

Play is Learning

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Definition of Play

Play is a self-selected and self-directed activity and will end when the sheer pleasure of doing it stops. Play is the only activity that unifies the whole person: mind, body, and spirit.

Work and Play

“Play is the work of children. Through play they learn about themselves and the world around them. When all they see, hear, and feel make sense to them...we believe their brains and bodies are ready to learn. Our culture seems to ask us to make a choice between work and play. We suggest instead that our time of work should be enjoyable and that our time of play will be productive.” (Sensory Integration International, 1991)

What do I need in my classroom for ALL children to learn?

- Dominant kids: blocks, outside, woodworking
- Interactive kids: dramatic play, storytelling, creative messy
- Sensitive kids: board games, books, writing
- Cautious kids: puzzles, science, math/manipulatives, Lego

Subjects not suitable for thematic units: These are everyday lessons!

- Safety
- Kindness
- Emotions/Feelings
- Friends
- Manners
- Bucket filling
- Community
- All about me

Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells us About Raising Successful Children

1. Collaboration: Are children able to talk to one another? Is there time planned for external thought? Do the children exhibit social control?
2. Communication: Effective communication is the fuel that propels collaboration! How to children talk to one another?
3. Content: What are children learning? Is it interesting to them (interest survey)?
4. Critical Thinking: Will they question appropriately? Will children believe everything they see or learn to question theories, information, opinions, truths?
5. Creative Innovation: loose parts, leave it on the table, give little direction, let them explore!
6. Confidence: Self esteem is the last deficit/authentic need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs! Confidence and self esteem is needed to get to need to know and understand.

What 3 things have to be present in curriculum?

- 1. Wonder
- 2. Discovery
- 3. Experience

Environment that supports play:

- Outdoor
- Unstable
- Near constant motion

This how the brain learns best. We are hard wired for an environment that supports the 3 pieces above. So the way children are usually taught in a typical educational setting is the EXACT OPPOSITE of what the brain needs!

So how do we, as teachers, do this?

- Uninterrupted time for dramatic play. 40-60 minutes
- How long does it take for children to be fully involved in play?
- Support different play themes, but not thematic units. Play themes come emergently from the children not the adults.
- Bring out the props! Fluid and open-ended
- Have the children help you plan
- Participate, participate, participate
- Observe play themes and GO!
- Provide open-ended materials
- Remember imagination when providing props
- Ask questions, lots and lots of questions!
- Watch out for the arbitrary rules