

PLANNING FOR THE EARLY YEARS

Series editor Jennie Lindon

Homes and families

How to plan learning opportunities that **engage** and **interest** children

By Tunja Stone

BIRTH
TO
FIVE

Contents

Planning to make a difference for children	2	Learning about 'past' and 'temporary'	22
Learning about each others' families	8	Learning about caring for and carrying babies	24
Learning about grandparents	10	Learning about homes animals live in	26
Learning about family trees	12	Learning about worms and making a wormery	28
Learning about family celebrations	14	Learning about animal families	30
Learning about homes people live in	16	Final reflections	32
Learning about den construction	18	Finding out more	32
Learning about our families' pets	20		

Published by Practical Pre-School Books, A Division of MA Education Ltd,
St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, London, SE24 0PB.

Tel: 020 7738 5454

www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com

© MA Education Ltd 2012

Series design: Alison Cutler **fonthillcreative** 01722 717043

Series editor: Jennie Lindon

All images © MA Education Ltd, other than the images listed below.

All photos other than the below taken by Lucie Carlier.

Front cover image © iStockphoto.com/digitalskillet.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopied or otherwise, without the prior permission
of the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-907241-32-1

Author's acknowledgements:

*The author would like to thank fellow childminders
Sam O'Connor and Christine Slade-Pedrick and the children
they care for, for their assistance during the photoshoot
that accompanied this book.*

Learning about each others' families

Young children make sense of families based on their personal experiences. This activity will encourage them to widen their understanding using their peers' experiences. The activity offers an opportunity to 'make their family' and to compare and contrast their own with others' families. With appropriate supervision and help with any cutting they require, children from fifteen months are likely to enjoy the activity.

What do you need to do beforehand?



Ensure you are well provisioned. Children may enjoy helping to check the availability of resources. Family members may have different skin tones to the children in the group and children will delight in informing you. For example, "The paint is the wrong colour to make uncle Dave".

Involving the children at the planning and preparation stage provides them with problem solving opportunities and allows you to locate suitable resources to match their families. For example, wool 'hair' for 'mummy's curls', 'long for aunt Jessie' and pink 'for my big sister.'

When painting with younger children, they will require closer supervision to eliminate risks such as sucking paint or glue from brushes or spreaders. Use stubby brushes to reduce accidental poking episodes.

Ensuring the availability of a friendly adult to work alongside them will allow the children to see sharing and negotiating skills demonstrated. It will also give them the confidence to imitate appropriate behaviours and try negotiation for themselves.

Plan for plenty of time and safe storage so children can revisit to make further family members and play with their creations.



For this activity, you will need resources which will enable children to construct family members as spoon or plate people. Suggested materials include assorted sized wooden spoons, or paper plates with lolly sticks and tape to make handles; paints, including skin tones; paint brushes; wool, straight and bobbed or curly in a variety of colours cut in various lengths; glue with spreaders and wobbly eyes.

It can be helpful if a practitioner joins in making a representation of their own family. It will give children ideas, vocabulary and a friendly adult presence to instil confidence and provide assistance where required.

Older children may like to use material scraps and scissors for dressing spoon dolls or 'old fashioned' wooden pegs for making dolly peg families. Although the youngest children may not produce family members, they will enjoy the painting experience using the paper plates and brushes.

An opportunity to learn about my family and those of my friends

As children make their families, show them to each other and share information, they are likely to make observations noticing similarities and differences. A child may notice, for instance, that they only have one grandfather whereas their friend has three granddads. Another child may have a grandmother living at her home yet her friend's is living in Spain. As children ask questions and express their views on discoveries – “Grandpa went to live in the sky” or “Can you phone him?” practitioners should respect their ideas. Sometimes providing simple alternatives to expand children's knowledge and understanding can be helpful and redirect any negative connotations they may have made. Such as “I cannot phone him but you could draw grandpa a picture” or “Daddy still loves you. You can write to him in France”.

Responding to children's and babies' interests

Children may develop and change this activity as they follow their own interests. For example, a persistent interest in turning items or themselves around is called a rotation schema. This may lead to a child more interested in stirring the paints or enjoying swirling paint around the paper plate.

Children may spend time exploring the properties of the glue. If they are especially engaged in this, you could

Time for you to think



Were children interested in other peoples' families and how did they show it? Can you use this to extend your planning? Which resources were most used?

Did the activity encourage some children to talk with confidence about their own family? Can you use the information to good effect? Did they ask about your family? It is perfectly acceptable to talk a little about your own family in response.

What else did children want to talk about? Did children make comments that left you wondering what to say? For example, have you thought of a better way to reply to the question “if I get sick will I die?”

provide paper and collage type materials to further their research. If it is the texture rather than the stickiness which holds their attention, you could provide cornflour 'gloop' for them to continue their experiments with. For additional texture, try adding a few grains of rice to the cornflour.

Children may also like pretending to be family members and act out experiences from their families or stories you have shared with them. They may have been talking about these with the puppets giving you a 'heads up' of the role play materials to provide for them to self select, for example, a cardboard box which can become a car, boat, bus, plane or even a house. Dressing up clothes, hats and bags, are especially essential for the younger children so they can 'dress' themselves.

Listening to children and talking with them

Sharing conversations is important (both listening and responding to children) and this activity provides several areas and vocabulary opportunities.

Useful words to share include those linked to creating, such as gluing, sticking, making, stirring, painting. Those linked to physical attributes, such as; hair colour, style, red, yellow, brown, black, pink, blonde, curly, straight, long, short, dark, light, pale, height and features such as; tall, short, small, big, face, eyes, nose, mouth, eyebrows, ears, relations and pets.

Some children may also appreciate help with how family members are related. Most will know about mummy and daddy, brother and sister. “My mummy has a mummy, but I call her grandma”. Some may need help in identifying mummy's sister as an aunty or may be too young to understand a relationship to their brother. As children talk about their families, you may notice they use several variants for grandparents.

As children enact family life with the puppets they have made and discuss families, you may find age is a topic of interest. Words children use may include old and young or attempt to be more age specific. The subject of birth and death may also arise. Children of this age do not need complicated explanations. Keep it simple and use connections from their home life to guide you.