

# Drama

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Guidelines for Teachers of Students with

**SEVERE and PROFOUND**

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General Learning Disabilities

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# Introduction

**Educational drama emphasises the active process of creating a story with an unfolding plot. This understanding of narrative—how events are linked—can help students to see patterns and sequences, as well as the significance and implications of situations.**

**Potentially, drama offers an integrating approach for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities that holistically addresses their learning needs. It can increase their ability to relate to others more effectively and with greater sensitivity.**

Drama, in focusing on an aspect of human experience, (for example, when characters are faced with some kind of problem or dilemma) helps students to become aware of the emotional states and intentions of others and helps them to develop their ability to influence and create an impact on situations. The appeal of drama to students of all abilities is that they are caught up in situations that are fun and intriguing, all at the same time. They are engaged in active learning, in contexts that are live, dynamic, and likely to be remembered. Drama can also be used to enhance memory skills and to help students recollect past experiences.

Drama can contribute to the development of students' ability to engage in representational thought. It offers an inside-out approach to symbolic understanding; for example, witnessing the transformation of a member of staff into 'someone other' and seeing their familiar environment and everyday items acquire new flexible meanings; a table becoming an ironing board, a cave or a bed.

Drama can provide a reason and sense of urgency to use and apply practical skills, concepts and factual knowledge; for example, counting skills, dressing programmes, or making eye-contact and tracking a moving object (teacher-in-role wearing an intriguing hat). These may be introduced through the drama, so capitalising on a vivid and memorable learning opportunity. Objectives from students' individual education plans may also be worked on in the meaningful drama context (for example, behaviour programmes, mobility skills), with drama helping to raise their self-esteem through experiencing satisfaction, fun and enjoyment.

Drama has a particular contribution to make to the development of communication and language. Vocabulary may be introduced in the naturalistic drama context. Alternatively, the drama may be manipulated so that a student is required to use a particular communication skill to obtain something. Drama may also provide the motivation to work on articulation skills or the use of switches (for example, to create sound effects). Some students may be challenged to organise their ideas logically and concisely, with a teacher-in-role becoming legitimately impatient!

Drama also offers important opportunities to promote social interaction skills. These may include turn-taking, making eye contact, focusing attention and sustaining concentration, and developing awareness (and tolerance) of being part of a group. Some students may be challenged to use socially appropriate body language, to offer appropriate comments or to select appropriate language for the particular context. Engaging in playful activity through drama helps to stimulate creative, flexible thinking. It enables students to begin to anticipate, predict and embrace change and difference.

Drama is a group experience. For these students, it should have a strong sensory component in order to enable them to access the shared experience through a range of sensory modes. There are many opportunities for developing this awareness through use of costumes, props and the creation of atmosphere (see *Approaches and methodologies*). Potentially, drama offers an integrating approach for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities that holistically addresses their learning needs. It can increase their ability to relate to others more effectively and with greater sensitivity.

## Overview of content

### Content strand and strand units

The content of the *Primary School Curriculum, Drama* is presented in one strand:

*Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding.*

This is sub-divided into three strand units that describe aspects of drama exploration, experience and activity. The strand units are

- Exploring and making drama
- Relating to drama
- Co-operating and communicating in making drama.

### Exploring and making drama

At early stages of learning, the foundations of make-believe are created in playful situations where adults reinforce spontaneous responses and invest them with meaning. Students with severe and profound general learning disabilities discover make-believe through being immersed within the group drama experience that requires commitment from everyone to make it work—staff and students. Supporting staff members have a crucial responsibility in generating an appropriate atmosphere and modelling play responses. Students need to experience, anticipate and contribute to tension and excitement, interspersed with moments of calm. They also need opportunities to imitate others, to initiate actions, and to learn to adapt their behaviour in the light of the make-believe consequences.

Drama activities with these students should be clear-cut, with an explicit turn-taking structure and a predictable narrative. The teacher working in role (see *Prerequisites for making drama*) on the inside of the drama is an effective way of drawing students into the make-believe without the need for characterisation as such (their roles can be notional—caught up, as themselves, in a fictitious situation). Students should be encouraged to relate to the teacher-in-role; a character in need is a particularly useful strategy for encouraging students to respond and show initiative, and it elevates their status in a reversal of the usual relationship.

Props and objects within the drama also help students to maintain focus; they should have a strong sensory appeal and their use should be carefully paced, working towards more symbolic and representational use of items.

### **Relating to drama**

For drama to be an effective learning medium, participants need to be enabled to engage meaningfully with the themes and issues contained in the material. This is particularly challenging on a cognitive level for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. However, responses of children at the early stages of learning tend to be on an emotional, affective level, long before they attain consolidated understanding of representational thought and reasoning. Similarly, for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities, it will be a matter of enabling them to engage on a feeling level with the content of a drama in order to begin to perceive its meaning.

Situations in drama need to have a resonance with real life, so that students may begin to make connections and apply their experiences. In this way, students with severe and profound general learning disabilities benefit from immediate opportunities to relate to the content of a drama; reflecting afterwards is more challenging. Nevertheless, this is important in order to put distance between the make-believe and the real world. It may be possible for some students to begin to extract significance from the drama by relating to key moments, captured through video replay of the lesson and the use of props as objects of reference.

Learning about human behaviour involves an understanding of motive, intention and consequences, and an appreciation of implications both for the individual himself/herself and for other people. Students with severe and profound general learning disabilities may begin to develop an awareness of their own potential influence through situations in which they immediately discover their impact on others. Teacher-in-role is a particularly powerful way of reinforcing this directly to students.

### **Co-operating and communicating in making drama**

Students require sensitive intervention by the teacher and supporting staff if they are to be enabled to make creative and imaginative contributions to the drama. The notion of a 'creative' response can be regarded as one that reflects a new connection or combination of ideas original to a particular student. The teacher should carefully pace the creative challenges within the group; it is necessary to structure choices in order to empower students to communicate decisions within clear boundaries both in and out of role.

An 'imaginative' response reflects the ability of a student to explore and experiment with memory, and to combine ideas rationally or irrationally. It is crucial, therefore, for the teacher of students with severe and profound general learning disabilities to feed their memory by providing a fund of experiences.

The time-gap for recall may need to be very short, with students enabled to access their memory of a previous experience through the use of visual hooks and concrete objects of reference, such as props and multi-sensory resources used within the drama.

At first, staff may need to support, prompt and model appropriate responses for students to imitate and gain confidence, and then aim to fade out the amount of support required. The important point is that staff should be sensitive not to dominate the activity. They should hold back 'one step behind' students wherever they can, with the intention of providing just the minimum amount of support to enable them to contribute a creative or imaginative response. For students at the early stages of awareness, being enabled to participate in a dramatic group activity will be a valuable experience for them. Having their fleeting reactions interpreted in order to influence the choice of costumes, props or the course of the dramatic action will require a conscious policy of careful observation on the part of all the staff involved.

Students' ability to communicate and contribute to drama does not always parallel their willingness to do so. Teachers need to be aware of the level of social challenge in drama work, especially for some students, and aim to extend their ability to engage in the group activity. Introducing drama to students with severe and profound general learning disabilities can offer them a unique reflective window on their behaviour, and make them more aware of their impact on others. Drama can be used to promote play capability; expectations will mirror a student's existing abilities, but with a view to scaffolding a way forward. This will influence the teacher's differentiation of the activity in and out of role, and determine how challenges will be pitched for individual learning needs.

Classroom drama essentially involves participants in improvised work that has a 'living through' feel to it. Aspects of this can be recaptured, presented again and communicated to others. This offers a meaningful way for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities to participate in a performance to an audience. They should also be enabled to contribute to behind-the-scenes preparations, such as creating scenery and costumes. Equally, students should have the experience of being part of an audience, in small informal settings and in more formal professional performances. The multi-sensory and multi-media appeal of productions and the atmosphere of the shared, collective experience will offer important learning opportunities for such students.

# School planning

The aims and broad objectives in the *Primary School Curriculum: Drama, Teacher Guidelines* indicate the value of drama for the student and should be interpreted freely in relation to students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. Likewise, many points raised in the section on school planning are also relevant. However, some specific issues require extra consideration.

## Curriculum and organisational planning

### A whole-school approach

Some teachers may be more confident in engaging with drama than others and may be willing to take a leading role in sharing knowledge with other staff members. Time and resources might be organised to facilitate sessions where ideas are discussed. Shared teaching might be desirable in some situations. The school might also consider building up a video selection of classroom dramas that have worked well. These could be used to stimulate ideas. Costumes and props that have been made for previous productions should be kept in the school as a common resource.

The abilities and needs of students with severe and profound general learning disabilities will need special consideration if a school drama is being planned. These students are challenged by drama conventions that require a sense of 'audience' in encapsulating and communicating ideas, thoughts or feelings, together with awareness of the potential impact of their work. That is not to say that they may not be involved in presentations and performance. Indeed, celebrating the whole school community in this way is important. The issue, rather, is to do with ensuring the dignity of the student, and avoiding tokenism. It is important to work to their strengths to elevate their status; for example, choosing an active role that allows for discreet prompting or maximising the power of the traditional image of a seated, silent figure. In working towards a school production, it will be beneficial to use classroom drama to explore issues around the production, ensuring that these are accessed in a way that is meaningful to all students.

## Planning for progression

Students with severe and profound general learning disabilities may present a range of challenges for the prospective teacher of drama. These should be addressed when planning the drama curriculum:

- developmentally, some students may not understand make-believe
- some students may lack security and the social skills necessary for engaging in pretence with others
- some students may have difficulty generating imaginary goals and sustaining make-believe responses.

Planning what to teach in drama is relatively straightforward. Drama at all levels seeks to illuminate an aspect of human experience, and it is this subject matter that essentially forms the learning intention. Issues tend to be universal and have application and relevance for all ages and abilities, for example, feeling scared in unfamiliar contexts, or helping someone in need.

The challenge for the teacher in terms of planning is more to do with how material is to be accessed to meet a range of learning needs. One possibility is to 'stream' drama according to the student's level of symbolic development, in order to have more homogeneous teaching groups. The alternative is to pitch activity so that it meets the range of needs in an inclusive group some, if not all, of the time. It is possible to structure the drama to include activity that can be enjoyed at a range of ability levels, and which nevertheless promotes valuable learning for all concerned; for example, physical or movement tasks, drama games, rituals, music, or art activities may be contextualised within the drama. The challenge for the teacher is then to differentiate the content of the drama by calling on a range of conventions and strategies in order for students to engage with the material.

*Indicators of increasingly purposeful participation in drama by students with severe and profound general learning disabilities will follow a developmental pattern, based on their growing ability to attend, respond and initiate.*

Unless the teacher structures the drama in ways that are developmentally appropriate, students will not be able to access the shared meaning (universal theme or issue affecting us all) embedded within the make-believe, and their participation will be only token. In their planning, teachers should structure activities based on the student's growing ability to attend, respond and initiate.

# Classroom planning

Many of the issues raised in the *Primary School Curriculum: Drama, Teacher Guidelines* guidelines are also relevant for teachers working with students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. Extra attention will need to be given to the following considerations.

## Curriculum and organisational planning

### Planning to increase the level of challenge

Any drama lesson is always a combination of teacher input and student input. The teacher should seek to increase the level of challenge in drama for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities by gradually:

- extending the number of options from which to make a structured choice or decision
- presenting a similar issue but in a different context (for example, teacher-in-role as a different character in need of practical help)
- developing a repertoire of emotional states to react to (for example, the same character played by the teacher-in-role but in a different mood)
- reducing the amount of staff support required to make an active contribution
- encouraging more interaction within the make-believe
- increasing the level of abstraction (for example, substituting photographs or pictures for real objects as props)
- demanding more challenging contributions from some students; abstract ideas (*'How shall we get our ball back?'*) as well as concrete clear-cut choices (*'Will we take milk or orange juice on our picnic?'*).

### Organising classroom staff

Teaching students with severe and profound general learning disabilities invariably involves teamwork. Consideration needs to be given to how the resource of support staff, especially Special Needs Assistants, will be maximised. It will be helpful to work to the strengths and interests of colleagues – whether they prefer to take on a character role or work more strategically alongside students. Supporting staff will need to be briefed clearly, so that they understand their function; it will be helpful too for the teacher and assistants to negotiate a signalling system with one another ahead of the drama.

The classroom team is (literally!) centre stage in holding the drama together, generating and sustaining tension and excitement, and giving shape to the emerging make-believe in order to give it significance.

The teacher needs to develop the ability to think quickly on the spot, especially when students may be relatively unforthcoming or else highly unpredictable. Gentle probing, however, can often reveal a logical intention behind an idiosyncratic response, which then has to be converted rapidly to fit the evolving drama before the group's concentration is lost.

It is crucial that all staff members involved are able to employ sensitive strategies to empower students, and that staff do not inadvertently overpower student creativity.

### Empowering students

The drama teacher's skill in empowering students through asking questions and enabling contributions is crucial; this is particularly so with students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. It is helpful to develop a repertoire of possible kinds of questions that can be adapted as necessary. 'Open' questions (why, how?) are useful for maximising the student's decision-making. For example, the teacher asks *'What would you like to take on the picnic?'* giving the student the opportunity to eye point from a selection of pictures on a portable board (or real objects on a tray). 'Closed' questions (that demand a 'yes/no' answer) tend to be more limiting, yet can be potentially very empowering, especially for students with limited communication skills. For example, the teacher asks a student *'Should we help Cinderella to run away?'* 'No' interprets the teacher, as the student casts eyes downwards.

### Space

Drama with students with severe and profound general learning disabilities raises some issues concerning space. Access to the school hall can be advantageous; manoeuvring wheelchairs and standing frames can be awkward within the constraints of a classroom. However, this can result in people wandering through the drama space, especially in schools where the hall is also a corridor. This can be very disruptive to the fragile nature of the make-believe and vulnerable concentration spans. Pressures on hall time from other users can also be frustrating, especially if a drama happens to be developing well.

It may be preferable to conduct drama in the classroom: as well as minimising disruptions, staff may feel more comfortable working in role, and changing a familiar environment with the use of props is important learning for the students. Placing a polite but firm sign on the door, asking not to be disturbed, might avoid unnecessary and distracting interruptions.

### Time

Another key management issue for teaching drama is time. Plenty of time is required to create the 'set' and de-role and reflect afterwards—time spent in role within the make-believe can actually be relatively short. Drama will need to be timetabled thoughtfully, allowing for availability of supporting staff, when they are not required elsewhere. Particular consideration also needs to be given to the regular commitments of the students (therapy sessions, toileting procedures) and their physical comfort and optimum concentration times.

# Approaches and methodologies

Many of the points raised in the corresponding section in the *Primary School Curriculum: Drama, Teacher Guidelines* are relevant to students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. However, statements tend to assume that students at least have a rudimentary ability to engage in symbolic play and make-believe. There will be extra considerations for those students who have yet to consolidate this understanding.

## Prerequisites for making drama

### Content

At all levels, drama seeks to teach students why people think and behave as they do. Therefore, the teacher needs to select appropriate content for drama that will challenge and extend students' existing frame of reference. The teacher working with students with severe and profound general learning disabilities needs to find a way to enable the group to become aware of and empathise with a basic emotional state (due to a particular set of circumstances) and discover the consequences. Drama offers opportunities to reinforce concepts, knowledge and practical skills being focused on in other areas of the curriculum, for example, visual tracking, one-to-one correspondence or dressing skills. Individual learning targets, can also be reinforced, for example, from communication, social skills or mobility programmes.

Students need to find personal resonance and meaning in drama, and have their interest captured. Interest levels should be sensitively monitored: too much stimulation can cause confusion, while too little can cause interest to wane. Concrete, visible items will be important meaningful 'hooks' for drama. Unless students are enabled to relate to the activity, they risk remaining unmotivated. Including a favourite interest in the drama may enable students to see a personal relevance in the experience. Elements of novelty may also help capture their interest – the use of attractive, bright or noisy props appealing to the full range of sensory modes.

Working in role can immediately capture the interest and attention of students with severe and profound general learning disabilities, especially when enhanced through effective strategic use of appealing props. This may rivet their attention, especially if the person is wearing an eye-catching or intriguing item of costume. It can help to maintain the attention of students with a short concentration span, who may then incidentally find themselves sharing a joint focus with others in the group. It is important that this is not over-worked; otherwise it may distract the student from the learning content of the drama.

Staff members need to develop their ability to work in role on the inside of the drama. This strategy, conventionally known as ‘teacher-in-role’ is a particularly powerful device for working with these students. Working on the inside of the drama enables the teacher to manipulate students’ emotional engagement (for example, feeling worried, sad, frightened, cross, happy). It enables material to be accessed directly without the need for complex language. Roles may be transferred between members of the staff team, but the teacher needs to decide the most effective position from which to steer the drama and manipulate the students’ learning. This may be achieved through the eyes of a character role or else in a notional role alongside the students, where another adult is playing the teacher-in-role character. A notional role is where participants effectively play themselves, caught up in a make-believe situation. This can also entail their playing general roles such as workers or friends of a character, but where characterisation as such is not required.

*All staff working in role should take extreme care not to upset or confuse students who find it difficult to separate make-believe from reality.*

Students should be helped to understand how make-believe works, by being actively involved in preparing the staff member for going into role, for example, putting on the costume and organising the actual props that are required. The teacher should also make it very clear when the drama is starting (and stopping), by talking the students into the make-believe and pausing momentarily before the drama actually starts, and explaining when it is stopping. Students should be involved in helping staff remove items of costume and in restoring the room to its original state. Even with this preparation, the fictional experience might still seem real to some students.

Drama can invoke a range of emotional responses—it offers important learning opportunities for students to develop ‘emotional intelligence’: recognising and understanding their own reactions and those of other people. Staff members need to be sensitive and alert to minimise possible student anxiety or confusion between reality and the make-believe.

### **The fictional lens**

In drama, the fictional lens is the means by which meanings are encapsulated within significant moments of a narrative. Young children begin to learn about narrative through early interactive games that tend to have a predictable pattern and structure. In key moments, they experience tension and excitement and come to associate these shared meaningful experiences with fun and an inherent source of pleasure. Paradoxically, it is the security of the familiar structure of such activities that forms the basis for learning that things can be different. In early interactive games, the caregiver intuitively ‘tweaks’ key moments and challenges the young child by introducing a variation to the game. In this way, the young child finds out that new meanings can be shared and developed, and also discovers their own ability to initiate change and influence the course of events.

Similarly, drama experiences offer opportunities for this important learning to students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. Drama activity with these students needs to replicate these early interactions and include a similar structure and characterising features, such as

- a predictable framework (‘narrative’) based on mutually understood key moments, which the student can learn to anticipate and sequence
- a clear shared focus for joint attention (attractive props, teacher-in-role with intriguing item of costume)
- turn-taking, in which students learn to listen, watch and regulate behaviour
- interaction with others within the make-believe (timing utterances and movements in exchanges)
- imitation of appropriate play responses (staff crucially joining in and modelling reactions for the students)
- reciprocal involvement of adults and students, where they are enabled to both lead and respond.

The teacher needs to judge sensitively when to introduce change or surprise into a drama activity. With some students, it can be a delicate issue, balancing the need for security with the familiar (yet which may offer no further challenge), with new experiences that risk the student feeling insecure and vulnerable. Changing one element of a familiar drama experience at a time may help students to adjust to new experiences. A certain degree of challenge and unpredictability may enhance learning: it is in these moments of tension that the student may become receptive to absorb a new experience beyond an existing frame of reference. However, the teacher needs to constantly remember that the drama experience may seem real to some students, and he/she should be prepared to remind students that it is 'pretend'—using a simple item of costume (hat, cloak, walking stick) that can be quickly removed and replaced will assist in distinguishing the make-believe.

*Signals (communicative intent) by the teacher-in-role in the drama should be blatant and clear, with uncomplicated language; on the other hand, over-playing a role can become bewildering and confusing.*

### **Creation of a safe environment**

Drama is a group experience that should involve everyone, staff and students. It is important that everyone has a role (however peripheral) in the make-believe, even if it is literally 'on the edge'. The teacher should differentiate the social dimension of drama according to the individual needs of the students. Some may find the level of social demand challenging at first, and require a more oblique, non-invasive, gently cajoling approach. Other students may need a high level of social structure (prompting and support from supporting staff) in order to become involved.

Staff members need to gain the attention of students through sensitive attunement. This involves sensitive interpretation of a student's reactions, preferences, sensibilities and interests, and consequent careful adjustment of the drama in respect of these. Investing intention and meaning in the student's reactions is crucial in order to form a shared group belief in the drama.

The teacher needs to judge the level of affective engagement by students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. Creating tension through the use of *suspense* and *excitement*, *mock horror* and *despair*, and *exuding emotional warmth* and *humour* will help generate emotional arousal and an affective resonance for the students. This will have to be carefully monitored so that they are not overwhelmed, yet are still able to perceive a personal relevance in the activity. Signals (communicative intent) by the teacher-in-role in the drama should be blatant and clear, with uncomplicated language; on the other hand, over-playing a role can become bewildering and confusing.

### **The elements of drama**

In make-believe, students discover explicitly how representations and shared meanings may be created through combining the elements that comprise pretence. It is these same elements that also give drama activity its essential characteristic mode of expression. Students' progress in drama reflects their growing ability to harness these elements of make-believe. They are closely linked to the content objectives of the strand unit *Exploring and making drama* and also the *Prerequisites for making drama*. These elements are described in detail in the primary teacher guidelines (pp.46-61) and are listed as follows:

- belief (consenting to the make-believe)
- role and character (taking and playing another)
- action (originating in characters in situations)
- time (connecting events, framing and constraining action)
- place (location—real and imaginary)
- tension (the motor for the drama arising in conflict—problems, dilemmas)
- significance (underlying relevance or meaning)
- genre (naturalistic, fantasy).

An approach to drama for students with severe and profound general learning disabilities needs to recapture the essence of early interactive experiences (see *The fictional lens*), and at the same time develop their ability to engage with the elements of make-believe and drama. Some students will develop

- symbolic understanding of representations
- the ability to use representations in play structures with others in the creation of shared meanings.

### **A strong sensory component**

Some students may never achieve a consolidated understanding of make-believe. For these students, drama can provide a vital opportunity to experience an emerging awareness of the ingredients of imaginative play, and to connect with a shared group experience of make-believe through the use of multi-sensory and multi-media stimuli. The following ideas may be useful for creating a sensory approach within drama activities:

#### *Auditory:*

- music; to signal the mood/style/duration/beginning/end of the drama
- poetry or narrative; for story content/repetition and rhyme
- percussion; used rhythmically to create suspense and anticipation
- human voice and body sounds
- sounds in nature; tapes of birds/water/sea/rain/traffic/animals.

#### *Visual:*

- visual communication aids such as objects of reference/photographs/pictures/symbols
- lighting; brightening or darkening the room for atmosphere
- costumes and props with a strong visual element (patterns/shapes/colours)
- images, pictures, photographs, slides projected onto a wall or large screen
- video or film
- puppets, masks.

#### *Tactile:*

- objects of reference
- fabric to represent features of a story
- costumes and props with a strong tactile element (furry, rubbery, rough, feathery etc.)
- range of (safe) natural material as props, such as water/sand/pampas grass/compost.

#### *Olfactory:*

- smells to signal start/key moments in drama
- smells to create atmosphere (stimulating, relaxing, exotic)
- smells carefully selected to represent key aspects of content, such as seaweed for the seaside, flowers in a garden.

#### *Body movement:*

- students in wheelchairs; being pushed quickly and feeling breeze on face, wheeling around/up/down over ramps and uneven surfaces to represent journey
- jumping/rolling/rocking etc. to represent movement in boat/car
- sliding, swinging or spinning students in blankets to represent contrasts in gentle and rapid movement.

#### *Gustatory:*

- items of food that represent aspects of the story content; at the picnic/shopping/visit to Granny's house (remember safe practice regarding food).

*An interactive, ritualised, turn-taking drama framework, in which a member of staff is in role, teaches the game of make-believe to students with severe and profound general learning disabilities.*

### **Taking play into drama**

The focus of any drama lesson should also be on the content: ideas, attitudes and issues to be explored. An approach to drama with students with severe and profound general learning disabilities should aim to develop their understanding of the essential elements of make-believe (the language of drama), while at the same time explore some aspect of human experience. The teacher and supporting staff may need practice in handling dramatic tension, working in role, and modelling appropriate responses for the group.

An interactive, ritualised, turn-taking drama framework, in which a member of staff is in role, helps to teach the game of make-believe to students with severe and profound general learning disabilities. This recaptures the essence of early interactive games, in which students may be given repeated opportunities to generate and sustain pretence. It also provides the security of a familiar, predictable narrative structure in which, even at the most basic level, students are caught up in the make-believe. The clear structure provides a basis for making choices and decisions. As students become more confident, boundaries may be broadened to enable students to think in a more flexible way. Using the familiar drama activity pivotally in this way allows the teacher to adapt the make-believe to introduce challenges for a range of learning needs.

### **Effective teaching and learning in drama**

Ritualised pivotal drama structures harness teaching strategies that are particularly successful for students with severe and profound learning disabilities and classroom drama should include the following features:

- a clear make-believe context: teacher-in-role, strategic use of costume, props and symbols, adapting a familiar environment to represent a different setting
- clear cues and signals: cues and signals that make use of all the senses; to herald the make-believe context, to draw attention to key moments and to signal the end of the make-believe
- active participation: specific tasks with immediate cause-effect consequences
- a turn-taking format: replicates the structure of early caregiver-infant interactive games and teaches prediction of familiar sequences and patterns in life
- inclusion of rhythm, rhyme and repetition in chants or songs that frame the turn-taking structure: appeals to the linguistic receptiveness of students at early stages of learning and teaches prediction of familiar patterns and sequences
- a potent focus for attention (attractive object or teacher-in-role) – provides a point for sharing interest and a reason to communicate
- a whole group experience: teaches skills of group work and provides opportunity to share in the creation of a collective social meaning
- a secure structure, with tight boundaries: enables students to begin to grasp how make-believe is contained and is distinct from real life
- using contrasts in tension: allows an ebb and flow of energy (active, then calm and quiet) to help sustain concentration, and invokes active engagement and awareness of themselves within the experience
- constructing the drama in small increments: helps students into the symbolism by being actively involved in creating the make-believe, and promotes their understanding of representation with staff clarifying confusion as necessary

- opportunities for interaction: allows students to experiment with different ways of communicating, to have their communicative attempts valued and to create impact on others
- the inclusion of challenges within students' grasp: builds on their existing knowledge and resources, with the opportunity to contribute ideas, solve problems and make real choices that matter, however small
- the inclusion of multi-sensory resources—offers a range of levels to support and access meaning within the material according to preferred (or stronger) sensory modes
- use of props as visual hooks and objects of reference: enables students with a short concentration span to come and go and still sustain the narrative, supports memory and triggers recall of an experience
- cross-curricular learning: the inclusion of topics from different subject areas and individual education plans
- introducing an unpredictable element, however small: provides a reason to comment and extend students' thinking processes
- opportunities to make choices and decisions, to apply their practical skills creatively and draw on their resourcefulness.

### **Effective teaching and learning in drama**

The pivotal structure described above offers flexible possibilities for extending students with severe and profound general learning disabilities, when they are perceived in need of a new challenge. This may be achieved through:

- adapting the existing structure for a new challenge
- proceeding to a different structure with the same level of challenge
- proceeding to a different structure with an increased level of play challenge
- interjecting an unexpected outcome to the existing structure that involves some kind of problem to be resolved.

Opening up a pivotal framework enables both teacher and students to gain confidence in working more 'at risk', and to gradually ease into open-ended drama. At first, this should be a simple practical problem that has to be resolved (for example, teacher-in-role has run out of a crucial item—what can we do?). Students should be encouraged and given the opportunity to influence the drama. The teacher should keep an open mind and should go with the desired and agreed direction, with the intention of leading students to consider directly the consequences and implications of their choices and suggestions.

Clearly, while some students in the group would not be deemed 'ready' for this change in events, it may well be that other students are in need of this kind of challenge. The others would still benefit from being caught up in the make-believe, even if they do not actively initiate or contribute ideas and suggestions once the drama moves into a new gear.

## What can I, the student, learn through drama?

- I can improve my sensory awareness through experiencing a wide range of costumes and props.
- I can learn to participate and be part of a group.
- I can learn to take my turn and co-operate with others in a group activity.
- I can develop my communication and social interaction skills in a range of contexts.
- I can learn to make choices and decisions.
- I can gain confidence, satisfaction and self-esteem from seeing my responses and initiatives acted upon by others.
- I can develop a range of emotional responses to situations and begin to come to terms with my feelings.
- I can become more aware of the impact of my feelings, actions and behaviour on others.
- I can become aware that other people may have a different perspective, and begin to empathise with their feelings.
- I can learn how sequences of events are connected.
- I can gain access to subjects that deal with human experience, which might otherwise remain remote.
- I can develop my understanding of symbolism and representational thought.
- I can develop creative, flexible thinking and apply this relevantly and purposefully.
- I can explore and take risks within the make-believe, and learn to embrace the unexpected.
- I can apply practical skills, concepts and factual knowledge in relevant contexts similar to real life.
- I can learn to associate having fun with taking part in a shared group experience with other people.
- I can learn to enjoy and appreciate being part of an audience.

## Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Exploring and making drama

- Impulse to play
- Role and character
- Using space and objects to deepen the drama context

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ develop awareness of sensory stimuli in drama activities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>be enabled to use all his/her senses to become aware of costumes and props (see Approaches and methodologies)</i></li> <li>– <i>become aware of a change in classroom environment when props are set up</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ accept experiences and tolerate being part of the group                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>sit motionless while a cloth is wafted to simulate a breeze (alongside class members but not necessarily making eye-contact)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ become aware that his/her own interests are being used within the make-believe                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>listen when the tune of a favourite song is adapted in the drama</i></li> <li>– <i>look when a favourite staff member enters the drama.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ show a response to sensory stimuli in drama activities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>show interest in particular props and costumes</i></li> <li>– <i>show preference for one material over another</i></li> <li>– <i>show reaction when sensory signals are used at start/key moments/finish of drama</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ sustain interest on task for the duration of moments of active participation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>show excitement on hearing his/her name mentioned in a refrain</i></li> <li>– <i>take his/her turn with assistance in a ritualised structure (concentration may be short)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ show a motivated response when his/her own interests are being used within the make-believe                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>smile or rock when the lyrics of a favourite song are adapted in the drama</i></li> <li>– <i>make eye-contact or reach out to a favourite person when he/she enters the drama.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ independently explore and communicate about sensory stimuli in drama activities                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>physically interact and experiment with props and costumes</i></li> <li>– <i>seek to wear a favourite costume</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ sustain interest for the duration of the drama                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>watch others</i></li> <li>– <i>take turn independently and then resume watching the action</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ contribute when his/her own interests are being used within the make-believe                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>clap hands when a favourite tune is adapted in the drama</i></li> <li>– <i>independently seek to help a favourite staff member with their role in the drama.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ participate in carrying out a short routine           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>accept supporting adult leading him/her by the hand as part of the search party seeking Little Red Riding Hood (played by teacher-in-role)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ become aware that he/she is caught up in a make-believe situation and accept a notional or general role           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>cease continuous movement or vocalisation when approached by a teacher-in-role</i></li> <li>– <i>accept and participate with assistance in playing a notional or general role such as a villager</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ focus on classroom objects used for their actual purpose within the drama           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>observe familiar objects being used for their actual purpose within the drama</i></li> <li>– <i>observe someone pretending to drink from a cup that is part of the picnic equipment in the drama.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ carry out (with decreasing assistance) a notional or general role in a short routine           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>imitate a supporting adult pouring a drink for a teacher-in-role</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ relate with some assistance to a character in role           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>with prompting, approach a teacher-in-role as Cinderella and brush her hair as part of her dressing routine for the grand ball</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ use unfamiliar items (real objects) within a short modelled sequence           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>watch an assisting adult use a dustpan and brush brought from home to sweep the floor for (desperate) Snow White played by teacher-in-role</i></li> <li>– <i>begin to take over the task with assistance.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ carry out a notional or general role in a short familiar routine           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>pretend to buy a bus ticket, hand over a coin and hold out hand appropriately for the ticket</i></li> <li>– <i>play the part of a friend of a character</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ spontaneously relate to a character in role           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>warn character of impending danger using facial expression/gestures/vocalisation</i></li> <li>– <i>(warn Jack that the Giant is coming, warn Little Red Riding Hood that the wolf is coming)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ use a range of objects and props of different sizes and abstraction (some with an obvious symbolic function) within a familiar sequence           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>put a doll in a cardboard box for a bed and cover with a blanket while helping teacher-in-role to look after her new baby.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Exploring and making drama

- Function and effect of dramatic tension
- Connection between events in the drama (understanding of narrative)

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ notice a change in atmosphere                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>tense at a sudden crescendo of voices and percussion instruments at a climactic moment of a drama game</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ encounter cause-effect situations with immediate consequences                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>have opportunity to be assisted in giving teacher-in-role a present, who is promptly delighted.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ anticipate a change in atmosphere (responses not necessarily appropriate)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>start giggling excitedly at the sight of a teacher-in-role playing a bear emerging from his/her lair</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ make a structured choice with support                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>select something to drink (with decreasing assistance) from a small number of picnic items.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Exploring and making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ contribute to a change in atmosphere by initiating an appropriate response to a cue or signal                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>quieten when moving past the sleeping giant played by an assistant in role</i></li> <li>– <i>initiate dimming of lights at a particular place in a familiar drama sequence</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ make a structured choice towards a clear goal                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>eye-point to a photograph of a beach from a small number of landscapes (to choose the location for the drama).</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Relating to drama

- Reviewing an action
- Relationship between make-believe story theme and real life
- Using insights to draw conclusions

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><b>Relating to drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ experience a consequence within the drama as a result of an involuntary move                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>become aware of what happens when he/she makes a loud noise and wakes up the sleeping boy/ girl played by teacher-in-role</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ experience the consequences of an action that replicates a real-life situation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>have opportunity to be wheeled at speed in a drama game (within bounds of health and safety) and crash into soft-play equipment</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ acknowledge an association with a situation in the drama                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>observe and perhaps show fleeting recognition at a video replay of a key moment in which he/she was involved.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Relating to drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ react positively or negatively to a consequence from making a guided choice                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>select a picture of trees blowing in the wind in a drama game, and express pleasure at being fanned</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ engage in an action that is appropriate to the drama that parallels real life                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>follow the example of a supporting member of staff and shake the hand of teacher-in-role playing a special visitor</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ recollect a situation in the drama and its consequence afterwards                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>link key props used as objects of reference for connected scenes (for example, show appropriate reaction to costume of wolf).</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Relating to drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ make a confident decision towards a goal and experience an immediate consequence                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>provocatively tap a sleeping character and see them wake up with a jump</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ perform an action that is drawn from his/her general experience and discover immediate consequences                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>spontaneously comfort teacher-in-role pretending to cry, who then instantly cheers up</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ demonstrate recollection of the drama and its consequences                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>independently put food items in the basket and hand to Little Red Riding Hood, independently retreat from the costume of the wolf, put on wolf costume and try to frighten someone.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Co-operating and communicating in making drama

- Appreciating drama performance
- Contributing to a drama performance

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><b>Co-operating and communicating in making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ have reaction interpreted that will influence the drama               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>feel two possible hats to be worn by the teacher-in-role and have reaction interpreted to indicate preference for one texture rather than the other</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ focus on a shared point of interest               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>show fleeting interest in multi-coloured cloak worn by the teacher-in-role every time he/she comes near</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ participate in a dramatic reconstruction of a past experience               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>attend to key moments in reconstruction of recent event (such as bus journey with teacher-in-role as bus driver wearing hat and holding real or toy wheel, students sitting behind in rows, listen to sounds of bus, be rocked gently in chair).</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Co-operating and communicating in making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ make a contribution (with support) to influence the context for the drama               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>help teacher prepare to go into role by assisting him/her in putting on a garment to indicate a character</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ engage in tasks within the drama that inherently require co-operation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>take part in follow-my-leader drama game</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ contribute to a dramatic reconstruction of a recent past event by responding to significant cues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>show excitement when trip in bus is reconstructed, show memory of a very bumpy ride by reacting when somebody says 'Here comes a big bump'.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Co-operating and communicating in making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ make a clear decision to influence the context for the drama               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>indicate where there will be a door on the façade of a house, help teacher create it using masking tape to outline details/stick cardboard door on façade</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ express a desire or an intention,               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>request an item from a choice held by the teacher-in-role, remember social graces 'please' and 'thank you'</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ help to reconstruct a recent past event in dramatic form               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>choose correct seat in 'bus' when students are being placed as they were on the real bus trip</i></li> <li>– <i>choose from a range of objects of reference to sequence what happened next on the trip.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Attending	Responding	Initiating
<p><b>Co-operating and communicating in making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ share in the collective experience of a dramatic performance as part of an audience (dramatised familiar story, short play, ballet, puppet show etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>in school, in locality, a special trip to a big performance</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ co-operate in making and organising props and costumes for the drama <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>participate with a group in painting cardboard trees for the forest, participate in placing props in their correct places</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ play collective role alongside others, including supporting staff in role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>participate in the school Nativity as a citizen in Bethlehem.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Co-operating and communicating in making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ respond to the developing storyline and/or key moments of a dramatic performance when he/she is part of an audience (dramatised familiar story, short play, ballet, puppet show etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>tolerate sitting and watching for a reasonable length of time</i></li> <li>– <i>visually and/or aurally follow what is happening</i></li> <li>– <i>show pleasure/boredom/fright/excitement at the action</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ show interest and pleasure in making and organising props and costumes for the drama and co-operate with others (with decreasing assistance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>look with interest at the attractive costume materials, hold material as an adult cuts it</i></li> <li>– <i>help to cut material with scissors</i></li> <li>– <i>help another student or adult to paint and place props</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ play an individual role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>play a shepherd in the school Nativity, carrying out actions on cue from the narrator.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Co-operating and communicating in making drama</b></p> <p><i>The student should be enabled to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ show engagement with and follow the storyline of a dramatic performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>show anticipation and curiosity when he/she is brought to a place that is set up for an audience, follow and ask about what is happening in the show</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ co-operate independently with an adult or another student in making and organising props and costumes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>independently seek to help, know what job he/she has been given and carry it out (clear instructions given verbally or visually)</i></li> <li>– <i>communicate with an adult about what materials to use for costumes or where to place props</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>■ take a character role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>play the innkeeper in the school Nativity, improvising appropriately and recalling required actions.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Exemplars

## Exemplars

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## Exemplar 1: Drama

Using an idea (Theme used over a series of lessons)

### Learning outcomes

1. The student will show involvement in a group activity, taking turns and participating without protest.
2. The student will use his/her senses to explore the costumes and props in the drama.
3. The student will attend to changes in lighting, indicating the coming of morning in the drama.
4. The student will identify and select items associated with early morning routine and relate them appropriately to someone else.
5. The student will respond to and empathise with a character in need, and be proactive in offering help.

### Resources

Apron, pyjama jacket, blanket, pillow, items used for early morning routine on a tray—enough for one per student (flannel, towel, toothbrush, hairbrush, comb, cup, bowl and spoon), school bag (or brief case), corresponding photographs of the same items on a portable board, sturdy table.

### Rationale

This activity is planned around learning content concerned with empathising with and helping a character in need. Seán's (or Sinead's) Mammy (or Daddy) needs to appeal strongly to the students, with clear, bold expression of feeling, in order to maximise their emotional engagement with his (or her) plight. Consequences of their actions need to be equally strongly felt, with staff in role immediately responding. Reflective discussion afterwards should try to pick up on this connection between cause and effect, supported with props or photographs as objects of reference. The drama hinges on a 'look behind you' game, which students learn to recognise.

## Exemplar 1: Drama

### Creating the context

- Sit the group in a large semi-circle around a central space.
- Move the table into the centre of the space, and involve the students in making it into a bed, positioning the blanket and pillow.
- Involve the students in helping the assistant to go into role as Seán or Sinead; putting on the pyjama jacket, escorting him/her into bed and tucking him/her in. Seán (or Sinead) goes to sleep. Darken the room and create a hushed atmosphere and encourage the students to quieten down, with lots of 'shhh-ing' at the slightest noise. Seán or Sinead could begin to gently snore.

### Starting the drama

- The teacher puts on the apron in full view of the class and pauses momentarily (to frame the make-believe) before rushing into the drama space looking harassed.
- Seán's Mammy turns on the light, greets the group and thanks them for coming over, immediately drawing them into the make-believe.
- She explains that she is having terrible trouble getting Seán up again, and he is going to be late for school (or work).
- Seán's Mammy shows the group the items on the tray that Seán needs to use in the morning, encouraging the group to handle them, name them and indicate their functional use; she encourages the group to relate the items to their corresponding photographs, placed in the correct sequence for early morning procedures.

### Deepening the drama

Seán's Mammy reminds the group that he just won't wake up, and adopts a suitably worried expression and posture, pausing to allow the group to show initiative. If this is unforthcoming, then a solution to the problem could be interjected: could the group please help get Seán ready for school (or work)?

Each student in turn is to select an item from the tray, approach Seán, and relate the object to him in a functional manner (for example, use the flannel to wash his face). This could be framed by a ditty or chant:

*Wake up Seán, wash your face,*

*Wake up Seán, wash your face,*

*Wake up Seán, wash your face,*

*You'll be late for school.*

Seán stretches and sits up obediently and graciously accepts the help; Mammy is delighted and profusely thanks the student as he/she returns to his/her place. Behind her back, Seán yawns again, lies back down and goes to sleep again, snoring loudly.

Mammy is horrified, and implores the group to help again. She refers to the photographs on the board, turning over the completed task, and moving on to the next one in the sequence and approaching another student.

This is repeated until everyone in the group has had a turn. Seán then stretches and gets out of bed, Mammy is delighted, thanks the group for coming (asks perhaps could they come back to help again sometime?), and everyone waves goodbye to Seán as he goes on his way.

## Exemplar 1: Drama

### Reflection

Teacher then stops the drama and removes the apron and Seán's costume items, talking the group through the de-roling and returning the room to its original state with the students' help. Out of role, the teacher should encourage the students to recall the drama, using props as objects of reference, and to make connections—what do they need to do in the morning to get ready?

### Differentiation

*Attending*—Students should be prompted by supporting staff as necessary, who should encourage them to focus on Seán and his Mammy, and to handle and explore the various props and objects used in the drama, maybe applying items to themselves (for example, drinking from the cup). Through repeated running of the activity, aim to increase their tolerance of being part of the group and willingness to participate, and to relate objects appropriately to Seán.

*Responding*—Consolidate students' ability to relate items appropriately (for example, putting the comb to Seán's hair). Through repeated running of the activity, aim to extend the range of functional play by imitating staff in other routines and with unfamiliar items, to increase interaction with teacher and assistant in role and to lengthen concentration when on task.

*Initiating*—At first encourage engagement in selecting and carrying out a short routine as independently as possible, then extend this into other routines. Encourage students to develop their routines (for example, washing Seán's hands as well as his face), and vary with a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar props. Also challenge students to interact appropriately with the teacher and assistant in role, and to stay focused for the duration of the drama.

### Extending the drama

The ritualised framework could be opened up... perhaps Seán does not wake up—what is the matter? Is he ill? What should we do? Call the doctor? Cheer him up?

## Exemplar 2: Drama

Using an established story (Theme used over a series of lessons)

### Learning outcomes

1. The student will demonstrate awareness of a change in atmosphere and cope with their reactions.
2. The student will explore the costumes and props in the drama at a sensory level.
3. The student will show involvement in the group activity, taking turns and participating without protest.
4. The student will adjust movement to go and stop on cue, and experiment with quiet travelling.

### Resources

Fake-fur wrap, red shawl or cloak, length of carpet or bubble wrap, brown and green card (to create tree cut-outs), tambourine, story book, basket with different food items (enough for one per student) and corresponding pictures on a board, wolf puppet or mask, small doll and miniature trees, room divider screen.

### Rationale

This activity aims to access a theme embedded in an established story. Using the traditional tale of *Little Red Riding Hood* as a stimulus, it takes licence with the story as known, in order to explore a key moment—in fact a scene that might plausibly be happening elsewhere, rather like the soap opera genre! It focuses on the universal theme of feeling scared in a strange setting, and offers students repeated opportunities to come to terms with that emotional state. It hinges on a ‘beat the bogeyman’ game at its core, which students can learn to anticipate and play.

## Exemplar 2: Drama

### Creating the context

- Read the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*, using puppets and objects of reference to bring the text alive.
- The teacher explains that they are going to meet Little Red Riding Hood (teacher-in-role) and go to the woods with her.
- Involve the students as far as possible in adapting the classroom: block out the 'set' (the woods) using carpet or length of bubble wrap to create a path, and make cut-out trees and attach them onto chairs. Create the façade of grandmother's house on the room divider screen using cardboard windows and door. Position it at the far end of the path through the wood.
- Involve the students in putting an assistant in role as the wolf (wearing fur wrap, and holding the puppet) and install him/her behind the trees in the wood.

### Starting the drama

The teacher puts on a red shawl in full view of the group, telling them that she is now Little Red Riding Hood, then pauses momentarily to frame the make-believe before entering in-role, carrying the basket of fruit.

Little Red Riding Hood greets the group, and tells them she's on her way to see her grandmother. She's been told not to go through the woods to the house. Perhaps they would take the basket of food for her? (Any reactions to the contrary?)

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### Deepening the drama

Each student in turn chooses an item of food to go in the basket. Some students will choose from the real items in Little Red Riding Hood's basket, while others will choose from the photographs on the board and then appropriately request the real item from Little Red Riding Hood.

Each student in turn proceeds along the path (with necessary assistance) on cue of the shaking of a tambourine, and stops if the shaking ceases (lights could also be dimmed to create added tension). The wolf should stir in his sleep then wake up and chase the student back to the start of the wood to the accompaniment of frantic beats on the tambourine. This could be framed by a ditty or chant:

*[Siobhán] is walking through the wood,  
Taking the [bread] for Little Red Riding Hood  
All the way to Grandmother's house,  
Tiptoeing along as quiet as a mouse.  
Look out [Siobhán] don't make a goof,  
Quickly, run! It's the big bad wolf!*

(Care should be taken that the students are not too frightened by this experience. The wolf is trying to get the food, not trying to eat the student! Staff should monitor each student's reaction, bearing in mind that some students may not readily be able to show their fear.)

This is repeated as each student takes a turn. In between, Little Red Riding Hood is despairing and sad, still wanting the food to be taken to her grandmother.

After each student has had a turn individually, the wolf wakes up, stretches and wanders first towards the group (reactions?) then ambles slowly towards the house and disappears behind it. Little Red Riding Hood announces that she has decided to go through the woods after all now that the wolf has gone (reactions?). She thanks them for their help, everyone waves goodbye and she sets off on her way.

## Exemplar 2: Drama

### Reflection

Teacher then stops the drama and staff members de-role with the students' help and return the room to its original state. Out of role, the teacher encourages the group to recall the drama, using props and objects of reference. Discussion could highlight feeling scared in the dark, and making connections to their own experience of the dark.

### Differentiation

*Attending*—Students should be fully prompted in structured choice-making, and supported in moving on cue along the path, keeping within the borders. Through repeated running of the activity, aim to enable students to react more directly to the teacher-in-role as the wolf, and to develop enhanced awareness of the game structure.

*Responding*—Students should be enabled to move along the path keeping within the borders, to imitate support staff travelling and stopping on cue, and to race/wheel back promptly to the safe place or indicate their wish to be brought back. Through repeated running of the activity, aim to increase independence in the play routine and in interacting with Little Red Riding Hood to obtain a chosen food item.

*Initiating*—Students travel along the path independently, going and stopping on cue and racing/wheeling (or asking to be wheeled) back to escape the wolf. Through repeated running of the activity, aim for students to approach their turn with more cautious awareness of the significance, and to request their chosen item appropriately from Little Red Riding Hood.

### Extending the drama

There are several possibilities for opening up the predictable format of this drama. Little Red Riding Hood will not go alone through the woods—any ideas? All go together? This could become a follow-my-leader game, with students taking it in turns to be Little Red Riding Hood (transferring the shawl to the students), and teacher in switch of role as delighted grandmother, pleased to see them and the food! Alternatively, the wolf could get the food (without harming the student!) and begin to store it up. How to get it back? Sneaking up on him while he is asleep etc.