



CASE STUDY

Elements: Supporting creativity in Early Years settings across Somerset

Setting: St. James Church School Nursery TA1 1XU

Type: School based nursery 2-4 years

Lead EYP name: Sue Lucas

Artist name: Peter Margerum

Artform: 3D Art from recyclable materials

Term date: Autumn Term 2016

Average number of children and age: 12 children aged 2- 4years

Average number of adults and type: Parents were encouraged to come with their child. 3 nursery staff supported each week. 7 parents.

Research question: *It is the process of creativity that is more important than the end result in impacting on children's brain development and learning.*

Activity:

Each of the six weeks had a different theme. Peter talked to the children and parents about the focus and skills to be used. The first week started with recyclable resources being set out in the school gym. These resources were separated by type and colour. For example bottle tops were separated into different containers by colour. Other resources were separated by type such as wood or metal. Children chose different resources and arranged them with their parents in a hoop or along a piece of fabric. Some of these resources were then threaded on to wire or in a bicycle wheel. Drills and tools were available to joining the resources together and children learnt with their parents how to do this safely. Each week Peter taught a different skill to the children and their parents.

One week had a paint focus another light and shadow and then we returned to using the recyclable materials.

Research findings:

Setting:

The partnership working with each child and their parents was very focused and it was encouraging to see that as the project developed the parents became more sensitive to responding to the child's ideas and creativity rather than directing with their own. High levels of engagement from both adults and children are very evident in the photographs.

Staff, children and parents were fascinated by the varied and wide ranging materials that were available for the children and adults to be creative with. The children wanted to be active as soon as they entered the gym so explanation time needed to be kept to a minimum. Thus they benefitted from activities that they could explore independently as well as with a specific focus or skill which was clear evidence for our research question.



Staff 1: We were particularly delighted with the level of engagement from parents working with their children. Looking for different ways to engage parents with their children's learning is very important to us.

Staff 2: Even though directed, really good. Lovely.

Artist: Adults working alongside children, coming along on regular basis. But it was a challenge to explain to both children and adults



Parent: It was amazing, my children really enjoys creative activities. We enjoyed doing it together and she has enjoyed doing art at home too. It was nice for me to see her focused on what we did and to do it together.

Artist:

Observing if the process of creating for children and adults was more beneficial and more important than the artworks that were created as a result of this process.

Maintaining this approach to the sessions was challenging. Whilst creating 2D and 3D visual artworks, there is always the temptation for these to become more permanent 'displayable' artworks for a wider audience to view and appreciate.

I provided a wide variety of material resources and a selection of hand tools for children and adults to use, and enable them to create 3D artworks as individuals, as child and adult pairings and in small collective groups.



The first three sessions gave participants the opportunity to experiment with different art materials and processes during each session.

The remaining three sessions continued this approach, but also included creating collective group artworks that would be permanently displayed inside and outside the setting.

The children were able to acquire new practical and creative skills, often working for a lengthy period of time with their parent/guardian, plus working with other children on shared group activities.

This was an unique opportunity for adults to work creatively with their children in the setting, to share ideas and skills, and to experience and acquire new creative and practical skills.

The staff at the setting were able to observe children and adults working together with the setting. Staff experience working with a new range of art 'materials and techniques' that they could use and develop subsequent to the Elements sessions.

The setting have realised that parents are willing to prepare resources in Peter's style for children to have available in our learning environment. The setting have also arranged their recycled resources in the way Peter did both outside and inside for children to access independently. The staff now looks differently for possible recycled resources.



Conclusion:

Setting:

As a setting we have greatly appreciated the opportunity for a professional artist to work with our families and staff. The levels of children's engagement in the variety of creative experiences available to them was high as was the engagement of parents with their children. The parents who were involved have been very positive about the experience and willing to help us continue.

Over the six weeks the children showed the needed activities that they could choose for themselves, access independently and stay focused on that didn't necessarily have an end result to display.

Artist:

The workshops gave children and adults the opportunity to experience creative play with a broad range of new materials, and to explore different methods for assembling and joining materials together in both temporary (changeable), and permanent assemblages. The activities stimulated dialogue between adults and children and enabled adults to share their practical skills with the children

The opportunities within a workshop session for free-play and experimentation without any pre-conceived ideas about what can be created has helped to change the staffs mindset regarding working creatively with young children. Being able to stand back and observe behavior and creative practice, and not to over direct the content of the workshop and therefore influence the outcomes.

