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Background

The "Media Playing Communities" project aims to examine how children, families and early years practitioners can extend levels of media literacy within their communities, by exploring how media can form an active part of a play environment.

Funded through the European Union's Life Long Learning Programme, the project involves families, pre-school children, early years practitioners and community organisations from Austria, Germany, Denmark, Romania, Italy, Spain, Hungary and the UK. These groups will develop media playing activities locally and exchange their ideas during and (hopefully) long after the project end, in November 2009.

In the UK, project activity is based in the South West of England, with 3 organisations from two communities, working together to explore how media play is already being used in every day life and how this can be developed further.

An English story about ICT in kindergartens

Understanding what Media Playing Communities means

The most useful way to describe what Media Playing Communities means is to begin by asking you to consider what we already do within our communities, in terms of play related activities with young children. We play games like hide and seek, or sit with our children to do drawing or colouring. We tell stories or help them construct Lego or some other form of building blocks. We "do" role play with their dolls and toys and play "shops", have tea parties and other imaginary games. This is the playing community we are familiar with; it's the games and ideas that are already embedded within our PLAY culture.

Less embedded is the use of media devices in these activities, which explore new ways to do similar (or very different) things with young children. This is the challenge of the project, to create a play culture that includes a media play element, in which adults and children share common ideas and understanding of media related play and games, in the same way as they do with traditional play.



Rocky, Lucy, Faria and Matthew exploring a traditional play culture, painting at the table

So media play is about how to use and develop a visual language – a form of media literacy based on experimenting within a given play culture. It's also about exploring and thinking about what we achieve through media play, to ask questions and maybe find some answers. If the play culture is strong, then media will be an option in life.

"The challenge would be to make "play practice" that contains mothers and grand fathers as well as teachers, project leaders – and researchers – a common culture together – media playing culture, media playing communities..." Klaus Thestrup, Media Play researcher 2008

The following section contains some examples of Media Play activities recorded at Lark Children's Centre and Kingfisher Pre-School in June 2008. We have tried to present the ideas from the eyes of the children and hope they provide you with an understanding of how an existing play culture can adapt to include a culture of media play.



Anna actively observing Will, during media play

"The Media Players UK"

Point Europa – A training and education charity responsible for project management tasks and the development of guides and handbooks to support the project's aims.

Lark Children's Centre – A Sure Start funded community project situated in North Prospect, Plymouth, providing full day care for children aged 0 to 5 years.

Kingfisher Pre-School – A not for profit organisation, situated in Kingsand, a rural village in South East Cornwall, providing sessional day care for children aged 2 to 5 years.

Parents from both communities are also involved in the project and will be travelling to Graz in Austria to join in project activities. They will also be involved in hosting activities in May 2009 and will be actively encouraged to share their ideas with the settings involved. Most of the initial activities took place over a two day period at "Lark" and "Kingfisher", although we have included examples of other media play conducted at the settings during other times. What we hope you gain from these examples is how a media play culture is fun and easy to implement. It doesn't involve much technical knowledge and can compliment non-media based play and resources you find at home or in the pre-school.

Children's Safety

Involving media play means creating images and this of course needs to be considered as part of your organisation's Child Protection and parental consent procedures. Whilst we want to encourage the celebration of children through positive images such as those in the guide, we also wish to emphasise that settings must have in place robust control measures that ensures images of children are appropriately taken and stored in line with good practice and that this is effectively managed.

Media Playing at Lark Children's Centre



Candice using digital camera especially designed for children

Dear Media Player's,

My name is Candice I am 4 Years old and my pre-school is called The Lark Children's Centre in Plymouth England. My pre-school looks after babies and children until they are 5. It's really big and there are lots of fun activities to do. It opens all day until 6 o'clock in the evening. We have a huge indoor space with separate places for the big children and even a little room for the babies. When I go to "Lark" I love playing with the media equipment like the computer, camera and video camera.

We are part of the Media Playing Community project and were visited by Klaus from Denmark and Will who lives in England like me. They played some new games with us using different cameras, the computer and a giant screen. We were so excited about this, so we took some photos to show you how we do media play at Lark. We hope you enjoy them,
Love Candice.



Candice and her sister Sian using the video camera

Look!! At Lark we make films!!!! This is one of my friends; here you can see me filming him playing in the outdoor space.



This camera records images which can be downloaded onto the computer for children to play back. Most cameras and mobile phones also have the capacity to film like this.

Sometimes our teachers film the things we do, once they filmed the babies painting when they were listening to Jazz music. I think the babies really enjoyed listening to music and painting.



Babies painting to Jazz music. Try playing different genres of music to children whilst they are painting. See if it alters their creative style.



Faria recognises herself on the film.



Klaus filming Candice during role play



Candice looking at one of the films they made

Look!!! At Lark we make up our own stories! Here we are making a film about a shark eating a boat. The shark sneaks up on the boat and swallows it. We played the game over and over again and lots of my friends joined in and we took turns being the shark or the boat. When the film was finished we watched it on the computer and then made some more. It was fantastic fun!!

LOOK!!! At Lark we take photos of each other and also use them to play with. Here you can see my friend Finley and behind him are some of the photos we have taken. We laminate them so we can save our memories and remember what we looked like as we grow.



Laminated photos help children explore themselves and others, share past achievements and develop a sense of time. You can make a diary which can be presented to the family when it's time to leave pre-school. A great media memory!!



Take a picture – a small part of any object or person and get the children to identify who or what it is.



Look!!! We play Guess Who and other games using a camera!! This game is really fun; we walk around our pre school taking photos with the camera and take turns guessing what we took photos of. But we only take a photo of a little part of a body or maybe just the corner of a chair, because it makes it more exciting. Klaus told us about another game that he plays in Denmark called "catch me if you can". You get about 5 children to form a circle and another child to stand in the middle. The children in the circle start running round and round and the person in the middle tries to "catch" one of them in the camera lens. The one you catch is out and you carry on with the game until there is only one child left. It's a great game to play.

Media Playing at Kingfisher Pre-School

Dear Media Player's,

My name is Daisy I am 5 Years old and my pre-school is called "Kingfisher" and we live in a tiny village in Cornwall, England. My pre-school looks after children from the age of 2 until they are 5, we have a big indoor space which we share with other people in our village. We also have a FANTASTIC garden and we love OUTDOOR PLAY!! At Kingfisher I love playing with the new media equipment.

My pre-school is also part of the Media Playing Community project and we had a visit from Klaus. We showed him our new computer and camera and also the photos my dad had taken of lots of "mini beasts" in my garden. We had a great day and took some photos to show you how we are media playing here at Kingfisher. We hope you enjoy them, Love Daisy.



One possible way of involving parents in the media playing experience is to send picture messages or email home to show their children's achievements.

This is my friend Flossie; she is taking a picture of her painting. We thought it would be a great idea to email this to her mum and dad so they could share her achievement. You could also use a mobile phone or send a picture message too!!



Daisy and Klaus relaxing in the garden



A screen is made from old wallpaper rolls and the images of mini beasts are projected on to it. Most schools have projectors which they may be happy to share with you.



Jude takes a photo of the mini beasts projected onto the screen.

We have been talking and learning about "mini beasts" here at Kingfisher and my Dad took some photos of different bugs and insects in our garden for me to share with my friends. At Kingfisher we put this on a projector screen which made the bugs look really big. My friends could explore the insects close up and also play with their shadows.



Rosie looking for more "mini beasts" in our Garden



Children taking photos of "mini beasts" in the garden

Everybody liked the "beasts" so much; we thought we would look for more of them in our garden.



At Kingfisher we learnt to make up new stories using our digital camera. We had a great time taking lots of photos and we used them to make up the story. Here you can see Will, telling us a story using the photos we took. We all decided on the beginning, the middle and end of the story. When we had finished we took the camera away and made new stories with them.



Jude shares a story with us



Children were really interested in making up their own stories using the photos they had taken.



A traditional game of hide and seek is taken into a media playing culture.



At Kingfisher we played hide and seek. I took my toy doggy and tried to hide it from Klaus who was looking for it with our camera. I was hiding it under Will's T-Shirt and behind his back. Klaus tried to "catch" doggy with the camera lens when he peeked out. It was really fun.



The construction of mobile phones is a common occurrence at Kingfisher and one that children seem to enjoy.

At Kingfisher we also make new media things to play with. Here is my friend Robert who has made a mobile phone. In his left hand are some blocks with a bell inside. He shakes his left hand to ring the bell and then answers his phone. (That's Media Play!!!)



Masthead

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