

From costume designer to movie director

A cape for Conor

Conor looked over my shoulder. I was sitting holding the fabric while Harriette sewed her mermaid bra top. “You could sew something, Conor,” I said.

“I’m *never* going to sew,” Conor said.

“Ahh – well, you might not want to sew a mermaid bra, but you might want to make something else,” I said. “Like a cape perhaps ...?”

“Yes!!!” Conor said, suddenly very enthusiastic about that idea. Off he went to draw his plan and then we went on a hunt to find the right fabric. Unfortunately we didn’t have any big pieces of red material, which was Conor’s choice, but we found something else that was suitable. The bra makers had discarded beads. I asked Conor if he would like to use the beads on his cape “They’re beads of power,” I told him. Then he was very excited about them and proceeded to sew many beads on his cape!!!



What learning is going on here?

I was *really* impressed with Conor’s attention to detail. He was so careful about where he put the needle in the fabric. And I was also very impressed with Conor’s patience. He was very focused and determined and worked on his cape for two days.

Once the cape was completed, Conor wanted to make a mask. It also had to have a bead on the third eye area!!! Very powerful!!! We didn’t have enough time to finish the mask at kindergarten so he has taken it home to finish there.

Well done, Conor. You are a fantastic power-cape creator, and it’s so great how you put so much care and attention into your work – fantastic learning dispositions!!!



Making a robber cape!

Conor made his second cape today! He had a clear idea about it – it was to be a robber’s cape. Just as before Conor put a lot of care and attention into his project. He went on to make a mask out of cardboard. “Now we can make a movie,” he said. I wrote down his movie script and the following day we did the shoot. What a fantastic improvisation – fantastic stage fighters too – slow motion and no contact – Excellent!!!

Julie

Conor’s movie ideas for *Robbers and Superheroes*

“Robbers are battling the superheroes – I’m a robber and Nicholas is a superhero. The robbers are baddies and the superheroes are goodies. The robbers are good at capturing and robbing – they capture the superheroes. The superheroes are good at catching them. If the superheroes do what they’re good at first, *they* win – but if the robbers do what *they’re* good at first, *they* win.”

The movie is titled *Robbers and Superheroes*

The images are a few stills from Conor's five-minute movie. During his involvement in this project he participated in a range of different roles including:

- scriptwriter
- costume designer
- movie director
- actor.



What did you like about the movie?

"I liked fighting," said Conor.



"The one where he stole the money and I found the key, the key to the treasure," said Esmond.



"I bumped into Tommy and he fell down," said Nicholas.



"I liked it where we became friends," said Jamie.



"I liked flying in the movie," said Jack.



"What I really liked about the movie was that the boys' fighting was fantastic. They managed to fight without hurting each other," said Julie.

Parent voice

As with most boys at kindie, Conor has (or should I say had) very strong ideas about boy games and girl games. Sewing was definitely a girl thing. He had previously helped me to make two superhero capes at home but his involvement had been on the design side.

I was very surprised and proud to hear he was sewing his own cape at kindie. We have a very varied dress-up box at home and Conor loves dressing up. His first cape was a cape of power with special buttons. He proudly explained what each button can do. The second cape was a robber cape, again with special buttons.

Conor has "great" leadership abilities which were demonstrated in the director and male-lead roles he played in his movie, Robbers and Superheroes. We were amazed when Julie said he had written the script and organised the other actors.

Last night we had some friends over for a double movie premiere. A friend of ours has a short movie, Woollyman 2, in the Wellington Festival next week. The double bill featured Robbers and Superheroes and then Woollyman 2. Conor was very proud that his movie was being watched by both children and adults. He carried the tape around all night.

At the end of the double bill, we voted that Robbers and Superheroes had more audience appeal.

Conor – costume designer, movie director, scriptwriter, and actor

... move over Peter Jackson!



What's happening here?

At the beginning of Conor's folder, his parents write "Conor is a superhero-type of boy. Spiderman and Green Goblin are the current favourites." This exemplar is evidence that Conor's interests are being responded to in this setting. Initially Conor doesn't want to sew, but he is enticed with the prospect of making a cape. Once the teacher identifies the beads as being "beads of power", there is no stopping him. The cape is finished, and he goes on to make a mask. Conor wants to make a robber's cape. When this and a second mask are completed, he announces, "Now we can make a movie." He tells the teachers the movie script. The following day they do the shoot. Conor organises the other actors and is ready to begin.

What aspects of noticing, recognising, and responding to learning in the arts does this assessment exemplify?

From the outset, the teachers respond to Conor's interest in superheroes. They are aware that Conor has strong views about what boys do and what girls do, and they call on his interest in superheroes to encourage him to try sewing. When the movie is finished, the teacher responds, "What a fantastic improvisation – fantastic stage fighters too – slow motion and no contact – Excellent!!!"

A parent voice commenting on the family's enthusiasm for film-making has been added to the folder. Conor's film is celebrated by his family with their own premiere.

What does this assessment tell us about learning in the arts (using a *Te Whāriki* lens)?

Conor's learning in this project spans all the strands of *Te Whāriki*. We see the development of Conor's learning dispositions throughout the stories. His interest in superheroes is sustained and deepened when he makes capes and masks and then moves into movie making. Throughout these activities, Conor communicates his ideas and feelings and takes initiative and responsibility for his own learning. He negotiates who will be in his movie and discusses what they will do. He also expands his working theories around what girls do and what boys do or do not do.

How does this assessment exemplify developing competence in the arts?

Increasing levels of participation play a significant part in this exemplar. Conor takes on a range of roles, including:

- Costume designer – he works on his first cape for two days, giving real attention to detail. He is very focused and determined. He selects appropriate materials to solve his design problems. He then goes on to make a second specific costume for a purpose (his movie).
- Scriptwriter – he develops his ideas and creates a story for his movie, explaining the key characteristics of robbers and of superheroes.
- Movie director – he interprets his own story and gives directions to the person doing the filming (the teacher).
- Actor – he plays the leading role!

Throughout these experiences, Conor contributes his views, using his personal experiences and his imagination to develop his ideas. He explores some of the key elements of drama (role, time, space, action, tension). Moving between what might be considered as both "process drama" and "improvisation", Conor engages in this experience and is rewarded with opportunities for discovery on many levels.