

FINGERPLAY BOOT CAMP



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Fingerplaying: Teachers' Roles

- 1 Introduce children to the love of learning, language and movement.
- 2 Model adult playfulness, creativity, spontaneity, literacy and community building
- 3 Provide a safe place for children to learn about their voices, bodies, and identities and the world
- 4 Plant seeds of self confidence, self observation, and positive self concept in growing human beings
- 5 Select rhymes and literature that will bring joy to all of us – teachers and children alike

You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.

~Clay P. Bedford

The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn.

~John Lubbock

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A New Approach to Fingerplays

Today, many educators see fingerplays as a great way to teach concepts, involve themes, and facilitate transitions. And they are. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. Fingerplays are a **foundational learning activity**. They are one of the first activities (along with songs and group games) that children participate in in a group setting. For this reason, fingerplays should fill the child with a positive feeling for group times, for their own bodies, for working with other people, and for language – rhyme – rhythm – poetry. These first experiences in a “learning together” setting will help to form the basis of the child’s attitudes and beliefs about all group settings that they participate in thereafter. If they find the experience enjoyable, they will bond to it. Positive early group experiences help children see themselves as competent and capable learners. Zest for learning and participating is awakened!

Selecting Joy

When selecting fingerplays, many of us make our decisions according to theme. There is a great deal of merit in choosing materials that compliment each other. Learning is enhanced. But quite often, we end up using the same fingerplays, with a new face for each season. Five little pumpkins. Five little snowmen. Five little raindrops. Five little ... By the time the children reach spring, they may instead feel like “Five Little Bored Children”. They know the rhyme. They can see that it is not the most thrilling thing for you to be doing either! So by selecting on the basis of theme, and not necessarily choosing a fingerplay because you just found it and can’t wait to share it with the children – you have accidentally created a “rut” mentality by example. So use Joy as your guide. See your role as a teacher to be one of introducing magic and inspiring genius! Any one of these children could learn several fingerplays in an hour, so why use the same one each month with a new “thematic” coat of paint? Teach them to love discovery, challenge, variety, and play! Give them fingerplays that will be so fun that they will play with them outside on the playground. Don’t recycle tired fingerplays. Instill a desire to learn!

Whole Fingerplays

When you are teaching a fingerplay for the first time, keep one thing in mind – fun. Say and play the whole rhyme at once. Do not stop after each line, or show in any way that you want them to “get it right”. The children are watching you for their cues. They are wondering what they should be doing, and what is important. If you stop after every line (for them to repeat it, or nodding your head up and down as the last child fumbles with the last line, then they will understand that this is a test - *that they are expected to perform*. They will be testing themselves and trying to “not make a mistake”. If you expect everyone to say the words and make the actions at the same time, they will pick up on that. Many resources will instruct you to say one line at a time, and go slowly. Don’t. Go at the pace that provides the maximum amount of fun. The children will not be frustrated with themselves unless they have been taught to be. Repeat the rhyme several times over days and weeks, and everyone will “get it”. But what is more, everyone will reap the benefits of the joyous first experience. The initial experience forms our beliefs and attitudes about ourselves, groups, tasks, teachers, language, and learning. The best way to learn something is if you don’t even know you are learning.

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How to use Fingerplays with Children:

Discover Each Line Every Time

Often we go into “automatic” mode when presenting songs and fingerplays (even reading books). Our rhythm and intonation and voice take on a robotic lull. Try being what you are saying. Taste every word. Slow down enough to let the play in. Wake up in the middle of each idea, each picture, and let the meaning of that moment carry you away. Each word is a universe with feelings, smells, tastes, arms, legs, and taxis. Feel and be each word.

Experience the full emotional range. This is where fun comes from!

Make it Fun

You know what fun is! Go ahead and play. It is more important that you create a love of learning, a desire to participate in a directed group activity, than it is to get “the point” across.

Not competence Based

You can present the rhymes as something to have fun with, or you can present them as something that the children must “get”. If you wait for them to finish lines, go artificially slowly, make them repeat lines after you, you are emphasizing the “getting it” part. Underneath the “teaching” the message that you are sending the children is “I don’t trust you”. Yes, there may be a concept to convey, or a skill to learn, but if those precede the positive social and emotional benefit of the fingerplay, the greater benefit is lost because of the more measurable, tangible one. If you share the fingerplays showing genuine excitement and pleasure, the message is “This is fun! You should try this!”

Repetition

Repeat fingerplays often. This gives the children a chance to embody all that the fingerplay has to offer, and experiment with their own learning style. If they are good rhymes, the children will request them.

Teach the Whole Thing

Don’t break it up line by line. This puts all the focus on competence and takes it away from the joy of being together. Did anyone slow the record down so you could learn the chicken dance? The cd for the Macarena? Focus on fun.

Look for and Acknowledge Individual Discovery

Each child is sending signals the entire time they are playing with a rhyme. You may not consciously know what those signals are, but if you take your time, and look into the eyes of each child, you will know when to reflect an emotion you see, or offer encouragement, or connect in some other way. Use those eyes and ears!

Adapt the Rhymes

No fingerplay is perfect. Look for opportunities to play with and change them on the fly. Children do this naturally. They crave an understanding of structure. How many children hear the chicken crossing the road joke, then tell it with a potato, a head, a garbage pail, or an octopus instead of a chicken? The jokes may not make sense in the formal way, but watch the other children – they are discovering what is funny and what is not at the same time. They laugh. Watch the children and reflect innovations.

Distraction and rest from worries / stress
 Self discipline
 Breathing
 Rhythmic Awareness
 Self as fun
 Motivation to Learn
 Joy, Enjoyment, Satisfaction
 Empathy / trust
 Active Agents - Self as Competent
 Dexterity
 Sequencing skills
 Community
 Calming

What is the Value of Fingerplaying?

Group these words into:
 E-Emotional
 SC-Self Concept
 P-Physical
 S-Social
 C-Cognitive

Brain Development
 Empathy
 RHYTHM
 Self as safe - belonging
 Possibility maker
 RHYTHM
 PLAYFUL
 Concepts
 Pattern prediction
 Listening
 Semi structured play

Problem solving skills
 Memory
 Pre-literacy Skills
 Joy in cooperation and belonging
 Observation
 Trust
 Exercise
 POSITIVE PHYSICAL SELF CONCEPT
 Curious about
 Phoneme awareness
 World

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HANDS IN THE AIR

Put your...

Start low and slow, get ready to stretch high

Hands in the air...

Hands up high

Hands on the ground..

Touch the ground

Finger on your nose...

Press fingertip to nose tip and extend tongue

And your tongue all around...

Trace circles with tongue while speaking

Put your hands behind your head...

Sitting straight up again, slightly back

And your elbows on your knees...

This is the tough one. Slow down and quiet down at this point, and children will do the same.

Put your chin in your hands

Matter of factly, as if watching the grass grow

And say "The moon is made of cheese"

Eye contact is important. Children may repeat it with or after you.

WORMS UP WORMS DOWN

Start with hand and forearm level across the chest, parallel to ground. Take index finger of opposite hand and stick it straight up from behind your hand, closest to your chest. Work towards elbow in a sewing motion for first half, conceal the finger behind the thick of the forearm, then sew backwards from elbow to starting place hand in second chapter. Finish with bird (your mouth) gobbling the worm from starting position.

CHAPTER 1

Worms up
Worms down

Worms up
Worms down

Worms up
Worms down

Worms are hiding
In the ground.

CHAPTER 2

Worms down
Worms up

Worms down
Worms up

Worms down
Worms up

Birds will come
And eat you up!

INSIDE MY HAND

Inside my hand

Catch the elf out of mid air with one hand

I hold an elf.

Show excitement or conspiracy - believe it

I'll put him safe

Make shelf with arm and flat hand crossing chest or abdomen, parallel to the floor

Below this shelf.

Show that the shelf is sturdy, smuck fist with elf in it tight below shelf.

He tries to wiggle

Wiggle fist and appear to be struggling to get it under control

And jiggle and hop.

The elf looks like it is going to get away!

And so I put him safe

Pull fist quickly from underneath and put it on top of back of flat hand

- On top!

Thank goodness, he's stopped struggling

But still he tries to wriggle away.

Again wiggle the fist

So I open my hands,

Slow right down, lean down to floor, place fist on floor

And he runs away.

Open hand slowly and watch as elf escapes across classroom and out door or window

Repeat later with two hands (two elves), using the chin as 'below this shelf' and on top of the head as

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THERE'S A ROCK BY THE RIVER

There's a rock by the river

Fist beside mouth, as if mouth is river

And a rock by the river

Other fist on other side of mouth

And a fish in between

Open and close mouth like fish (three times)

Biggest you've ever seen

Open and close mouth like fish (again)

And he's drinking all the water

"Glug glug glug"

And he's drinking all the water

"Glug glug glug"

There's a tree by the river

Two fingers pointing up beside mouth

And a tree by the river

Same with other hand

And a beaver in between

kissing sound - top front teeth over bottom lip (three times) Biggest you've ever seen

Repeat

And she's eating all the trees

Turn head and pretend to eat fingers (three times)

And she's eating all the trees

Repeat

There are flies by the river

Wiggle five fingers beside mouth

There are flies by the river

Same with other hand

And a frog in between

Make "mlph" sound and stick tongue out (three times)

Biggest you've ever seen

Repeat

And he's eating all the flies

Stick tongue out at fingers (three times)

And he's eating all the flies

Repeat, other hand

There's a picnic by the river

Closed fist by mouth, different than rock

And a picnic by the river

Same with other hand

And a ME in between

Sing "La la la la" waving both arms over head

Biggest you've ever seen

Sing "La la la la" waving both arms over head

And I'm eating all the Pizza

(Make munching sound and eat fists) (three times)

And I'm eating all the Pizza

Repeat

The three repetitions of each action are on equal, accentuated beats.

GOOD BYE TALL

Goodbye Tall

Wave to children, hand up high

Goodbye Middle

Wave from halfway to the ground

Goodbye teeny with the tiny fiddle

Waving with one finger and small voice - down low

Goodbye Loose

Wave in a wobbly, loose fashion

Goodbye Tight

Wave rigidly in short, quick waves

Good morning

Lean to left, wave both hands with arms stretched out

Good afternoon

Wave both hands up high

Good evening

Lean to right and wave

Goodnight!

Put palms together (like pillow)

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MR. WIGGLE AND MR. WAGGLE.

Once there were two friends
Mr. Wiggle, and Mr. Waggle.
They lived in identical houses.
Mr. Wiggle went in his house like this,
He opened the door,
went inside,
and closed the door.
Mr. Waggle went into his house like this,
He opened his door,
went inside,
and closed the door.

One day, Mr. Wiggle Decided to visit Mr. Waggle.
He opened his door,
came out
and closed his door.
Then he went up the hill and down the hill
and up the hill and down the hill and up
the hill and down the hill until he reached
the home of Mr. Waggle.
Where he knocked on the door.
And called out "Oh Mr. Waaaaguuuul".
But Mr. Waggle didn't answer, so Mr.
Wiggle knocked louder
and called out, "oh Mr.
Waaaguuuul!"
But There was still no answer, so Mr.
Wiggle knocked even louder,
and called out even louder "oh Mr.
Waaaaaguuuul!", but there was
no answer. So Mr. Wiggle
decided to go home,
he went - up the hill and down the hill, and
up the hill and down the hill and up
the hill and down the hill until he
reached his own house,
Where he opened the door,
stepped inside,
and closed the door
Well, wouldn't you know it!

The very next morning
Mr. Waggle decided to go visit
Mr. Wiggle
So he opened his door,
stepped out
and went - up the hill and down
the hill and up the hill and
down the hill and up the hill
and down the hill until
he reached the home of Mr. Wiggle.
He knocked on the door.
And called out, "Oh Mr. Wiggle!"

But there was no answer.
So he knocked on the door again,
and called out again "Oh Mr. Wiggle!"
but still there was no answer.
So Mr. Waggle knocked again, as loud
as he could.
And called out as loud as he could,
"Oh Mr. Wiggle!" But there was no answer,
so Mr. Waggle decided to go home.

He went - up the hill and down the hill
and up the hill and down the hill and
up the hill and down the hill
until he came to his own home,
where he opened the door,
stepped inside,
and closed the door.

Well wouldn't you know it!
The very next morning,
Mr. Wiggle
AND Mr. Waggle decided to go visit
each other.
They both opened their doors,
they both stepped out,
they both closed their doors.
And they both went, up the hill and
down the hill, and up the hill and down
the hill and
uuuups! THEY MET AT THE TOP OF
THE HILL!!!!

They shared the news,
They shared the gossip,
They talked about hills, and doors and
Ups and downs, and when they had said
everything they had wanted to say, they
said "Goodbye" "Goodbye" and they both went home.
They went down the hill and up the hill and down the
and up the hill and down the hill and up the Hill
Until they got to their own houses, where they opened
their doors,
stepped inside,
and closed their doors
and the next time they wanted to talk,
they used the
Telephone

-Traditional

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A Hodge Podge of Helpful Resources

Books

What'll I do With The Baby-O?

I'm a Little Teapot! Presenting Preschool Storytime

by Jane Cobb, Black Sheep Press.

Creative Fingerplays and Action Rhymes: An index and guide to their use.

Jeff Defty

Where is Thumbkin?: 500 Activities to Use with Songs You Already Know

Pam Schiller (Anything by Pam)

Ring Around The Moon, Sally Go Round The Sun

Edith Fowke

Websites

Youtube.com – search “fingerplay” or “finger rhyme” or

This woman has put a heap of work into rhymes and activities!

<http://cullensabcs.com/category/activity-idea-videos/all-videos-themes-categories/>

Some neat old favourites here

<http://www.nncc.org/Curriculum/fingerplay.html>

<http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/~tales/> Your Neighbourhood Tellers!

www.storiesbykevin.com

Call me with any questions. I love to chat about fingerplays.

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Don't forget your friendly neighbourhood Librarian!!!

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