

Chapter 1 : How Pretending & Dramatic Play Drive Child Development | Bright Horizons®

develop basic skills through creative play and social interaction. From the four editions of national policy on education, it could be seen that the main method of teaching in the pre-primary/early childhood education is.

We define play, review the main types of play and their developmental benefits in various areas. Play is often defined as activity done for its own sake, characterized by means rather than ends the process is more important than any end point or goal, flexibility objects are put in new combinations or roles are acted out in new ways, and positive affect children often smile, laugh, and say they enjoy it. These criteria contrast play with exploration focused investigation as a child gets more familiar with a new toy or environment, that may then lead into play, work which has a definite goal, and games more organized activities in which there is some goal, typically winning the game. Developmentally, games with rules tend to be common after about 6 years of age, whereas play is very frequent for 2- to 6-year-olds. The Research Context Almost all children play, except those who are malnourished, deprived, or have severe disabilities. This is true of young mammals generally, although other mammals show much less variety of play forms than human children. These findings suggest that play has developmental benefits. Benefits might be immediate, long-term, or both. However, the exact role of play in learning is still debated. Nevertheless, correlational and experimental evidence suggest important benefits of play, even if some benefits can also be obtained in other ways. Locomotor play, including exercise play running, climbing, etc. Exercise play increases from toddlers to preschool and peaks at early primary school ages, when the neural and muscular basis of physical coordination and healthy growth is important, and vigorous play obviously provides good opportunities for this;5 later, it declines. At first, playing with one partner is complex enough, but by 3 or 4 years old a play group can consist of three or more participants, as children acquire social coordination skills and social scripts. Parallel play, common in 2- and 3-year-olds, is when children play next to others without much interaction. Some play is solitary. Rough-and-tumble play, including play fighting and chasing, can look like real fighting, but in play fighting children are often laughing, kicks and blows are not hard or do not make contact, and it is usually done with friends. Object play refers to playful use of objects such as building blocks, jigsaw puzzles, cars, dolls, etc. With babies, this play is mouthing objects and dropping them. With toddlers, this is sometimes just manipulating the objects e. Play with objects allows children to try out new combinations of actions, free of external constraint, and may help develop problem solving skills. Any benefits of object play need to be balanced against those of instruction, bearing in mind the ages of the children, the nature of the task, and whether learning is for specific skills, or a more general inquisitive and creative attitude. The more marked benefits may be for independent and creative thought,8 though the evidence is equivocal. This is playful, with repetition and sometimes laughter. Children use language humorously at 3 and 4 years old. This is my tail. Look at my wing. Some phonological skills can be developed in the solitary monologues when children babble to themselves in their cot, but most benefits of language learning probably come in sociodramatic play. Pretend play involves pretending an object or an action is something else than it really is. A banana is a telephone, for example. This play develops from 15 months of age with simple actions, such as pretending to sleep or putting dolly to bed, developing into longer story sequences and role play. Sociodramatic play, common from around 3 years of age, is pretend play with others, sustained role taking, and a narrative line. Many learning functions have been advanced for pretend and especially sociodramatic play. For these benefits, some structuring by adults is helpful in maintaining a story line, having suitable materials including plastic letters, books, etc. Another hypothesis is that pretend play enhances emotional security. A child who is emotionally upset, for example, by parents arguing or the illness or death of someone in the family, can work through the anxieties by acting out such themes in pretend play, with dolls for example. Theory of mind ability means being able to understand represent the knowledge and beliefs of others; that is, that someone else can have a different belief or state of knowledge from yourself. This does not happen until the age of late 3 or 4 years old. Social interaction with age-mates seems to be important for this, and social pretend play with siblings or with other age-mates may be especially helpful, as children negotiate different roles and realize that

different roles entail different behaviors. Without this we cannot understand the putative benefits of play. Further, while play may have many positive benefits, this is not always so. Play fighting is viewed ambivalently by nursery staff as many staff find it noisy and disruptive, and believe it often leads to real fights. However, this is more frequent for some children who lack social skills and are rejected by playmates. These children often respond to rough-and-tumble play aggressively. There is not a large research base on which to make informed judgments about whether the concerns are justified. Dunn and Hughes²² found that 4-year-old, hard-to-manage children showed frequent violent fantasy and the extent of this was related to poorer language and play skills, more antisocial behaviour, and less empathic understanding at the age of 6 years. This does suggest concerns for the effects of such play on disturbed children. Preliteracy benefits of play can be enhanced by providing paper, crayons, and plastic letters. Exercise benefits of play can be enhanced by providing challenging forms of climbing apparatus. Creative play can be enhanced by providing lego-type bricks to stimulate creative construction activities. Nursery staff can work with children to structure their play and give it more educational value by including activities such as jigsaw puzzles, color and pattern matching games, and materials like water, sand, and clay that children can manipulate and by enhancing sociodramatic play. Play training can be one enjoyable and effective way of improving skills in language development, cognitive development, creativity, and role-taking. Also, there should be some active involvement of adults in structuring some play, as in play tutoring. And, increasingly, as children get older, there is a need for direct instruction. The balance between types of play is a matter of continuing debate. As all types of play provide different opportunities, a blended program in preschool, with plenty of opportunities for free and structured play, is likely to be best for children and to provide them with a happy and stimulating environment in which they can flourish. The nature and function of a neglected aspect of play. *Child Development* ;69 3: The genesis of animal play: Psychological bases for early education. Byers JA, Walker C. Refining the motor training hypothesis for the evolution of play. Bjorklund D, Green B. The adaptive nature of cognitive immaturity. *American Psychologist* ;47 1: Social participation among preschool children. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* ; The nature and uses of immaturity. *American Psychologist* ; 27 8: Pellegrini AD, Gustafson K. The Nature of Play: Great Apes and Humans. The effects of Sociodramatic play on disadvantaged preschool children. Pellegrini A, Galda L. A reexamination of symbolic play and literacy research. *Reading Research Quarterly* ;28 2: Research from multiple perspectives. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; The roots of reading. Zero to Three Press; Early Child Development and Care, ; 8: Dunn J, Cutting AL. Understanding others, and individual differences in friendship interactions in young children. *Social Development* ;8 2: Social and pretend play in children. A review of the evidence. The role of play in human development. Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press; The Oxford handbook of the development of play. War, weapon and superhero play in the early years. Open University Press; The war play dilemma. Teachers College Press; Dunn J, Hughes C. Violent fantasy, antisocial behavior, friendship, and moral sensibility in young children. *Child Development* ;72 2: A comparison of the effects of fantasy play tutoring and skills tutoring in nursery classes. *International Journal of Behavioural Development* ;4 4: How to cite this article:

Chapter 2 : Play Activities to Encourage Motor Development in Child Care - eXtension

Conclusion. Play is vital for a child's life. It provides recreation, and relaxation, and is a source of inspiration. Play is closely tied to the cognitive, physical, social and emotional development, especially in the areas of problem solving, language acquisition and numeracy.

The importance of how children learn through play Learning through play Play is one of the main ways in which children learn and develop. It helps to build self worth by giving a child a sense of his or her own abilities and to feel good about themselves. Young children can develop many skills through the power of play. They may develop their language skills, emotions, creativity and social skills. Play helps to nurture imagination and give a child a sense of adventure. Through this, they can learn essential skills such as problem solving, working with others, sharing and much more. In turn, this helps them develop the ability to concentrate. Providing children with a range of playthings will help them learn in a number of ways: Sand and water play can be an early introduction to science and maths, eg learning that water is fluid, not solid, and that it can be measured in different sized containers. Playing with dough or clay, drawing and painting pictures, dressing up, playing with dolls can encourage creativity, imagination and expression of feelings. Building blocks, jigsaws and shape sorters can help with recognising different shapes and sizes, putting things in order and developing logic. Playing ball games, dancing, running, climbing all help to develop body movement, strength, flexibility and co-ordination skills. Games help with turn taking, sharing and mixing with others. Singing, playing simple music instruments help to develop rhythm, listening and hearing. It needs to be about doing things with them that they like. Show them how things work, but if they want to experiment, let them. Children learn through all their senses through taste, touch, vision, hearing and smelling. They will watch those around them and copy language and behaviour. Children develop in their own ways and in their own time. Try not to compare them to other children. You can also encourage reading, by reading to and with them. Look at the pictures together; this will help younger children make sense of the words. This will give you a chance to teach them how things work and they will be able to ask you questions. Play also allows children to relax, let off steam, develop social skills such as concentration and co-operation, encourages the development of the imagination, develops motor skills and teaches self expression. Whilst it is very important that children play with their peers and are given opportunities for unstructured play, children who also play with a loved adult can benefit greatly – the benefits of having fun together cannot be underestimated! Think about creating play ideas that help support and extend learning and development. Children make sense of the world in which they live by acting out situations before they happen and by copying what they see around them. Most children are naturally imaginative and will happily talk away to someone on their toy phone or drive the sofa to the shops, and this creativity should be actively encouraged! Outdoor play and exploration Encouraging your young child to explore outdoor play is extremely beneficial and necessary for their development. Outdoor play helps them to learn lots about the everchanging environment and gives them the opportunity to use their whole body and develop their gross motor skills. It can meet their multi-sensory needs and can give them a love for the outdoors. Whether it is messy play, creative or role play, it is an essential part of learning. Froebel Trust have produced an informative pamphlet talking about outdoor play with lots of ideas and advice. [Click here to download this](#). You can also share experiences and advice with other parents on our Forums. Family Lives is here for you and you can contact us about any family issue, big or small. What do you think of our website?

Chapter 3 : The Importance of Pretend Play | Scholastic | Parents

10 Tips for Playing With Your Newborn. Here are some other fun and easy ways to play with your baby to enhance their newborn development through those tiring, sleepless early months.

The cognitive benefits of play: In fact, play may function as an important, if not crucial, mode for learning. Here are some examples. Play improves memory and stimulates the growth of the cerebral cortex. In , Marion Diamond and her colleagues published an exciting paper about brain growth in rats. The neuroscientists had conducted a landmark experiment, raising some rats in boring, solitary confinement and others in exciting, toy-filled colonies. Subsequent research confirmed the results—rats raised stimulating environments had bigger brains. They were smarter, too—able to find their way through mazes more quickly. Greenough and Black Do these benefits of play extend to humans? Ethical considerations prevent us from performing similar experiments on kids. But it seems likely that human brains respond to play and exploration in similar ways. Play and exploration trigger the secretion of BDNF, a substance essential for the growth of brain cells. Again, no one has figured out an ethical way to test this on humans, so the evidence comes from rats: After bouts of rough-and-tumble play, rats show increased levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor BDNF in their brains. Gordon et al BDNF is essential for the growth and maintenance of brain cells. BDNF levels are also increased after rats are allowed to explore. Huber et al There is some circumstantial evidence, too: Chinese and Japanese students, who are among the best achievers in the world, attend schools that provide short breaks every 50 minutes. Stevenson and Lee Note that physical education classes are not effective substitutes for free playtime. Bjorkland and Pellegrini To reap all the benefits of play, a play break must be truly playful. How long should recess be? In a small study of year olds, researchers found that recesses of 10 or 20 minutes enhanced classroom attention. Recesses as long as 30 minutes had the opposite effect. Pellegrini and Holmes Language and the benefits of play Studies reveal a link between play—particularly symbolic, pretend play—and the development of language skills. Psychologist Edward Fisher analyzed 46 published studies of the cognitive benefits of play. Fisher Kids were asked to perform such symbolic tasks as substituting a teddy bear for an absent object. Researchers found that kids who scored higher on a test of symbolic play had better language skills—both receptive language what a child understands and expressive language the words she speaks. These results remained significant even after controlling for the age of the child. Recent research also suggests that playing with blocks contributes to language development. Evidence that play promotes creative problem solving. Psychologists distinguish two types of problem—convergent and divergent. Some research suggests that the way kids play contributes to their ability to solve divergent problems. For instance, in one experiment, researchers presented preschoolers with two types of play materials. Pepler and Ross Some kids were given materials for convergent play. Other kids were given materials for divergent play blocks. Kids were given time to play and then were tested on their ability to solve problems. Kids given divergent play materials performed better on divergent problems. They also showed more creativity in their attempts to solve the problems. Pepler and Ross Kids given training in pretend play showed an increased ability to solve divergent problems, and the converse was true as well: Kids trained to solve divergent problems showed increased rates of pretend play. Pretend play has also been correlated with two crucial skill sets—the ability to self-regulate impulses, emotions, attention and the ability to reason counterfactually. In the first case, studies report that kids who engage in frequent, pretend play have stronger self-regulation skills. Although more research is needed to determine if the link is causal. Lillard et al , the data are consistent with this possibility, and the idea has intuitive appeal. In the second case, many researchers have noted similarities between pretend play and counterfactual reasoning, the ability to make inferences about events that have not actually occurred. Alison Gopnik and her colleagues Walker and Gopnik ; Buchsbaum et al argue that counterfactual reasoning helps us plan and learn by permitting us to think through "what if" scenarios. Pretend play taps into the same skill set. So perhaps pretend play provides children with valuable opportunities to improve their reasoning about possible worlds. Of course, these results might merely tell us that kids who are smart in preschool continue to be smart in high school. It therefore seems plausible that block play itself influenced the cognitive

development of these kids. Playful experiences are learning experiences. Finally, lest anybody doubt that kids learn through play, we should keep in mind the following points. Most play involves exploration, and exploration is, by definition, an act of investigation. Play is self-motivated and fun. Thus, anything learned during play is knowledge gained without the perception of hard work. This is in contrast with activities that we perform as duties. When learning is perceived to be arduous, our ability to stay focused may feel like a limited resource that is drained over time. Inzlicht et al. Play is an obvious gateway to the state of flow. These arguments aside, there is also empirical evidence that kids treat play as a tutorial for coping with real life challenges. All around the world, children engage in pretend play that simulates the sorts of activities they will need to master as adults. Lancy, suggesting such play is a form of practice. And when kids are fed information during pretend play--from more knowledgeable peers or adults--they take it in. Experiments on American preschoolers suggest that children as young as 3 understand and make distinctions between realistic and fanciful pretending, and use information learned from realistic pretend scenarios to understand the real world. Sutherland and Friedman; Child development and evolutionary psychology. The power of possibility: Evidence for a relation between executive function and pretense representation in preschool children. Beginning literacy with language: Young children learning at home and school. The impact of play on development: Play and Culture, 5(2), Neuroscience Letters 1: Play in hunter-gatherer society. In The nature of play: Induction of brain structure by experience: Minnesota Symposia on Child Psychology: Lawrence A Erlbaum Associates; Exploratory behavior, cortical BDNF expression, and sleep homeostasis.

Chapter 4 : Why pretend & role play matters for young children | KiddyCharts

Play is a powerful method of cognitive and emotional development, for children and adults. Here are some idea on how to develop cognitive skills in playful manner.

Printer Friendly The Importance of Pretend Play in Child Development Where can you find police officers, veterinarians, office workers, princesses, karate instructors, and chefs all happily working side-by-side? In a dramatic play area of a classroom, of course. The truth is, in the midst of creating a restaurant together, clomping around in grown-up shoes, or twirling around with friends in a fairytale land, children are learning to solve problems, coordinate, cooperate, and think flexibly. Imagine the skills required to turn the sandbox into a dinosaur bone excavation site! Children learn about themselves and the world. Dramatic play experiences are some of the first ways children learn about their likes and dislikes, their interests, and their abilities. Just watch children playing with dolls to see examples of this. Dolls often become versions of the child himself and are a safe way for children to express new ideas and feelings. Children work out confusing, scary, or new life issues. Have you ever witnessed children pretending to visit the doctor? One child dutifully holds the mock stethoscope as the others line up for a check-up. Through these role plays, children become more comfortable and prepared for life events in a safe way. Children often use pretend play to work out more personal challenging life events too, whether it is coping with an illness in the family, the absence of a parent or divorce, or a house fire. Children develop important complex social and higher order thinking skills. Pretend play is much more than simple play activities; it requires advanced thinking strategies, communication, and social skills. Children cultivate social and emotional intelligence. How we interact with others is key to our lifelong success and happiness. Knowing how to read social cues, recognize and regulate emotions, negotiate and take turns, and engage in a long-term activity that is mutually beneficial are no easy tasks. There is no substitute for creative and imaginative play when it comes to teaching and enhancing these abilities in children. Children synthesize knowledge and skills. Pretend play is an ideal way to do this. They sort by attributes as they group similar foods in sections of the store, use math concepts to tabulate amounts as they determine prices and calculate grocery bills, use writing to communicate by making signs, experiment with shapes and weights as they organize the store, work collaboratively as they assign roles and play together, and much more. Invite your children to recreate a favorite story or take it further and add their own twist. During your pretending game, prompt their ideas by asking questions like: Make sure your child has ample and regular access to things like dolls, stuffed animals, or puppets. Prop boxes are something most high-quality early childhood programs have plenty of. They are boxes or bins, crates, or bags with themed dramatic play materials in them. Examples of popular prop boxes are a flower shop, office, restaurant, post office, and shoe store. No material, environment, or story can take the place of uninterrupted time to play and explore ideas. Be ok with leaving a post office in the living room for a few days to allow your children to fully explore and enhance their creative explorations. Find more learning activities for kids! In many ways, a few hours creating pretend ponies and galloping around the yard with fellow cowboys and cowgirls is as developmentally essential as any other pursuit. You might consider crafting a space helmet from foil and a bowl and joining in!

Chapter 5 : Why play matters - Family Lives

Enhancing development through play is a great way to nurture the essential skills that they need to move forward. Play is a way for children to communicate with those around them, especially before they have the sufficient language skills that they need to vocally talk to people.

Different cognitive skills are acquired as a child meets certain developmental milestones, but a child of any ability will benefit from activities that promote active learning. Sing-a-longs Sing songs with your child and encourage him to sing along with you. Play his favorite songs and music in the house and car regularly and he may eventually start singing along by himself. This activity helps promote memory and word identification. Identify Noises Have your child identify noises that he hears throughout the day i. He will begin to understand how sounds relate to objects in his everyday environment. Here is an example of an easy game to help your child learn his letters: Cut out individual squares that feature each letter of the alphabet written in bright colors. Mix them up and tape them on various surfaces in the house. Go through the alphabet with your child and encourage him to search around the house to find the next letter and tape it to the wall in order. Practice Counting Identify opportunities throughout the day to practice counting. Practice Shapes and Colors Identify shapes and colors when interacting with your child. As he gets older, you can ask him to describe objects to you. Offer Choices When you can, offer your child choices: Ask Questions Another way to help your child learn to think for himself is to ask him questions: Ask him questions while you explore and listen to his responses and reactions. These adventures can provide a learning experience for both of you. Play with Everyday Items Playing with everyday household items is educational, fun and cost effective. Encourage your child to match various-sized lids to their accompanying pots or have him look in a mirror and point to his nose, mouth, eyes, etc. Offer a Variety of Games Play a variety of games with your child to encourage problem solving and creativity.

Chapter 6 : Play Supports Early Brain Development in Impressive Ways | Urban Child Institute

The purpose of this study is to explore various ways of enhancing children's development in early childhood education through play. The researcher adopted descriptive study to highlight various categories, stages and values of play and how adults can support children's play activities.

Print Young children learn by imagining and doing. Have you ever watched your child pick up a stone and pretend it is a zooming car, or hop a Lego across the table as if it were a person or a bunny? Your child is using an object to represent something else while giving it action and motion. But this pretend play is not as simple as it may seem. The process of pretending builds skills in many essential developmental areas. Social and Emotional Skills When your child engages in pretend or dramatic play, he is actively experimenting with the social and emotional roles of life. Through cooperative play, he learns how to take turns, share responsibility, and creatively problem-solve. It is normal for young children to see the world from their own egocentric point of view, but through maturation and cooperative play, your child will begin to understand the feelings of others. He also builds self-esteem when he discovers he can be anything just by pretending! Language Skills Have you ever listened in as your child engages in imaginary play with his toys or friends? You will probably hear some words and phrases you never thought he knew! In fact, we often hear our own words reflected in the play of children. Kids can do a perfect imitation of mom, dad, and the teacher! Pretend play helps your child understand the power of language. In addition, by pretend playing with others, he learns that words give him the means to reenact a story or organize play. This process helps your child to make the connection between spoken and written language – a skill that will later help him learn to read. Thinking Skills Pretend play provides your child with a variety of problems to solve. Does your child enjoy a bit of roughhousing? Some researchers in early brain development believe that this sort of play helps develop the part of the brain the frontal lobe that regulates behavior. So instead of worrying that this type of activity will encourage him to act out or become too aggressive, be assured that within a monitored situation, roughhouse play can actually help your child learn the self-regulation skills needed to know how and when this type of play is appropriate. Nurturing the Imagination Not enough pretend play at your house? Large plastic crates, cardboard blocks, or a large, empty box for creating a "home" Old clothes, shoes, backpacks, hats Old telephones, phone books, magazines Cooking utensils, dishes, plastic food containers, table napkins, silk flowers Stuffed animals and dolls of all sizes Fabric pieces, blankets, or old sheets for making costumes or a fort Theme-appropriate materials such as postcards, used plane tickets, foreign coins, and photos for a pretend vacation trip Writing materials for taking phone messages, leaving notes, and making shopping lists Shop Pretend Play Activities.

Chapter 7 : Play and Social Skills - Kid Sense Child Development

Play becomes sophisticated and increasingly symbolic. Play in the preteen years often is a group production, and the pastimes kids prefer reflect that. Many complex hand games for several players, and equipment for organized sports or activities (baseball bat and glove, racket/paddle games) is often a hit.

Cecchini MS Dramatic play can be defined as a type of play where children accept and assign roles, and then act them out. It is a time when they break through the walls of reality, pretend to be someone or something different from themselves, and dramatize situations and actions to go along with the roles they have chosen to play. And while this type of play may be viewed as frivolous by some, it remains an integral part of the developmental learning process by allowing children to develop skills in such areas as abstract thinking, literacy, math, and social studies, in a timely, natural manner. However, when we actually watch children play, we see them reinventing scenes that might take place in other areas of life such as gas stations, building sites, department stores, classrooms, or libraries. Setting the Stage Any dramatic play area should be inviting. Presentation alone should inspire creative and imaginative play. This should be an area where the children can immediately take on a role and begin pretending. In establishing these areas, you will want to consider the following. Each area should incorporate a variety of materials that encourage dramatic play, such as hats, masks, clothes, shoes, tools, vehicles, etc. You can include both teacher-made and commercial materials. Part of your materials list for each area should include items that stimulate literacy activities, like reading and writing. Paper, pencils, a chalk board, wipe-off board, address books, and greeting cards are all examples of materials that might be used to promote the development of literacy skills. Materials should be developmentally appropriate and allow for both creativity and flexibility in play. This includes materials that can be used by all children unisex and those that may be used in more than one way a table as a table, or with a blanket over it, as a dog house. The goal of all areas should be to reinforce grade level appropriate physical, cognitive, and social skills. Finally, try to change the materials or props, as they are sometimes called on a regular basis. Different materials on occasion will enhance the area, spark new interest in a much used area, and allow the children to incorporate new experiences in their play. The Dramatic Play Skill Set There are basically six skills children work with and develop as they take part in dramatic play experiences. Role Playing “ This is where children mimic behaviors and verbal expressions of someone or something they are pretending to be. At first they will imitate one or two actions, but as time progresses they will be able to expand their roles by creating several actions relevant to the role they are playing. In the beginning they will mainly rely on realistic materials. From there they will move on to material substitution, such as using a rope to represent a fire hose, and progress to holding in their hands in such as way to indicate that they are holding an actual hose. Children pretend to be the mother, fireman, driver, etc. As the use of dramatic play increases, they begin to use words to enhance and describe their re-enactments. As children climb the social skill ladder of development through play, they will move from pretending at the same time without any actual interaction, to pretending that involves several children playing different roles and relating to each other from the perspective of their assigned roles. Communication “ Dramatic play promotes the use of speaking and listening skills. It also teaches them to choose their words wisely so that others will understand exactly what it is they are trying to communicate. Dramatic Play and Development Dramatic play enhances child development in four major areas. And by recreating some of the life experiences they actually face, they learn how to cope with any fears and worries that may accompany these experiences. They also develop the skills they need to cooperate with their peers, learn to control their impulses, and tend to be less aggressive than children who do not engage in this type of play. Physical “ Dramatic play helps children develop both gross and fine motor skills “ fire fighters climb and parents dress their babies. And when children put their materials away, they practice eye-hand coordination and visual discrimination. Cognitive “ When children are involved in make-believe play, they make use of pictures they have created in their minds to recreate past experiences, which is a form of abstract thinking. Setting a table for a meal, counting out change as a cashier, dialing a telephone, and setting the clock promote the use of math skills. By adding such things as magazines,

road signs, food boxes and cans, paper and pencils to the materials included in the area, we help children develop literacy skills. When children come together in this form of play, they also learn how to share ideas, and solve problems together. Language “ In order to work together in a dramatic play situation, children learn to use language to explain what they are doing. They learn to ask and answer questions and the words they use fit whatever role they are playing. Personal vocabularies grow as they begin to use new words appropriately, and the importance of reading and writing skills in everyday life becomes apparent by their use of literacy materials that fill the area. Dramatic play engages children in both life and learning. Marie is the author of five books. She continues to write articles for parents and teachers. Articles and activities listed on this website may be printed for single use. No article or activity may be duplicated or distributed in any form, in whole or in part, without permission from the publisher, Excelligence Learning Corporation.

Chapter 8 : Enhancing Development Through the Sense of Touch | Urban Child Institute

The Importance of Play in the Development of Language Skills Jackie M. Oddo, M.S., OTR/L & Leigh Castleberry (Former Speech-Language Pathology Intern) Play has been called "the work of children" because it is through play that children learn how to interact.

Play is a universal phenomenon and serves both natural and biological functions. Through play, children learn about the ever-changing world Elkind, Teachers and families often view the value of play in different ways. The different descriptions of the value and purposes of play add to the dilemma of what and how classroom teachers can support learning and development for young children by providing carefully planned and supervised experiences. Why does play belong in early childhood classrooms? Play is critical for healthy development and learning. Much has been written about the cognitive, social, emotional, and language benefits of play, as well as the types and stages of play that take place in early childhood classrooms. The theories of Piaget cognitive and physical development and Vygotsky socio-cultural experiences describe play for children as optimal learning times Elkind, Brain research also supports the importance of play during the critical periods of brain growth during the preschool years Healy, What are some of the defining characteristics of play? When children play, they have active engagement with materials. They are intrinsically motivated and have freedom from external rules. Children begin to think symbolically when they play. For example, using a block and pretending it is a telephone, or pretending a pegboard with pegs is a birthday cake. What is important when designing environments that promote play? Teachers should begin by providing opportunities for children to have spontaneous, unstructured child-initiated play experiences. With this in mind, the classroom design must also be conducive to play. Children need a large enough area for playing with two or more peers in an area where they will not be interrupted. When creating interest areas in the classroom, careful attention should be paid to the size of the space for both the dramatic play area and the block area, as these interest areas are frequented by children. The teacher must also provide stimulating materials to enhance and entice children into play. Materials should include loose parts that are open-ended and empower creativity by providing children opportunities to think, plan, and carry out their play. The consistent organization of materials in the space is important so children can be purposeful in selecting and placing materials back when they are finished. With organized materials on shelves and in bins, children can clearly see their choices for the day. Children also need freedom to explore the play environment and the materials in a way that interests them, providing a sense of wonder and encouraging creativity. Large blocks of time minutes in the daily schedule must also be allocated for play so children may develop play scenarios, get organized, and then execute their plan. Teachers must also realize that children will often find their own space for play. For example, children may place materials on top of a low shelf, turn a box over or use a chair “expanding their play space beyond the table and floor. What is the role of the teacher in play? The benefits of play are maximized when teachers facilitate play, as limited learning may take place otherwise. Teacher support is also seen as a necessary component of developmentally appropriate practice. Teacher interventions during play take on many possibilities from assisting with problem solving, questioning, redirecting undesired behaviors, and enticing children into play themes. Teachers must also teach play skills to children who have difficulty entering into a play scenario. By helping children when planning roles, encouraging children to talk to peers, posing open ended questions, and becoming involved in play, the teacher extends and enhances learning. For example, one role of the teacher is developing an understanding of the specific skills and knowledge children need to develop. Teachers should also individualize for children, keeping in mind their current level of cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development. For example, the teacher may have the goal of increasing the amount of expressive language a child uses throughout the day. The teacher might invite the child to the dramatic play area with another child who is very verbal and engages easy in play scenarios. Effective teachers build their curriculum upon what the children already know. They offer play experiences in areas where children are familiar with and have prior knowledge and experience. If a child has not had experience with a particular play scenario, he will not be able to expand on the role during fantasy

play. The prop box included many typical things that an office would contain – a keyboard, telephone, calculator, notepads, staple, tape dispenser, paper clips, etc. It was obvious this was a real life play scenario they had experienced. Children often will act out themes they are familiar with such as family roles, doctor, school, fast food restaurants, and shopping for food and clothes. When a child puts on a raincoat and a firefighter hat and rushes to rescue his teddy bear from the pretend flames in the playhouse, he is practicing what he already knows about firefighters. Play and learning should be integrated throughout the day. The facilitation will be the most effective if complemented by a carefully planned classroom environment. The teacher works to minimize conflict and confusion so that children have consistent time and space for play. Children need to be seen as competent individuals who, when given teacher support and interactions with other children, are able to construct knowledge in play settings. Play becomes a springboard for investigating play materials, art materials, the ideas of peers, and the world beyond the classroom. This approach to curriculum focuses on the development of the whole child, with content presented in meaningful contexts. For example, your classroom might visit a train museum and instead of focusing on all of the parts of the train which leads to rote memorization, the teacher might facilitate the focus on the roles of the people who would work on and ride the train: Teachers must be intentional in their planning for play. This includes using their knowledge of growth and development to determine what is age and stage appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally appropriate for each child in the classroom. Children are also given the opportunity to work out feelings, emotions, and fears they are unable to address or acknowledge overtly. What is competing with play? Children spend an average of 2 hours per day using computers, iPads, and iPhones, and watching television. The more time children are watching screens, the less opportunities they have for play and interaction with nurturing adults – both of which are critical to healthy development and learning. Research also indicates this screen time has a negative impact on attention and self regulation for young children TRUCE, Academic expectations have been pushed down and early acquisition of skills and content knowledge have left little room for play in the early childhood classroom. Structured and competitive group sports have taken the place of playing with neighborhood peers, and children are joining teams as early as age three. Realistic toys and props that do not allow children to use their imagination and be creative have lined the shelves of stores leaving little room for open ended and creative materials. What are the implications for the early childhood classroom? Play allows children to make important discoveries, including what they like and what they do not like. Play is deeply satisfying to young children. We also know that children do not separate play and learning. Although research supports the value of play in the classroom, the jump has yet to be made from theory to practice. Rote and drill activities have replaced providing time for children to construct knowledge and understanding in order for children to arrive at the correct answer. By depriving children of play opportunities, we are also depriving the opportunity to learn critical social skills and develop flexibility and strength to cope with difficult situations. What needs to be changed? Planning for play must be intentional. Teachers must focus on creating opportunities for higher level thinking by incorporating time, space and materials for play. By securing a prominent place in their curriculum planning for play, teachers will encourage fellow colleagues and administrators to support their efforts. Lastly, they must work to educate parents on the value of play, building parent understanding and support for play in the curriculum. Chopsticks and counting chips: Spotlight on young children and play, Tools of the mind: The vygotskian approach to early childhood education 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education programs. Taking back childhood; Helping your kids thrive in a fast-paced, media-saturated, violence-filled world. Thanks for the memory: The lasting value of true play. Spotlight on young children and play. Brain development and learning from birth to adolescence. From play to practice:

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Physical play is used to refer to physical, exploratory, manipulative, and constructive play. 2 Pretend play is used to refer to pretend, make believe, dramatic, socio-dramatic, role, fantasy, and small world play.

Three-year-old Alyce thinks it funny when her father puts on a silly hat. Six-year-old Pedro throws a cape around his shoulders, runs across the room and pretends to be Superman. Play is essentially important in the life of a child. Maturation and socialization develop during all stages of childhood through the use of play. Historical artifacts and documents prove that children have been playing since earliest times. Toys have been found in the ruins of ancient China, Egypt, Babylonian and other civilizations. Parten identifies these levels as part of the maturation process for children: Play, without regard to the involvement of other children in the room or playground. A child may build a tower with blocks, yet be oblivious to other nearby children. As the child plays, they observe other children in the same area. Often this child will begin to model their play on another child. After watching another child, they may alter their own play. Even though they may appear to show little interest, they are observing others. A form of play where several children are playing with the same materials, but each is playing separately: Using puzzles, for example. They may converse with others, but work independently. If one leaves the group, the play continues. Play in which a loosely organized game is decided upon. For example, children may run around the room, pretending to be airplanes. There are no definite rules or roles. If one child decides not to play, the others continue. Play in which children assume assigned roles and depend on others for achieving the goals of the play. If one of the key players decided to drop out, the play episode will end. According to Ellis , play fosters the behavioral variability of an individual, and therefore a species. This increases the probability of future adaptations to unpredictable circumstances where behavioral flexibility is an advantage. Today, leaders in theories of early childhood education see play as fostering well-being, creative thinking skills and cognitive development. As the child plays, all facets of development are enhanced. Motor, cognitive and socio-emotional development are all increased as the child participates in play experiences. As the children engage in play, the need for variety and competence all come into focus. Suggestions for Helping Children Learn Social Skills Through Play By using research and knowledge gained by educators, scientists and child psychologists, we know more about how children develop social skills. Parents and teachers have numerous opportunities throughout the day to help babies, toddlers and preschoolers develop social skills while doing routine work. Recently, several new programs have been developed to help caregivers accomplish these tasks. A Positive Approach to Parenting. Focusing on activities for babies, toddlers and preschoolers, the program offers simple ideas that promote learning. If your child is a baby: When taking your baby to public places, he comes in contact with new faces and voices. Stay close to your baby so he develops a sense of security. This gives him confidence to meet unfamiliar people and surroundings. Babies enjoy making eye contact with other babies. Allow her time to interact and play as they communicate through sounds or gestures. Soon your baby will learn that you always return and you will help him develop a sense of trust. If your child is a toddler: Find opportunities to praise your toddler for good behavior. For example, when you must wait in line, praise the child for being patient. For example, if running errands, stop by the park for a few minutes. Play allows your child to interact with peers and you both have more fun. As you help your toddler develop social skills, use positive statements when speaking. Allow your child to make choices when possible. For example, allow her to choose to wear either the red shirt or the blue shirt. Confidence and a strong sense of self are vital to developing social skills. Play pretend games with your preschooler. Help your child decide what they would say in these situations as they practice difference types of social skills. Teach pro-social skills and responsibilities by encouraging your child to perform simple chores, such as helping to put groceries away after shopping. Show him how to separate recycled items for collection. Questionnaire for Parents and Teachers Adults can be special partners as they help children develop social skills. How would you answer the following questions? Do I plan time for children to play alone? Do I encourage children to invite friends over to play? Do I have a safe home where children may play? Are the play items appropriate for each age of development? Do I allow children to make choices for

playthings? Do I allow children to be leaders in their play? Do I limit the selection a child has at one time? Do I realize that too many things can be overwhelming and make learning difficult? How can parents and teachers make sure children have adequate materials and play time? Brewer suggests that caregivers keep a daily journal for a few days, recording the time their children spend in active play and the materials used in that play. Parents must make the distinction between active play and a passive activity, such as watching TV.

Stimulating Play Items Most homes and child care centers contain stimulating playthings. These items help the child develop creative and imaginative play, whether playing alone or in small groups. Unlike expensive packaged educational toys that may have only one use, these basic items provide hours of fun. The following toys grow with your child and provide a longer learning time: Blocks variety of sizes.