DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 298 PS 009 406

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TITLE Role Playing and the Young Child.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 34p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Dramatic Play; *Early Childhood Education; Intellectual Development; Language Development; Reading; *Role Playing; Social Development; Teacher Role; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This paper examines aspects of role playing in young children focusing specifically on the importance of role playing, the components of role playing and how to use role playing. The importance of role playing is discussed and several reasons for believing that role playing is related to intellectual and social development and to learning language and reading are presented. Five components of role playing as presented by Curry and Arnaud (1974) are discussed. The teacher role in preparing for and managing role playing is then discussed step-by-step and several specific "how to" suggestions are offered. Finally, the facilitation of growth in language and reading through the use of role playing in the Language and Imaginative Play Approach (LIPA) is discussed. (JMB)

# ROLE PLAYING AND THE YOUNG CHILD

by

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"You be mother!" says Angelo to Leslie, ". . . and I will play father." Shanda notes, "I was the baby, yesterday, and today, I am Aunt Bessie!" Sam, in turn, becomes the baby and the cast of characters is complete. Role playing goes on continually with pupils. The cast of characters, situations, and themes change from "mommies" and "daddies" to playing doctor, hospital, caveman, monster, restaurant, superman, wonder woman, or dozens of others. However, the same process is used over and over again. Whether we call it "let's pretend" as in dramatic or sociodramatic play, role characterization, or perhaps creative dramatics, the children involved in these types of pretend are "role playing". Youngsters project themselves into roles of heroes and heroines, villains, the discovered or discoverer or the hunter or the hunted. Role playing takes place through role portrayal. Yawkey and Blohm [1977, p.4] suggest that pupils in role playing ". . . pretend to be people or objects other than themselves and through their verbal statements and/or motor movements they show these role perceptions." Older children and adults also use role playing especially through rule governed games such as charades, pantomime, "Password", and others. Pretending to be another person or object through role play is basic to young and

older children and adults.

In role play, young children create characters out of a 'puff of thin air' and use objects as if they are other things. When role playing occurs, what children think, do, and feel becomes, ". . . part of a matrix of impressions that others pick up, incorporate, integrate, and project in the form of a response [Ostrovsky, 1974, p. 245]." In turn, children's reactions to what occurs affect them. Above all, role playing has both personal and social aspects which are closely tied to growth and learning and communication, language, and reading.

## Importance of Role Playing

Educators ask, "Why role playing?" Honest answers to this question come from research findings in child development and educational psychology. Most importantly, the results confirm that role playing is a cognitive process of mental abstraction and ". . . as such is closely linked to evolving thought processes and language--both oral and written [Yawkey & Blohm, 1977b, p. 4]." Role playing has the potential to facilitate intellectual and social growth of pupils in early childhood and middle school years. There are a number of sound reasons for linking role playing with intellectual and social development and with learning language and reading.

First, the pupil's thinking patterns grow and develop through role taking. In role play episodes, children define and assume roles of somebody or something. In the process, students mentally develop and expand upon the roles. Here, role playing permits the actor not only to explore but also to gain mastery over the environment of objects and ideas. Being the chief actor, observer, and participant permits the student flexibility and originality in thinking--the key ingredients of thought and creativity. Children become actively involved with ideas through role playing. The active involvement with ideas is the basic ingredient of communication, reading, and all of language. A second reason for linking role playing with development and learning is "social elaboration". This reason stresses social rather than mental activity and action. Social involvement in role playing involves peers and adults. In role playing the child becomes immersed ". . . in a sea of words which defines and relates his social behaviors and his physical activities [Richmond, 1970, p. 11]." Throughout the sea of words flowing between and among actors, pupils begin to develop and expand upon their social relationships with others. Social relationships among peers become reciprocal through role playing. Youngsters are able to see beyond themselves and from other children's points of view. The pupils through social involvement are able to view themselves and the world around them from

differing perspectives.

A third benefit of role playing is the development of creative thought. The child learns to gather together related and unrelated experiences he or she has had and then to focus and finally use them in the process of role playing. From the gathering, focusing, and using past and present experiences, new combinations of thought are instantly created. Putting existing thought patterns together in new ways is the basic thread of creativity. When a young child role plays, the teacher and parent in observing the episode will comment, "Where did Jacques or Sally learn that idea!" The answer to the question of "where" lies in the creation of new ideas joined together from past and present experiences through role playing. With the creation of new ideas and their expression, it is very difficult to explain the source for these new ideas. The pupils simply focused selected past and present experiences, combined them differently, and spontaneously expressed them in the role playing episode.

A fourth reason for linking role playing with mental and social growth and learning in the curricular areas is "concentration". The power to concentrate on ideas, actions, and situations individually or in group settings is developed in role playing. Role playing requires focused thought over periods of time. Since role playing is fun, pleasant to do, and entertaining, the young child, especially, spends a great

deal of time in role playing. Role playing permits pupils to lose themselves in the process of playing someone or something. Since they are not concerned with the outcome of role playing or how well the characters are played, attention and concentration can develop, expand, and grow. The process of concentration is also basic to academic learning as well as mental and social growth.

A final benefit of role playing is discipline. Role playing requires group efforts. Deciding who is going to role play particular characters and assigning roles to themselves means establishing common goals through peer involvement. In defining, deciding, and assigning the roles, the child must learn to control his or her individual actions in favor of group deliberations, actions and decisions. In learning to control individual actions in role playing, children learn to discipline themselves. Individual and personal desires become regulated and in turn subordinated to the wishes of the group through role playing. Through self discipline in role playing cooperation and greater interaction can emerge. Transcending individual desires and wishes using decision making in small groups assists thinking skills and is the basic fabric of social growth.

Role playing in school and home settings has the potential for facilitating intellectual and social growth and academic learning in the curriculum areas. It only awaits

further use by educators wishing to help children develop communication, language and reading concepts. Key relationships linking role playing with the development of thinking and communicating are further highlighed through the basic components of role playing.

## Components of Role Playing

Curry and Arnaud [1974] see components of role play as: (1) developing the role; (2) using thematic content; (3) displaying feelings; (4) distinguishing between reality and fantasy; and (5) forming interpersonal transactions. The first component, developing the role, is shown by the way the pupils (1) perceive; (2) enact; and (3) express their roles. Experiences gathered at home and school are the bricks and mortar of role development. Watching, listening, and imitating adults, peers, and brothers and sisters help the child learn roles. Observing Ms. Vasquez teach Whitney the sounds of letters, or father and mother setting the table for dinner help develop roles. Going shopping, visiting the farm, viewing television, hearing the construction crews talk and seeing them build a house are experiences basic to role perception. These experiences help students develop perceptions of various roles. Younger children differ from older ones on basic perceptions of roles observed. In turn, the perceptions of roles alters the way younger and older

'play' the roles. For example, putting on a fire official's hat for a young child is sufficient for role playing a fire fighter. However, older youngsters perceive the role of fire fighter differently. The older pupils require hats, firehoses, boots and other objects to portray their roles adequately as fire fighters. For the older pupil the more materials and props he or she uses the more realistic and accurate the role played.

The second factor related to the 'developing the role' is enactment. Enactment simply means how the pupils express themselves in acting the role. Here, the quantity of words used and whether the words expressed make up coherent patterns of communication become important. The more words used to express and communicate thoughts and the greater coherence shown the more exact and descriptive role taking becomes. Again, younger children differ from older ones on ways of enacting roles [Curry & Arnaud, 1974]. Young pupils, for example, in role playing a school crossing guard can simply say "stop" or motion with their hands. The one word expression or singular motor movement represents the entire role playing episode. For a young child the relationship between role play and communication is linguistically simple and straightforward. It may take a few seconds to two or three minutes for a young child to show through verbal and motor movements how the role is enacted. The older student, however, goes

into much depth to express the thoughts of the characters role played. Complete with long verbal explanations and detailed motor movements, the role play of the older child may last from ten to twenty minutes or more.

The last factor important to 'developing the role' is the medium of expression. This factor refers to the type of objects used in showing or communicating the role to others. The objects can be real such as lamps, tables, or dishes or instructional materials designed to teach skills and concepts. The objects used as a medium of expression can be multipurpose materials such as blocks, sand, water, or clay or the pupil can use his or her body and body actions. Body actions and a very small number of objects are used by younger children to express their roles. Older children use a great number and variety of objects as their media for expression.

The thematic content of role taking, component two, can be determined by observing the types of actions the children use in context of the roles being portrayed. What the youngsters do and what they say to themselves and others in performing the actions determine the thematic content. For example, pupils are filling and emptying plastic containers in a water filled basin. One student comments to another, "The cake is going to taste 'chocolatey good.'" . . . "The children will eat it all up!" The pupils here are role playing adults and the thematic content suggested

from their actions and comments is, "baking a cake!" Ongoing social situations and emotional concerns that children have determine thematic content. It can be based upon real situations and experiences children have, see or hear about. For the young student, examples of thematic content include "going shopping", "playing doctor", or "mommies and daddies". Often, the thematic content is rather momentary. These youngsters frequently use family situations and imitate adults, relatives, and significant others as models. The thematic content used in role playing for older children may reappear over and over again and will last over longer time periods. Older children generally use thematic content drawn from experiences outside the family. They use television and other vicarious second-hand experiences as models.

'Displaying feelings' sometimes called 'integration of affect and intellect' is another important component of role playing [Curry & Arnaud, 1974]. The basic idea here concerns whether or not the student shows feelings and agressions in socially acceptable ways. In other words, through role play is the relationship between how a student feels about something or someone and what he or she does in response to that feeling direct or indirect. In role playing, youngsters may pretend that they are ferocious monsters. They directly show that they are ferocious beasts by "grabbing and crushing objects" in their reach. In this role playing episode, the students thinly disguise themselves and directly vent their

feelings. Older pupils cloak their feelings and agressions in elaborate ways. However, these disguises are socially approved. Examples include: (1) a sheriff who locks up the 'bad' guys; (2) a parent brandishing a group of children for doing an unlawful act; and (3) superman rebuilding a destroyed city. The sheriff, parent, or superman perform acts in socially accepted ways. The disguises of the older children are more complete, feelings more indirect and socially legitimate than the younger child's.

The fourth component of role playing is the ability to distinguish reality from fantasy. Recognizing the difference between what is imagined and what is real is crucial to effective role playing. A child who can tell the difference between reality and fantasy in role play often says, "Let's pretend that . . .!", "I am 'playing' like . . .!" or "Don't worry it is only make-believe!" The pupil, in the examples, recognizes the distinction between fact and fantasy and ". . . maintains distance between imagined and real events through pretend [Yawkey, Blohm, & Yawkey, 1977, p. 10]." Unlike older pupils, preschool, kindergarten and some primary grade children do not understand that they are playing a role. These children actually become the people and objects they are role playing. They actually lose themselves in the role and believe that they really are "superman" or "wonder woman".

The fifth component of role playing is called "forming

interpersonal transactions" [Curry & Arnaud, 1974]. This aspect refers to how the children relate to one another in the group setting. Within pure role playing, the peer group members define and assign roles and then proceed to act them out. Modes of interpersonal transition require a fundamental awareness of group relationships and empathy for others. A great many preschool, kindergarten, and some primary grade children are still developing feelings for the group, generalized others, and empathy for one another. Thus, instead of defining and assigning roles in context of a group, they act as individuals and engage in parallel or solitary play. Since they are rather egocentric, their role playing is rather personalized and focuses on themselves and perceived extensions of themselves. Although the younger child is aware of group membership, he or she defines membership and participation in groups on the basis of those who can and those who can't play. Group membership on this basis is rather exclusive. Advanced, preschool, kindergarten, primary grade and older youngsters perceive ". . . that the presence of the children and their ideas served to enhance, deepen, and extend their own ideas [Curry & Arnaud, 1974, p. 276]." Here, these students use inclusiveness to form groups and discuss and assign their roles.

## Getting Ready To Role Play

Teacher Management: In setting the stage for role play, there are a number of important steps that teachers must understand. A clear understanding of these steps enables the educator to plan and prepare effectively for the experience. Through effective planning the teacher is better able to use role playing as an educational tool in classrooms. Then, too, with a clearer understanding of the steps involved in the process, planning for role playing in classrooms becomes a continuous and integral part of learning rather than something to be accomplished on a hit or miss basis or something to be done once or twice a week [Nelson & Singleton, 1977]. Finally, the teacher can adjust the steps in role playing to fit the grade level, maturity, and age level of the pupil. For example, in early childhood classrooms, preschool through third grade, it is neither advisable nor beneficial formally to list and discuss these steps with this age child. The child of this age, for the most part, is rather spontaneous and some with teacher direction can be guided through the steps in incidential fashion. Then, too, at the early childhood level, role playing processes are modified forms of dramatic and sociodramatic play. The pupil at this age already uses some of the steps in role playing. A formal discussion of the role playing steps can confuse the young child.

At the middle childhood level, grades four through six,

the teacher may desire to list and discuss these steps in rather formal fashion prior to role playing. Because of greater awareness and influence of peer groups, the pre-adolescent is often more inhibited and less spontaneous than the student at the early childhood level. Then, too, the pupil in the middle school can easily understand and contribute to a formal discussion based upon the steps in the role playing method. Finally, a formal discussion of these steps in a middle school classroom can be of benefit from the point of view of integration. The student at this age level can integrate ideas of role playing with his or her actions in the role playing episode. Thought, language, and action are more unitary for the older child with language and thought processes assisting one another in learning.

Steps in Role Playing

The formal steps in role playing are:

1. developing classroom atmosphere
2. warming up the class
3. selecting the role players
4. setting the stage
5. preparing the audience
6. role playing the episode
7. discussing the episode
8. adding re-enactments as necessary (replaying reversed roles, rehearsing next steps or simply exploring alternative role playing possibilities)

9. discussing re-enactments where needed
10. sharing experiences and generalizing [Hendry, Lippitt & Zander, 1947 and Nelson & Singleton, 1977].

. . . developing classroom atmosphere (1)

Nelson and Singleton [1977, p. 143] state that, "There are three major sets of variables at work in classrooms which affect group functions: teachers' perceptions and expectations of students; students' perceptions and expectations of teachers; and, students' perceptions and expectations of each other." Role playing can only occur in classrooms in which the roles of teachers and students are perceived as non-threatening. With a classroom atmosphere that is nonthreatening, the contributions and needs of pupils and teachers are recognized.

> As such, and equal status group, will recognize the worth and uniqueness of each member and will endeavor to develop the cohesiveness and cooperation necessary to achieve a group goal [Nelson & Singleton, 1977, p. 154].

Role playing can only occur in an atmosphere that fosters and supports contributions from all members of the group and where the role of the teacher is facilitative rather than dictative. Frank expression of feelings and ideas are outcomes of a positive classroom atmosphere. A positive classroom atmosphere becomes one in which:

1. It is "safe" for students to explore behaviors--both antisocial and socially acceptable.
2. It is permissible for strong feelings--even bad feelings--to be expressed.

3. The group is helped to respect the ideas and feelings of all members [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, p. 7].

. . . warming up the class (2)

The warm-up phase for role playing is simply where the teacher provides the students with some background on the situation, problem, story, or event to be role played. The background enables the students to identify with the specific incident. It acquaints them with the general problem at hand. The background also develops an awareness of the situation and the motivation to deal with, solve, and role play the stories and events presented. At the early childhood level, the educator may reread a familiar story to the kindergartners or use a problem situation from their own socio-dramatic play episodes as part of the warm-up [Yawkey & Blohm, 1977]. The educator at this or more advanced levels can read a problem story and stop at a point in the story that poses a dilemma. At this time the warm-up should begin. At more advanced early and middle childhood levels, the pupils use their own stories, films and television incidents as a base for role playing.

The stories, incidents or situations chosen for role play must be representative of children's actual experiences. Yet, they must be distant enough to make exploration possible through role play. When problem situations chosen for role play mirror real problems faced by a child or group of

children, role playing becomes threatening to the individual or group. "The more convincing the story, the more exciting it develops, the more strongly will the listeners identify with the fictional characters [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, p. 7]." When the children have completed the story, excerpt, socio-dramatic play, or have seen the film or television episode and heard the teacher express the problem to be solved in detail, the initial phase of warm-up is completed. With the initial phase completed, the teacher then helps the group move into discussion and then into role playing itself. Motivating questions that could be used to help the children discuss aspects of the event used or dilemma posed include:

1. "What do you think will happen now?"--story stopped at a dilemma point.
2. "Why did Henry act like that?"--probable actions of the character examined.
3. "What happened in that situation?"--description of excerpt from a story, film, television sequence or socio-dramatic play episode.

The above questions pose the problem or set of problems originating from direct or vicarious experiences. Ideas for solution flow and discussion on the problem begins.

. . . selecting the role players (3)

Choosing pupils on the basis of whether or not they identify with the role is the main criterion for selecting the right student for the right role. Students who see themselves in particular roles and feel their parts are better

able to role play the specific characters or situations than those who can not relate to them. After the basic activity for the role play episode is completed, the educator can begin 'exploring' to select those students who identify with the characters or situations. Techniques for exploring include asking children questions about the basic experiences, characters, and situations. Some examples of these types of questions are:

1. "What did Diane do when . . .?"
2. "How do you think the animal felt after . . .?"
3. "Why was Shanda so responsive to . . .?"
4. "Describe your favorite character in the story."
5. "Tell about the most thrilling moment of the story!"
6. "After the incident what kind of person did Anglo become?" "Why?"
7. "Why do you think the animal (or person) acted that way?"
8. "Why is the gift given to Andre so special to him?" "How did Andre act in receiving the gift?"
9. "What do you think happened to Whitney after . . . ?" "Why?"
10. "What would have happened if Sherry kept the . . .?"

After exploring through questioning, the teacher can get ideas about how well students identify with the characters or situations. With students answering questions, the teacher

is able to note who can relate to various roles, and how well they can identify with them. There are a number of ways of assigning children to the roles after the exploration period. Based upon insight gained through questioning, the educator can ask the children if they wish to "play" those characters or situations. If volunteers are used in role playing Shaftel and Shaftel ask that the teacher ". . . avoid assigning roles to children who have volunteered for roles by others [p. 76]." The group may have volunteered a child for a role because of any number of salient reasons. Then too, the youngster identified by the group to "play" may not see himself or herself in that role. The teacher may also pick up on antisocial or agressive responses to the questions, and ask those students who offered them to 'play' the roles. Here, the teacher is most interested in further exploring the consequences of that solution suggested in antisocial and agressive answers. "Or, he [the teacher] may select a child who will play an authoritarian or strict mother or father role, knowing that this role may typify a problem faced by a number of . . . young children [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, p. 76]." Sometimes the teacher can select a child to play a role based upon need identity. Here, the educator may feel that a particular child needs to identify with a specific role or perhaps place himself or herself in the role of the other. Selecting the role players based upon how well the child

identified with the characters, strong feelings elicited about the actions of certain players, or knowledge of the youngsters' home life and personality traits become an opportunity for social as well as language growth.

. . . setting the stage (4)

After the role players are selected, "setting the stage" insures group planning prior to the role enactment. Here, role-players plan in a broad sense what they are going to do. The discussion among the role players should result in a plan of action. In developing a plan of action, dialogue is not written out in script form. Neither specific statements of the players nor the end of the episode are planned. Spontaneity is present so the players in the enactment will have the chance to pick up on one another's cues as the roles evolve and the enactment progresses. In the plan of action, the roles of each of the players are broadly outlined. The role players can explore the consequences of a particular character or situation. In developing a plan of action, the players discuss the general course of flow of the episode. In the plan of action, the number of characters required for the episode can be determined. Once the plan of action is decided by the role players the stage is set.

. . . preparing the audience (5)

During or after 'setting the stage', the audience or group observers must be prepared to participate actively and intelligently in the episode [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967]. Preparing the observers is of fundamental importance in learning. Through appropriate preparation, the observers learn the skills of active listening. As a crucial skill in language development, the observers gain additional practice in auditory discrimination. By actively listening to the role players, the audience learns to become aware of varying feelings and ideas. Shaftel and Shaftel [1967], in addition, suggest that active listening also permits ". . . young people . . . to place themselves in the other person's position in order to look at it [the situation] and see what he sees [p. 78]." Another outcome of active listening is problem solving. The observers after the role playing episode is complete can be guided to explore alternative solutions to ideas and actions presented in the episode.

With the resultant benefit being the growth of listening and problem solving skills, the audience is assigned observer tasks. These various observer tasks can then be completed by the audience as the episode unfolds. Several examples of questions that can be posed for the audience are:

1. "What solutions to the problem situations are posed by the players? Are the solutions practical

and realistic?" "Why?" "Why not?"

2. "How did the players develop the solution?"
3. "What ideas and thoughts are communicated by body actions and movements of the players?"
4. How would you change the episode if . . .?"
5. "What was the most serious part of the episode?" "What was the funniest part of the episode?"

For preschool, kindergarten and primary grade youngsters, the questions for observing should closely approximate t heir levels of intellectual and social abilities. Examples of observer tasks for the younger child follow:

1. "What did Janet say to Henry when . . .?"
2. "How do you think Shanda felt when . . .?"
3. "What kind of food was the animal eating?" "Do you think it liked it?"
4. "Where was the [name for an object used in the episode] placed in the scene?" "How do you know it was there?"
5. "Why was the . . . [situation or event] . . . so funny?"

Regardless of the age of the pupils, no questions that require an evaluation of the players should be asked. If players feel that they are being assessed by the teachers or peer group the quality of the role play is markedly reduced. Learning that comes out of a role playing episode for players as well

for observers diminishes drastically when role players are assessed on their performance. Spontaneity of the players is also affected. Then, too, assessing the players directly reduces the number of children who want to participate actively in the episode--from both player and observer groups.

. . . role playing the episode (6)

With observer tasks assigned, the episode begins. The players, as Shaftel and Shaftel [1967, p. 79] state, ". . . assume the roles and live the situation, responding to one another's speeches and actions as they feel the people in those roles would behave." Both the role players and observers should keep in mind that no role player is flawless in their performance. Spontaneity, development of language, and problem solving are emphasized; formality and perfection de-emphasized. The observers and players must also be aware that the way a role is played, ". . . is no reflection upon the player as a person [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, p. 79]." The player is simply representing a role as he or she sees it: the role is one of interpretation based upon knowledge together with the feelings of what is required in the situation. The educator contributes to this step of the role playing process with much discretion. When the teacher begins to intervene and direct the role players in acting out their roles, the spontaneity of the actors diminishes. The educator can easily join the audience and play the role of the observer while the enactment is taking place.

. . . discussing the episode (7)

With a resounding, "The End", the episode is over and the discussion of the enactment begins. The teacher then uses the basic questions prepared as observer tasks for the audience. As children discuss responses and various alternative solutions to the questions posed, the educator can ask other questions that are appropriate and specific to the discussion. The most significant point in the discussion step is to get the pupils to express their opinions and ideas about the context of the enactment. Here, the children can use communication in oral and written form to express their thoughts and ideas. The pupils learn to solve problems and develop alternative approaches to them. Here too, the pupils in their discussion explore the consequences of the alternatives suggeste "It is in such discussion that a child learns, with the support and often with the opposition of his age-mates . . . [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, p. 80]." The questions in helping the observers and players to think about the episode, help to broaden social and personal perspectives. "The entire group experiences, in a very active sense, the stress and satisfaction of problem solving [Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967, p. 80]."

. . . adding re-enactments as necessary (8)

The step of "adding re-enactments" and further role playing depends upon the educator's goals and students' ideas

gathered from previous discussion. The teacher may ~~feel that~~ additional re-enactments are necessary either for reinforcement of learning, developing alternative solutions to the episode, or providing additional opportunities for other actors to participate in the role portrayal. The pupils may want to repeat and/or change the enactment based upon suggestions in the discussion. For the older child, re-enacting the episode can be based upon changes in interpretation after discussion by group members. Younger children may wish to play the roles over and over again because of the fun involved. They are also interested in repeating episodes to better understand them. Same or different children can re-enact the episode to show similar or different interpretations and solutions. Continued development of language, both oral and written, and extended opportunities for problem solving are learning outcomes of playing the roles over and over again.

. . . discussing re-enactments where needed (9)

After each re-enactment, discussion of the episode by the observers and players must follow. Discussion following re-enactments are necessary and vital steps in learning and growth. It is through discussion that the player and observer develop understandings, skills, and attitudes that can enhance intellectual and social growth. Discussion may also provide the time and the right opportunity to re-teach concepts and skills that are fundamental to written and oral language.

With skilled guidance, the students can analyze and re-analyze role playing situations and at the same time relearn and extend intellectual and social understandings.

. . . sharing experiences and generalizing (10)

The final step in the sequence of role playing insures learning. In 'sharing experiences and generalizing' there are a number of educationally sound options that the teacher can pursue.

First of all, it can be used for evaluating the understandings, skills, and attitudes the students acquire through role-playing. Used in this manner, 'sharing experiences and generalizing' becomes formative evaluation. Specific concepts and skills may be assessed in the curriculum areas. Either in oral or written form, the teacher can ask children questions about comprehension of story content and word recognition skills. Secondly, this step provides opportunities to assess process skills used and learning through role playing. Process or 'learning to learn' skills facilitate learning. As identified by Nelson and Singleton [1977, p. 149] these process skills include, ". . . critical thinking, analytic procedures, discussion techniques, inquiry, evaluating, problem solving, hypothesizing, planning, [verbal] analogy, and inductive and deductive reasoning . . .!"

A third option that teachers can explore in this step deals with shared experiences of group members. Older children

especially have the intellectual capabilities to observe and classify social experiences. When the pupils discover that they too have had similar experiences and problems like the characters in selected stories, they come to realize these are also shared by many other people. Pursuing this option, provides the children with some reassurance that people regardless of geographic location, sex, race or age share similar experiences and situations and likewise share similar problems. The result of this option brings together, experiences of school, community, and society into closer relationship. By understanding that people everywhere have similar experiences in living, learning, and earning, solutions to problems arising from these experiences are brought into perspective.

The steps in role playing provide opportunities that are fundamental to continued growth in language and decision making. The steps in role playing adapted to the maturity and intellectual and social capabilities of the youngsters do provide opportunities for continued learning and growth.

## Using Role Playing through L.I.P.A.

Language and Imaginative Play Approach (L.I.P.A.) using role playing to facilitate growth in language and reading can serve as an instructional aides model. Early and middle childhood teachers, can use L.I.P.A. to capitalize on children's

role playing episodes to establish meaningful direct experiences. These experiences in turn provide a framework for developing communicative language processes--namely, listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

The L.I.P.A. contains two main phases--observation and language development [Blohm & Yawkey, 1977]. The observation phase provides direct experiences fundamental to language development. Here, the educator is provided with a set of guidelines for observing and then interviewing the children at the end of the role playing episode. The second phase, language development, uses the direct experiences provided by the observation phase. In this phase, provision is made for the development, use and practice of language for oral reading profficiency [Yawkey & Blohm, 1977]. The components of the observation phase are: (1) observing, (2) interviewing, and (3) transcribing. The components of the language phase are: (1) reading, (2) reviewing, and (3) retyping.

Throughout the observation component, the teacher observes for main elements used in role playing. These elements are: (1) developing the role; (2) using thematic content; (3) displacing feelings; (4) distinguishing between reality and fantasy; and (5) forming interpersonal transactions. These elements are apart from the teachers role and responsibility in step 6--"role playing the episode". While

the players and observers are engaged in the enactment, the teacher notes, in mental or written form, some of the key elements used in role playing the episode. For the first element, developing the role, the teacher notes what persons or objects the children transform themselves into. Actions and verbal statements of the children in portraying the roles give the teacher cues for determining transformations made by the children in role playing. The teacher also observes the use of objects in the role play. Whether objects are present or absent is also important. How the objects are used is observed. The role, objects, and the types of actions made in context of the role are indicators of the quality of role play and show the level of conceptual ability of the student. For example, the teacher may hear one of the players say, "I am sawing a log!" The child, here, uses his arm and arm movements in place of a saw. The object, saw, is absent. By observing for the roles children play, and the objects used in the role enactment, the teacher ". . . is better able to interview the children and transcribe the language they use to describe their . . . episode [Yawkey & Blohm, 1977, p. 23]." The thematic content used, whether or not the players displace feelings and distinguish between reality and fantasy and how interpersonal transactions are formed are additional elements that are crucial to the role playing enactment itself.

In the interviewing component of the observation phase, the teacher encourages the children to verbalize their roles

and use the language descriptions substituted for role play, objects, actions, and situations. This also serves to enhance each child's ability to interact with what others have to say during the discussion. The educator makes sure that the pupils describe the play episode coherently and in sequence by helping them to identify which events comprise the beginning, the body, and the ending of the episode.

The children recall and relate what happens in the episode in the transcribing component of the observation phase. As the children offer statements, the teacher transcribes their diction onto the chalkboard, each sentence printed on a separate line. The transcription is exactly recorded, in style and form as the children relate it. Each child in the group is encouraged to offer at least one statement, reinforcing once more, oral language growth. When the transcribing component of the observation phase is completed, the teacher introduces the language development phase of I.I.P.A. with the reading component. As the teacher reads the episode, the children note that their particular speech patterns may be written and read back again. In addition to noting left-to-right patterning and return sweep from one line to the next, the children become aware of word and sentence structures and punctuation. The children then read the role play episode together to develop oral reading fluency. Supplemental group-taught skills may be presented in an incidental manner since they reflect the content of dictation [Blohm & Yawkey, 1977]. Comprehension

skills such as following directions, understanding words in context, summarizing main impressions, and noting outstanding ideas and details, may be developed and enhanced through discussion experiences following the reading. The teacher may see opportunities to include practice in identifying work families, blend combinations, and plural forms of spotlighting examples of each in the children's role playing episode. At the end of the session, each individual notes words he or she is able to recognize without help. These words are listed for the child and will be used for word study in the individual review segment.

The second component, reviewing, is an individual review session. The pupil reads the episode orally to reinforce oral reading fluency. Correction of pronunciation is offered only as needed. The child and the educator then review the word list from the dictated sentences. The child pronounces each word presented in isolation and identifies its meaning in context of the episode sentences. This aids in expanding the child's personal vocabulary, practicing, pronunciations, and noting spelling conventions. Opportunities for individual skill building appear where weaknesses are indicated in oral recitation and followup discussion. Practice in auditory and visual discrimination, syllabication, silent letters, and other skills may be introduced only where evidence suggests the necessity. The child need not be the victim of didactic instruction in skills he or she already has. Essentially, this

procedure frees the child to pursue other areas of language development. The teacher may encourage a child to use the premise of the group episode to create a new story, developing the child's ability to organize his or her thoughts, choose from all that might be said, and then illustrate a personal experience orally or in written from in a clear and interesting manner. Development of speaking, listening, writing, and reading relationships (i.e. conceptualizing reading as speech that has been written, is further enhanced and reinforced through followup activities and projects). Some children may choose to draw pictures which depict scenes from their group play episode while others make scale models of objects or people they portrayed. Still others may choose to dictate or write new stories based on the themes original episode and its vocabulary as their followup activity.

The final component of the language development phase of L.I.P.A. is the retyping of the groups' role playing episode into a more permanent form. Copies of the episode ~~are dis-~~ tributed to the children to keep. Children in each group may choose to read their episode to friends in other groups and even trade for a different episode to read on their own. A copy of each group's L.I.P.A. episode may be posted on the bulletin board along with related children's followup projects for everyone to see [Blohm & Yawkey, 1977]. Then new groups, formed spontaneously as new imaginative play episodes emerge, may be identified to proceed through the L.I.P.A. components.

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