

Play-based Learning: The What, Why and How

Birth to Three Continuity Project



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Mount Vernon

Warm Up Activity

Individually on post-it notes...



- Write at least one **HOPE** you have for an play-based classroom
- Write at least one **CONCERN** you have



Outcomes for Participants



1. **What:** Define features of play-based learning
1. **Why:** Apply brain-based principles to classroom design and instructional planning to improve student outcomes
1. **How:** Analyze the teacher's role in scaffolding student play

Play-based Learning

Play and learning are not dichotomous. Young children learn and make sense of the world in a different way than older children do. They need to manipulate materials, engage with their peers, engage all of their senses, and work through their thoughts and feelings.

Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Defending the Early Years

Science of Learning

Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2015

- Learning occurs best when children are *mentally active* (not passive)
- *Engaged* (not distracted)
- *Socially interactive* (with peers or adults)
- Building *meaningful connections* to their lives



Activity: Jigsaw DAP



- Each person reads their section
- Each person briefly summarizes key ideas
- Group summarizes and implications
- Recorder: Captures key ideas on chart paper
- Reporter: Shares ideas with whole group
- If done early, begin the **ALL Read** section

Jigsaw Groups: DAP Book



Topic	PK pages
1. Physical	113-117
2. Social	119-123
3. Emotional	123-128
4. Cognitive	129-135
5. Reasoning	135-139
6. Language and Literacy	142-147
If you finish, read pp. xii-xiii	

Topic	K pages
A. Physical	23-26
B. Social	26-30
C. Emotional	30-33
D. Promoting S/E Dev.	33-36
E. Cognitive	36-40
F. Language and Literacy	43-47
If you finish, read pp. xii-xiii	

Jigsaw Groups

Prepare to teach your section

- list?
- chart?
- keywords with drawings?
- whatever!

Research on Play-based Kindergarten

Children in play-based kindergartens have a double advantage over those who are denied play: they end up equally good or better at reading and other intellectual skills, and they are more likely to become well-adjusted healthy people.

Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School, 2009

Ideal Classroom



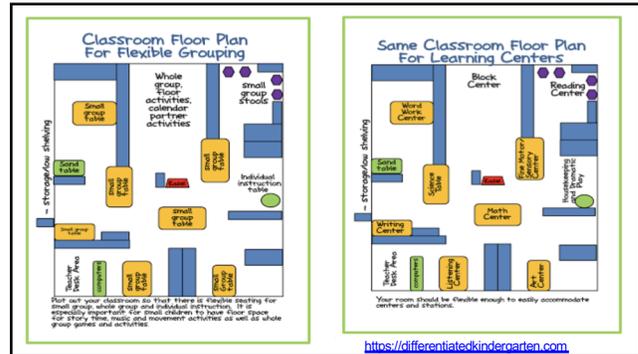
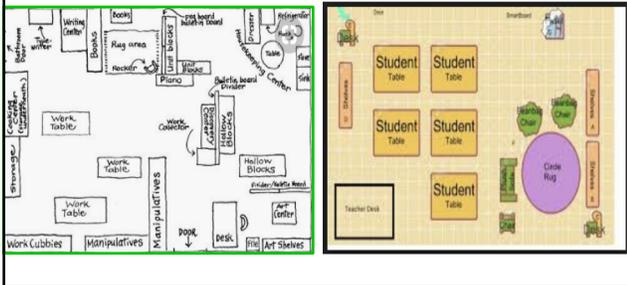
- Academic content is embedded in meaningful everyday experiences.
- Children are actively engaged, playing and working with materials and other children.
- Children have access to materials. They are not all doing the same thing at the same time.
- Teacher works with individuals, small group, and whole group at times. There is a balance of activities.
- Children's original artwork and writing is displayed.

Ideal Classroom

- Children work on projects and have time to play and explore for long periods of time.
- Children have time to play outside every day, weather permitting.
- Teachers read to children throughout the day.
- Curriculum is adapted to the needs of the students.
- Children and their parents look forward to school.

(NAEYC, Release #12)

What do you notice?



Environment

- Moveable furnishings
- Traffic flow
- Quiet and noisy areas
- Floor coverings
- Decide which areas need table/chairs
- Safety: full view

Environment

- Whole Group area
- Areas for independent and small work
- Spaces defined and labeled
- Well organized and free of clutter
- Materials labeled, accessible to children
- Meaningful, purposeful print
 - Child's eye level
 - Updated regularly
 - Includes children's work

Whole Group Area

A Whole Group Meeting area for building community and conducting whole-group instruction.

Possible items in the whole group area:

- Large rug that fits all students
- Whiteboard easel
- Pocket chart(s)
- Schedule of the day
- Calendar
- CD player/ Mp3
- Chart stand
- Center chart rotations
- Class expectations

Whole Group Area



Small Group

Teacher works with small flexible groups based on the specific skills and interests of students. In Kinder, this is during literacy and math blocks. In preschool, this is a separate time (15 min.) and not pull out during play. The teacher must clearly see all of the other centers and students from her area.

- Teacher works with the students on specific concepts and skills.
- Teacher facilitates oral language, guided reading, writing groups or math groups.
- Teacher and student materials are organized and easily accessible.

Small Group Teacher Center



Learning Centers

Learning Centers provide opportunities for hands-on learning, inquiry and exploration, to reinforce or extend concepts and skills, and to practice language and social skills.

- Clearly defined with boundaries and labels
- Strategic placement of centers (noisy areas away from where quiet learning occurs).
- Manipulative materials have an open-ended purpose
- Materials organized and labeled for student access and replacement
- Materials and environmental print at student level
- Books and writing materials in each center

Classroom Design Reflection

Hot spots

- What areas in the room are collectors of junk, bottlenecks in traffic flow, or visually unappealing or just don't work?

Work areas

- Does the classroom setup provide for a variety of places for kids to work individually, in pairs, and in small groups?
- Are children successful in choosing their own spots to work?

Teacher area

- Is it a hot spot? Is my teacher area an eyesore or catchall?

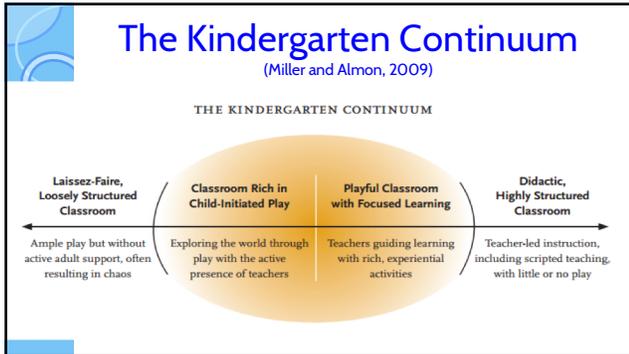
Setting Up Effective Centers

What is working in classroom design?
What might you change?

Library	Art/Makerspace
Dramatic play	Discovery
Blocks	Small toys/manipulative
Small group	Large Group

Schedule

- A balanced daily schedule that accommodates play-based learning across all of the learning and development domains is an important element of a high-quality PK/kindergarten classroom.
- The way the schedule looks at the beginning of the year, middle of the year and end of the year will change to meet the needs and growing independence of the students.



- ## Schedule
- In the beginning of the year, a great deal of time is spent building classroom community, establishing routines and procedures and explicitly modeling how to appropriately learn and play in the centers.
 - Centers and materials are introduced slowly and there are clear on-going teacher demonstrations on how to appropriately use the materials.
 - The goal is to ensure understanding and gradually release support so that the students can be as independent and successful as possible

- ## Schedule
- In a best-practices classroom the daily schedule includes:
- Whole Group Times:**
- Build community and common experiences
 - Introduce and teach skills and concepts
 - Practice and review skills not yet mastered
 - Provide movement/music breaks
 - Provide time to perform - sing, dance, play acting

- ## Schedule
- In a best-practices classroom the daily schedule includes:
- Small Group Times:**
- Provide differentiated instruction
 - Reinforce skills
 - Provide corrective feedback during guided practice

- ## Schedule
- In a best-practices classroom the daily schedule includes:
- Learning Center Areas:**
- Provide opportunity for self-selected activities and interest
 - Provide practice of targeted skills
 - Provide connecting and extending activities
 - Build independence and self-reliance skills

- ## PK Half day
- Sample Daily Schedules**
- 2.5 Hour Programs
- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 10 minutes: | Arrival and quiet centers |
| 5 minutes: | Cleanup Time |
| 15 minutes: | Whole Group Time |
| 65 minutes: | Choice Time (includes snack as a center) |
| 5 minutes: | Cleanup Time |
| 30 minutes: | Gross Motor |
| 15 minutes: | Small Group Time |
| 5 minutes: | Pack up and Dismissal |

PK Full Day schedule

Full Day Program (6 Hour Day)

- 15 minutes: Arrival and Quiet Centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 15 minutes: Whole Group Time
- 65 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
- 20 minutes: Small Group Time
- 5 minutes: Prepare for lunch
- 30 minutes: Lunch
- 60 minutes: Rest Time/ Quiet Centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
- 65 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 10 minutes: Clean up Time/Prepare for departure/Dismissal

Component	Possible Activities	Time in minutes
Arrival	Sign in, Reading, Table work,	15
Class Meeting	Community building, Message, Oral language (vocabulary, phonological awareness) Read aloud/Shared Reading	20
Centers	Small Group Guided Reading/Math Independent Centers: Literacy, Math, Play, Individual Modeled/Interactive Writing	60 includes clean up and snack
Sharing and Reflection	Oral language, creations at centers, SEL, ESL	20
Gross Motor	Outside or in gym	25
Dismissal	ALT-Reg,	10
Total		150

Sample Half-day K Schedule

Minutes	Activity	Description	Type of Instruction
5-10 mins.	Arrival	Question of the day; answer question in pocket chart	Individual, Small groups
15-20 mins.	Morning Meeting	Building Community Morning Message: scaffolded writing Calendar: days of the week, daily schedule	Whole group
10-15 mins.	Shared Reading	Focus is on large text to read together	Whole
60 mins.	Literacy Centers	Small group/Guided reading: Focus is book in hand, literacy skill building 5-6 centers: rotate over several days	Small
5 mins.	Reflection	Reflect on center activities May do a read-aloud, Snack	Whole
10-15 mins.	Shared or Modeled Writing	Scaffolded writing Writing mini lesson	Whole
20-25 mins.	Independent/ Guided Writing	Students write independently/teacher conferencing Guided writing in small groups	Individual Small
5 mins.	Reflection	Reflect on writing, sharing writing, Pair/share May do a read-aloud	Whole
60 mins.	Lunch/Recess		
10 mins.	Independent Reading	Personal book trays	Individual
15-20 mins.	Math Mini lesson	Routines (i.e. counting), fluency Math mini lesson	Whole
45 mins.	ESL/Science/Social Studies	Mini lesson Inquiry learning	Whole Small
50 mins.	Choice Centers	Plan, do, reflect Learning plans	Independent Small
5-10 mins.	Wrap up/Dismissal		

Sample Full-day K Schedule

Turn and Talk



How does your schedule differ from these samples?
 What could be your next step in changing your schedule?
 What are some challenges to modifying your schedule? How can they be addressed?



Play

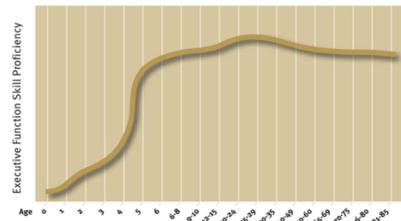
“Play is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being of children beginning in early childhood. It is a natural tool for children to develop resiliency as they learn to cooperate, overcome challenges, and negotiate with others. Play contributes to healthy brain development.”

American Academy of Pediatrics
 Clinical Report, 2012

Play

Play-based learning offers children the space to make choices that promote executive functioning and self-regulation. Mature play embodies negotiation, empathy, reciprocal conversation, and concepts in multiple learning domains.

Executive Function Skills Build Into the Early Adult Years



Tests measuring different forms of executive function skills indicate that they begin to develop shortly after birth, **with the ages 3 to 5 a window of opportunity for dramatic growth in these skills.** Development continues throughout adolescence and early adulthood.

[Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University](#)

Executive Functioning



Children need executive functioning skills to achieve academic success in the later years of elementary, middle, and high school years. The growth of executive functions starts at birth and starts to flatten around age seven. For children to succeed in elementary and later schooling, they need to be able to focus, tune out other distractions, and persist. They need to be creative and problem solve to build new knowledge based on old knowledge. If our goal is to have all children reading fluently by the end of third grade and have success in the later years, preschool and Kindergarten children need to have unstructured spontaneous play for at least 45 minutes every day within their play-based curriculum. The early years are the time to build executive functioning. *There is nothing more important than building executive functioning during the early years.*

[Defending the Early Years at NAEYC 2017](#)

there is absolutely no research that shows that a structured, large group, teacher-led approach to teaching young children improves test scores or helps children learn to read faster. In fact, there is research proving the opposite. Children learn more in a play-based curriculum.

Types of Play

- Large motor
- Small motor
- Mastery
- Rules-based
- Make-believe
- Symbolic
- Sensory
- Playing with the arts
- Language
- Construction



All types of play are important in the early years, but they are not of equal value. This is a very important point in understanding how play is linked to executive functioning. Construction play, block play, water play, puzzles, clay, painting, etc., are all valuable and essential for children. However, the most important and highest level of play is socio-dramatic play or pretend play with others. Mature socio-dramatic helps develop executive functioning.

Bedrova and Leong, *Tools of the Mind*

Playful Experiences are Learning Experiences

Most play involves exploration, which an act of investigation.

= NGS STANDARDS

Play is a gateway to a state of flow.

= ENGAGEMENT

Evidence exists that play is a tutorial for coping with real life challenges.

= SOCIAL EMOTIONAL



Children from Poverty and from Racially Underrepresented Groups:

- Have lower quality playgrounds
- Have less time in the schedule for recess
- Have more structured instruction and less playful learning in school from an early age

Jarrett & Waite-Stupiansky, 2009

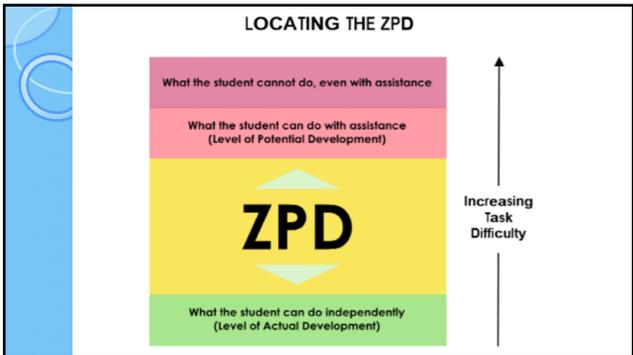
DAP Foundational Principles

Meeting Children Where They Are

- Knowing child development
- Knowing the skills children bring to their classroom
- Includes home language, English language, culture, family, interests

Helping Children Reach Challenging and Achievable goals

- Plan and adjust instruction for children of varying levels
- Includes rigor: opportunities and supports to achieve within their zone of proximal development



Powerful Interactions

- **Be Present**
 - Listen, Observe
- **Connect**
 - To their idea, interest
- **Extend**
 - Add one more thing: prop, role, plan, scenario, language, writing, etc.

5 STAGES OF MATURE MAKE BELIEVE PLAY

1. First Scripts	No plan, no roles, limited language, plays with objects as objects, short time frame
2. Roles with Actions	No plan, roles emerge from action, creates stereotypic scenarios, language describes action, plays with objects as props, plays for a few minutes
3. Roles with Rules and Beginning Scenarios	Plans roles and actions, uses language for roles and actions, needs props for roles, 10-15 minutes of play, plays familiar scripts fully
4. Mature Roles	Plans scenarios and plans evolve, multiple roles interact, symbolic props &/or invents props, uses role speech, 60 minutes of play, series of coordinated scenarios with "problems" that evolve over time with emotional aspects
5. Dramatization, Multiple Roles and Director's Play	Plans elaborate scenarios, can play more than role at a time, can use pretend rather than actual prop, scenarios last over several days, book language as well as role speech, series of coordinated scenarios that can change based on player

Develop a scenario.

- Magnatiles
- Playdough
- Legos/Blocks
- Dramatic play scenario



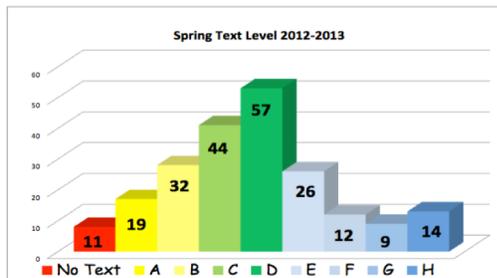
PROPELS

- Plan
- Roles and Actions
- Props
- Extended time
- Language
- Scenarios



Text Level Scores 2012-2013[†]

72% of FDK students reading at grade level for exiting kindergartners (C and above)[†]

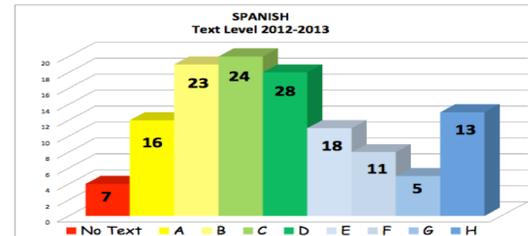


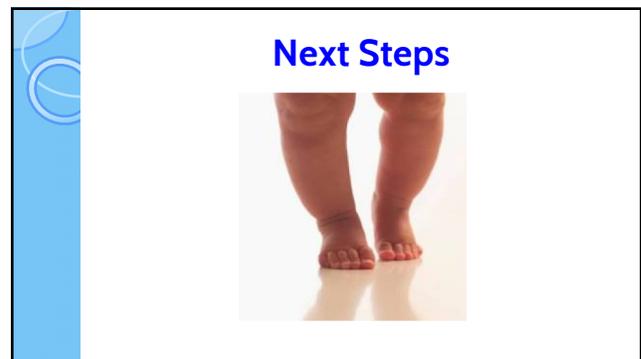
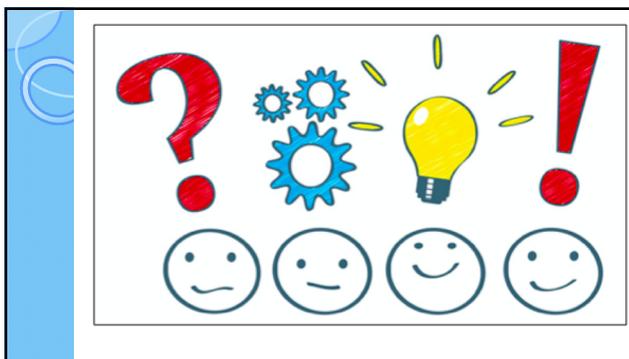
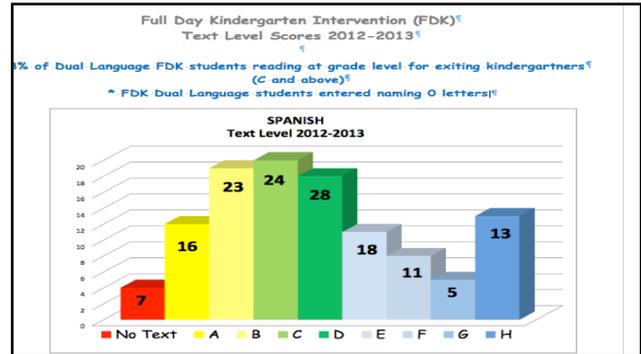
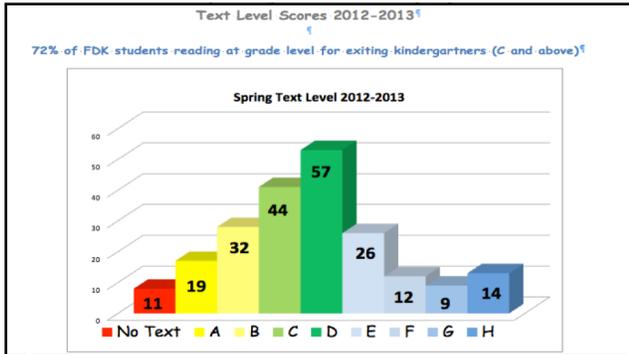
Full Day Kindergarten Intervention (FDK)[†]

Text Level Scores 2012-2013[†]

% of Dual Language FDK students reading at grade level for exiting kindergartners[†] (C and above)[†]

[†] FDK Dual Language students entered naming 0 letters[†]





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