



CASE STUDY

Elements: Supporting creativity in Early Years settings across Somerset

Setting: Horrington Primary School

When: Autumn 2016

Lead EYP name: Sam Ray

Artist name: Hannah Lefevre

Artform: Movement

Term date: Autumn 2016

Average number of children and age: 15

Average number of adults and type: 2 EY practitioners/EY advisor

Research question: To explore the role of adults in creative, imaginative and playful activities

Activity: The sessions at Horrington set out to explore the role of adults in creative, imaginative and playful activities. In doing so, we embarked on a surprising journey.

Each session took place in two parts, the first followed morning registration and phonics. During this time, whilst the children had fresh energy, we explored a movement story together.

The second part of the session, between morning break and lunch, tended to involve a construction activity, where the children had more scope to explore their individual ideas. With the exception of the final session, this second session took place outside.

Session content

In the first part of the morning, for the first three weeks, objects were used as starting points for the children to create their own stories. We used 'Grandpa's briefcase' pop-up book to frame the explorations. In week one, a metal tin was filled with the items that Grandpa had collected in the book, in the second week, wooden items, in the third week, metal items.



Each child chose an object and used their object to create a part of the story. We then created the story using music, movement and role play, as a group.

In the second part of the session in these first three weeks, the children engaged in construction outside – with balls of string the first week, wooden items the second week and metal the third week.



In the fourth week, sensing that the children needed a story book as a framework, we used the story book 'Bob the Man on the Moon' and within the story, we worked with newspaper and the children made their own creations. The children were then given a large page of a map book, on which they added their own routes and landmarks. They also worked with chalks outside to create their own maps on the floor.



In week 5, we took a journey to India, then explored a Chai Tea story/recipe together and finally, did our own 'cooking' with autumnal items and pots and pans outside.

In the final week, we explored the story of Little Red Hen, then made bread, which included the telling of a mystical story about a cold [flour] mountain. As it was raining that day, we put food colouring in puddles and watched the colours diffuse into the water.

Generally, the group responded enthusiastically to imaginative role play and construction activity and showed no fear of handling materials. We planned the next session at the end of the morning, based on what had happened and the children's response.

Research findings:

The Role of the Adult

As we set out to explore the role of the adult, in this project, we embodied a range of

roles, including:

- Provocateur – collecting and preparing resources, choosing a story or a starting point, providing the initial inspiration, planning an idea.
- Observer and responder - observing what the children respond to and using it to inform future practice, in the moment, or in future weeks.
- Companion – joining the children in their play.
- Documenter – taking photos and recording what was occurring (the children seemed to respond to this affirmation).
- Encourager / guider – giving encouragement or guidance where we felt it was warranted, or needed.
- Role model – role modeling creativity, play and so on.
- Entertainer – at times, the children seemed to be enthralled by characters and were drawn into our own characterisation (such as us as Aliens), particularly when we both got into role together.
- Facilitator – 'containing the group, or the activity, keeping track of time!

Contrary to expectations, it gave more freedom for the teacher.

Sam: “It made me think in a different way. As a teacher you think you’ll do a story, explore it in a particular way, always aiming for an end result. Instead, we read a story, provided some resources and then let them play. It was about being less controlling and not so scared of where it goes. This was far more interesting for me as the children go in completely different individual paths. Each child is more confident and competent, generating their individual documentation and reinterpreting the materials. The focus was incredible – especially given that this is in their first school term. “In the moment planning” has helped with this. And has helped me be confident in letting them be freer.

Hannah: We were not free all the time - in Week 3, we had to create more structure. I’ve really enjoyed the routine and structure, which is important to support freer play. It worked well because I found I needed the structure, can’t be quite as spontaneous. (e.g. 'okay let's go' had to be 'okay, let's line up' and more briefing involved). I learnt this pretty fast. By the 6th week we found a balance in our practice and met in the middle.

What have you enjoyed the most?

Sam: Working together and having someone to collaborate with – a soulmate – especially since the other teachers in the school teach the National Curriculum and not Early Years.

Hannah: We had an exchange of knowing and, seeing this, the children loved that we were in it together. I’ve really enjoyed phonics, so nice to be held by the structure of being in one place. Would like to have had longer, but maybe had long enough to get into. I’ve enjoyed the children!

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the project has highlighted that, within an early years setting, the role of the adult is multifaceted and ever-changing; whilst being an entertainer, the adult is also serving as a role model, before then quickly changing to become the observer that will

eventually document. The adult promotes the creativity in the classroom and develops the children's imaginations through stories and art and dance, but at the same time, the children lead the adult on a playful and imaginative journey where the final result remains open.

