

Case study

The Play Museum

Details

What:

The Play Museum is an Artist in Residence project delivered in partnership by Kurilpa Community Child Care Centre and Imaginary Theatre. The project focused on kindergarten students working as artists and leaders in their own specialist creative form; play.

Artists, Verena Curr and Nathan Stoneham, worked with students and staff over a ten week exploratory and innovative residence where the students were centred as experts and the adults as their support staff.

The students were inspired to creative extensions through experiences from their play. Mud play led to landscaped forms and discussion on urban and environmental issues. A visit to the Planetarium led to student-constructed cardboard sky gazing and imagineering. New circumstances were generated through dramatic play and 'what-if' exploring and prototyping.

This play supported the creative process of film making with the students as creative directors, designers, actors, prop makers, script writers, ticket sellers, hosts, advertising gurus and event managers.

The residency culminated in an interactive multi-artform installation event held at Kurilpa with carers, family and friends invited to join the students in their creative experience.

When:

October to December 2014



Realising the design of *The Ticket Booth* for the Play Museum.
Photo by Nathan Stoneham

Where:

Kurilpa Community Childcare Centre, West End, Brisbane

Key stats:

- 5 artists involved
- 35 students
- 16 activities

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$20 000– Artist in Residence Program

Contact for further information:

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Website:

<http://imaginarytheatre.wix.com/theplaymuseum#>

Outcomes

- Artists deepened and extended their existing knowledge and skills of working in an early years educational setting.

“We enjoyed the discovery that AIR does not necessarily have to be approached as a workshop module, but by having artists on hand as an accessible resource for children and educators working in educational settings in a range of ways allows for the development of new ideas, possibilities, and different kinds of engagement. (E.G. ‘The Studio’)”

- Educators gained greater depth to their ideas and insight into what arts-led education can look like in the early years.
- Imaginary Theatre’s ‘Play Provocation’ methodology was shared as a resource with teachers, helping them to further embed the arts as an integrated aspect of their daily practice and curriculum.
- Early learners were immersed in an enriching arts and creative-led environment, participating in multiple art forms, collaborating in group problem solving activities, and showcasing their work at a community event. A number of parents noticed positive changes in their children.

“Why did it make you feel [happy]:

‘Because we had a magazine to make’ - Astrid, 5

‘We played the game I made’ - Oscar, 5”



Inside the planetarium at *The Play Museum*. Photo by Nathan Stoneham

Learnings and reflections

Imaginary Theatre reflected that positive collaborative exchange was due to the high level of commitment by the artists, the educators and the Centre’s administrators. Communicating clearly and openly about the project, fostered this commitment.

“The development and investment in building professional relationships and setting up effective means for communication are key to the success of the project.”

Building strong, trusting, relationships with the students and planning project delivery with flexibility was also very important to the success of the project.

“An AIR in an early years setting must be flexible to respond to the environment and to the children’s interests to be most effective and deliver meaningful learning outcomes.

Relationships with children are fundamental to an emergent curriculum”

Imaginary Theatre found that the timing of the project, both in terms of time during the day and time of year, had an effect on engagement levels. This will be taken into consideration when developing timelines for future projects.

“Working in an early years setting the children have the capacity to engage better in the mornings as opposed to the afternoons when they become tired and often less focused.”

“The timing of the project plays a significant role in the effectiveness of the program. Term 4 or end of year is not the best time for the project. It needs to be delivered in Term 2 or 3.”