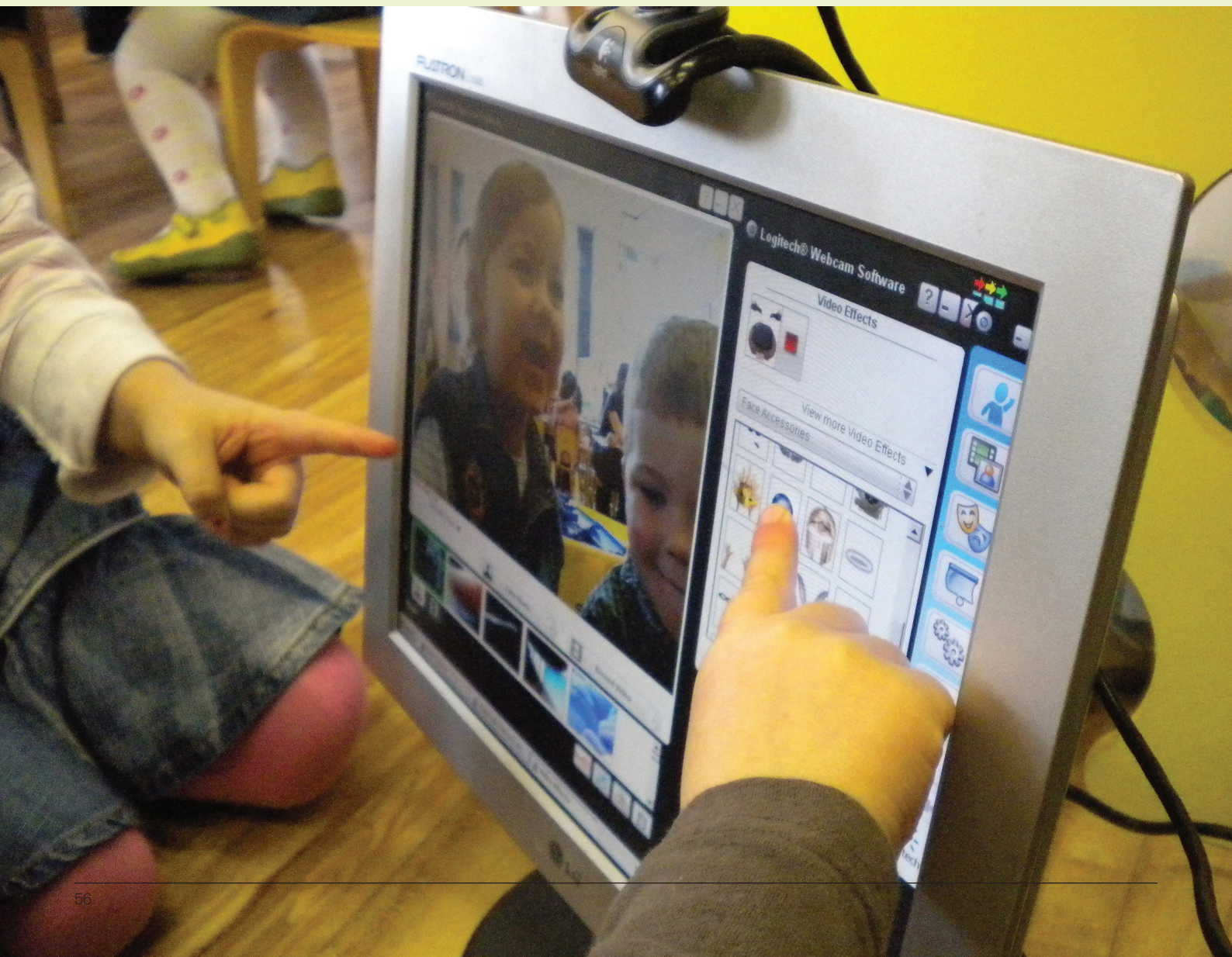
Stories and feelings

Using technology

Session 1

Starting points

Making opportunities for children and staff to learn to use a computer and web-cam to make stories.





Step 2

To introduce the artist a photo of him was put up so that everyone knew who he was and what he was doing, so he had a good welcome from the start.

He first introduced a simple game to get the children used to the webcam. They played with images of themselves and put pig noses and hats etc onto their faces using the accessory programmes on the web-cam.

The older group would sustain this for about an hour really enjoying choosing the accessories etc. They were taking turns and practiced holding their heads still until the webcam found them. They also found out that if you close your eyes the webcam leaps to someone else.

They were soon ready to get into the story making stuff, with about six children working with the artist at a time – three strong users of the technology and three watching.

The children began making up stories in pairs or small groups.

They took on roles so they could work together.

'Can I be a cameraman?'

'We're doing cartoons'

Their stories were captured using '2-simple' software that uses a simple format for their words and images.

Resources:

- web-cam
- '2simple' software
- computer or laptop
- toys found in the setting

Ideas for further exploration...

- the babies really interacted with the game of changing their faces on the web-cam, and enjoyed exploring their own faces on the screen
- the camera can be used with the babies as a way of documenting 'in the moment'
- with this technology, the children can make their own comic book stories that can be printed and remain in the nursery to be read over time and developed as an ongoing project
- using boxes to make scenes for the stories

Step 3

Over three sessions, there have been groups of boys making stories.

Often these boys play physical 'fighting' games and play out characters from TV and films. It is worth noting that all of the comic book stories that they made, even when in groups were their own creations. The boys invented their own characters inspired by the props they found around the nursery.

There was sometimes a fight scene in the story but it was always resolved in the story by the children.

Through the story telling, the boys could act out their own responses to situations they created. They were totally in control, and they were able to practice compromise. Boys worked together and didn't fight for two hours non-stop in a morning session. Their conflict and aggression went into the story.





Session 2

Starting points

To combine the use of props and craft activities with the use of technology to develop the children's story making and story telling to integrate the computer more fully in the setting.

Step 2

Starting the session with the webcam and accessories warm up activities, a nursery practitioner started to use the computer program as well, they seemed to find it easy and was a fun 'activity'.

Tom then brought out materials for making puppets, lolly sticks, eyes, pipe cleaners, card and sticky tabs.

The children really got into creating their own monsters and people there were a lot of aliens, and some alien fighting!!!

Tom started to use the camera to document them as they were showing good motor skills and working together well. It was easy to get a collection of images and then to label them with what was happening with the older group – they were so interested in building more and more elaborate puppets that Tom just kept documenting and didn't push them towards stories.

The children were beginning to explore their characters and playing in the space with them at the end of the session

Step 3

At an open day focused in the garden, Tom left the webcam set up in the room so it could be accessed without him needing to be there. Children and parents played with it sporadically through the afternoon and about three nursery practitioners also played with the technology.

It's important to note that sometimes it is less daunting trying something new when there is not an 'expert' watching over you.

The children were coming to the web-cam to see their faces after they had been painted. This is an example of combining activities, making the technology seem more 'human'.

Resources:

- web-cam
- '2simple' software
- computer or laptop
- puppet making materials – lolly sticks, pipe cleaners, sticky eyes, tape and glue etc

Open Sesame!

The Open Sesame! Project

West Sussex 2010-11

Focus

A project to explore how skills sharing between artists and early years practitioners can have a positive impact on children's creative development and the early years setting.

Scope

The project recruited eight early years settings to work with three lead artists and three 'trainee' artists. This group participated in a series of masterclasses with theatre practitioners who make work for very young audiences. The masterclass programme was convened and led by Patrick Lynch from Lyngo Theatre, and included sessions with Sarah Argent (Theatr lolo), Mike Akers (Travelling Light / 5x5x5) and Oily Cart Theatre Company. These provided inspiration and opportunities to develop collaborative work that was then taken back into sessions with the children at the nurseries. The project ended with sharing sessions for parents and training for staff.

Partners

Arts Service West Sussex County Council (WSCC)
Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey
Chichester Festival Theatre
South East Dance
The Hawth Theatre
University of Chichester
Early Childhood Services WSCC

Project Artists

Lead artists Jane Gordon, Jenny Staff, Alex Sutton-Vane and associate artists Rebecca Parrant, Anne Colvin, Rosie Heafford, Lauren van Niekerk, Clare Halstead.

Participating settings

The Ark, Bolney
Woodstock Day Nursery, Worthing
Lancing Children and Family Centre Nursery
Beach House Day Nursery, Shoreham by Sea
The A House Pre-School, Hassocks
Willow Tree Pre-school, Langley Green
Colgate Pre-School, Horsham
Stepping Stones Day Nursery, Bognor Regis

Project report and evaluation

Dr Vicky Cave



The Open Sesame project was led by the Arts Service at West Sussex County Council, building on the previous CreatAbility projects from 2005-7 and supported by a range of partners. Funding for part of the programme came as a result of a successful application to be a Themed Enquiry project with Creative Partnerships Sussex and Surrey.

At the heart of the project was a question:

How can skills sharing between artists and early years practitioners can have a positive impact on children’s creative development and the early years setting?

Evaluation of previous projects with artists working in early years settings suggested that developing creativity in early years in the longer term might be better achieved through sustainable partnerships between artists and early years settings that included opportunities for artists and early years practitioners to share their skills and develop their practice together.

To give artists and early years practitioners some additional inspiration and the time and space to collaborate and learn from each other away from their work in settings, a series of masterclasses were set up. They were led by theatre

practitioners who make work for very young audiences, as this kind of performance work is multi-art form, encompassing story-making, music, movement, and visual arts. The first session included some exercises for the group as a whole to think about what they were expecting from each other and the project, and what they felt about their own creativity.

In between the masterclasses, the work that took place in the settings grew from discussions between the artists and practitioners, and resulted in different work taking place in each setting. For example, one setting concentrated on introducing dance, another used a nearby forest area to collect wood to make charcoal for drawing and to expand their use of the outdoors. A number of settings explored different kinds of storymaking, inspired by the ‘story square’ idea that was presented in one of the masterclasses, and another discovered that children were very engaged in music making and recording their voices.

At the end of the project there were ‘endings’ at each setting which were either events to share the project with parents or training sessions for staff.





**Looking back
to move forward**

Benefits of collaboration:

'Will you draw me a space ship' requested one boy. But when I started to draw, everything was wrong! I was unable to understand his verbal directions and translate them into drawings to his satisfaction but he would not draw them himself. Finally after much trying on my part and much frustration for him (although he was very patient with me!) Tracey made a break through. 'You move my hand and show me what to do.' It turns out she did no moving of her hand and the boy drew what he wanted, and he drew it by himself while she held the pencil too. After this experience, he may gain more confidence to draw. Also I have learnt a new creative way of supporting someone who in the moment feels like they cannot draw what they are thinking about.

Project artist – Hastings year 1

Successes of the East and West Sussex Projects

The projects in East Sussex and West Sussex have both been looking in detail at what happens when artists and early years practitioners collaborate with each other.

This section offers more insight into the value of both projects, drawn from reflection sessions and project evaluation reports. Although they were developed in different ways, the two projects provide similar evidence that early years practitioners and artists working together:

- develops the confidence of early years practitioners to use creative approaches and take risks – for example making more use of outside space
- provides effective ways to involve parents and make contact with the wider community and cultural sector
- supports opportunities for shared sustained thinking and holistic learning
- supports inclusive practice, children's schemas, independent learning, communication and social skills
- supports reflection and experiential learning and skills sharing for both artists and early years practitioners, and given sufficient time a supportive learning community develops
- demonstrates the benefits of using simple materials and the possibilities for learning, creativity and play offered by them
- provides opportunities for children to engage for long periods of time in activity and for activities to engage children who are usually hard to reach
- results in activity that supports learning in all areas of the foundation stage curriculum.

Insight into using materials:

Jane had poured cement onto the bricks over the week so they came back hard and ready to clean up. The spray bottles were re-introduced from week 1 and this time there was enough for most of the children.

With some slightly soapy water, we sprayed and picked away at the clay using brushes and sticks to reveal the patterns.

Although this was a very slow process, the children spent a very long time finding the patterns they had created earlier on in the project.

Nursery practitioners Sonya and Trish both commented on how they don't usually get so mucky with clay but really saw the value in exploring such a sensory material. They were as keen to find what patterns were underneath as were the children and Jane!

Trish and Jane had chance to talk further about the use of the cement bricks and how they can be used in the garden. There was also opportunity today to discuss the value of the clay work with the children and the importance of following where the children's interests take you. We also discussed how the clay can be used again and again and will always produce a different result as it is such a free material without any limitations apart from our own imaginations.

Project report – Hastings year 2

Challenges in the projects

To help future projects to plan successfully, here is a summary of the main challenges faced by both projects:

Time

Time for planning and reflection is vital. If planning is shared, practitioners and artists can support each other better in settings. Reflection after a session embeds learning and develops practice.

Although the Open Sesame project ran over a period of seven months, it was not felt to be long enough, and there was not enough reflection time built in, especially for the practitioners.

Staffing

Working out a way to work with an artist in a busy setting with a wide age range demands that the sessions be structured to fit in with the way the setting is organized, but also requires flexibility within the staff team so that the artist is supported, and the practitioners can get the most benefit from their working relationship with the artist.

Scheduling time away from the setting for practitioners to attend meetings or training sessions needs to be allowed for:

“It can sometimes be challenging to schedule time away from the setting but when you organise yourself and staff effectively it can be achieved.”

Practitioner – Open Sesame project

Changes to staffing, absence for illness or other reasons will have an effect on the project because it will affect the relationships that are built with artists and continuity of the work. Changes are often unavoidable and hard to anticipate, but can be mitigated by sharing the project work amongst a number of staff members.

Working with freelance artists

Artists not being paid for sessions, or contributing unpaid time can get in the way of successful working relationships between artists and settings. Ensure that contracts or other clear forms of agreement are drawn up, and that you understand the mechanisms for invoicing and payment.

Artists are likely to have other commitments so be sure that their sessions and the time for planning and reflection is scheduled in advance.

Collaborating with children

“One boy decided that once he had added his leaves he wanted to blend it all again which gave a very interesting result where the pulp changed colour from the leaves. I hadn’t anticipated blending again and this was another one of many fantastic situations where I have learnt and discovered following the ideas and lead of a child.”

Project artist – Hastings year 1

“It was noticed that children are beginning to feel confident with what the web-cam is for and ways in which they can use it. In time, they may use it for other purposes guided by their own creative exploration triggered by this starting point. It is important to leave the children with a bit of space to come up with their characters and stories. Don’t fill the gaps for them.”

Project artist – Hastings year 2

“Practitioners found the Creative Partnership project was reaching out to children who they had found it hard to find interests for previously and those who needed a challenge. These children were exceeding practitioner’s expectations when involved in the project.”

Project report – Hastings year 2

Recommendations

Include opportunities for reflection on the experiential learning (reflection in action) through structured sessions or additional facilitation for participants to make links between professional creative practice and how that practice could be applied in day to day work in settings.

Allow time for an effective negotiation of approaches and understanding between artists and practitioners.

There is a need to focus on growing local art talent – perhaps through establishing local hubs to effectively support this kind of creative work in early years settings in the future: travel costs for artists can be prohibitive for sessional work.

Find ways for the wider involvement of staff in settings through establishing aims of the partnership with whole staff team at the outset (including establishing what the perceived barriers to creativity are) and through whole staff training sessions at some point during project.

Make the most of opportunities for parent and community involvement – EYFS key principles require settings to work with parents – the main ingredients from the project for developing positive relationships can be applied to developing relationships with parents.

Promote ideas for the use of simple /cheap materials and communicate this to parents to support creative activities at home (e.g. booklets developed as part of artist/practitioner collaboration).

Identify where creative skills develop maths and science as well, and communicate this to parents too – as a way of stimulating interest in basic skills learning, or to widen people's perception of the value of creative practice.

Link projects to local creative and cultural sector opportunities and resources.

Resources and references

Other projects:

Summary of Creative Partnerships projects in East Sussex 2008-11, including early years projects at Hastings and St Leonards Children's Centres and Rother Children's Centres

[Creative Partnership PDF](#)

CreatAbility project in West Sussex 2005-7:

Link to a [film](#) from the CreatAbility pilot project in West Sussex – using visual arts in early years settings

“Creative Activities for the Early Years”

Stella Skinner (Sage Publications 2007) [publication](#) based on the main CreatAbility project

Networks and contacts:

Earlyarts: [Earlyarts](#) is the largest national network for people working creatively with children and families in the arts, cultural and early years sectors.

Culture Shift: [Culture Shift](#) is developing creative learning projects in the south east

Open sesame masterclass leaders

[Lyngo Theatre](#)

[Oily Cart Theatre Company](#)

Sarah Argent, [Theatr Iolo](#)

Mike Akers, [Travelling Light Theatre / 5x5x5](#)

Project artists

[Jane Gordon](#)

[Alex Sutton-Vane](#)

[Jenny Staff](#)

[Anne Colvin](#)

[Rosie Heafford](#)

[Lauren van Niekerk](#)

[Clare Halstead](#)

[Sarah Yates](#)

[Tara Reddy](#)

[Ben Fairlight](#)

[Fiona Pienkowska](#)

[Kate Murdoch](#)

[Tom Cook](#)

[Becci Kenning](#)

Deborah Sharpe

Phil Bedford

Jim Roseveare

Miranda Sharp

Amanda Jobson

Rebecca Parrant

Reggio Emilia

Main website [Zerosei](#)

Joint website of the European networking pre-schools project [Reggio Emilia Approach](#)

Sightlines Initiative: the UK contact point for Reggio Emilia, and co-ordinator for study visits to Reggio from the UK [Sightlines-initiative](#)

Related reading

'Mapping training and development provision for early years practitioners' [Research report](#) – Creativity, Culture and Education (2010)

Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: [Final Report](#) – A Longitudinal Study Funded by the DfES 1997-2004

'Born Creative' – Demos – 2010

In a series of essays Born Creative brings together the experiences of creative practices in early years education, to show the importance of cultures, environments and networks in the enrichment of the early years learning and interrogates the role of leaders, policy and parents in creating them.

Free to download [here](#)

