

Benefits of learning through play



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Play is a very important part of a child's development, and can affect their development in a number of ways, there is a collection of principles that were formed to look at the value of play in nurturing a child's development, this is called the 'play Cycle'. It consists of the following stages .

- Metalude-This is when a child chooses the activity or toy that they want to play with.
- Play Cue-This is an expression or a physical action which a child might do to show other children that they would like them to come over and be involved. For example, a child may have a toy car and pretend to mimic a crash sound to the other child which would then tempt them to involve themselves in the car game.
- Play return- This is when a child or adult has accepted the request to play and then makes the decision to whether they want to involve themselves or not.
- Play Flow-this is when a child gets very involved in a task or activity, this usually starts from the play cue.
- Annihilation-This is where a child makes the decision to stop what activity or play they are doing, reasons being boredom from repetition or if the game has ended.

Play can affect all aspects of a child's development, below I have listed the different areas.

- Physical development- Physical development through play for young children involves play which enhance gross and fine motor skills, for example threading string through small holes requires concentration and fine motor skills. Activities involving running, jumping, riding a bike

requires gross motor skills. These are really beneficial for a child and need to be encouraged from a young age as they will be needed for them to take part in activities such as sports day. Children should also be encouraged to realise the importance of healthy eating alongside physical exercise.

- Emotional development-Play which involves emotional development is extremely important for young children and needs to be incorporated during school activities. This type of play is beneficial to all children of all ages but also helps encourage children who find it hard to express their emotions, a way in which this can be used for example children can use dolls or teddies to play out a situation, dress up and role play can be used also. This is good to build self esteem and self confidence to then assist in other incidents in school.
- Intellectual development-This type of play doesn't necessarily mean that a child has to put pen to paper, many play activities can be creative and fun that will benefit a child intellectually, for example a group of children could be doing junk modelling and they would then discuss which materials would suit each part of the model and what colour paints to use to then match up to the rest of the groups designs.
- Social development-Play is vital to make sure that children develop good social skills with their class friends, teachers and other adults. This is a life skill that needs to be encouraged from an early age to then get them ready for life in a school environment. Activities that can help build up child's social skills can involve for example a group of year 2 children having a classroom discussion about who is in their family, the other children can then discuss differences and similarities,

for example child A may say “ I have a brother” child B may respond “ I don't have a brother I have two sisters” obviously this type of discussion needs to be approached in a sensitive manner as some children have different family set-ups for example child a may not have a dad like child b which could then spark off a different conversation.

Creating play spaces is paramount to a child's education and development. These play spaces will let children explore all sides of there development. Research was made in 2008 by OFSTED to look into learning inside and outside the classroom. This investigation found that ' *when planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils personal, social and emotional development*'. Taken from <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/learning-outside-classroom>

When creating a play space within a school setting it is important to first launch a small discussion with the children to find out what they would and wouldn't like in a play space, letting the children get involved in planning and creating a play space will emphasise there interest, and also develop self confidence, this can be done by getting the children to draw simple plans on how they would like it too look, what items they would like to include and colours. Also getting the children to make a visual model of how they would like it look by using junk materials, shoe boxes, plastic bottles, cereal boxes etc. After the children have constructed there plans the teaching staff could let each child vote for which one they like and then the winning child(ren) could be taken to some other play spaces in different schools.

its important to involve children in the group discussion of creating a play space to encourage self confidence and self esteem, it also teaches them that by taking charge of a project that there is hard work involved which will then show them that they need to respect all the play equipment. It is important to assure that all children are involved in the consultation process, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity and impairment. Also making sure the play equipment is suitable for any children with physical disabilities.

Its important that being a teaching assistant you support all play sessions, there are two main forms which are

- Structure
- Process

Structural supportis to make sure that the classroom is set up appropriately for children to carry out play safely. To assure this, messy, noisy and quiet play needs to be separate. Each child needs to know that help is available in each play area.

Play spaces need to be set up to be appealing to the eye to encourage children to take part, some children need this encouragement for something to stand out as they find it hard to choose between different play activities. Good organisation is also key to assure a steady flow to each play activity, the teaching assistant will need to make the room layout is set out appropriately for the children involved at the time and any specific needs,

Process supportis what the teaching assistant may have to give to pupils when they are involved in a play activity. Teaching assistants need to ensure all play activities consist of the correct materials as this will enable the pupils

to engage in the tasks in hand and learn to become proactive in their approach when learning.

There may be children in the class that need extra support with activities due to certain disabilities or conditions, for example there may be a child with ADHD who needs one to one interaction with certain activities and encouragement to get involved in the play space. It is important to make sure as a teaching assistant you do not take over the play activity and just assist, for example if a child is struggling to use a ruler to do a straight line the teaching assistant shouldn't do it for them instead get a ruler yourself and show the child on a separate piece of paper how to hold it etc, this will then build the child's confidence and they will feel like they have achieved something new that they couldn't do before and learnt a new skill.

Various legislations need to be followed when creating a play space. This is to make sure all children are safe and protected when using play equipment, it is paramount that these are always adhered to as the children's safety is vital. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is put in place to ensure all children have admittance to the same equipment, services etc as to those children without a disability. When designing play space for children it is important to plan for children with disabilities, their accessibility shouldn't be made obvious, facilities should be included that can stimulate children in more ways than one for example if a child has a physical disability other activities should be arranged so they are able to use their other senses, such as a 'texture table' where they can touch items and guess what they are. If a play space is already arranged, it is important that these are equipped suitably for a child with a disability, for example if a child is wheel

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chair user there needs to be adequate space for them to manoeuvre around but also to think of the needs of the other children without a disability. Its important to make every child feel valued and equal within the setting. This also goes for outdoor play spaces.

According to Wicksteed playscapes:

' RoSPA's publication " playgrounds for children with special needs" states: Like or similar play experiences should be available to all site users; i. e. If there are slides, rockers and roundabouts in a play area, then all users should be able to have sliding, rocking and rotating experiences, even if some users cannot access all play items or features.'

Author-wicksteed playscapes

<http://www.wicksteed.co.uk/legislation.html>

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Risk assessments are vital when a play space has been created. Risk is hard to foresee but Play England have described it by stating:

'Providers need to decide for themselves what level of risk is appropriate in their provision, because the type and style of provision must be responsive to local circumstances. This is one reason why industry standards, which don't necessarily have a one size fits all format, need to be interpreted within the local context. This enables providers to include equipment or play opportunities that some more anxious parents might object to. However, simply reflecting the concerns of the most anxious parents, and altering playground design in an attempt to remove as much risk and challenge as

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possible, prevents providers from offering important benefits to the vast majority of children and young people. It may also lead more adventurous children to seek physical challenges in other, less well-managed environments, which others settle for sedentary activities'

Authors-S. Lester, Dr O. Jones, W. Russell

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/supporting-school-improvement-through-play.pdf

Another two legislations that needs to be adhered too is stated below

Occupiers liability Act 1957 and 1984

'An occupier of premises owes the same duty, the "common duty of care", to all his visitors, except in so far as he is free to and does extend, restrict, modify or exclude his duty to any visitor or visitors by agreement or otherwise'

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/5-6/31/section/2

EN1176 Playground Equipment Standard

The royal Society for the prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) shows information on safety for play ground equipment, there are seven different areas covered in the legislation which are stated below

- Safety in general
- Different test and safety requirements for swings
- Slide safety requirements

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- Runaway safety and test methods
- Roundabout safety and test methods
- Rocking equipment safety and test methods
- Installation, maintenance, inspection and operation

Everything described in this unit concentrates on how play can affect a child's development, physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially and that it is vital for children to have the creation of play spaces. This unit also describes how sometimes a teaching assistant needs to intervene during a play session to establish smooth flow of play and to be aware.