

Philosophical Conversation

In the early years

By Dr Sofia Nikolidaki, University of Crete, Department of Preschool Education

Can you play the bad guy?

During break time two children come close to me.

Emily: Miss Sofia, can you play the bad guy?

Teacher: What am I supposed to do?

Vasiliki: You would kidnap our families?!

Teacher: What?

Emily: And we will ask you to give them back to us but you will not. Ok, let's play now!

Vasiliki: You, bad (a name I don't know...possibly from a TV hero) give us back our families. Now!

Teacher: (Playing the bad guy) I am not giving you anything.

Emily: Then we will take them back with our magic powers.

Vasiliki: Attack!

Two children start punching me!

(Nikolidaki research log, 2018)

Teacher's food for thinking

It is flattering when children trust their teacher and give them an active role in their games. This gave me some ideas:

- I guess that children picked me to play the bad guy so that they wouldn't need to hit one of their classmates. Children know that hitting and punching others is not acceptable. However, if a teacher agrees to play that role, then maybe she stops being a teacher. She becomes the bad guy. The bad guy is not the teacher or another child. Therefore, children can hit the guy without guilt or regret.
- Children seem to trust their teacher and maybe that's why they ask her to play a different role.
- The teacher is still an adult and a trusted authority figure, so maybe the children ask the teacher to play the bad guy because they know she will stop the game or change if appropriate.

- Children seem to exorcise hidden fears such as their parents' potential kidnapping. They set the rules of how the bad guy is going to act as when they explain that "we will ask for our parents but you will not give them back to us".
- Children identify themselves as super-heroes they have seen in films. They manage to get into others' shoes and they pretend to live as if they were someone else. This is a kind of fantasy lived experience in a safe environment for the children.

Further questions and activities

Concepts: Magical, supernatural powers

- What some examples of magical powers?
- Are they real or imaginary?
- Are magical and supernatural powers the same? What are their similarities and differences?
- Who has magical and/or supernatural powers?
- Would you like to have magical powers? What type of powers would they be? How would you use them? Why?
- How can a person get these powers?
- How can these powers be used? Which should/shouldn't be used?
- Am I free to use my powers in any way I prefer?

Imagine you have a magic wand: Draw the changes you would make:

- To yourself
- Your friends
- Your family
- The place you live
- The planet

Concepts: Changing, transforming, becoming

- Did you fight with the bad guy or with your teacher?
- Whose hand hurts? The bad guy's or the teacher's hand?
- If your teacher transformed to a bad guy permanently what would happen?
- Can a teacher become the bad guy in a game? How?
- Can a teacher become a bad guy in reality?
- Can you change to something else? How?
- Is changing to something and becoming something the same?

	Become a ...?				
Can a ...	Prince/ Princess?	Superhero?	Thief?	Your idea	Your idea
Teacher					
Child					
Frog					
Apple tree					
Box of chocolates					

Further activities

Draw a superhero you would like to become?

Imagine and describe your own superhero. What is the hero's appearance? What are his/her special powers?

Write the secret recipe for acquiring powers. Write a certain recipe for a certain power.