

Piaget's theory of cognitive development: how does it relate to using toys in day...

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Block Sorter: A Developmental Toy

In my daycare classroom, we have a small purple Winnie the Pooh block sorter. It is shaped like a bee hive, with honey dripping down the side and small bees attached all over the sides of the hive. The top of the hive features a lid that opens and closes for the retrieval of blocks from inside of the hive. The top of the lid has a square cut out, perfect for the toy's accompanying assortment of vibrant and colorful square blocks to fit into. The hive features a switch that can be turned to "ABC's", "OFF", or "Questions." When the switch is set to "ABC's," a small portion of the ABC song will play each time a block is successfully put through the square-shaped cut out in the lid of the toy. When the switch is set to "Questions," the toy will ask a question regarding the color or letter of the block that is successfully inserted into the cut out.

I will be using this toy in the context of my preschool class- they are toddlers, all around eighteen months old. The children take turns sitting in the floor with this toy, turning and manipulating the blocks to fit into the cut out; if the block is not turned perfectly, it will not fit through the cut out. They must use their fine motor skills to try to maneuver the block into the small hole.

I believe that this shape sorter toy is directly related to Piaget's theory of cognitive development when used in the context of the eighteen month old children. Under Piaget's sensorimotor stage, this toy would become most effective during the Tertiary Circular Reactions, Novelty, and Curiosity sub stage. Piaget states that during this sub stage, which takes place between

the ages of twelve to eighteen months, "" Infants become intrigued by the many properties of objects and by the many things they can make happen to objects; they experiment with new behavior." The children are experimenting with their ability to twist and turn the square blocks to fit them into the hole in the top of the hive. They are intrigued when they are able to fit the blocks into the square cut out: their interests are peaked, and they want to repeat this action again and again, until they master the concept. This goes along with Piaget's description of children during this stage being like " young scientists." The toddlers are conducting experiments to get the results that they want from the blocks and the hive.

This toy could also coincide with the next sub stage described in Piaget's theory- the Internalization of Schemes. This sub stage falls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four months, and is described by Piaget as the time when infants develop the ability to use primitive symbols and form enduring mental representations. Once the toddlers master the skill of fitting the block into the cut out, they remember exactly how to turn and manipulate the block in order to make it fit each time with ease. They are able to make an enduring mental representation and can recall what to do when presented with the challenge of the blocks.