The Dramatic Play And Emergent Literacy Connection: Helping Teachers See the Teachable Moment

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Play ... leads children to use their minds to wonder, their hands to experiment and their words to share ideas. (Luongo-Orlando, 2010, p. 12)
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Not A Box
Agenda

• Review of literature
• Setting up play
• Choosing Literature
• Some Examples
• Closing
Play is everywhere!
• **Christian Science Monitor**: Toddlers to tweens: relearning how to play January 2012
• Dr. Pepper/Snapple – Let’s Play Community Partnership (KaBOOM) commercial
• **Scientific American** – Review of Stuart Brown’s The Serious Need for Play January 2009
• **New York Times**: Effort to restore children’s play gains momentum, January 2011
• **New York Times Magazine**: Taking play seriously. February 2008
• **The Atlantic**: All work and no play: Why your kids are more anxious, depressed. October 2011
• **NPR**: Old-fashioned play builds serious skills. Feb 2008
• *Smithsonian*: Let the children play, It’s good for them. July/Aug 2012

• *US News & World Report*: Learning and play, September 2012

• *USA Today*: Less play time equals more troubled kids, experts say


• *Chronicle of Higher Education*: The case for play: How a handful fo researchers are trying to save childhood. February 2011
Via Pinterest:
No matter how big and bad you are, when a two year old hands you a toy phone, you answer it.
When engaged in play, children must use language to communicate & negotiate meaning.

Mielonen & Paterson, 2009
May I take your order?
Play and development?

- Lillard & Colleagues 2013 review of play and child development
- Nicolopoulou & Ilgaz response focusing on play and narrative
“Meanwhile, the lack of existing evidence that pretend play helps development should not be taken as an allowance for school programs to employ traditional teacher-centered instructional approaches that research has clearly shown are inferior for young children. The hands-on, child driven educational methods sometimes referred to as “playful learning” (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009) are the most positive means yet known to help young children’s development.” Lillard, et al, 2013, pp 27-28)
• Enjoyable/pleasurable
• Intrinsically motivated
• Freely chosen by the player
• Active engagement on part of player
• “As if real”
• Non-literal
  • Segal, 2004

Defining Play:
Elements of Play
Dramatic Play

Symbolic representation of materials

Sociodramatic Play

Role taking, Verbal communication

Mature vs. Immature (Bedrova & Leong)

create new scenarios, assign new roles, invent props to fit play, immersed
• Saracho & Spodek (2006)
  • Piaget/Constructivist
  • Vygotsky/social contexts & symbolic thinking
• Bronfennbrenner/person-environment dynamic
Credible evidence supports the claim that play can serve literacy by providing settings that promote literacy activity, skills and strategies. Therefore, we recommend that ample opportunities to engage in dramatic play and literacy-enriched play settings should be standard features in early childhood programs. Christie & Roskos, 2008
Rosco & Christie review

- Relationship between free play with pretend elements and oral-language skills
  - Syntactic complexity
  - Mental imagery related to reading/writing
- Creative drama play and literacy – meaning making
- Literacy-enriched play areas increase frequency of reading and reading behaviors
Dramatization of stories positive affects story recall (esp 3 – 7 year old low to middle SES children)
Play & Language Connection

• Symbolic thinking/representation
• Language required in social play
• More complex forms of communication in social play
• Motivation for language (play is in the child’s control)

(Weisberg, et al, 2013)
Writing and Play

- Writing attempts in preschool connected to letter knowledge (Gerde, et al, 2012)
- Developmental process
Play-based literacy learning... (KG) teachers provide:

- Sufficient time and space for play
- Material resources
- Background knowledge developed for play
- Scaffolding of retelling/dramatization of play
- Facilitation of children’s attention and learning through modeling & interaction (p. 184)
• Common experiences (Morrow, 2007)
• Environment & Materials matter (NRC)
• Choose strategically (Bluiett, 2009)
8 Principles Effective Early Literacy Instruction (EL & SBBR)

- Core content --- (oral language, print awareness)
- Oral Language
- Storybook reading
- Carefully planned environment
- Opportunities to engage in emergent literacy
- DAP forms of explicit instruction
- Home supports

- Instruction & assessment guided by standards

- (Vuchelich, Christie, & Enz, 2011, pp. 12 – 14)
Setting Up the Play Environment

• Writing materials = not just in “writing center” but in all or many centers (Gerde, et al, 2012)

• Adults modeling and scaffolding writing (same)
Using props during storytelling had positive impact on children’s dramatic play afterward – increased use of vocab from story (Barton 2013)
Literacy-embedded play centers

- Objectives: Literacy within context
- Standards: Accommodations for diverse learners
- Vocabulary: Assessment strategies
- Materials: Children’s books
- Setting (center)
- Roles & Viewpoints

Walker & Spybrook 2011
Bredekamp, 2004, p. 171

• Take own role seriously
• Recognize play as a key teaching/learning context
• Be skilled in research based teaching strategies
• Incorporate play with other teaching methods

Teacher’s Role
Choosing Literature
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Kindergarten example

Bowne & Brokmeier (2008)
http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v10n2/bowne.html
Gardening
Dramatic Play
Books for supporting gardening play...

Mrs. Spitzer's Garden

The Surprise Garden

Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard

Secrets of the Garden

PLANTING THE WILD GARDEN

ROSE'S GARDEN

and then it's spring

Grandpa Green
Props

Plastic/silk/cloth/paper flowers
Flower pots
Cut up craft paper dirt
Children’s gardening tools
Gardening clothes (aprons, gloves, boots, sun glasses, sun hats...)
“Patio” furniture
Literacy Garden Props

Flower/plant note pads & writing materials
Seed packets
Gardening books, catalogues, magazines
Garden planning materials
Garden Plot Planning Tool


Thank you

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