

Playgroup – What's the Point?

Anne Stonehouse

Play

- means different things to different people
- is often used to describe activities that aren't play
- is not the only way children learn
- doesn't always lead to desirable learning.

- Promoting learning through play doesn't mean that adults can always stand back and get involved only when necessary.
- The concept of ***intentional teaching*** suggests that professionals/educators have an active role in children's play.

- Play ***IS*** a wonderful way for children to learn, but what is it?

Play

- Takes place alone or with others
- As few rules and restrictions as is reasonable
- Child/children more or less in charge
- Active engagement, involvement
- Involves creativity, innovation, improvisation
- Number of possible outcomes or results, open-ended
- Emphasis on the process, not the 'product' (result)

- Think of the experiences you offer as being on a continuum from those that have the characteristics of play to those that don't.
- The balance should be toward the 'play' end of the continuum.

- Children's immersion in their play illustrates how play enables them to simply enjoy *being*.

(EYLF, p.15)

- Children don't know the difference between care and education, just having fun and important learning activities, times and experiences that are planned to be educational and those that aren't planned at all.

Curriculum is:

“all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster young children’s learning and development”. (EYLF)

Learning outcomes

- **Strong sense of identity**
- **Connected with and contributing to communities and groups**
- **Sense of wellbeing**
- **Confident and involved learners**
- **Effective communicators**

Encouraging learning in playgroups starts with:

- A rich inviting welcoming physical environment
- Open-ended materials
- Choices and variety
- Intentional teaching by facilitators and other adults

In play children can:

- discover, create, improvise, imagine
- (in play with others) create groups, test out ideas, challenge each other's thinking, build new understandings
- ask questions, solve problems, engage in critical thinking.

(EYLF, p.15)

Through constructive play children can:

- expand their thinking, increase their desire to know and learn
- strengthen positive dispositions to learning
- learn to recognise what's unfair
- learn constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community.

(EYLF, p. 15)

Young children are:

- **citizens with rights**
- **amazing learners**
- **people with many strengths, as well as needs**
- **collaborators**
- **teachers and learners.**

- How would I like it to be – what would I want to happen and what would matter most – if I were a child here?

- If I were a parent or carer here with a child, how would I want it to be – what would I want to happen and what would matter most?