

# Ruby and the supermarket

## Learning story

9 June

Teacher: Sue

Several children were busy in the sandpit, making puddings. Ruby was very sure of exactly the ingredients she needed for her pie – “Bananas, apples, chocolate, ice cream” – but she indicated that she didn’t have them all. “Perhaps we could go shopping?” I suggested.

So we set off. First we went to the “fruit shop”. “Need two apples,” said Ruby. We found the “apples” and handed over the money. Ruby had a bucket with a little bit of sand, and each time she bought something, she fished in the bucket and handed over some “money”. “What else does Ruby need?” “Get some bananas.” She used a lot of language.

The game went on for some time. (The others left us for different activities.) We visited a different shop for the ice cream and chocolate and then another one for a handle for the door and some screws. (On our travels, Ruby noticed the door of the sleep room and announced that we needed “a handle and some screws”).

We made our way back to the sandpit to make the pie after our busy shopping trip.

## Learning story

9 June, again

Teacher: Jo

Today, just like every other day, Ruby amazed me with her articulate nature. I observed Ruby and Sue discussing a trip to the shops and was very keen to pay attention as these imaginative interactions with Ruby are often so filled with rich language and with scientific and mathematical concepts. They’re a real joy to watch, even when you’re not taking part!

Apples and kiwifruit were on the agenda today. Today, Ruby’s plan was for a short visit, with just enough time to get two shiny red apples and two brown kiwifruit. “All finished now,” said Ruby once she had made her purchases.

Seeing my opportunity, I approached. “Would you like to draw a picture of your shops and food, Ruby?” “Okay,” said Ruby, running over to

the table. “Apple,” she said as she drew circles on her paper in red crayon. “Is this the colour of your apples, Ruby?” I asked. “Yes,” said Ruby. “Red.” “Well done, Ruby. What else did you buy?” “Kiwifruit – look, there” she said, pointing to her picture. Before long, we had drawn the shops as well as some pictures of her mum and dad.



Ducking inside for a moment, I brought out an apple that had been cut in half. Showing it to Ruby, I explained how

the apple had been cut and asked whether she would like to draw a picture of the inside of the apple. “No, peel it,” was the response. “Why?” I asked. “So Ruby eat it,” was the delightful answer I received as Ruby began chewing away on the apple! Well, I never!

## What learning happened here?

Ruby’s thirst for knowledge is very much an aspect of her personality. Her make-believe play provides an information exchange within a responsive social context. Ruby’s use of language in her play as she responds, imagines, questions, describes, creates, and decides shows her independence, confidence, and sense of responsibility for her own learning. Her awareness of scientific and mathematical concepts was evident as she talked about colours and numbers and explored past events.

## What next?

Well, a trip to the shops with Ruby is a must. My interest couldn’t be greater. Is she wonderfully helpful? Does she enjoy gathering groceries? I’m sure I will soon see. Keep a lookout for Ruby’s follow-up story, soon to come – a visit to the real shops!

*Children’s learning is greatly influenced by the role of the family and significant others. The attitudes, skills and knowledge developed in the early years are the basis for learning in later years.*

Hogben and Wasley, 1989, page 22



## The supermarket

12 June

Teacher: Jo

"Read Ruby's stories," said Ruby on spotting me early this morning.

And so the much anticipated supermarket adventure began. After hearing and seeing her latest story, Ruby showed a keen interest in this shopping trip to the supermarket. She gobbled up an explanation of the need for a



"shopping list" of things to buy, and then we settled to the task at hand.

"Crackers, bananas, and a paper" were "musts" for Ruby. Mille was a keen helper, happy to help

budget as long as she could join us in the adventure. Checking the usually forbidden kitchen cupboards was an amusing task, which they followed by asking all the teachers for further suggestions. "Shopping list," they announced proudly, waving it around. This time-consuming challenge was of huge interest to these shoppers, who giggled a lot. "Panadol," suggested Lorraine, holding her head! (Ha, ha.) "Shelley," said Ruby, so we went in search of Shelley. "Bubbles" was Shelley's shopping item of choice, and so the journey continued.



With our list in hand and warm hats on, we set off with excitement at an all-time high and delightful smiles shining from our faces.

The walk was not without challenge as I managed to get the double pushchair stuck in the supermarket entrance bars. After

holding up a lot of busy shoppers, we got through and were off again.

What a hoot!



Once inside, the fun really began as we searched the aisles for the items on our list, then placed them in the pushchair, a very tricky task

when holding a banana. But what clever helpers! With all our items in hand, we paid, waved, and left the supermarket, keen to return another day.

Munching on our bananas, we returned to the centre, put our shopping away, and sat down for a rest and chat. "What did you think about our trip to the shops, Ruby and Mille?" I asked. "Fun shopping!" said Ruby. "Shops, yeah. Walk," replied Mille. An all-round success, I would say.

## What learning happened here?

Reading her learning story and looking at photographs of herself gave Ruby the opportunity to revisit her learning and interests. It also cemented her feelings of confidence and independence and her awareness of how much we value what she does. Our discussing going on a trip to the supermarket enabled Ruby to take responsibility for her learning and to express her ideas and feelings, two very significant learning dispositions. As I had suspected, Ruby was wonderfully helpful on the trip. She persisted with the difficulty of lifting heavy items and gained enjoyment from leading this learning opportunity.



## What next?

We will offer Ruby more opportunities to explore her interests and extend already cemented learning.

### **What's happening here?**

Ruby faces an imaginary play dilemma: she is missing some of the ingredients for her sand pie. Her teacher suggests they go shopping for these ingredients at an imaginary playground supermarket. When these episodes of play end, another teacher invites Ruby to draw the ingredients she needs. They plan a trip to a real supermarket for the next time Ruby attends the centre. For this trip, Ruby and Mille make a list.

### **What aspects of assessment for infants and toddlers does this exemplify?**

The complexity of Ruby's learning becomes evident across a number of assessments. In the first story, Ruby takes on Sue's suggestion of "going shopping" for the missing ingredients but then takes the lead, determining the storyline. Ruby obviously understands the sequence of shopping. She verbally shares the list of ingredients with Sue and selects goods from around the play area, paying for the items as she goes. She weaves these sequences into her play and guides Sue in these imaginary tasks.

In the second story, Jo has noticed Ruby's engagement with Sue and the other children in a familiar social role play around shopping and food. Recognising this interest from stories previously shared by other teachers at a staff meeting, Jo deliberately seizes the opportunity to explore this interest further with Ruby. When the time is right, Jo offers Ruby alternative media for representing her interest in food, drawing the kiwifruit and apples and, the next day, writing the shopping list. These assessments prompt the teachers to provide an opportunity for Ruby to make connections from the imagined to the real.

### **How might this assessment contribute to infants' and toddlers' learning?**

There is only a short delay between the teachers' first stories and the excursion to the supermarket. Jo shares those stories with Ruby to prompt her recollection of events and revisit an interest. She gives Ruby the opportunity to anticipate a new storyline and to move from the realm of imaginary and dramatic play to a real event.

The teacher gives Ruby and Mille authentic opportunities to determine the outcome of this event, choosing what should be added to the shopping list, approaching the teachers for their suggestions of what could be added, and selecting groceries from the shelves. The teacher plays the role of a resource person. She writes the shopping list, providing the written link between what the children hear and the items they will seek at the supermarket. At the supermarket, she provides a secure base from which Ruby and Mille can venture.

The teachers know Mille well and recognise that she would enjoy this excursion, despite not having been involved in this learning experience from the outset.

### **What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?**

The teachers make time to ensure that assessments are documented. The team meets together to share and discuss stories.

The teachers write stories alongside the children. They capture the language, emotions, and events and the context of learning as it occurs. They revisit the stories with the children through reading and looking at photos.

The teachers also share stories with each other to ensure that multiple perspectives are sought and to alert each other to the children's current interests. This ensures that they are all able to seize opportunities to deepen the learning.

Often, teachers need to give toddlers' play their full attention. Moving away to document learning events could compromise the outcomes for the toddler. Here, the adults work co-operatively to support the documentation of significant learning events to ensure that they do not compromise the outcomes for the children.

The teachers make the small group excursion to the supermarket possible by negotiating the rhythm of the day to allow flexibility in teacher responsibilities.