

Construction Lesson with Infants to 2nd Classes 'Obstacle Courses'

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Curriculum Strand: Construction (Visual Arts Curriculum p.22, 38)

Objective: *Explore and experiment with the properties and characteristics of materials in making structures (p.22, 38)*

Linkage:

Paint and Colour > *Use colour to express vividly recalled feelings, experiences and imaginings (p.19)*
Explore colour with a variety of materials and media (p.32)

Drawing > *Discover and draw line and shape as seen in natural and manufactured objects and discover that lines can make shapes (p.18)*
Explore shape as seen in natural and manufactured objects and become aware of the shape of shadows cast by objects (p.30)

Print > *Experiment with the effects that can be achieved with simple print-making (p.20)*

Clay > *Make a clay form and manipulate it with fingers to suggest a subject (p.21)*

Fabric and Fibre > *Make simple collages (p.23)*

Integration Possibilities:

Science: *Observe, discuss and identify a variety of plants and animals in different habitats in the immediate environment (p.24)*

Observe, identify and explore a variety of living things in local habitats and environments (p.42)

Oral Language: *Experiment with descriptive words to add elaborative detail (p.18)*

Experiment with more elaborate vocabulary and sentence structure in order to extend and explore meaning (p.27)

Physical Education: *Develop the basic movement actions of running, stopping, jumping, rolling, climbing, transferring weight, balancing, swinging, twisting and turning using a variety of body parts while exploring space (p.20)*

Develop the basic movement actions of balancing, rolling, turning, twisting, stretching, climbing, and transferring weight using a variety of body parts while exploring space (p.30)

Mathematics: *Explore, discuss, develop and use the vocabulary of spatial relations (p.28, 48)*

Developing this Activity in Class:

Before I start an art lesson I find it very helpful to do a little exercise with the children to unlock their imaginations and to create a safe environment in the classroom for them to show and discuss their work without fear of ridicule. Mankind's imagination got us out of the caves and onto the moon!! Anything can happen in our imagination if we only let it! "Close your eyes and imagine a big door. It can be any colour you like. Written across the door in big capital letters is the word IMAGINATION. Now reach out and slowly open the door, let your imagination out! Open your eyes and let me see the sparkle! Now we can do anything, our imaginations are at work and we are all different!"

Materials Needed: Construction toys, e.g., Lego, wooden blocks, mobilo, stickle bricks ...

Stimulus:

Serendipity
 Serendipity the snail
 Can't move very fast,
 I've been waiting *ages* for her -
 Here she comes at last,
 Strolling slowly on her tummy
 Down the garden path.
 I tried it once and I was told
 To go and have a bath.
Wendy Cope

"Have you ever seen a snail moving along the ground? How does it move? If there is something in its way how does it get past? Describe how the snail does this. Have YOU ever tried to get past obstacles? Have you ever taken part in an obstacle race? Describe what it was like. Now, imagine an obstacle race for snails! Could you make a tricky obstacle course for them? Remember that the snail has a shell to carry about too!"

Activity:

The children use the construction toys to construct the obstacle course. This is an ideal opportunity for children to collaborate and work in groups. Encourage the children to describe the course and to explain what each snail must do to complete the race. This will elicit words such as over, under, around, between, along, beside, up, down swing, climb, stretch, etc. Use of the construction toys allows plenty of scope for change and a mix of toys encourages great use of the imagination!

Evaluation/Looking and Responding:

This will be happening as the children work. Encourage them to talk about their ideas, where they think the snails might have difficulties with the course and how they came up with their ideas. When they have finished, give each group time to describe what they have done and to ask questions of each other.

Extension Activities:

The children can make obstacle courses for people using the construction toys. Older children can use card, paper, found objects and glue to make these obstacle courses, they have great fun doing it.
Make a print of Serendipity's slime trail using marbles/golf balls, white or silver paint on black paper.
Draw Serendipity's shell.
Send Serendipity on holiday and paint her house in your favourite colours or colours you think she would like.
Pull Serendipity's shape out of a ball of clay.
Make a collage of Serendipity's favourite food using scraps of fabrics of different shades of green and a range of different textures and patterns.

ICT Possibilities:

Photograph the children's work before it is dismantled and scan it into the computer. The children (and you) now have a record of their fabulous constructions.

Using the I Am An Artist DVD:

The *Construction* programmes on the DVD offer opportunities to see children making constructions, using a variety of construction toys.

Note:

I have used this lesson with all classes in the school and the children have had great fun doing it. Older children—3rd to 6th Classes—use a selection of card, paper, matchsticks, waste materials, twigs, fabrics, etc to make the courses. One group of children then collected snails and had the race in the classroom! The snails went for it and had a clear winner!

Relevant Artists:**Relevant Websites:**

Scoilnet, which is a portal to lots of sites useful in the classroom
<http://www.scoilnet.ie>