
I would like to discuss some events that occurred one day while I attended a 3 year old program along with the Occupational Therapist.

On this day, I intended to read the children a story, “Goldilocks and the Three Bears”. As I joined the circle of children on the floor, I carried my book and a very large garbage bag stuffed full of unknown objects. As I entered the circle, I was met with many wide-eyed children. I set the bag down beside me and waited.

What ensued were many inquiries, some verbal, some tactile. There were many guesses as to what was inside the bag and many questions and guesses were made. Their interest was piqued! I had hoped that day to help the children discover many of the vocabulary words we can use to describe size, location, texture, etc. by comparing and contrasting objects.

You see, inside the bag was a collection of teddy bears of various size, colour and texture. What I did not expect was the inquiry and question asking that occurred! Some children discovered with their hands, touching the bag and trying to silently figure it out. Others were verbal and tactile, asking many questions to their friends and the teachers. I sat back and watched and gently guided them to find their own answers by asking more questions. We did not look inside the bag yet…

Next, I read the story. Many of the children knew the story and would tell the story along with me. Verbal participation and movement was encouraged. After the story was done, the bag was pulled close to me and I directly asked the children what they thought was in the bag. The children were all encouraged to touch the bag again as it was placed in the middle of the circle and we guided them to discover using their own words, that the contents were “soft”, “squishy”, “light”, “not hard” or “not heavy”. I exposed portions of the objects in the bag to the children and they described what they saw as “fluffy”, “fuzzy”, “furry”, “brown”, etc. It was time to reveal the contents as many children guessed correctly…bears!

We pulled out each bear, hoping to encourage the children to discover the different size and attributes of each bear in front of them. They did this using “big”, “small” and “medium sized”. Others also brought in elements of the story and began discussing the “Momma Bear”, “Poppa Bear” and “Baby Bear” sizes. We each picked up a bear and recited together the rhyme “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear Turn Around” a few times and then practiced comparing and contrasting the location of our bears as we hid them around the classroom using words such as “around”, “up”, “down”, “in”, “under”.

While individual differences in the children’s skills were present, all children were able to participate, learn and explore at their level. They were learning new words, talking/interacting with their peers socially, exploring with their hands and making connections from a variety of sources including the story they just heard to the objects.

After that, our Occupational Therapist involved the children in “Bear Walks”, movement in the gym, music, craft and making “bears sitting on chairs” snacks with gummy bears, graham crackers and cream cheese. At the end of the morning, each child went home with a small stuffed bear.

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