



Teaching Play

Information Evening

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What is Play?



- Worksheet "What is Play?"



What is Play?

- What were the common reasons to classify an activity as play or non-play?
- What are our biases?



Play Definitions

- "Play is easy to recognise but very hard to define" (Johnson, Christine, & Yawkey, 1999).
- Commonly defined by 5 characteristics:
 1. Nonliterality/ Imaginative: Internal reality takes precedence over external reality.
 2. Intrinsic motivation.
 3. Process (over product) orientation.
 4. Free choice/ spontaneous and voluntary.
 5. Positive affect.



Play Definitions



- Also commonly defined by:
 - Active engagement by the player.
 - Can be clearly contrasted to what is not play.
 - Flexible, novel, and with ever expanding themes.
 - Pleasurable, safe, and valued to the player.
 - Organisation is imposed by the player/s.
- Does this change the activities we classified as play?



Development of Play

- It is commonly accepted that a generally consistent developmental sequence exists.
- Different forms of play emerge and peak at different times throughout development.
- But...
 - Not sets of independent discrete skills.
 - Not developed in a linear step-by-step manner.



Types of Play

Sensorimotor/ Manipulative/ Exploratory Play

- Begins very early in development.
- Initially reflex-oriented.
- Helps children learn about objects, relations, and ways to interact and influence the direct environment.



Types of Play

Functional Play

- Emerges around 14 months.
- Objects, including miniaturised ones, are related to in a functional way.
- Includes knowledge of conventional associations, e.g. doll & spoon, cup & saucer.



Types of Play

Symbolic Play

- Emerges around 24 months.
- Play which involves pretending.



Development of Symbolic Play

(Gowen, 1995)

Category	Description	Examples
Prepretense	Child engages in approximate pretense but gives no confirming evidence of pretense.	Child briefly touches phone; briefly puts bottle to doll's mouth.
Pretend Self	Child engages in pretense behaviour, directed toward self, in which pretense is apparent.	Child raises cup to lips, tips cup, makes drinking sounds.
Pretend Other	Child engages in pretense behaviour toward other; pretends the behaviours of other people.	Child feeds doll with toy baby bottle or cup; pushes truck on floor and makes truck noise.
Substitution	Child uses an apparently meaningless object in a creative or imaginative manner, or uses an object in a pretense act in a way that differs from its usual use.	Child feeds doll with block as "bottle", puts piece of play dough on plate and calls it a hamburger.



Development of Symbolic Play

(Gowen, 1995)

Category	Description	Examples
Imaginary Objects or Beings	Child pretends that an object, substance, person, or animal is present.	Child tips empty teapot over cup and says "coffee", child moves around room making motor sounds as though riding an imaginary motorbike.
Active Agent	Child animates a toy that represents a being so that toy becomes an active agent in the pretend activity.	Child hops toy animal across rug as though it were running, put's dolls hand to it's mouth as though it were feeding itself.
Sequence, No Story	Child repeats a single pretense act/scheme with multiple receivers.	Child gives mother a drink from the cup, then gives doll a drink from the cup.
Sequence Story	Child uses more than one related scheme in pretense activity.	Child stirs in cup, Drinks from cup, and says "Mmm, tastes yummy".
Planning	Child engages in pretend play preceded by evidence of planning.	Child says that "Baby is hungry" before making the food and feeding the doll.



Development of Social Play

(Parten, 1932)

Unoccupied Behaviour	<i>The child is not playing, but watches anything of momentary interest.</i>
Onlooker Behaviour	Child observes other children playing and may talk to them but doesn't involve himself in the play.
Solitary Independent	Child plays alone with materials different to other children. He is not influenced by what other children are doing.
Parallel	Child plays alongside, but not with other children using the same materials.
Associative	Child plays with others, sharing materials and ideas and following one another, but still does what he wishes.
Cooperative/Organised	Child is part of a group that is organised for a particular purpose. The group may have 1 or 2 leaders. All children take different responsibilities in the group.



The Development of Play

- *Activity:* In small groups place the descriptions of play skills along the birth to 10 years continuum.



Autism and Play

- A lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play, or social-imitative play appropriate to developmental level is a diagnostic criteria for autism (DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994).
- A child with autism's play can be impaired at all developmental stages, most research has concentrated on pretend play, especially symbolic play.



Autism and Play

- Sensory motor play dominates beyond the age at which it starts to decline in typically development.
- Play is often characterised by inflexibility, repetitiveness or lacking in curiosity.
- Play is often solitary.
- Impairments in social skills can also interfere, for example a child who wants to play with peers, and has the actual play skills needed, but has difficulty initiating.



Why Teach Play?



- Provides a medium through which children can develop skills, experiment with roles and interact with others.
- Play is the norm in early childhood and therefore a lack of play skills can create social isolation.
- When learnt, play can create a sense of mastery, increase motivation to play, and increase in pleasure in playing.



Why Teach Play?

- Provides a chance for self-exploration.
- Increases fluidity of thoughts, reduces conceptual fragmentation, reduces repetitive and rigid behaviour patterns.
- Encourages, and has been shown to improve, communication and social interaction development.
- Can provide a replacement behaviour for less purposeful or less desirable behaviours.



Teaching Play

- How to teach play depends on the individual child and on the type of play being taught.
- It is important to consider:
 - Developmental readiness.
 - Language development.
 - Peer involvement and social skills.
 - Motivation.
 - Setting, teaching plan, and generalisation.

(Terpstra, Higgins, & Pierce, 2002)





Teaching Play



- Be Proactive!!
 - Work as a team.
 - Be systematic and methodical.
 - Approach it in the same way we approach teaching in other areas, e.g. specific targets, clear objectives, tracking progress, prompting and prompt fading, reinforcement.



Teaching Strategies

- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Teaching Interactions
- Task Analysis
- Rehearsal
- Scripting
- Role Play
- Imitation/ Modelling: direct or 3rd person; peer or adult
- Video Modelling
- Playdates
- Differential Reinforcement “Catch them being good”
- Self Monitoring
- And?....



Teaching Play

- **Activity:** In small groups task analyse one of the play activities.
 - Consider:
 - The play skills involved.
 - Developmental play prerequisites.
 - Skills from other domains, (social, language, communication, academic, etc...).



Teaching Symbolic Play

- A deficit in symbolic play is a diagnostic criteria of autism.
- However... there is a plethora of research demonstrating that symbolic play skills can be taught effectively, be generalised, encourage the development of other skills, and have a lasting positive impact on the development of the child.



For example:

- Paterson, C.R., and Arco, L. (2007). Using video modelling for generalizing toy play in children with autism. *Behaviour Modification*, 31(5), 660-681.
- Woods, J. (2008). Increasing functional and symbolic play skills of children with autism using activity schedules and script-fading. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, 68 (10-B), 6949
- Bernard-Opitz, V., Ing, S., and Kong, T.Y. (2004). Comparison of behavioural and natural play interventions for young children with autism. *Autism*, 8(3), 319-333.
- Reagon, K.A., Higbee, T.S., Endicott, K. (2006). Teaching Pretend Play Skills to a Student with Autism Using Video Modeling with a Sibling as Model and Play Partner. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 29(3), 521-534.



Teaching Symbolic Play

- Recommendations for teaching symbolic play:
 - Structure: For example, a known story line, or stereotyped characters.
 - Affect: There needs to be inherent pleasure in the play.
 - Interests: The play must be personally meaningful to the child, for example, incorporate personal interests and understanding.
 - Nonrepresentational materials: There needs to be a balance between representational and nonrepresentational objects.
 - Continuity: Sequences within the play that are understood and sensual to the child.
 - Social play: Incorporate the use of peer or adult models.
 - Appropriate language.

(Sherrat, 1999;2001)

