

Expressive Arts



Drama In The Nursery

Expressive Arts:

I can use drama to explore real and imaginary situations, helping me to understand my world.

Louise Arbuckle of The Drama Studio has recently completed a series of staff training sessions with Cameron House Nursery. The staff had identified drama as a way to increase children's confidence and to develop social and language skills (also helping children with additional language needs) in a creative environment.

Louise took a progressive approach with the staff, fully understanding the nervousness that many teachers have of this type of work. She asked them firstly to try to enter the world of the child, to overcome adult self-consciousness and to focus on providing a stimulus for the children's learning.

Crucial to drama teaching is 'teacher in role' technique which ensures animated delivery and instantly engages the children. It would be the mastering of this technique that would open their minds to a whole new teaching and learning experience.

Louise used the well-known Billy Goats Gruff story as a starting point leading the lesson while the staff observed. They were surprised by the children's natural responses and even those with spoken language limitations understood the story and followed instructions remarkably well. Parents heard all about the drama story and one child wanted to take Louise home 'to play the drama game again!'

During the next lesson the nursery staff took the plunge and became different characters within the story learning the 'in role' technique. They have continued to practise this technique at other times during the regular nursery day referring to it as 'pockets of drama'.

Using Chinese New Year as a theme, Louise also led a movement lesson which demonstrated the power of mime in young children's communication. This is of immense value to all children and particularly to those who are shy.

The final session saw the progression through to the purest level of creative drama teaching, developing the story almost entirely from the children's imaginations. The skill now is keeping the children focused and maintaining leadership while at the same time 'letting them go,' allowing creative freedom. This final step requires courage on the teaching side but the rewards and learning experiences are well worth it.

In the evaluation meeting the whole process was discussed with reference to *Curriculum*



For Excellence. All the staff agreed that every strand had been covered. The confidence of both children and staff had markedly increased. The staff had gained so much from this most enchanting and totally absorbing activity with children who are probably at the most receptive stage of their lives. They now had superb new skills in both their understanding of how children learn and how best to facilitate this learning.

Louise teaches drama classes for The Drama Studio within several Edinburgh nursery schools but training the staff to do it for themselves has been ground breaking indeed. If you wish to contact the Drama Studio for further information you can do so on 0131 453 3284 or visit the website www.thedramastudio.com e-mail: info@thedramastudio.com

Quotes from Cameron House staff course evaluations.

'She put staff at ease using these ideas and building our confidence. I now feel more able to plan a session after watching such a skilled professional at work. A truly talented drama specialist who had the children and adults gripped.'

Arelene Hay, Nursery Nurse

'So much content was covered in each session - very thorough planning to give us the best opportunities possible in the time available and just right for the children. Very good value both professionally and financially.'

Chris McCormick, Head Teacher

'Louise can always think of doing something that matches the current themes of our nursery.'

Queenie Tam, Nursery Nurse

'Louise put people in a comfort zone. Staff have confidence to try drama now.'

Debbie Finney, Secretary

