

PERENNIAL PROBLEM:

What to do about Nurturing Human Development

CONTINUING PARENTING CONCERN:

Promoting Healthy Parent-Child Relationships

RELATED CONCERN:

Play

DESIRED RESULTS FOR LEARNERS:

Students will understand how in play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults.

LEARNER OUTCOMES: Students will:

1. Explore the role of play and play activities in children's lives.
2. Examine the position adults hold in a child's play.
3. Become aware of how enrichment activities assist in the development of a child.
4. Consider the variety of methods of improving children's development through play.

SUPPORTING CONCEPTS:

- A. Importance of Play
- B. Stages and Types of Play
- C. Parent / Adult Role
- D. Enrichment Activities

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Play is something that adults rarely find the time to do. Play by many is considered a waste of time when one should be working. This idea has been perpetuated throughout history. Play has not been researched until recently. "Play, even for children, was not accepted in early history because children were expected to work" (Decker, C.A., 2004). According to *The Merriam Webster Dictionary* play is "to engage in recreation; handle or behave lightly, or absentmindedly; to take advantage (on fears); to move or operate in a brisk or irregular manner." These definitions of play encourage the historical perspective that play is nothing but an impractical use of time. Many times parents of young children assume that because a child is playing he or she is not learning, when in fact, play is the essence of learning. Play is not impractical nor is it negligent. Children are naturally curious and therefore are born ready to learn. Play allows children to interact with the world of people and objects through their natural curiosity. Play can take the form of concepts learned, word play, and problem solving games (Decker, C.A., 2004).

Play encompasses all areas of development. Through play children are able to increase their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and their ability to communicate with peers and adults (Fernie, D., and Unknown). While children are involved in pretend play they build their passive and active vocabulary and use mental representations through symbolic play. Play allows children to build social skills and self-concept through conflict resolution and negotiation. Children are able to use their words to solve problems while learning what behaviors are socially appropriate.

Mildred Parten and Jean Piaget each have theories on play. These play theories are different from each other yet have similar properties and both mirror a child's development. In order to understand the importance of play one must examine the play stages that children go through and how they relate to the areas of development.

In addition to the play theories by Parten and Piaget, researchers also believe other types of play are important in a child's social and cognitive development.

Adults have a significant role in a child's play. It is the adult's responsibility to provide time, space, and materials for a child's play. Adults need to allow a great deal of free expression for play. An adult's attitude about a child's play can either hinder or encourage the naturally curious child's explorations. "Adults can provide many learning experiences that enrich children's lives. They can encourage creativity with the types of play they provide and the ways they value these activities. When children have experiences with art, music, science, and literature, they learn aesthetic, creative, and scientific concepts" (Decker, C.A. 2004).

Parents play a critical role in their children's development and are responsible for their children's environment. Parents are their children's first and most important teacher. Children develop within the context of their family and their development is affected by the nature of the relationship with their parents. In a review of the literature on caregiver-child interactions during play, O'Reilly and Bornstein (1993) affirmed the central role of parents in developing their child's cognitive abilities through warm, supportive interactions in various types of instruction. In the context of play, children are receptive to parental suggestions, and they play in a more sophisticated manner when their caregivers join them (O'Reilly & Bornstein, 1993). As the specific nature of parental goals differs across cultures, so does the parents' particular emphasis during play interactions with their child. However, it seems to be true universally that parental support, whether it is direct or indirect, enhances the quality of a child's play experience. Parental support of children's play is extremely important, but the actual means of support, whether through the provision of time, space, materials, or social partners, varies widely and appropriately by culture (Vandermass-Peler, 2002).

TEACHER PREPARATION:

1. What are your memories of play? Who played with you most often? How did your family view or value play?
2. What cultural backgrounds do your students come from? How might play hold a different value for them?

Note: TM in the activities refers to transparency master and SM refers to student master.

DIRECTED ACTIVITIES:

Supporting Concept A: Importance of Play

1. **“Play – What is it?”**: To help students clarify their own ideas about the meaning and purpose of play, have each student write down on a piece of paper the following sentence prompt: “Play is a child’s...” Write the responses as a word collage on a piece of butcher paper or on the whiteboard under the sentence prompt. Discuss with the students the word collage.

- What memories do you have of playing?
- Who played with you most often?
- What role did or do your parents or adults hold in a child’s play?
- How does your sentence relate to what you experienced as a child?
- What benefits do you see in play?

Use your classroom set of textbooks or provide students with articles that are researched-based about the importance of play (sample websites are at the end of the curriculum). Have the students read and then create with a partner a mini poster that answers the following questions:

- Explain the following quote about play, “A child’s work is all play.”
- In what ways does play relate to Erikson’s stages of social-emotional development?
- How does play benefit a child, a parent, and society?

Have the students present their poster to small groups and then post in the classroom.
(*Awareness of Context, Desired Results*)

Supporting Concept B: Stages and Types of Play

2. **“Stages of Play”**: An understanding of the different stages and types of play can help students and adults have appropriate expectations and understand how to provide positive guidance during play. Use a video or recorded clip of infants, toddlers, or preschool children playing (videos can be bought online, videoed of children in a childcare center/preschool, or obtained through the local ESD). Discuss the concept of children sharing before you begin. Have the students watch the video for the following things:

- What do you see the children doing?
- How many people are the children interacting with?
- How are they interacting with other children/adults/caregivers?
- What do you notice about their attention span?
- What do you notice about the structure of the play?
- What aspects of the play do you notice that relate to other developmental theories?

Have the students discuss in small groups and then come together as a large group and discuss what was observed.

Make enough copies of Mildred Parten’s Stages of Play and Jean Piaget’s Stages of Play with Objects (SM-1) to hand out to groups of two to four students. Cut the title, each stage title, and each stage description into strips and place into an envelope.

Put the students into groups of two to four people and give each group an envelope. Explain to the students that there are two different theories on stages of play in the envelopes. Have the students sort out the slips of paper and problem-solve to put the information together. Go around the room and observe the process. When you feel enough time has passed, go over the stages with the students.

- What similarities do you see about Jean Piaget’s cognitive development theory and that of his stages of play with objects?

- What similarities do you see within Piaget and Parten's theories?
- How might these theories help us in working with children?

Have the students again watch the video clips and in their groups categorize the stages of play that are observed.

(Awareness of Context, Alternative Approaches, Desired Results)

3. **"Types of Play"**: Set up pictures around the classroom of children doing active-physical play, manipulative-constructive play, socio-dramatic play, and language-logic play (games). Have the students get out a piece of paper and fold it into four sections. Have the students then go around and examine the pictures and write down what they observe in the photos.

After the students are finished observing, put up the names of the different types of play on the board or overhead. Have the students read the titles and label each section of their paper with the picture observations on it. Go around to each picture and discuss.

- What skills did you observe?
 - How does the title of this type of play fit with what you observed?
 - How could this type of play be beneficial to children?
- (Awareness of Context)*

Supporting Concept C: Parent / Adult Role

3. **"Parent /Adult Role"**: It is essential for parents and students to understand the role that they hold in a child's play and learning. Begin helping students understand this by putting them into groups of three to five. Place butcher paper and markers/pens around the room, enough for each group. Have the students make a T chart on the paper. On one side have them write "positive" and on the other "negative." Now have the students think about when they were younger or a time when they were trying to learn something. On the positive side have the students write down all the positive characteristics of a person who taught them something and on the other side write down all the negative characteristics of a person who had taught them something. Go around the room to judge time. Have the students go around and share their school-appropriate lists and make a master on the board or the overhead projector.

- What trends do you see?
- Why did you choose those positive and negative traits?
- How does this relate to play and an adult's role in it?
- What do you think about this statement: *"Parents are their child's first and most important teacher."*

Assign a textbook or article reading about the role of adults and parents in their child's play. Have the students write a letter to a parent, an article for a magazine, or create and present a speech about the importance and role of a parent/adult in a child's play.

(Awareness of Context, Alternative Approaches, Desired Results)

Supporting Concept D: Enrichment Activities

5. **"What are Enrichment Activities?"**: Write the word *"Enrichment"* on the overhead or whiteboard. Have the students discuss what they think the word means. Have a student use a dictionary to look up the official meaning of the word.

Discuss as a class the definition of the word "*Enrichment*" as it refers to activities aiding children's growth and development. Ask the students to think of other enrichment activities besides playing with toys. List these ideas up on the overhead and discuss each. (Consequences of Action, Desired Results)

6. **"Art"**: Give the following journal prompt, "Visual art is..." Discuss what the students have come up with. Ask the students, "Why are painting, construction, and photography considered visual arts." Ask the students, "In what ways do visual arts help children develop?"

Put out several art activities for the students to experience. Have the students evaluate the activities by writing a paragraph answering the question, "How would this activity enrich the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of a child?"

Put up "Visual Art Notes" (SM-2) for the students to copy down. If possible obtain several examples of children's artwork. Separate the artwork into the different stages of visual arts. Give the students 10 minutes to examine the artwork and categorize it. The students will be looking for and writing down ways the children have shown spatial relationships, exaggerated sizes, transparencies, and other designs discussed in the notes. (Consequences of Action, Desired Results)

7. **"Music"**: Ask the students for examples of how music creates feelings. Write these on the overhead. Then ask the students why they think music is an important part of a child's learning experience and play.

- Have you ever noticed a child dance?
- In what ways does movement and music assist in a child's physical development?
- What kind of instruments would be appropriate for young children? Why?
- How might language development be linked to music?

Play one or two children's songs and teach the class the songs that have been sung in the preschool or at home. When the students are done listening discuss:

- What features did you notice in these songs that make them suitable for children?
 - What types of pitches and words did you notice?
 - Were the words sung to a tune or a chant?
- (Consequences of Action, Desired Results)

8. **"Science"**: Go over the notes on "Science" (SM-3) with students. Have several science activities for the students to observe and experience (could use activities such as; Ooblic, Gak, ice/water, will it roll, oil bottles, Insta-snow, Biocolor ice painting, etc.). Discuss how these activities are science-related and enrich a child's development. (Consequences of Action, Desired Results)

9. **"Literature"**: Say to the students "You probably already know why literature is important in a child's play and learning and you probably don't even know it. So let's brainstorm."

Read a short children's story to the class. Ask the students to explain how the story is appropriate for children. Discuss as a class the responses.

Have the students draw a picture of their favorite part of the story after you finish reading the story. Ask the students why the story was read to them and why they were asked to draw a picture. Discuss as a class and write the ideas that the students come up with on the overhead. Put the words "follow-up activity" on the overhead and ask the students to

please define this term. Discuss what follow up activities are, why they are used, and how they relate to literature and literacy.

(Consequences of Action, Desired Results)

10. "Wrap-Up Assignment": Assign the students to choose one of the following activities to culminate the unit:

- A. Write a short paper entitled "Children and Play."
- B. Create a pamphlet that informs the community about the role of play in a child's development.
- C. Write an article for a magazine or newspaper about play.
- D. Create a power point presentation that could be used to inform the community on how to promote learning through play.

RESOURCES:

Bergen, D. (2001). Pretend Play and Young Children's Development. ERIC Digest. http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed458045.html

Decker, C.A. (2004) Children the Early Years. Tinley Park, Illinois: The Goodheart-Willcox Company, Inc.

Fernie, D. (Unknown). The Nature of Children's Play. <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/nature.of.childs.play.html>

O'Reilly, A.W. & Bornstein, M. H. (1993). "Caregiver-child interaction in play." In M. H. Bornstein and A. W. O'Reilly (Eds.). The role of play in the development of thought. New Directions for Child Development, 59, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Vandermass-Peler, M. (2002). Cultural variations in parental support of children's play. In W. J. Lonner, D. L. Dinnel, S. A. Hayes, & D. N. Sattler (Eds.), Online Readings in Psychology and Culture (Unit 11, Chapter 3), (<http://www.wvu.edu/~culture>), Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington USA.

Websites:

www.naeyc.org

www.teacher.scholastic.com

www.psychologytoday.com

www.findarticles.com

www.allianceforchildhood.org/

www.extension.oregonstate.edu

Mildred Parten's Stages of Play

1. On-Looker Play –
Actively watches others play but doesn't interact. (Not sure how to or scared?)
2. Solitary Play –
Plays by self with own supplies. No interaction with others.
3. Parallel Play –
Child plays next to another child. Doesn't control another's play.
4. Associative Play –
Play involves similar activities and toys. Borrowing and loaning materials.
5. Cooperative Play –
Structured play with 2 or more children. Roles and rules are present. Work on one task (Help each other and take turns)

Stages of Play with Objects (Jean Piaget)

Practice Play-

Babies explore objects by picking them up. Play activities are repeated.

Symbolic Play-

Children engage in fantasy play. Examples: pretend they are someone else, a block is a phone.

Rule Play-

Children make rules for games or follow established rules.

Visual Art Notes

Manipulative Stage of visual arts:

Step 1: Playing with art materials rather than creating anything.

Step 2: *Occurs around 24-30 months of age:*
Scribbling, consists of dots, straight & curved lines, loops, spirals, and imperfect circles

Step 3: *Occurs around 30-42 months of age:*
Use of basic shapes (rectangles, crosses, ovals, & circles) Combine shapes in drawings

Step 4: *Occurs around 42-60 months of age - the transition between the Manipulative and Representation stages:*

When children create their first symbols
They decide what the symbol is after it is made
The face often is the first and favorite symbol
(bodies often appear to be an afterthought)
No spatial relations among objects; symbols seem to float

Representation Stage of visual-arts:
create symbols that represent objects, experiences,
and feelings.

Most five-or six-year-old children have reached
this stage.

Decides what it is going to be before it is drawn.

Shows spatial relationships

- Baseline – shows what is on the ground of
the picture (drawn grass, dirt, water,
etc...)
- Fold over – drawing objects perpendicular
to the baseline, often drawn upside down
- Exaggeration – increase of size to show
importance
- Transparencies- pictures that show the
inside and outside of an object at the same
time, much like an X-ray.

Science Notes

Science is wondering about the world. It is a part of everyday life. (*snow melting, why questions, caring for the world*)

Children are natural scientists. They wonder, seek answers, and test their answers over and over.

Adults can encourage science activities by:

- Encouraging children to wonder
- Calling attention to beauty in science (*light in a prism, colors of butterfly wings*)
- Asking open-ended questions
- Having them use their senses
- Classifying things
- Making observations
- Teaching children to care for nature and living things and modeling this behavior.

Science should “never be a magic show.” It should focus on what children see and question what is around them.

- So children can learn about the world

Children can overcome some fears with science facts by:

- Helping them understand the causes and effects of things. (*Thunderstorms*)
- Explaining how and why things happen.
- Doing activities to help the understanding and learning.