

PLAYING TO LEARN...

EED210

Sara Pollaro

THE WORKSHEET DILEMMA...

- ◉ A child is given many papers during the school day to trace over dotted lines to form letters and numbers.
- ◉ The child must also match pictures and letters.
- ◉ The child's lines are shaky and not always exactly on the line.
- ◉ The teacher writes a comment stating that, "The child could do better."
- ◉ After reading the comment, the child's mother thinks that there is something wrong with the child's performance.
- ◉ The truth is that there is something wrong with the teacher's expectations. (Grossman, Ph.D., 2008)



REGULAR CURRICULUM VS. PLAY BASED CURRICULUM

The Problem With Paper and Pencils...

- Typically there is an expected “right answer”
- A wrong answer is emotionally costly
- Evoke feelings of ignorance and incompetence



Play based problem solving...

- Safe environment for taking risks
- Feel confident taking risks and trying again
- Making mistakes and learning from them (Fordham & Anderson, 1992)

A worksheet is limited:

- It can show a child different sized squares and rectangles.
- There is no interaction except for pencil marks.



A child who has a variety of wooden block shapes:

- Can see, feel and understand the different shapes.
- The child can expand on the basic concept by creating an endless variety of other constructs from the basic shapes.

PLAY AT THE CENTER OF A BALANCED CURRICULUM

(EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD)

- ◉ A balanced curriculum reflects the philosophy and beliefs of educating the whole child. ("The balanced curriculum:," 2005)
- ◉ Enables the child to take an active role in constructing meaning from his or her experiences.



PLAY BASED MATH



- In play based curriculum there are plenty of opportunities to learn math.
- Play based math can be exciting and challenging by stringing different colored beads that match pattern cards.

- Also fun is setting a table for three people with one each: plate, utensils, and cup.
- Also waiting for a turn at the activity table because space only allows two children to participate at a time.



STANDARD CURRICULUM MATH...



- Mathematical understanding is more than recognition of numbers.
- Sorting, putting items in a grouping, and problem solving are all important math concepts.
- The teacher may believe the child understands the concept of "four" if they circle four flowers on the worksheet.
- But until the child can transfer that learning to other situations, such as the number of places at the table for four people, the child does not truly understand what "four" means.
(Grossman, Ph.D., 2008)

PLAY BASED LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



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Language and literacy develops through talking and playing together.

- In exploring through play, children use vocabulary and language that pushes them out of their comfort zone.
- Through this experience, they learn from interacting with their peers how to expand their knowledge base in core literacy skills.
- Language development is facilitated in play-based learning by the interactions of children at different levels of literacy.



STANDARD CURRICULUM LANGUAGE AND LITERACY...

Physical and intellectual development *cannot* be achieved in 15-20 minute teaching sections:

- Memorizing the alphabet
- Interpreting letter combinations

Letters and numerals typically mean little to the three- to six-year-olds in this stage. These children use concrete rather than abstract symbols to represent objects and ideas (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).



PLAY BASED SCIENCE

When children play in a directed scientific setting, they:

- Pay attention
- Have a more profound understanding of the concepts
- Generate important scientific learning.



A child can read or watch a film about how gravity works, they are expected to retain the information with no practical application...



When children observe through play they:

- Actually see how many small rocks it takes to sink a floating boat.
- The child has learned the concept of gravity.
- The child has learned about buoyancy, spatial displacement and counting.

CONCLUSIONS

- Play is an important part of childhood.
- It is a cherished right of passage that conveys huge developmental benefits.
- A balanced curriculum explores the appropriate balance of play, academic enrichment.
- Play offers organized hands on activities for all children regardless of with intellectual, and environmental differences.



“As we strive to create the optimal developmental milieu for children, it remains imperative that play be included along with academic and social-enrichment opportunities and that safe environments be made available to all children.” (Ginsburg, 2006)

Citations

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