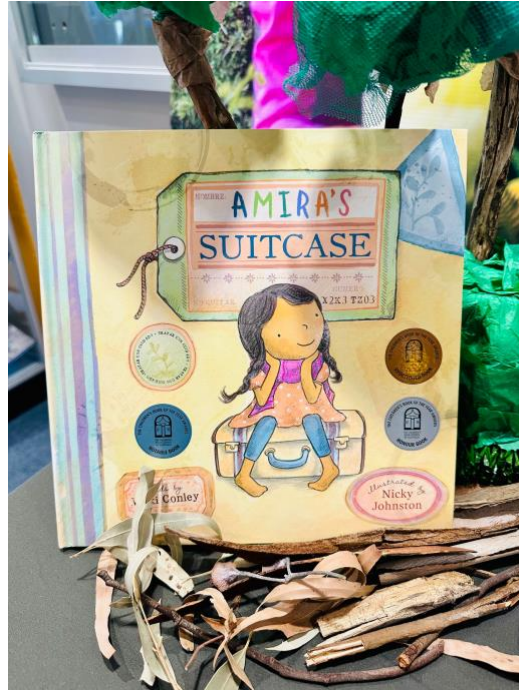


Amira's Suitcase

Vikki Conley
New Frontier Publishing



**Planning a *Conceptual PlayWorld* in STEM (Fleer, 2022)
Monash PlayLab**

Five Characteristics of a Conceptual PlayWorld to support imaginary play and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) thinking and learning (Fleer, 2022)

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned	Conceptual PlayWorld in action
<p>Selecting a story for the <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i></p> <p>Story: Amira's Suitcase Written by Vikki Conley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Selecting a story that is enjoyable to children and adults. Summary of the story. ■ Building drama for the characters in the story. ■ Building empathy for the characters in the story. ■ A plot that lends itself to introducing a problem situation. Overview of the problem. ■ Being clear about the concept(s) and its relation to the story and play plot to be developed. ■ Adventures or journeys that spring from the plot (e.g., chapters). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This story is about a girl named Amira who has a suitcase and inside a plant is growing. It brings forward the concept of pollination (the life cycle of a plant). ■ Develop the drama in the story e.g. "keeping the treasures [seeds] safe". The magic and excitement of watching a plant grow and change. ■ Develop empathy with the Amira. We encourage the adult and children to look closely at the illustrations. Why do you think Amira has a suitcase? The plant becomes Amira's friend. The children in the story share a

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		<p>curiosity about plants. Her new friends Nala and Tien also have seeds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Amira knows that her plant needs soil, sun, and water. I wonder where seeds come from. ■ Concept – pollination. ■ Problem situation: The plants need the children’s help to find bees. Pollination is essential for the ecosystem. ■ Possible plot extension: Introduce new characters e.g. bee characters “the pollinators”. Did you know that bees carry pollen on their legs and body from one plant to another? ■ Perhaps you could meet birds, bats, etc. who also help the pollination process.
<p>Designing a <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i> space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Finding a space in the classroom/centre/outdoor area suitable for an imaginary <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i> of the story. ■ Designing opportunities for child-initiated play in ways that develop the play plot further or explore concepts and make them more personally meaningful. ■ Planning different opportunities for children to represent their ideas and express their understandings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A section in the outside space could be turned into a beehive (the nest of a bee colony). This is where bees store food e.g. honey, honeycomb, pollen, and house the bee eggs. ■ You could meet an Apiologist who studies bees. You could also pretend to be a beekeeper. ■ You might meet Amira and her friends. ■ You could role play being a worker bee flying from flower to flower. How do they communicate where the pollen is? Do they have wings? How far do they fly? ■ Draw the life cycle of a fruit tree. Is there a bee in your drawing? It’s important for pollination. You could also role play the life cycle of a fruit tree. How does a seed sprout? What role does a bee play?

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Entering and exiting the <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i> space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan a routine for the whole group to enter and exit the <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i> of the story where all the children are in the same imaginary situation. ■ Children choose characters as they enter into the imaginary situation. ■ Adult is always a character in the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To signify entering and exiting the imaginary situation (e.g. Beehive) you could pretend to fly. You might like to make wings or antennae to signal you are in character. ■ Children and adults could pretend to be apiologists to learn more about the important work of bees for the life cycle of a fruit tree. ■ Or you could pretend to be bees. ■ You could pretend to be Amira, Nala, Tien gardening. You could climb “up, up, up” like in the story.
Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Problem scenario is not scripted, but a general idea of the problem is planned. ■ The problem scenario is dramatic and engaging. ■ The problem invites children to investigate solutions to help the play in the <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i>. ■ Being clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation. Concepts are in service of the children’s play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Plants send a message, such as “Dear Children, I’m so excited because it’s Spring. I’m an apple tree and I can’t grow fruit for Amira and her friends until bees bring the pollen from the blossom of another tree. Can you please find the bees? They might be in their beehive. Love from the Plant in the Suitcase” ■ You could visit the bees and tell them there is a new fruit tree. ■ Or you could pretend to be a bee and learn about the bee dance (the “waggle” dance). You could communicate the direction and distance of the pollen. ■ You could travel from flower to flower. Without bees we wouldn’t have fruit to eat. What other plants do bees pollenate? ■ Concept – pollination.
Planning adult interactions to build conceptual learning in role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adults are not always the same character. Roles are not scripted. ■ Planning of who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem. There are different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There are different roles adults can take: Adults plan their role for the PlayWorld to be equally present with the older children (e.g. “Let’s investigate the role of bees in the ecosystem.”), or to model practises in role (e.g. “I’m an

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned	Conceptual PlayWorld in action
	<p>roles adults can take: Adults plan their role for the <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i> to be equally present with the children, or to model practices in role, or to be needing help from the children. Their role can also be together with the child leading (primordial we), where they literally cradle the child or hold their hand and together act out the role or solution.</p>	<p>apiologist, I love bees. Did you know that bees have hair on their bodies to collect flower pollen?”), or to be needing help from the children (e.g. I’m a plant. How do I grow fruit?”). Their role can also be together with the child leading (primordial we) (e.g. Let’s pretend to be bees and fly from one plant to another.) where they literally cradle the child or hold their hand and together act out the role or solution.</p>

Acknowledgment: Australian Research Council Laureate Fellowship Scheme (Grant Number 180100161) funding contributed to the development of open access curriculum materials and research: Fler, M. (2022). *Conceptual PlayWorlds*: Monash University Working Papers: <https://www.monash.edu/education/research/projects/conceptual-playlab/publications>