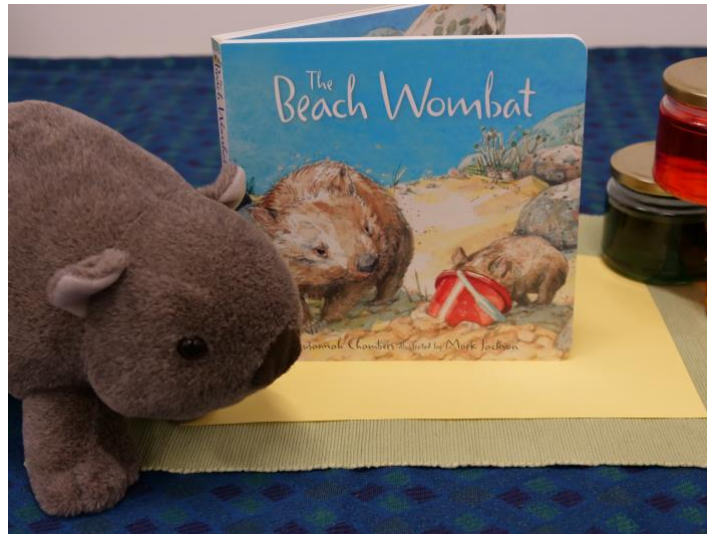


The Beach Wombat
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Planning a *Conceptual PlayWorld* in STEM (Fleer, 2022)
Monash PlayLab

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>	<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 book is about a wombat experiencing life in a national park. What adventures does the wombat get up to? ■ Children develop empathy for the wombat when the rain comes ... ■ Concept - nocturnal animals (adaptation for survival). The imaginary situation takes place during the night when the wombats are out exploring, foraging and digging. ■ Possibilities to extend the play plot: Oh no, it's raining. The wombat is lost and needs to get home to the burrow. The children can pretend to be various nocturnal animals and help the wombat get home before sunrise.

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned	Conceptual PlayWorld in action
Designing a <i>Conceptual PlayWorld</i> space	<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"> ■ Turn any outdoor space into a national park full of animals. Is it day or is it night when you visit? When you visit during the night what animals do you meet? ■ Pretending to be the wombat and other nocturnal animals. What adventures do they get up to during the night? How do they adapt? Investigate their adaptations e.g. eyes & sight, claws, sense of smell. How would it feel to be a wombat lost in the national park? ■ Invite children to represent their ideas about nocturnal animals and wombats e.g. draw wombat tunnels and show them to the wombat, role play the behaviour of nocturnal animals e.g. sleeping during the day, active at night when you visit the imaginary national park. ■ Creating craft work (e.g. make puppets) to represent animals and their nocturnal adaptations, e.g. big ears for a Bilby. Have fun playing new adventures with the puppets.
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 the imaginary situation together you could pretend to crawl through a wombat tunnel (you could use a playground equipment tunnel). Remember to crawl through the tunnel on your way home. ■ Children and adults choose to be characters e.g. the lost wombat, wombat friends or family. Other nocturnal animals e.g. koalas, bilbies, bats, owls, possums. Where do you live? Who's in your

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		<p>family? What do you eat? Do you come across campers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is there a colony/mob/wisdom of wombats? Is there a baby wombat? Did you know that wombats have backwards facing pouches (just like koalas)? ■ Children (or adults) could pretend to be wildlife biologists as ‘experts’, park rangers protecting the animals.
<p>Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario</p>	<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"> ■ Receive a letter from the Wombat in the story: “Dear children, I need your help. It started raining and I’m lost. I miss my family. I need to find my way home. Please send your nocturnal friends to help me find my way home before sunrise. Love from the Baby Wombat” ■ Which animals will be awake to help the wombat find its way home before sunrise? ■ Children can investigate and pretend to be nocturnal animals. Which animals are nocturnal? ■ What characteristics do wombats have? Did you know they live in burrows and tunnels? What adventures do they get up to during the night? How do they adapt? e.g. Pretend to be wombats with long claws to dig burrows. ■ Pretend to be a Baby Wombat and investigate adaptation in nocturnal animals, e.g. Why do some animals see better at night? Why do some animals have a better sense of smell? Can you smell the grass, shrubs, roots and vegetables?

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned	Conceptual PlayWorld in action
<p>Planning adult interactions to build conceptual learning in role</p>	<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 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 	<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 children (e.g. “What is a nocturnal animal?”), or to model practices in role (e.g. I’m a Wildlife Biologist. Did you know you’ve got an excellent sense of smell that helps you find your way in the dark?), or to be needing help from the children (e.g. “Tell me what animals could help the Baby Wombat at night? Who would be awake?”) Their role can also be as together with the child leading (primordial we) (e.g. “Let’s pretend to be the baby wombat together. We could dig tunnels and sleep during the day.”) where they literally cradle the child or hold their hand and together act out the role or solution ■ Conceptual intentions are planned: Planning of who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem.

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