

Drama and movement through stories and music

The Camden Foundation Stage Advisory Teacher Team has worked in partnership with **Collingham Gardens Nursery, Coram Fields Nursery** and Holly Lodge Playgroup to involve parents in their children's learning, by using drama and movement in stories and music.

At **Coram Fields**, the project started with parents being invited to watch a video of their own children playing in the setting. This provided the ideal opportunity for the foundation stage advisory teacher to discuss the importance of learning through play, and the forthcoming parent-partnership project.

“We had a really good turn-out for this as most parents were intrigued to see what their child does at nursery.”

This initial session really helped to raise interest and led to more communication between practitioners and parents. It 'opened doors' and helped to generate interest and attendance at the drama and movement workshops.

Holly Lodge Playgroup held similar video sessions; **Collingham Gardens Nursery** communicated with their parents through their monthly newsletter.

The workshops were led by Anni McTavish*, an early years creative arts trainer. She took the children on imaginative journeys using a puppet, story and music, movement and drama.

Parents, children and practitioners all joined in the acting, singing, and dancing with ribbons and simple props. Some felt a little reluctant to participate at first, but gradually relaxed and joined in.

Moving and singing alongside their children, in a group activity, is often helpful for parents. They can be reassured that a lively response is expected and natural, that children need to move and that action enhances learning.

Music and movement are all-inclusive activities; and parents of children with special needs reported how pleased they felt to see their child included as part of the group.

Practitioners have been excited by this way of working in partnership with parents. They participated in the movement sessions, joining in with enthusiasm and encouraging parents to do likewise. Some had to overcome their own feelings of awkwardness, developing their own confidence to 'perform' with parents in the room.

Working together in this way has had a positive impact on relationships between practitioners and parents. Parents have initiated more conversations about their children.

“The atmosphere between parents and staff was a lot more relaxed. We were friendlier after the workshops.”



“As we had seen each other at our funnier times, there was no room for embarrassment now.”

Large cloth bags have been made, which contain a puppet, music book, CD, and a collection of coloured ribbons and bright silk cloths for dancing. Each setting now has a number of these bags for use within the nursery, with separate ones available for parents to borrow.

Now everyone in the family can continue to move and travel on imaginary music and story journeys at home. The bags encourage open-ended play so that children’s imaginations can take them anywhere.

Disposable cameras have been added to the bags so that parents can record their child’s experiences, then share them with practitioners.

Each nursery now has digital cameras so that practitioners can, likewise, share their observations of the children with the parents. In this way, a seamless flow of discussion about the child can take place between parents and nursery.

The work has also had an impact on both planning and practice in the settings. Children have created imaginative stories that have been recorded on tape or computer. Some children have chosen to draw their stories. The stories have been shared with parents.

Managers and practitioners in all the nurseries realised how much more engaged children were in their own, self-initiated stories and play. This confirmed how important it is to plan around a child’s own interests and enthusiasms through drama and movement.



Could you include parents in your own singing, dance and story sessions?

Parents will sense their child’s enjoyment and it gives practitioners the opportunity to share what is known about how children learn from this type of experience.

**You will find a sample story, suggested resources and contact details for Anni McTavish on the CD-Rom in your pack.*

Ase and her sister put on a show for us, which they enjoyed because they knew they had the bag available. They planned and thought about what they could do with the materials and ribbons. Ayo sang some of the songs in the book while Ase danced with the ribbons in her hands. They put actions to the songs and it caught the attention of everyone especially their baby brother. I think with the presence of a camera the children were even more eager to perform, especially since they all like their picture taken. (Parent feedback.)

“It brought the fun back into our planning. My colleagues and I were left feeling really inspired; we found ourselves gelling more as a team.”