

# Year 2



## Literacy Through Block Play





## Glasgow's Improvement Challenge (GIC) Health & Safety

“Distance Aware” ..... Encouraging people to take care and respect the space of others

All participants should choose a seat on entry and use this space for the full training session. **Please wipe desks/communal tables before leaving.**

Doors and windows will be opened to increase natural ventilation where it is practical, safe and secure to do so while maintaining appropriate internal temperatures.

Tea and toilet facilities should be used at designated areas, following signage





# House-Keeping

- **Fire Alarm:** Tested Wednesday at 10am. No other fire alarm planned so in the instance of hearing it please take guidance from the trainer and make your way to the nearest exit. Be mindful of the children attending Royston Primary, if you feel you could support the class teacher in getting the class out safely please do so.
- **Parking:** Please be considerate of residents and that if parking attendants do patrol the area they will give tickets to cars parked on the pavement or on yellow lines during restricted times.
- **Refreshments:** Please ensure that at the end of training all cups, spoons etc are placed in the bins provided.
- **Facilities:** male/female toilet locations



Reflection



# Reflection



PAUSE

Pause  
and  
Reflect



Chat

Reflect on learning from last session, what did you do?

- Mark-Making
- Deconstructed Role Play





PAUSE

Pause  
and  
Reflect



Chat

# Motor Skills

Using the mapping template consider how you could plan to promote opportunities for 5 stages of gross and fine motor skills within a chosen area of your indoor/outdoor provision.

Consider provocations, experiences, resources and use of space.



# Aim

- Explore the far reaching impact of block play on a child's development
- Discover the history of block play
- Suggest practical opportunities for supporting your staff team in experiencing block play
- Explore the development of early literacy skills through block play



# Introduction to Block Play



# Frederich Froebel

- Frederich Froebel was the founder of Kindergarten Education. He believed in the value of play to shape behaviour and aid in children's intellectual and emotional growth.
- Froebel believed that even very young children could learn scientific, artistic and natural principles by playing with various physical objects, which he called “gifts”.





# Froebel's Blocks

Froebel intended the blocks to be used for children to represent:

- Forms of life
- Forms of beauty
- Forms of knowledge



# Caroline Pratt

- Developed teaching methods that focused on play, influenced by Froebel's kindergarten philosophy that suggested that children's play and activity were central to their individual growth and development.
- Her philosophy of teaching was based on the children's interests, and through play she allowed them to learn experimentally through their experiences in their immediate environments.
- Advocate of free play vs 'taught' curriculum
- Developed wooden unit blocks, based on the blocks used by Froebel.
- Froebel (1782-1852) and Pratt (1867-1954) each therefore developed a theory which supported the importance of children learning through **active** engagement in **meaningful play**.

Bruce, T. (Eds) (2012)



# The Blocks

- **Unit blocks**
  - solid hardwood
  - sustainable
  - built on the same basic standard of measurement. – ratio 1:2:4
- **Large hollow blocks:**
  - carry with two hands
  - can be stood on
  - can build life-sized structures
  - hollow in order to reduce their weight

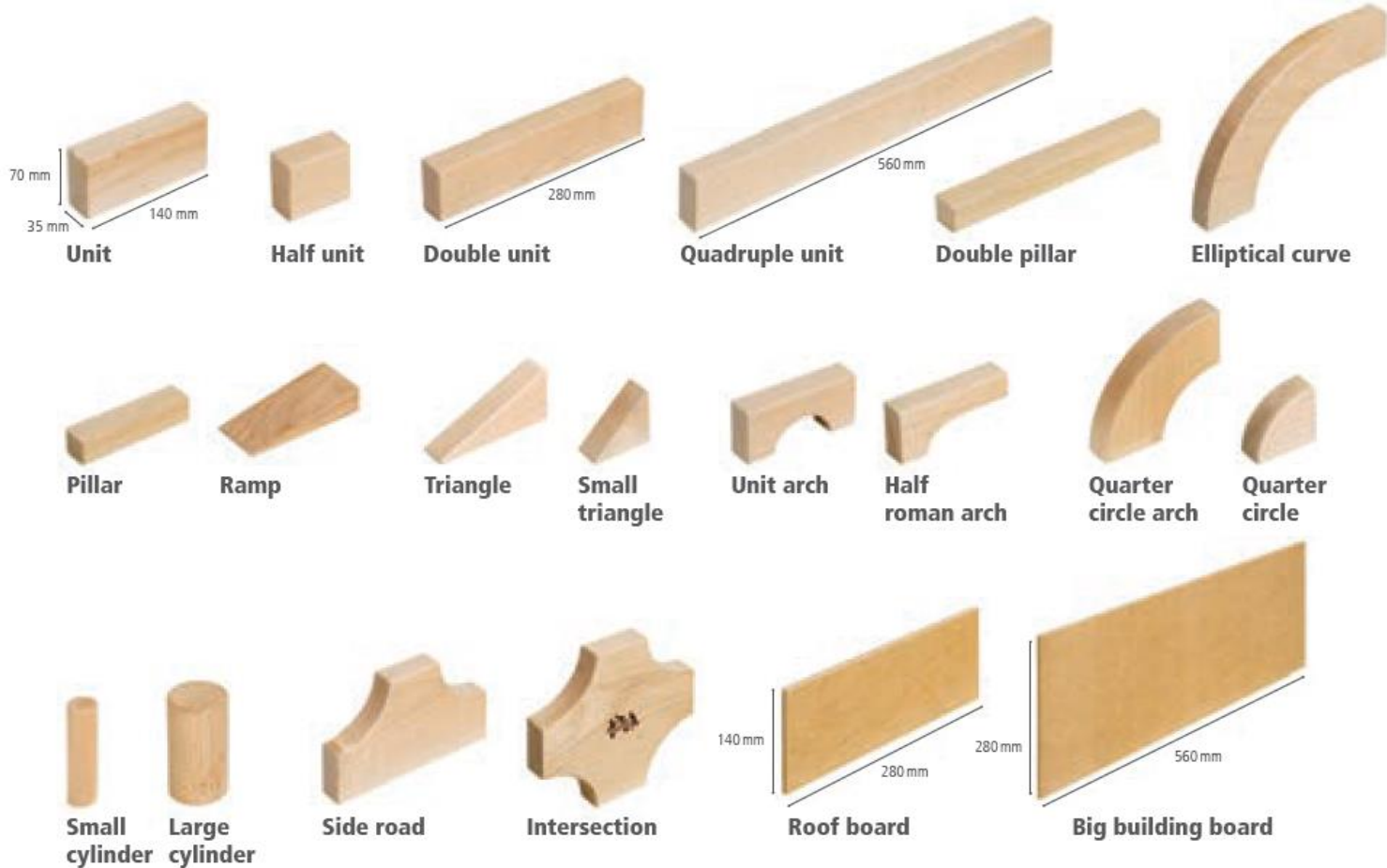


# Environment, Space and Storage

- Organised
- Easily accessible, open access storage
- Adequate space
- Sufficient number and variety of blocks
- Different shapes can be seen



# Block Names



# Stages of Block Play



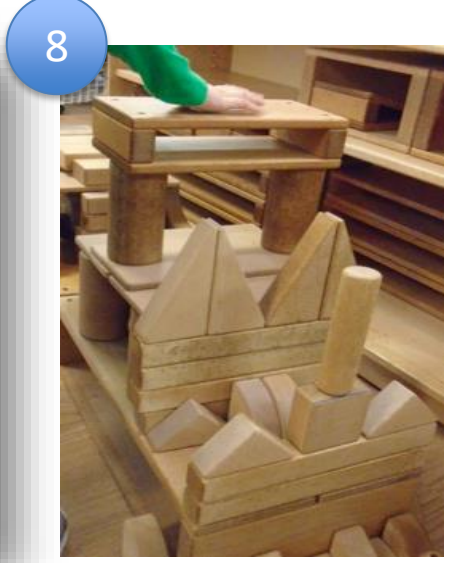
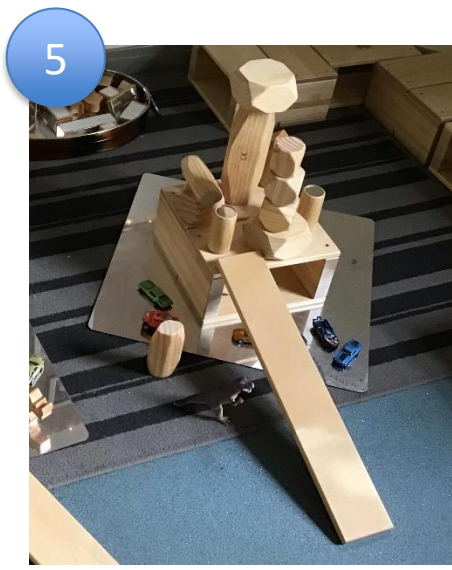
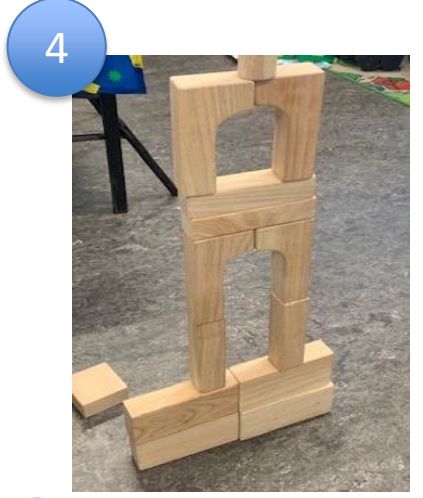
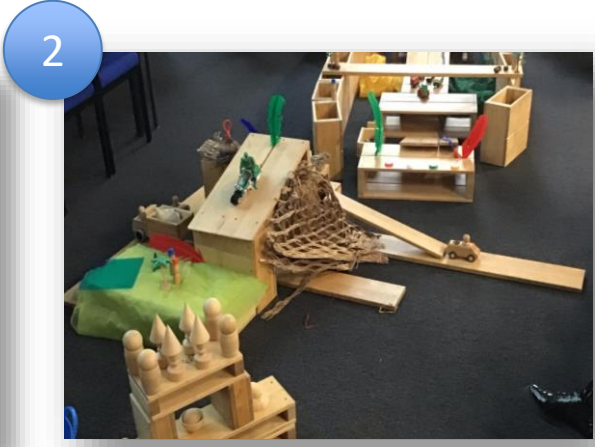
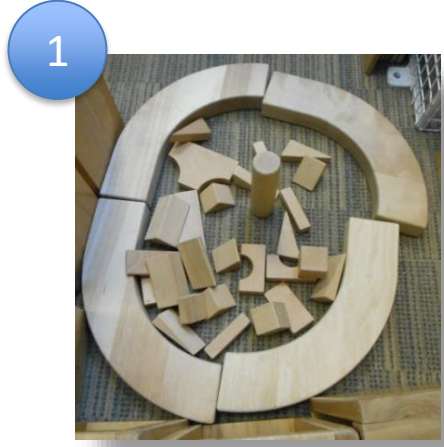
# Stages of Block Play

Children's play with blocks will change over time as their understanding and experience deepens. Knowledge of these stages allows practitioners to support children's learning and provide what they need in order to take the next step.

- Stages of block play include:
  1. Carrying
  2. Stacking
  3. Bridging
  4. Enclosures
  5. Patterning
  6. Building complex structures
  7. Dramatic Play with complex structures







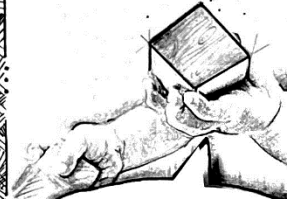


Harriet Merrill Johnson's  
**7 Stages**  
 of  
**Block Play**

Adapted by Catriona Gill

**STAGE 1 - CARRYING**

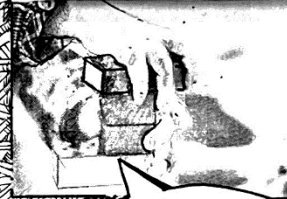
Blocks are carried but not used for construction...



**CONCEPTS:**  
 ATTRIBUTES (COLOUR, SIZE, SHAPE, ORIENTATION, TEXTURE); MEASUREMENT, COMPARISON, NUMBER

**STAGE 2 - STACKING**

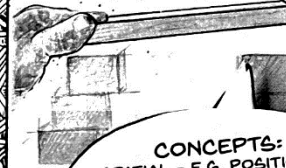
Blocks are placed in horizontal or vertical rows...



**CONCEPTS:**  
 ORDERING/SERIATION, EQUIVALENT LENGTH, RATIO OF LENGTH, SORTING, WEIGHT, CORNERS/EDGES/SURFACES, ONE-TO-ONE CORRESPONDENCE

**STAGE 3 - BRIDGING**

Blocks are used to bridge the space between other blocks...

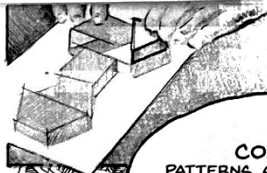


**CONCEPTS:**  
 SPATIAL - E.G. POSITIONAL WORDS, RELATIONSHIPS, MAPS/DIRECTIONS, GEOMETRICAL E.G. RECOGNISING & NAMING SHAPES, TRANSFORMATION

**CONCEPTS:**  
 PERIMETER, MEASUREMENT, PROBLEM SOLVING/COMPUTATION, PARTS-TO-WHOLE RELATIONSHIPS

**STAGE 5 - PATTERNING**

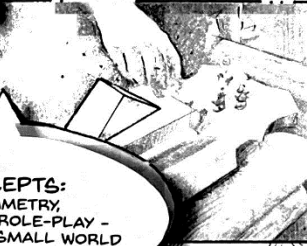
Blocks are placed in patterns or symmetrically when building. Block accessories may be incorporated. Structures are not generally named...



**CONCEPTS:**  
 PATTERNS, SYMMETRY, CLASSIFICATION, ROLE-PLAY - PARTICULARLY SMALL WORLD

**STAGE 6 - COMPLEX STRUCTURES (1)**

Block structures may be named - with names relating to their function.

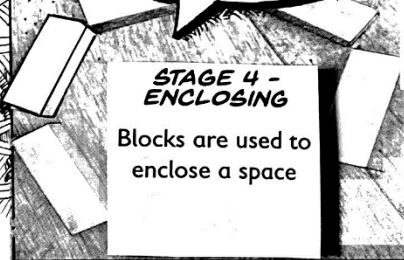


**STAGE 7 - COMPLEX STRUCTURES (2)**

Block building often reproduces actual structures or experiences. There is a strong impulse for dramatic play around and incorporating the structure(s) Naming may occur as an advance plan.

**STAGE 4 - ENCLOSING**

Blocks are used to enclose a space



#BEINGME #REALISINGTHEAMBIITION @CAFTEAM

# Stage 1 - Carrying

Children will:

- explore the blocks using their senses – they examine them closely, touch and taste them.
- hold one block in each hand and hit them together, exploring sound.
- carry the blocks from place to place.
- knock down structures built by others.

**No actual building takes place within the carrying stage.**



# Stage 2 - Stacking

Children:

- Have an intrinsic need to build rows and towers repeatedly – they do this before moving on to build other structures.
- May haphazardly stack blocks until they fall.
- May line blocks up, pushing them into an even line.



**When children have mastered building rows and towers they build them in multiples – this can resemble floors and walls.**



# Stage 3 - Bridging

Children:

- Begin bridging or roofing the space between two upright blocks
- Repeat bridging over and over again.
- Use this skill to build bridges on top of bridges.



# Stage 4 - Enclosures

Children:

- Use blocks to enclose space.
- Need to practice using four block to create an enclosure in the shape of a square.
- Repeat creating enclosures over and over
- Begin to experiment with the size and shape of enclosures and connect one to the other.



# Stage 5 - Patterning

Children:

- Use blocks to create patterns and symmetry when building
- May incorporate some enhancements, such as small world and loose parts.
- Generally do not name their buildings



## Stage 6 - Building Complex Structures

Children:

- Use a larger number of blocks incorporating towers, rows, bridges, enclosures and patterns in the same structure.
- Name their structures whilst they are building or after

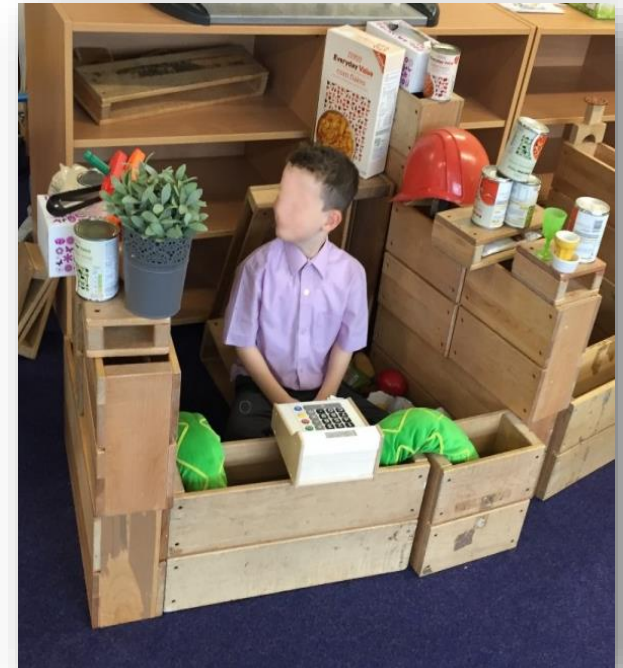




## Stage – 7 Dramatic Play with Complex Structures

Children:

- Tell you what they are going to build before they start, showing they have a plan for their play
- Build familiar structures. The design features of the building represent the actual structure, for example, windows or a drawbridge.
- Create and add their own enhancements to the structure, recycled materials (loose parts) supporting the dramatic play and their interpretation of how the world works.





# Learning Dispositions

- Initiative
- Concentration, persistence and perseverance
- Creativity and curiosity
- Innovative
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving and experimentation
- Collaborative and co-operative
- Self-motivation
- Reflective



# Schematic Play



# Schematic Play

- Schemas are patterns of repetitive play.
- Schemas are often seen in block play.
- Observing schemas can help practitioners to support children and provide opportunities to extend and develop their play and learning.



Why does my child sometimes continually repeat the same actions when they play?

Young children benefit from opportunities to repeat and practise different actions. This helps their brain development and learning for example, actions of up and down, going from side to side and rotating supports early writing development.



It's possible your wee one is engaging in what's called...

# Schematic Play

this happens when babies, toddlers and young children repeat actions or behaviours to explore the world around them and find out how things work. There are many kinds of

# Schemas



enclosing schema



orientation schema

Children like to turn themselves and objects upside-down and back to front to gain a different view. Seeing things from a different view.



connecting schema

children enjoy repeatedly carrying things around from place to place

connecting schema

Parentzone SCOTLAND



Education Scotland  
Foghlam Alba

based on text by Stella Louis



THE SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE  
LITERACY NUMERACY HEALTH & WELLBEING



# Role of the Adult



# Role of the Adult

- Knowing about blocks
- Free choice
- Connections
- Space
- Storage which shows the whole and the parts
- Time
- Valuing block play



# Role of the Adult

## Sensitive Interaction

- Being a participative observer
- Listening
- Protecting children's block play
- Being a play partner
- Putting actions into words
- Questioning
- Supporting and extending



# Learning Across the Curriculum





# Learning in all areas

- Communication and Language Development
- Physical Development
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding of the World
- Expressive Arts and Design.



# Learning Across the Curriculum

I am learning to assess and manage risk, to protect myself and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible. HWB 0-16a

In everyday activity and play, I explore and make choices to develop my learning and interests. I am encouraged to use and share my experiences. HWB 0-19a

I am aware of my own and others' needs and feelings especially when taking turns and sharing resources. I recognise the need to follow rules. HWB 0-23a

I can show ways of getting help in unsafe situations and emergencies. HWB 0-42a

I understand positive things about friendships and relationships but when something worries or upsets me I know who I should talk to. HWB 0-44b

I am aware of the need to respect personal space and boundaries and can recognise and respond appropriately to verbal and non-verbal communication. HWB 0-45

## Health and Wellbeing

I can explore digital technologies and use what I learn to solve problems and share ideas and thoughts. TCH 0-01

I can explore, play and communicate using digital technologies safely and securely. TCH 0-03

To help care for the environment, I reduce, re-use and recycle the resources I use. TCH 0-06a

I explore ways to design and construct models. TCH 0-09a

I explore everyday materials in the creation of pictures/models/concepts. TCH 0-10a

I explore and discover different ways of representing ideas in imaginative ways. TCH 0-11a

I explore a variety of products covering a range of engineering disciplines. TCH 0-12a

## Technologies

I have the freedom to discover and choose ways to create images and objects using a variety of materials. EXA 0-02a

I can create a range of visual information through observing and recording from my experiences across the curriculum. EXA 0-04a

Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through activities within art and design. EXA 0-05a

Working on my own and with others, I use my curiosity and imagination to solve design problems. EXA 0-06a

I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work. EXA 0-07a

## Expressive Arts

I have the freedom to choose and explore how I can use my voice, movement, and expression in role play and drama. EXA 0-12a

Inspired by a range of stimuli, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through drama. EXA 0-13a

I use drama to explore real and imaginary situations, helping me to understand my world. EXA 0-14a

I can respond to the experience of drama by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work. EXA 0-15a

## E's and O's explored through Block Play

## Numeracy and Mathematics

I am developing a sense of size and amount by observing, exploring, using and communicating with others about things in the world around me. MNU 0-01a

I have explored numbers, understanding that they represent quantities, and I can use them to count, create sequences and describe order. MNU 0-02a

I use practical materials and can 'count on and back' to help me to understand addition and subtraction, recording my ideas and solutions in different ways. MNU 0-03a

I can share out a group of items by making smaller groups and can split a whole object into smaller parts. MNU 0-07a

I have experimented with everyday items as units of measure to investigate and compare sizes and amounts in my environment, sharing my findings with others. MNU 0-11a

I have spotted and explored patterns in my own and the wider environment and can copy and continue these and create my own patterns. MTH 0-13

I enjoy investigating objects and shapes and can sort, describe and be creative with them. MTH 0-16a

In movement, games, and using technology I can use simple directions and describe positions. MTH 0-17a

I have had fun creating a range of symmetrical pictures and patterns using a range of media. MTH 0-19a

I can match objects, and sort using my own and others' criteria, sharing my ideas with others. MNU 0-20b

I can use the signs and charts around me for information, helping me plan and make choices and decisions in my daily life. MNU 0-20c

## Sciences

Through play, I have explored a variety of ways of making sounds. SCN 0-11a

Through everyday experiences and play with a variety of toys and other objects, I can recognise simple types of forces and describe their effects. SCN 0-07a

Through creative play, I explore different materials and can share my reasoning for selecting materials for different purposes. SCN 0-15a

## Social Studies

I have experimented with imaginative ways such as modelling and drawing, to represent the world around me, the journeys I make and the different ways I can travel. SOC 0-09a

I make decisions and take responsibility in my everyday experiences and play, showing consideration for others. SOC 0-17a

Within my everyday experiences and play, I make choices about where I work, how I work and who I work with. SOC 0-18a

## Religious and Moral Education

As I play and learn, I am developing my understanding of what is fair and unfair and the importance of caring for, sharing and cooperating with others. RME 0-02a/ RME 0-05a /RME 0-09a

I am developing respect for others and my understanding of their beliefs and values. RME 0-07a



imagination  
collaboration  
balance  
co-ordination  
gross motor skills  
classification  
negotiation  
colour  
language  
pattern  
length  
cause and effect  
storytelling  
space size  
number  
texture  
position  
height  
estimation  
trial and error  
spatial awareness  
area  
measure  
co-operation  
direction  
fractions  
ordering  
sorting  
fine motor skills  
problem solving  
sequencing  
mapping  
weight  
shape

# Literacy Learning through Block Play



# Literacy Development

Block play helps to develop:

- Creativity and imagination
- Language and communication – vocabulary
- Storytelling and role play (story acting)
- Mark making - representation of own ideas and symbols



# Literacy Experiences and Outcomes

Literacy E's and O's  
explored through  
Block Play

I explore sounds, letters and words, discovering how they work together, and I can use what I learn to help me as I read and write ENG 0-12a / LIT 0-13a / LIT 0-21a

As I listen and take part in conversations and discussions, I discover new words and phrases which I use to help me express my ideas, thoughts and feelings. LIT 0-10a

Within real and imaginary situations, I share experiences and feelings, ideas and information in a way that communicates my message. LIT 0-09a/ LIT 0-26a

As I listen and talk in different situations, I am learning to take turns and am developing my awareness of when to talk and when to listen. LIT 0-02a / ENG 0-03a

I enjoy exploring events and characters in stories and other texts, sharing my thoughts in different ways. LIT 0-01c

I listen or watch for useful or interesting information and I use this to make choices or learn new things. LIT 0-04a

I enjoy exploring events and characters in stories and other texts and I use what I learn to invent my own, sharing these with others in imaginative ways. LIT 0-09b / LIT 0-31a

I use signs, books or other texts to find useful or interesting information and I use this to plan, make choices or learn new things. LIT 0-14a

As I play and learn, I enjoy exploring interesting materials for writing and different ways of recording my experiences and feelings, ideas and information. LIT 0-21b



**Curiosity**

- Inquire
- Observe
- Research

**Open-Mindedness**

- Listen
- Think differently
- explore

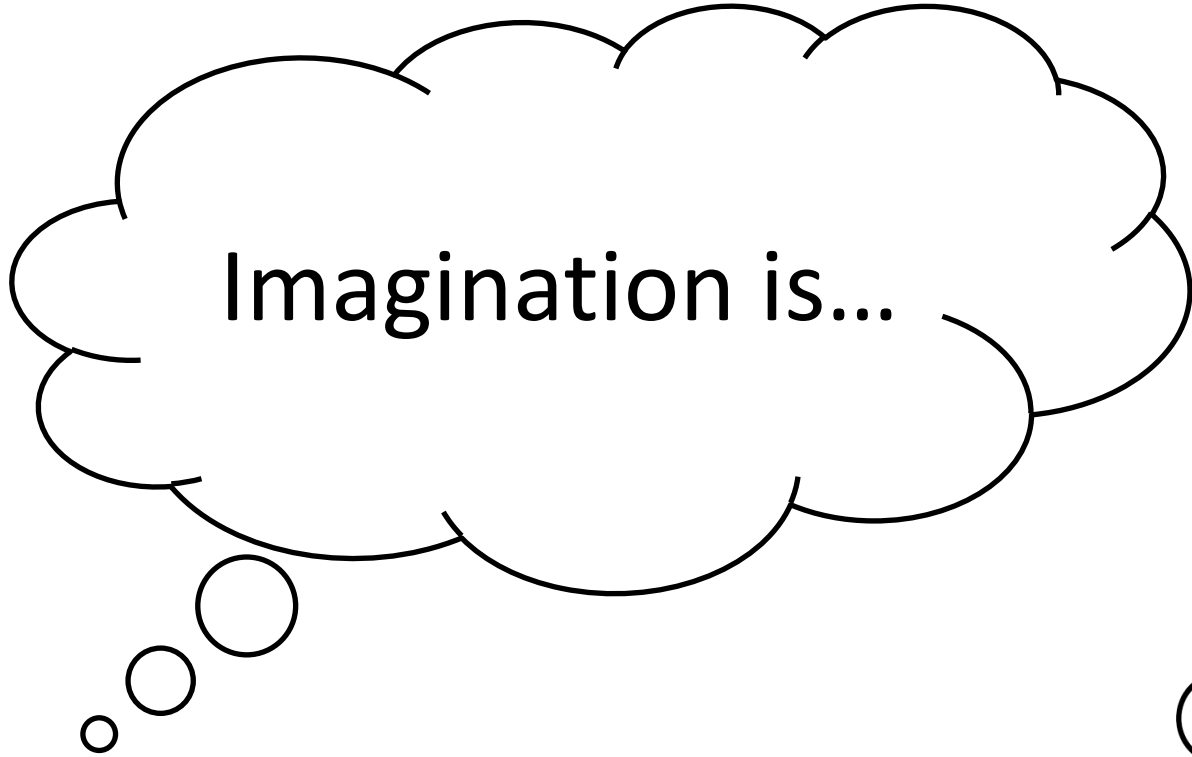


**Imagination**

- Have ideas
- Invent

**Problem Solving**

- Identify
- Respond
- Present solutions





# Imagination is...

“...play  
without  
action”

“...the ability to form  
rich and varied mental  
images or concepts of  
people, places, things,  
situations not present.”

“...seeing  
what isn't  
there.”

“...a cognitive  
capacity to picture  
in ones mind an  
alternative reality.”

“...is more  
important  
than  
knowledge.”

“...ability to  
picture what  
doesn't exist.”

# Language and Communication

## Communication

- Being in control and engaged in interactions
- Using symbols and understanding symbolic relationships
- Using more advanced language
- Use of props
- Sustained Shared Thinking

## Vocabulary

- Sparkle words linked to focus book
- Names of the blocks
- Specialised words vocabulary linked to specific themes or interests e.g. astronaut









# Sustained Shared Thinking

*“Engaging children in meaningful, responsive, and intentional discussions is a key teaching practice for early childhood educators and essential for developing children’s oral language and communication.”*



# Developing Children's Language

## Modelling

- Showing an example
- Using 'think alouds'

## Scaffolding

- Plan your strategy or approach
- Reviewing actions or steps
- Break ideas or tasks down
- provide cues and prompts

## Extension

- Providing suggestions
- Prompting children to explain their thinking
- Helping children to think through alternatives





# Example

child 1: You can't go near a volcano

educator: Why wouldn't you be able to go near a volcano?

child 1: If you touch it, it would burn our finger off!

educator: What's that telling us about the temperature?

child 1: Very hot!

educator: Ve-ry very hot!

educator: Let's look at this video of a volcano, can you see what's happening on the outside of the volcano?

child 1: The other stuff is coming out to make it ... like whooshy

educator: Can you see there are little patterns there that weren't there before... on the volcano now... [pause] Look what's happened to the sand ... If you look very carefully, what can you see?

child 2: Little holes

child 1: It's changed colour.

educator: There are holes

child 1: Because the bubbles made the holes

educator: Because the bubbles made the holes. Did you hear [child 1]? Can you tell us again [child 1]?

Child 1: The bubbles made the holes



# Snapshot Observation

Reflect upon your snap shot observations:

- What did you notice?
- What could you see and hear?



# Story Telling and Role Play

Block play can:

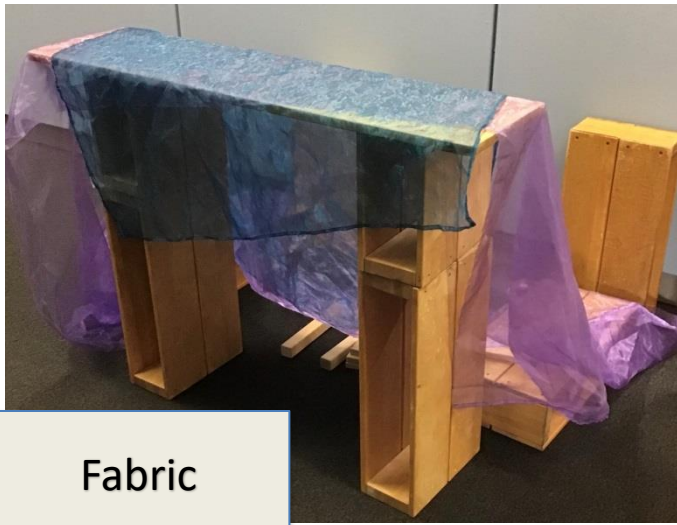
- Develop children's abstract thinking and use of imagination
- Enable children to represent their ideas symbolically through arranging and manipulating blocks
- Develop oral language and literacy learning as children take on roles and develop their own story narratives
- Foster social interaction between children as they plan, negotiate and create together.



# Story Telling and Role Play

How can we motivate and support children to enable them to take advantage of the far-reaching developmental benefits of block play?

- Literacy enhancements
- Incorporating blocks into interactive shared story sessions
- Block provocations
- Adult role – active observer, prompting, guiding



Fabric

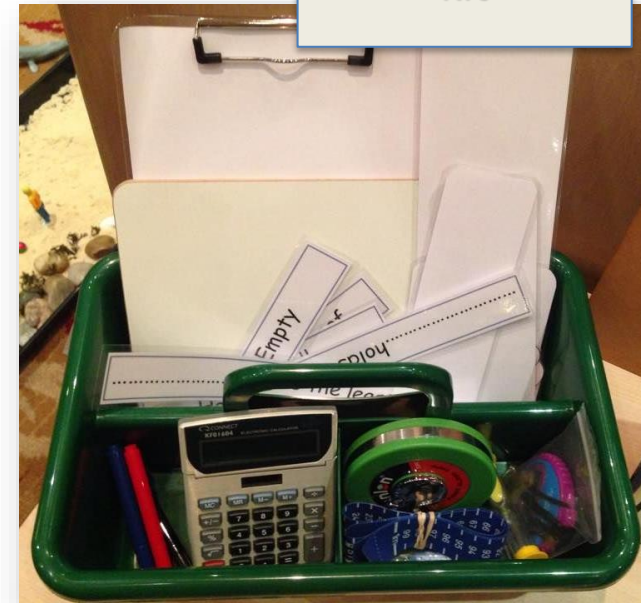


Loose parts

Mark making kit



Small word/  
story props







Build elements of setting from the book



Setup provocation for oral storytelling





# Adult role in facilitating storytelling and role play through blocks

*“Preschool children tend to spend more time in pretend talk with their peers than with their teachers”*  
(Dickinson and Smith; 1991)

## Continuum of adult involvement

### Onlooker:

- appreciates ongoing drama
- nods, smiles, and so forth

### Co-player:

- assumes role
- mediates dialogue
- defines roles and responsibilities of characters

### Play leader:

- introduces conflict
- facilitates dialogues
- solves problems

# Sociodramatic Play

Dramatic play – “behaviours children use to transform identities of objects, actions and people.” Pellegrini; 1985

## Key features:

- Development of roles
- Creation of storylines
- Creating own spoken lines (dialogue)
- Interacting with others
- Directing others in play

## Provides opportunities to:

- Join in
- Share and take turns
- Explore interactions within different relationships
- Negotiate with others



# Mark making

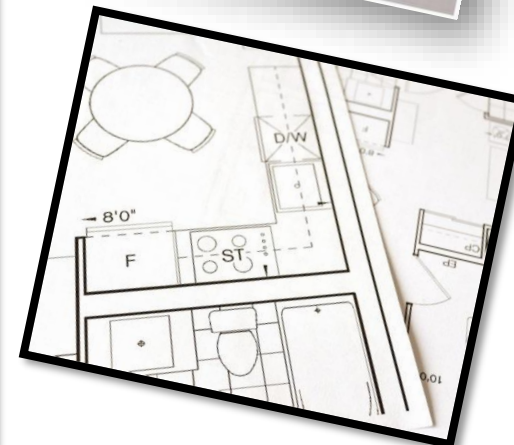
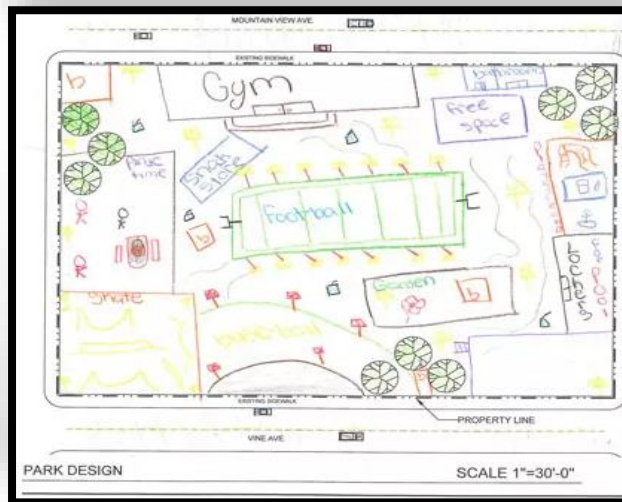
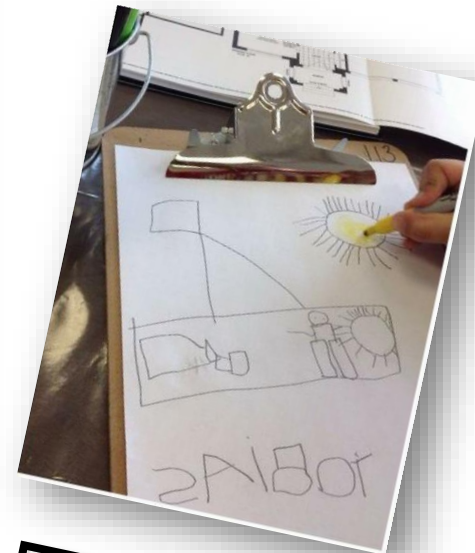
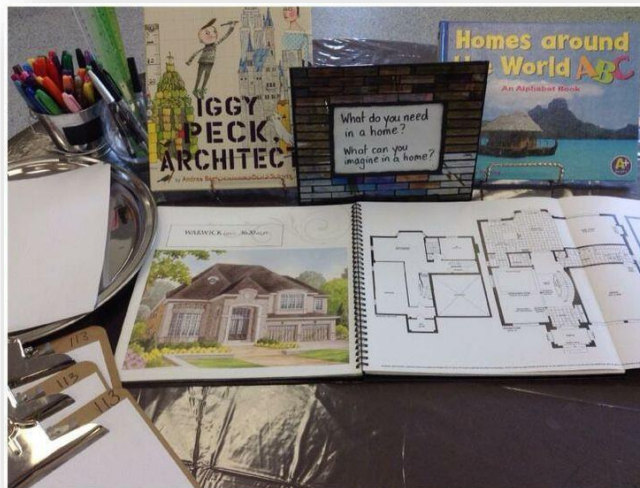
## Opportunities for mark making

- Planning building/construction
- Record constructions
- Making signs/labels/characters/features
- Making a story about their construction





# Enhancements





Literacy Learning through Block Play

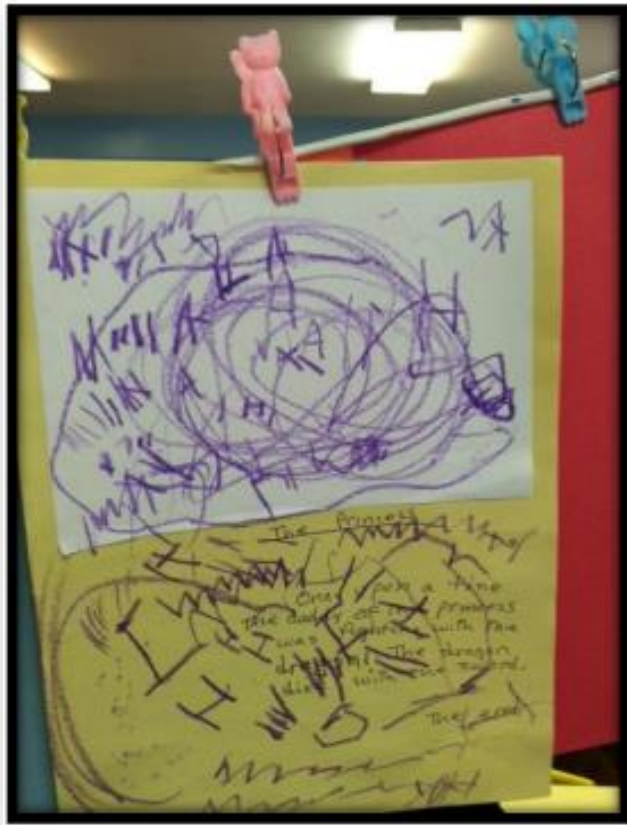


Literacy Learning through Block Play





# Writing Stories



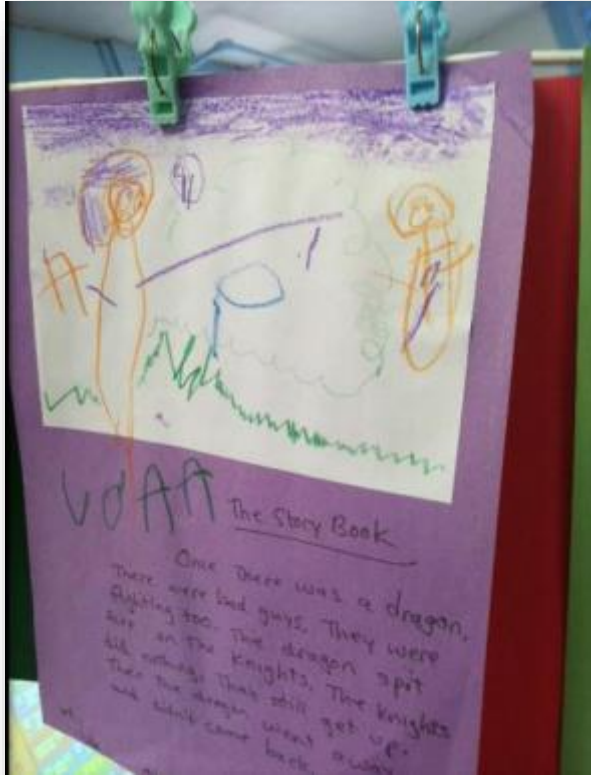
## *The Princess*

*Once upon a time the  
daddy of a princess was  
fighting with a dragon.*

*The dragon died with a  
sword.*

*The End*

# Progression over time



## Story 1

***Once there was a dragon***  
*There were two bad guys.*  
*They were fighting too.*  
*The dragon spit fire on the knights.*  
*The knights did nothing. They still get up.*  
*Then the dragon went away and didn't come back.*  
***The End***

## Story 2

***The Knight and the Dragon***  
*Once a knight was fighting a dragon that was spitting fire all over the place!*  
*The knight had something to protect himself. It was a shield.*  
*The knight saved all the people in the castle.*  
*The knight was shooting bows and arrows and made the dragon go away.*  
***The End***

# Suggested activities for staff CLPL





# Build a Tower

- In groups build a tower which is 1m high
- It must have the following:
- 4 base pillars
- Bridges to join the pillars
- 3 platforms as landing pads
- An interesting top of the tower
- All team members can only use one arm
- Each team members will have 4 blocks each which have to be used to build
- Each team member is responsible for placing their own block. BUT they can be helped



# Telling Tales

## The 10 word story

- As a group randomly generate a list of 10 words
- Choose 2 of these words to focus on
- Create a sentence containing these two words, write it down
- A member of the team states the sentence after listening the group start to question the sentence, e.g. why did that happen? Why did it happen? Where was this place? Who was involved?
- As these questions are answered build up your storyline.
- Use the blocks to frame your thinking/back drop
- Feedback your story to the group



# References

- Bruce, T. (Eds) (2012) *Early Childhood Practice: Froebel Today*. Sage Publications Ltd.
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- Kieff, J. and Wellhousen, K. (2001) *A Constructivist Approach to Block Play in Early Childhood*. Delmar Cengage Learning.
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**2023-2024 dates for your diary**  
**LfA year 2**

01/09/23	9:30am-12pm	Session 1: Developing Our Storytelling 1	Gemma
	1pm-3pm	Leadership of Change 1	Gemma
15/09/23	9:30am-12pm	Session 2: Developing Our Storytelling 2	Gemma
	1pm-3pm	Leadership of Change 2 (FLO)	FLO team
06/10/23	9:30am-12pm	Session 3: Fine and Gross motor development	Gemma
	1pm-3pm	Leadership of Change 3	Gemma
03/11/23	9:30am-12pm	Session 4: Early writing and mark making	Gemma
	1pm-3pm	HGIOP – Baseline	Gemma
17/11/23	9:30am-3pm	Session 5: Early Literacy through block play	Gemma
26/04/24	9:30am-12pm	HGIOP – Final	



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# Year 2



## Literacy Through Block Play

