

Supporting and motivating narrative development in your setting

Understanding narrative structures and the ability to use these in different contexts are important in their own right and also underpin later reading comprehension. Storytelling and role-play provide rich contexts for developing a range of language skills, including vocabulary and grammar, and the ability to produce extended narratives that incorporate children's own knowledge and experiences into the stories they've heard. They also help develop children's imagination and creativity. Role-play boxes and themed world-play boxes with accompanying books support children in retelling favourite stories drawing on the language of books.

Motivating narrative development

- Remember that the origins of narrative lie in the natural human desire to relate and thus share our experiences with others. Make time to listen to children and encourage them to talk about what they are doing and feeling, what they did this morning or yesterday, what they might do or would like to do tomorrow or at the weekend.
- Remember that some children will need more encouragement and support to talk about their experiences than others, but that this is a necessary step on the way to developing the advanced narrative skills that will allow children to create imaginative stories or re-tell and re-enact stories they know well.
- These situations supported by appropriate adult questions also offer children the opportunity to develop their skills in prediction and drawing inferences.
- Develop role-play through a favourite story. Goldilocks is a well-known tale that children can readily imagine and recreate the roles and language from. Also, try something different, like 'Ten in a bed' or 'Handa's surprise' or focus on stories that are currently in use in your setting.
- Role-play can carry on inside or out. Provide a 'story-trail' of props to encourage re-playing of a story: Red Riding Hood's cloak left on a bench, her picnic basket under a tree and so on. Use role-play for children to develop stories from familiar activities such as going on holiday, a visit to Grandma, or a visit to the park.
- Make sure all your shared and favourite picture books are stored well in a book area for children to share and retell stories from. Add a tape recorder or CD player with well-stored books, tapes and CDs for children to choose from.
- Make sure relevant information books are placed around the setting alongside activities to motivate children to recall events. Use these *with* the children first so that you can provide them with a model to follow, Children do not necessarily guess the purposes we have in mind in providing resources: show them how the resources can be used and incorporated into role-play.
- Turn your favourite stories into props for story boards, add a microphone to a Tape recorder or CD player so that children are able to retell the story as they go and it can be listened back and shared with an adult or small group.
- Make small world story boxes. Taking off the lid and opening the front of the box can create a scene, much like a small stage. The walls of the box can be decorated with the children to recreate scenes and small props can be added to play out elements of the story.
- Story sacks and rhyme sacks are easy ways to ensure you have quick access to support your or the children's storytelling. Add a picture book, some props and a tape or CD to listen to the story. If you have a talking photo album or talking postcards add children's drawings of the story, record their voices and they will be able to listen to their retelling of the story with an adult or small group.
- Create quiet, welcoming places inside and out for children to enjoy picture books or story telling; add a basket of books to a bench, a rug and books under a tree or

puppets to a carpeted area. Remember, you can model use of these resources by sitting on the rug with a group and sharing the books together.

- Make sure your range of texts to motivate storytelling will include all children (see Module 4 unit 3 on selecting texts, for further guidance)
- When children tell stories write them down in a book that the children know is kept for sharing stories. Read back short sections at a discussion time and children will quickly become avid storytellers as they realise their stories, feelings and thoughts are valued.
- Include puppets or a 'soft toy character' for children to tell stories to and 'through'.

Supporting narrative development

- Provide experiences in the setting that can be used as a basis for narrative production: for example, a group of children who have baked some biscuits can share the delight of eating these with the other children and explain to them how the biscuits were made.
- Find and/or make books or sets of cards in which activities and experiences familiar to the daily lives of the children are depicted: going to the park, going shopping, going to a birthday party, and so on. Children really enjoy talking about photo stories in which they are the stars. This is often best accomplished in small groups of four or five children, scaffolded by an adult.
- Provide opportunities to reflect on and recount past events and shared experiences. This, too, can often be best achieved in small groups with adult support. Children enjoy being a member of a named group, and gain confidence as they share ideas and experiences with the same small group over time.
- Share picture books with children. Make sure that this sharing also takes place regularly in small groups. You might find it helpful to timetable such activities into the day, to make sure that all children regularly take part. Provide plenty of models of favourite stories told and retold. Children will gradually adopt the language and structure of stories into their own storytelling, a vital development towards beginning to read and beginning to write.
- Support children in becoming increasingly familiar with a bank of favourite books, stories rhymes and songs.
 - Use different voices to tell stories and get young children to join in, sometimes using puppets, soft toys or real objects as 'props'.
- Encourage children to re-enact the stories they hear in their play.
- Encourage children to predict outcomes or to think of alternative endings.
- Read stories that children already know, pausing at intervals to encourage them to 'read' the next word.
- Talk to children about characters and their feelings about stories.
- Take the children to visit the local library.
- Have a librarian or children's author visit the setting.
- Model telling and retelling stories across the setting throughout the day; make up simple stories set in the context of a chosen small world play or become a character from a book as you join in with role-play.
- Enjoy sharing stories with children in places that they choose. Some children might be more confident to express their thoughts about a story in a quiet area on a one to one basis; others may enjoy referring to an information book as they play at being a builder or fireman.
- Make a regular *time* for sharing books and storytelling.
- Make books with children including ICT texts (using an interactive whiteboard, 'Create a Story' software or 'talking photo albums').
- Help children to predict and order events or make up stories by providing props and materials to re-enact stories and events.