Play in the Classroom

Effective Teaching & Learning in a Play-Based Classroom

LONGWORTH EDUCATION, NAPIER,

NEW ZEALAND

Selected for
hundrED
2017

House Keeping Matters

- Gaining your attention

- Basic rules for the day

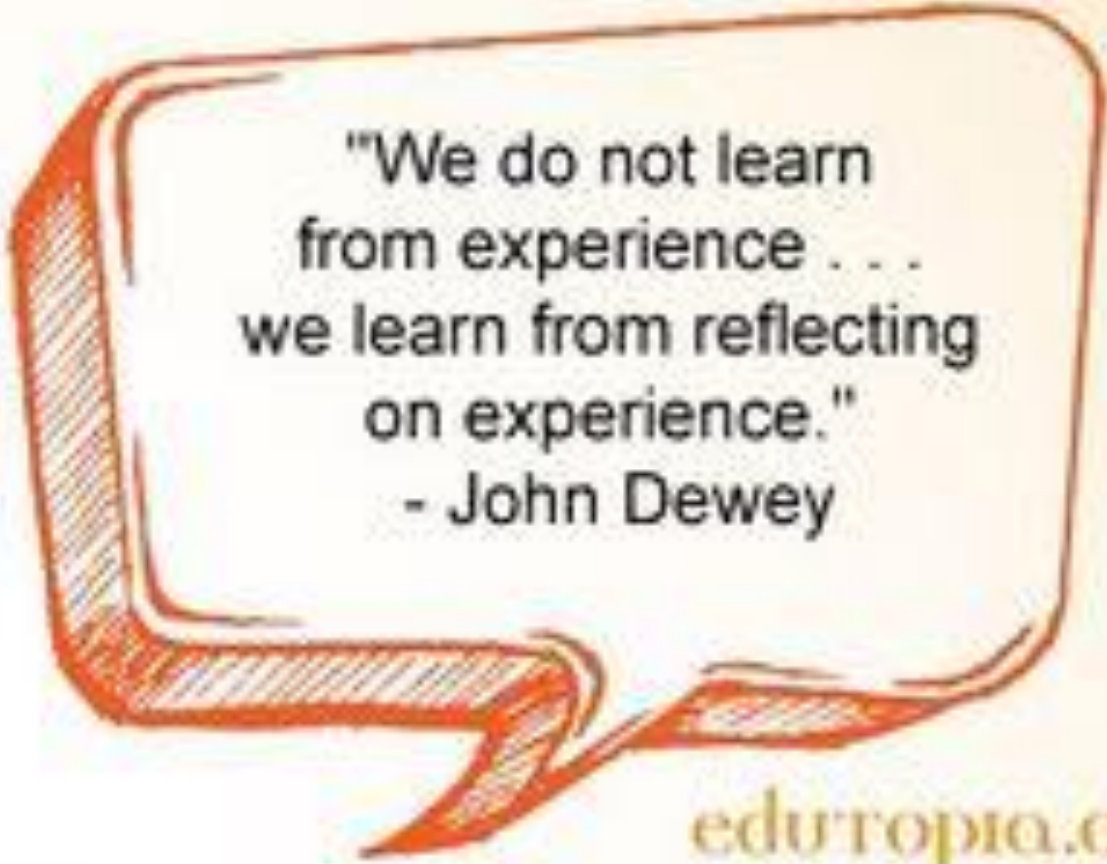- Evacuations/Bathrooms etc

- Handouts/Note taking

Introductions

Program for the Day

- Expectations and Roles

- Practical Reflection Time

- Philosophy and Research – A Background to the Play Based Learning Approach

- Developmental Stages & Urges

- Oral Language

- Exploring and Considering Important Resources in the Classroom Context

- Timetables, and Documentation

- Challenging the Challenges and Barriers Ahead

- Conclude 3.30pm

Professional Practice Continuum

A TIME FOR REFLECTION

"We do not learn from experience . . . we learn from reflecting on experience."
- John Dewey

eduropia.org

What the Research Tells Us: Play

- Extensive research on the role of play and its value in the healthy development of all aspects of learning – physical, sensorimotor, social, emotional and cognitive

- When engaged in authentic play, children are more likely to develop higher order cognitive and socio-emotional skills than if exposed to direct teaching and adult-structured learning opportunities

- Neurological research now confirms behavioural, biological and developmental research garnered over 30 years ago on the importance of play to healthy childhood development

The Characteristics of Play

Primarily, play is:

1. self-chosen and self-directed;

2. process rather than product driven;

3. contains structures or rules established by the players themselves;

4. imaginative, non-literal and removed from reality;

5. occurs between those who are active, alert and non-stressed.

(Gray, 2013; Brewer, 2007)

What the Research Tells Us: Play Based Learning

- Constructivist and social-learning theories (Piaget, Bruner, Bandura and Vygotsky)

- Strong sense of self-efficacy and resiliency result through peer interaction and negotiation (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Wassermann, 2000).

- Conversations that occur during play allow children to explore diverse ideas and experience a variety of perspectives, deepening their understanding of concepts presenting themselves within the context of their play.

What the Research Tells Us: Play Based Learning

- There is limited evidence regarding the value of play within the primary school context, despite the significant research base at pre-school level.

- Traditionally, primary school classrooms have been established with the purpose of transferring knowledge to children in preparation for the workforce. (Claxton, 2008; Gray, 2013; Robinson & Aronica, 2015).

- The very nature of play and its characteristics gives the appearance that it is trivial and as such, not conducive to the rigors of academic learning (Gray, 2013).

- Conflict for educationalists between the tasks of play and learning are a 'false dichotomy.' Play opposes 'work' and that learning is, in fact, 'work'.

The Power of Conversation

- Opportunities for genuine conversations less teacher talk, more peer talk and respectful equal conversations between adults and students.

- All are seen as learners.

- The amount of talk that students directly correlates with their achievement.

Conversations in the Classroom

- What is research telling us?

- 88% of time teachers have a role-given right to speak at any time   and to any person, while students have restricted rights and opportunities to speak and express themselves – (Cazden, 2001)

- Of the remaining 12% of the time, half is spontaneous "non-legitimate" speaking, of which only half is accepted by the teacher.

- In high achieving classrooms, teachers talked about 55% of the time; but in classrooms in which students were identified as low-achieving, teacher talk was 80% (Flanders 1970).

A New Zealand Perspective

Jannie van Hees – Doctoral research 2012

- Jannie worked with four teachers in their NE, Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms. Initial observations showed in all cases the teachers dominated the oral language.

- She describes the teachers as being outside the "goldilocks zone".

- When students are provided with increased opportunities to express and interact in a classroom environment that closely aligns with first language conditions, they are expressively and learning enabled.
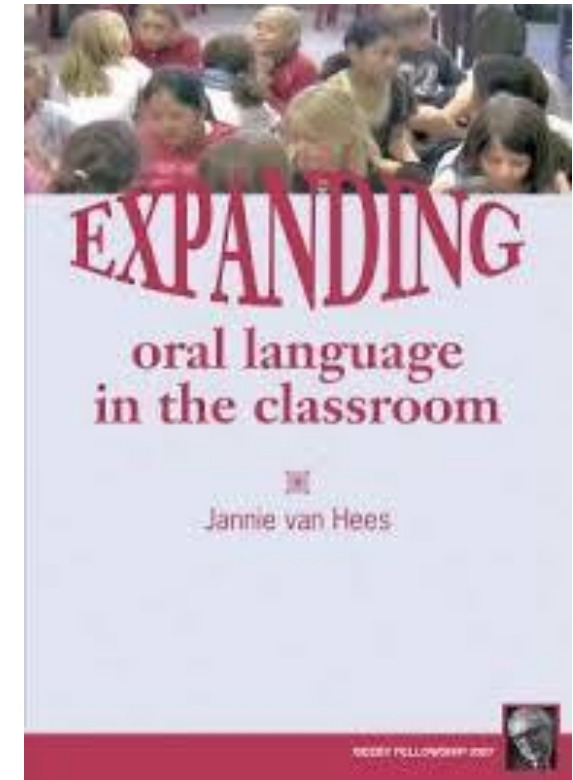
Play Programme for Oral Language Intervention

- Explored the connections between young children's oral language vocabulary and children's reading of written language in beginning reading books.

- As a result of the study, teachers decided that a play programme would be a developmentally appropriate and intrinsically motivating approach for children to experiment with oral language and get immediate feedback. It would allow for the development of vocabulary in rich contexts.

Susan Hill, Associate Professor in Early Childhood Education, University of South Australia

Allowing Wait Time

- A question is asked every 72 seconds. Most teachers only wait 2 seconds for an answer.

- Increasing the average wait time to 3 seconds produces measurable increases in learning.

- 38% of questions are answered by the teacher themselves.

Black et al 2002

"Play, by my definition, is, first and foremost, activity that is self-chosen and self-directed. It is activity that you are always free to quit. Activities that are chosen by teachers and directed or evaluated by teachers are not play."

Peter Gray, Ph.D and author Free to Learn

Let's Take a Moment....

- Consider what the research says

- What are the implications for your practice based on this theory?

- Can you see any challenges to establishing practices that reflect the theory of authentic play based learning?

Student Developmental Continuum

A TIME FOR REFLECTION: WHERE TO PLACE YOUR STUDENTS

	Piaget	Vygotsky
Defining Characteristics	Stages, development drives learning, learner centered	Social interactions, Zone of Proximal Development, learning drives development
Mechanisms of Change	Innate development, stages, assimilation, accommodation, equilibration	Scaffolding, social interactions, cultural development, internalization
Readiness	Genetic development growth, biological stages, has to be developmentally appropriate	ZPD has to contain the capabilities that are being taught, scaffolding
Role of Student	Actively manipulates objects/ideas, continually invents/reinvents knowledge through interaction with the world	Interact with instructor, peers, and socio-cultural environment to solve problems.
Role of Teacher and Classroom	Provide environment that encourages students to interact and ask probing questions.	Engage learners in socially-organized activities, provide scaffolding for learner.
Endpoints	Hypothetically everyone can reach the endpoint.	Learning how to think.

The Importance of a Developmental Approach

- Play-based learning environments reflect a developmentally appropriate response to students learning needs

- The 'Godfathers' of education research identified a fundamental need for students to learn through play in the 'Early Years' – defined as the ages of 3-7

- Children who are at the same chronological age can be at very difference stages socially, emotionally and developmentally.

- Some children in Piaget's 'pre-operational level' of cognitive development intermix fantasy and reality. They are unable to understand the rules of games, or temperamentally cannot wait and take turns

- Others in the concrete operational stage are obsessed by the rules, finding it difficult to see other peoples' perspectives, or think flexibly outside rules for creative thought.

"Depriving young children of play experiences, the reverie of imagination, and open-ended explorations with the world around them contributes to the acceleration, fragmentation, and deterioration of young children's developmental possibilities"

Thomas Armstrong, "The Best Schools"

Stages of Play

Age	Play Type	What you may observe
0 – 2 years	Solitary	• Plays alone, then later starts to play with grown-ups • Limited interaction with other children
2 to 2 ½ years	Spectator	• Observes and notices other children playing around him but will not play with them • Copies others • Likes repetitive actions
2 ½ to 3 years	Parallel	• Plays alongside other children but not with them • Copies adults and other children during play • Much of his play is imaginative
3 to 4 years	Associate	• Is starting to interact with others with some fleeting cooperation in play • Is developing friendships and preferences for playing with some, but not all, other children • Is interested in "why" and "how"
4 ½ to 6+ years	Cooperative	• Enjoys playing in small groups • Likes to play with others of the same gender • Capable of playing cooperative games and enjoys using rules

Adapted by Theresa Case from http://www.child-development-guide.com/stages-of-play-during-child-development.html

Understanding Children's Urges

One

Two

Three

The Urge to Play

- Rather than viewing children learning in 'subjects', developmental research acknowledges the 'urges' that children have in their play.

- Urges (also known as schema) encourage the neurological pathways to 'come online'. Neural pathways grow through nurture and play.

- Biologically, play is the tool to ensure survival, through the practice of skills and inquiry. It is fundamental wiring!

Playing with Fire and Water

What could you do to adapt your playground to support your children's urges?

The Role of the Teacher: Intentional Teaching

- Achieving an appropriate balance between direct instruction (viewed as the more traditional method of teaching) and self-directed, exploratory learning is the "art of teaching" (Robinson & Aronica, 2015, p.103).

- The notion of 'intentional teaching' as a role for the teacher within a play-based setting extends from Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

- The use of descriptive commentary, academic, social and emotional teaching techniques respectfully support students in their learning journey
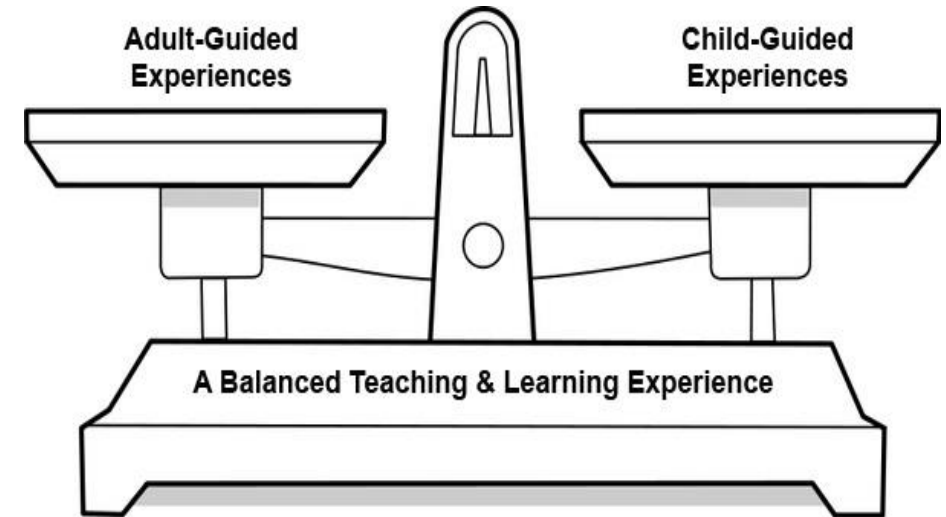
Adult-Guided Experiences | Child-Guided Experiences

A Balanced Teaching & Learning Experience

"Mature, sustained socio-dramatic play is the most important type of play. This is when executive functioning develops"

Guddemi, 2013

Resourcing Play Based Learning

- What self-chosen activities/resources do you have currently in your classrooms that children can play with when they are not engaged in curriculum learning activities?

- How often do you allow this self-choosing?

- Can the children play with these activities freely, or are they only available by request or as 'follow up' activities? Can they physically access them themselves, or do you need to help them retrieve them?

The Theory of Loose Parts

"an environment which is rich in *open-ended materials* and *real materials*, invokes children to experiment, engage, construct and invent; invites them to tinker, to manipulate and to play"

(Nicholson, 1972)

The Classroom Environment

Setting up for Play

Loose Parts
How children used these resources in their dramatic play

Pre-Operational use of Loose Parts   Concrete Operational use of Loose Parts

The wonders of outdoor 'mixing'……

The School Day:
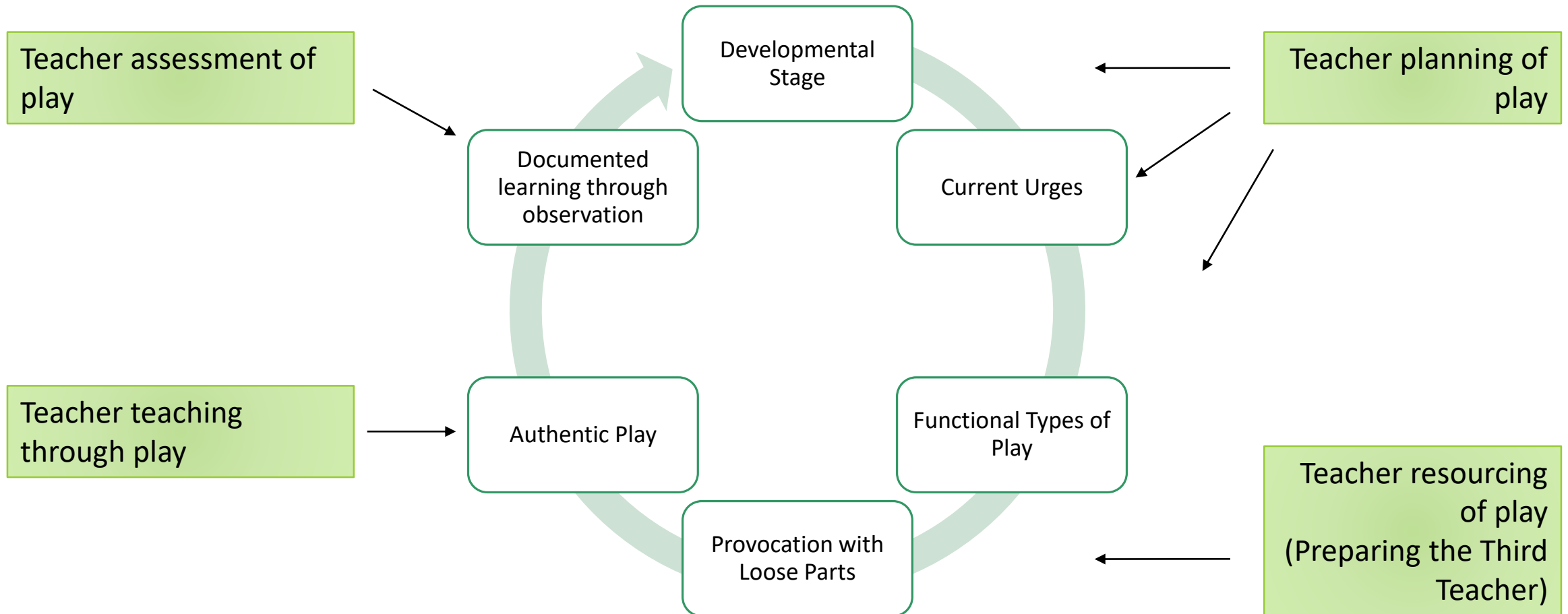# Learning through Play All Day, Every Day

Planning

- Very different to the traditional documentation approach.

- How is it possible to pre-plan the unknown?

- Therefore planning is done in anticipation of learning with a high degree of flexibility.

- In a play-based setting, the planning encompasses a reflective approach and is not governed by a theme or topic, but by the student urges/interests and Key Competencies.

- Planning should be evidence of your response to documented observations of the learning occurring through play.

Responding to Your Learners:
Teaching through Play

What you need to know first

Teacher assessment of play

Teacher planning of play

Developmental Stage

Documented learning through observation

Current Urges

Teacher teaching through play

Authentic Play

Functional Types of Play

Provocation with Loose Parts

Teacher resourcing of play
(Preparing the Third Teacher)

Given that children do not have to attend school until they are six years old, there can be some flexibility and overlap in the use of Te Whariki and the curriculum documents for school and kura.

- Te Whariki, p. 58 2017

Learning Stories

- A narrative description of the learning *process* rather than a documentation of the final *product* (eg the level attained or the learning achieved)

- Recognition of the student as an active learner through observation and reflection

- Gives teachers a new set of 'eyes' on the learner – focuses on key competencies and learning dispositions, and the role the teacher plays in supporting the students urges and interests

- Allows parents and students a 'voice' in the assessment process

Risk Taking and Trust

Luke, you thought it would be fun to take the boat under the bridge. Everyone tried to guess if it would fit.

After a lot of discussion, you suggested Danny help you by pushing the boat with a stick.

When it became too tricky for Danny, Leah helped out by pushing the boat.
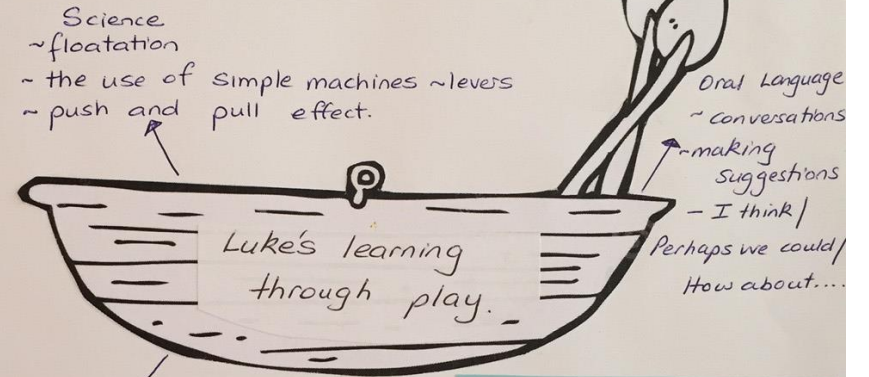
Great success!

Key Competencies
Capabilities for living and lifelong learning

Managing self
This competency is associated with self-motivation, a "can-do" attitude, and with students seeing themselves as capable learners. It is integral to self-assessment.

Students who manage themselves are enterprising, resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They establish personal goals, make plans, manage projects, and set high standards. They have strategies for meeting challenges. They know when to lead, when to follow, and when and how to act independently.

Science
~ floatation
~ the use of simple machines ~ levers
~ push and pull effect.

Luke's learning through play.

Oral Language
~ conversations
~ making suggestions
~ I think / Perhaps we could / How about....

Maths:
~ estimating height & length

Social Skills:
~ how to organise a group of helpers
~ having trust in your abilities and your peers.

Relating to others
Relating to others is about interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas.

Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations. They are aware of how their words and actions affect others. They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to co-operate. By working effectively together, they can come up with new approaches, ideas, and ways of thinking.

Problem Solving Skills
~ how to manoeuvre the boat under the bridge
~ how to stay in the boat (balance)

The more risks you allow children to take, the better they learn to take care of themselves.
- Roald Dahl

urges

Luke, you were keen to use these planks of wood to create a shelter. Firstly, you secured the wood by using lots of nails.

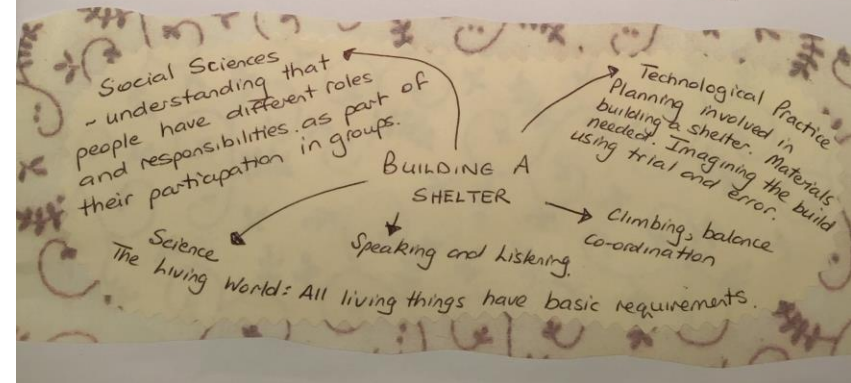## Enclosure:~ Building a shelter

Working collaboratively.
Sharing ideas and listening to others.

We found an old curtain and we thought it would be good to attach it to the old ladder. Danny helped you to drape it over so it hung evenly.

You attached the curtain by using lots more nails. Sometimes it was tricky to reach so you suggested that Danny might like to use the ladder.

You very kindly let Dan join in with your construction.

You all shared your ideas about how your shelter should look.

Social Sciences ~ understanding that people have different roles and responsibilities as part of their participation in groups.

Technological Practice Planning involved in building a shelter. Materials needed. Imagining the build using trial and error.

BUILDING A SHELTER

Climbing, balance, co-ordination.

Science The Living World: All living things have basic requirements.

Speaking and Listening.

Reviewing the Continuum

- Reflect on where you placed yourself this morning…..

- Given your learning journey today – does it need to change?

- Consider where your students are on their developmental continuum…

- *Knowing this – what next?*

- *Remember this is a long journey…….*

Problems & Challenges

Timetabling & Curriculum Delivery

- Examine your class timetable

- Consider how to achieve a 'balanced' teaching approach through play

- Reflect on effective curriculum coverage in play

- Review the important part resourcing plays in a play-based learning environment

Check our website for dates & venues

Play in the Classroom
effective teaching and learning in a play-based classroom
The 'Nitty Gritty' - Resources, Timetabling and Curriculum Delivery

9am - 3pm

A Workshop for Classroom Practitioners

Following on from the popular 'Play-Based Learning for the Junior Classroom' series this workshop is aimed at those facilitating learning in a play-based classroom environment.

This workshop will enable teachers to:
- Critically examine their classroom timetable, with support, to implement effective learning through play classroom practices

- Understand how to achieve a balance between a quality literacy and numeracy program and child-led learning

- Learn to identify all aspects of the Curriculum within children's play

- Consider ways to motivate and invite students into play in areas of the curriculum not commonly covered in children's play

This workshop is a popular follow-on from the foundation workshop
'Play in the Junior Classroom'.

Book early to avoid disappointment!

This will be a popular workshop for those looking to build on their skills and knowledge of Play in the Classroom.

$220 +GST per person

To register email:
sarah@longwortheducation.co.nz

Play is our brain's favorite way of learning

The Role of the Teacher

- Examine the role of the teacher in a play-based classroom

- Discuss and practice key scaffolding strategies

- Practice (with support) ways to document learnning observed
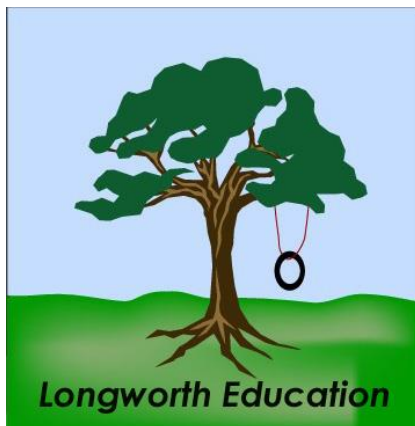
- **Check our website for dates & venues**

The Joy of Play Educator's Conferance 2020

Napier Conference Centre

22 January 2020

8.30am – 3.30pm

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