

Using Persona Dolls to help teach RE in the Primary school

Primary RE Conference
October 7th 2009
Madeleine Lake (MECS)



Outcomes

- Understand why Persona Dolls are recommended as a resource which can be used to encourage empathy and promote inclusion and community cohesion
- Consider examples of dolls and their stories from particular ethnic and religious backgrounds
- Explore how the dolls could be used to deliver aspects of the Primary Scheme of work for RE



Why use a Persona Doll?

- To promote inclusive practice
- Develops empathy – respect and care
- Develops anti-discriminatory attitudes
- Helps people to overcome prejudices, misconceptions and stereotypes
- Helps pupils and adults to appreciate similarities and differences



Key messages about culture i)

- British culture is not a single culture but is full of a wide range of different lifestyles, cultures, religions, etc.
- There are lots of good things about living in a society that is full of diversity.



Key messages about culture ii)



- Some British people have a language, other than English, which is spoken at home and are lucky enough to become bilingual.
- The way you and your family live is only one possible way of living. Some things you can choose for yourself, some will always be part of your culture or heritage.
- Cultures change and grow.



In pairs or 3's

Talk to the people next to you

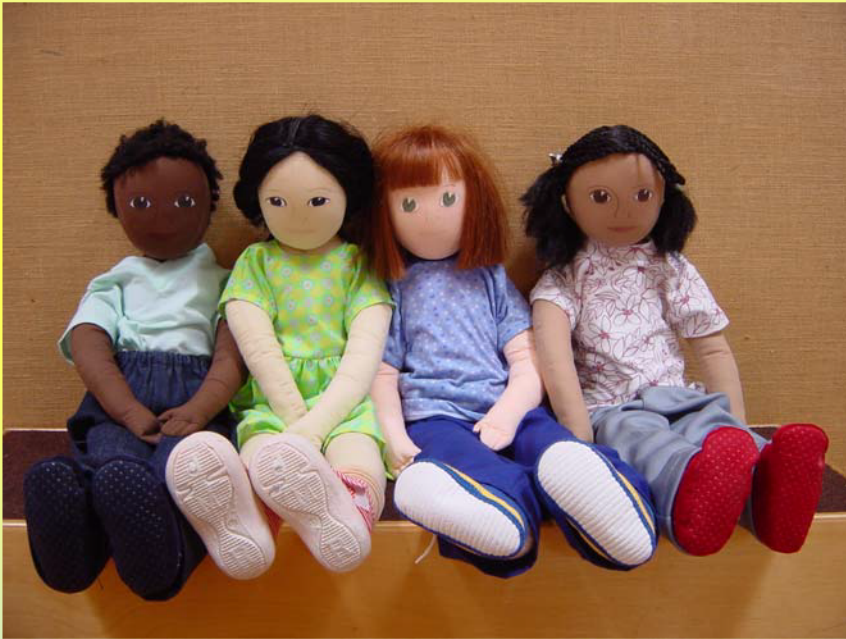
i) about any previous experience or knowledge you have about Persona Dolls

And/or

ii) Share any strategies you have used to develop children's abilities to empathise



About the Dolls and Their Stories

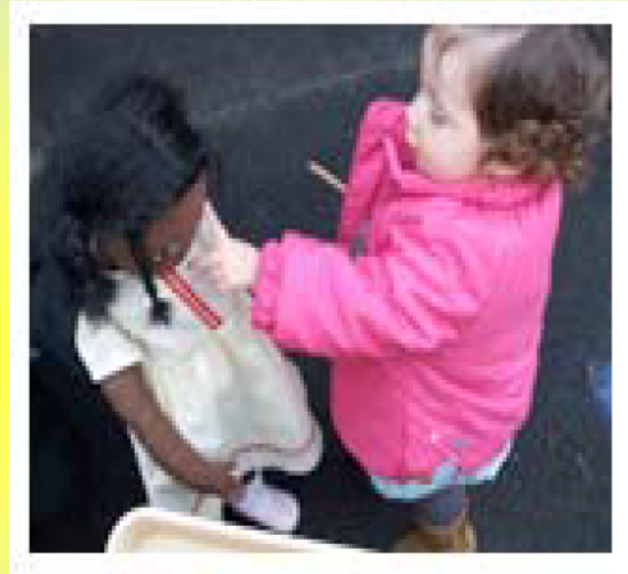


- The Dolls have their own individual personalities, family relationships, life histories, likes and dislikes.
- They visit, usually at circle or group time and the children quickly accept them as friends, bonding and identifying with them.
- Any large doll can be used. Ideally it shouldn't have a particular expression eg. smiling.



When are the dolls used?

- before or when particular issues or situations arise.
- to create a discussion about an incident that has happened in the school - the situation described by the doll would be similar, but not identical, to the actual event.
- to stimulate learning across the curriculum and about events outside the school e.g. family or community traditions.



What do children learn?

Children:

- ❖ Feel supported, secure and safe
- ❖ Share their own experiences
- ❖ Are involved in persona dolls stories
- ❖ Increase their vocabulary & oral participation
- ❖ Develop listening skills
- ❖ Develop empathy / respect & care
- ❖ Help to solve problems the doll presented
- ❖ Enjoy the sessions



Using The Dolls In Your School/setting

- Looking at your group
- Introducing the doll for the first time
- Involving the children : discussion and problem solving
- The stories
- Subsequent visits



Building the Persona i)

Consider:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Colour of hair, eyes, skin
- Physical appearance
- Likes and dislikes
- Disability or learning difficulty



Building the Persona ii)

- Family structure
- Siblings
- Where the doll lives
- Parents' occupations
- Favourite family activities
- Cultural and family background

NB! Avoid stereotypes by using real authentic experiences.



Important points



- keep the doll's persona the same each time you use it with the children, build on it but make notes of new information (the children will remember details – you may not!)
- keep the sessions short, bearing in mind the age of the children
- put the doll somewhere where the children can see it, or maybe it lives with you, never let the children see you put the doll in a cupboard or its bag.



Record of sessions in an early years setting

Key focus, purpose, approach	Support materials / objects	Response / key points
Celebrations - Birthdays	Cards Photographs Months A story about a birthday party	Children share how they celebrated their birthday.
Special clothes	Clothes for special occasions A variety to avoid stereotypes	Children talk about their favourite clothes.
Similarities & differences Colour of skin	Posters / pictures of children from other communities Children themselves	Read – All the Colors of the Earth by Sheila Hamanaka Discuss similarities & differences Observe hand colours
Relatives eg. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins	Photos of grandparents and other relatives.	What do they like to do with their family?



Activity – in groups of 4/5

In your group, discuss how you would introduce the doll for the first time.

Think about a focus for the introduction.

Take it in turns to be the practitioner and introduce the doll to the rest of the 'children' in your group.



Useful resource

*Portsmouth EMA website –
video clips of teacher using a
Doll*

- www.blss.portsmouth.sch.uk
- Click on Early Years button
or drop down Quick Menu :
Resources – Early Years
- Click on 'Persona Dolls' – left
hand index
- Click on 'Read a case study
here'



Useful Books

- **‘The Little Book of Persona Dolls’**
Marilyn Bowles
publ. Featherstone Education
- **‘Combating Discrimination, Persona Dolls in Action’ &**
- **‘Equality in Action : a way forward with Persona Dolls’**
Babette Brown
publ. Trentham Books



Contacting Persona Doll Training

- Persona Dolls and other materials can be ordered from

Persona Doll Training
www.persona-doll-training.org

Email: personadoll@tiscali.co.uk

