

Why should adults support play as a component of early childhood education as much as they support academic instruction in early childhood education?

I. Introduction

I have been working with young children for many years. I've worked at many preschools. Each school has its own approach. Some schools emphasize academics heavily. Some schools are play-based schools. While I was working at the academic schools, I noticed many things that I was not happy about. At an academic-based school, children would learn reading, numbers, shapes and art. Many children were forced to sit in a circle so they could learn a new letter. There was one incident that I will never forget. One day a two-and-a-half year old boy placed a tiny brass bowl on his head and he said to a teacher, "Look, I am a king!" I looked at him and smiled. Another teacher came and said, "Put it away. That is not how we use it." The little boy looked sad and he reluctantly went to put the small bowl away. Why could not this boy enjoy pretending to be a king? There were more incidents where children were told not do something when a teacher said, "I did not give you a lesson in that yet. You should do something else and practice what I have already taught you." There are too many rules that limit children's creativity—like having to do exactly what teachers tell them to do.

In late November, 2015, I visited a play-based preschool in Cambridge. I had an interview with the director of the school. Based on the interview and from what I saw at her school, it assured me that play-based schooling can be a good choice for early childhood, a view for which I have been finding support in the published literature. For example, "All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities." (Play Work Principles Scrutiny Group, 2005) and "Decades of research have shown that play is an important mediator in the physical, social, cognitive, and language development of young children." (Bergen, 2002; Garvey, 1993; Vygotsky, 1976)

In spite of this research, play faces threats from many directions in modern American life. The growing emphasis on standards, assessment, and accountability in schools has led to a reduction in outdoor and active physical play. In many schools and centers, play has been all but eliminated to make room for the more passive academic learning." (Stipek, 2006) After the "No Child Left Behind" bill passed, many schools turned their attention to promote academics and focused on reading and writing. Some schools even cut down children's play time. According to much of the research I found, many preschools try to be like regular schools. Preschoolers learn things as if they are already in school.

Adults should aware that play is essential for children and it is the foundation of children's development. We cannot look at play as something that children should do only when they do not have anything else to do. Birth to five years is the significant time for children to play and learn about themselves. This is evident at play-based schools. All teachers have to do is to

provide opportunities for children to express their interests. For instance, provide materials for children to play, use and manipulate. From my observations at play-based schools, children come up with many ideas to play with toys and create things. This implies that children learn more when they have independence when playing.

All of the effort I made for this project is to honor children. My purpose is to raise awareness of play. In the sections to follow, I review several arguments from research in favor of the idea (after first defining some of the key terms to be used, such as “play”), then lay out future steps for me to build upon my understanding of issues derived from this review of the literature.

I. Definitions and Background

Adults

Adults in my project refers to parents, teachers, educators, policy makers, administrators, preschool directors, caregivers and anyone who works in the education fields that relate to early childhood.

Early Childhood

In general, educators define early childhood as children from birth to eight years old. However, my research defines early childhood as children from birth to five years old because these are the children who go to preschool, and who are the scope of my research.

What is Play?

Have you ever asked yourself what play is? I think play is activities that are flexible and enjoyable. There is no right or wrong way to play. Play is important to all children and it is fundamental to development. When children play they make their own decisions and learn how to get along with their peers. Children can invent things in their own ways; anything is possible in play. They get to extend their creativity and exercise their imaginations. (Peter Gray, 2015)

Play is something that children can choose to do by themselves and manage on their own. Anyone can play as long as they are not too sick to play. The motivation to play is from the heart. Play engages the imagination but it can also be based on reality. It can be either way.

Play is a universal language that children use to communicate among themselves. It is fun to play and it is spontaneous. “When you asked me what I did in school today and I say, ‘I just played,’ please don’t misunderstand me. For you see, I am learning as I play. I am learning to enjoy and be successful in my work. Today I am a child and my work is play.” (Anita Wadley, 1974) I think that Wadley gave a powerful statement. If we ask adults, “What did you do at work today?” Most of the answers are likely to be, “I did my work.” For young children though, playing means learning. That is what adults should keep in mind. Therefore, when children say they play at school it means they are learning. “*Play is a powerful catalyst*

for positive socialization.” (Dr. Stuart Brown) When children play with others they learn to express their feelings, and at the same time they learn how to understand people around them.

“*Play is the work of children.*” (Maria Montessori) Children sometimes learn how to be adults while they are playing. For instance, when they role play as mommy and baby, children will try to imitate how a mother holds her child. Adults learn by doing their work.

Types of Play

When speaking about types of play, adults may think of games that children love to play or what those adults loved to play when they were young—like tag or hide and seek—but these are not the types of play that I would like to discuss here. These following types of play are various forms of play in early childhood.

Unoccupied play: This type of play starts in the early months. Children in this period do not have specific goals when they are playing. They just play with random things in front of them or near them. *Solitary play:* Children from three to eighteen months enjoy playing alone and exploring things around them. *Onlooker play:* Most toddlers observe and learn from how their friends play. Then later on they associate with others. They may have conversations with their friends, but they may not play interact with others. *Parallel play:* At two years old, children will play next to their peers but they will not really engage with them. *Social play:* Three-year old children learn how to share with their peers. They cooperate with their friends. They start to learn moral reasoning. *Associative play:* Children between ages three to four years old are interested in playing with others. They learn how they can get along with their peers. They learn what they should and should not do with others. This type of play promotes language skills in children because they have to communicate with their playmates.

Constructive Play: This kind of play is associated with making or building things with objects like blocks or tubes. *Fantasy Play:* Children use their minds to imagine and think beyond reality. They pretend to be something that they are interested in. *Cooperative play:* This play takes place late in early childhood. There are goals and rules in this type of play and children learn how to obey the rules and learn how to both lead and follow others.

Why children should play outdoors instead of indoors

Where do children normally play? Play can take place outdoors or indoors. Outdoor play can be at a playground, a rice field, next to a river, on a mountain, etc. I used to play in those kinds of environments when I was a child. I nearly drowned one time and I fell from trees many times. It sounds dangerous but I learned to be careful. I learned how to survive—and more importantly—I had so much fun and I became the brave person I am today. That is what outdoor play gave to me. If I had stayed indoors and played video games or with a smart phone, I do not think that I would have learned the lessons that I learned when I was a child.

Nowadays children stay inside to play more than they go outside to play. (Clements, 2004; Hofferth and Curtin, 2006) It is easy to spot parents giving their child a smartphone or tablet to play with. Recent research indicates that too much indoor play is harmful to children. When children stay inside and play video games they do not use their imaginations. It is more

like following directions. Players have to do specific things in order to get points. When children play outside they are free to choose the way they would like to play. They are happier and less stressed than children who play inside. Children who play outside get to exercise their creative thinking. Researchers from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom discovered that children who play outside are more active and less likely to be obese compared to children who play inside.

According to research (Fjortoft 2004; Burdette and Whitaker 2005), children who play outdoors regularly:

- Become fitter and leaner
- Develop stronger immune systems
- Have more active imaginations
- Have lower stress levels
- Play more creatively
- Have greater respect for themselves and others

Benefits of play

I introduced many kinds of play earlier and now I would like to touch on the benefits of play. Different kinds of play develop particular skills.

Cognitive Development

Play promotes creativity. When children play with open-ended materials—materials that do not have specific structures to manipulate—children can think of ways that they can play with these kinds of materials. Open-ended materials allow children to let their imaginations run wild while they are playing. Children do not have to worry about if they get it right or if it will be the same as other children's. (Drew and Rankin, 2014) Children get to express themselves freely. When children have activities with movement like free play, it has an impact on their cognitive abilities. Moreover, it also promotes academic achievement in school. On top of that, after children are done playing they can focus on their lessons better and they behave well. (Katherine Sellgren, 2015) There is no right or wrong in play. Children get to use all of their senses to explore the world around them. They can imagine that they are kings or queens somewhere. When children play, they decide in what way they would like to play. Play also promotes abstract thinking through pretend play. *“Vygotsky also specified that object substitutions, such as pretending that a stick is a horse, play a key role in the development of abstract thinking, imagination, and literacy.”* (Vygotsky, 1978c)

Language Development

Researchers have found a relationship between symbolic play and words people use to communicate, for example, a child using a banana as a pretend phone. Researchers discovered that children understand language better because of symbolic play. Children who play more tend to gain better language skills than children who play less. In sociodramatic play, children will create a scenario that they would like to be in, like going to a supermarket. While they play, they will think of sentences that people may use when they go to a supermarket. Then a child may say to the other child, "Can you get me some milk?" Children will choose a role they want to play and may also assign roles to their peers like "I am your mommy and you are my baby." In this way, children will negotiate with their peers, which will allow them to practice communication skills.

Even when children play with simple blocks at the age of one to two years old, their language skills can improve compared to children who do not play. This study was done by a researcher who found out that there was a big difference in language test scores between children who played with blocks and the control group. (Christakis 2007) When children play with their peers or the adults, they hear new vocabulary and learn new words from these people. Overall, children develop their language through play because they have to use language to communicate with their peers. They hear new words and then use them to talk to their peers.

Physical Development

Low physical activity may lead to health problems. Children who rarely play when they are young are more likely to become obese when they grow up. Besides risking bad health in general, obesity may lead to heart disease or diabetes. Infants and toddlers develop their physical strength through play and movement. Each movement they make with their bodies has an impact on different kinds of motor skills. When they are young they have little control over their bodies. When they get older they will try to do things that are more challenging than just standing or crawling. For instance, they may try to hop or jump. (Issy and Hamilton, 2012) Better motor function has also been found to lead to fewer accidents (HC Netherlands 2004). When children jump, run around, hop, or climb on monkey bars, they strengthen their gross motor skills. Playing with sand, sticks, Play-Doh, Legos, or beads develops fine motor skills.

Social Development

Play does not only foster cognitive, language and physical development. It also benefits social development. When children play with others, they learn how to get along and understand the feelings of people who play with them. When children play with other children they learn to build relationships among themselves. They learn to have a sense of community. Children use language to communicate with their peers and to establish rules in their play. Because of this, later on they will learn how to understand who they are. (Casey,

2010). Playing with others promotes the understanding of other people's perspectives. Children learn how and what their peers think about by working together, taking turns, giving, sharing and working on problems. (*Open University, 2011*) Children who cannot implement creative play because they lose the ability to do so will have a difficult time with problem solving, especially in a social context. (Issy and Hamilton, 2012) When playing with others, children learn to give and receive. They learn to share sympathy with their friends. They learn how to share and take turns. They discuss how they would like to play and talk about the rules that they will have to follow.

Happiness and Emotions

The happiest thing that can happen to children is play. If we ask children what makes them happiest, they are likely to say that playing with their friends makes them the most happy compared to other things. (Entin, 2011) Children learn how to cope with their fears while they play; things that can be risky or frightening such as climbing trees, playing on swings, or climbing a pretend cliff. They also learn how to manage their fear and stress. Peter Gray, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Boston College stated that decreased ability to manage emotions may affect anxiety disorder. Gray also suggests that adults who did not have enough time to play and manage their emotions while they were young are at risk of experiencing anxiety—and they may not be able to tolerate it when something provokes their fear.

Play influences and facilitates children's knowledge acquisition in the classroom

Researchers uncovered that play promotes children's academic performance in school. Pretend play promotes abstract thinking, which is a hard concept to learn. Pretend play facilitates mathematical skills, problem-solving skills and language skills.

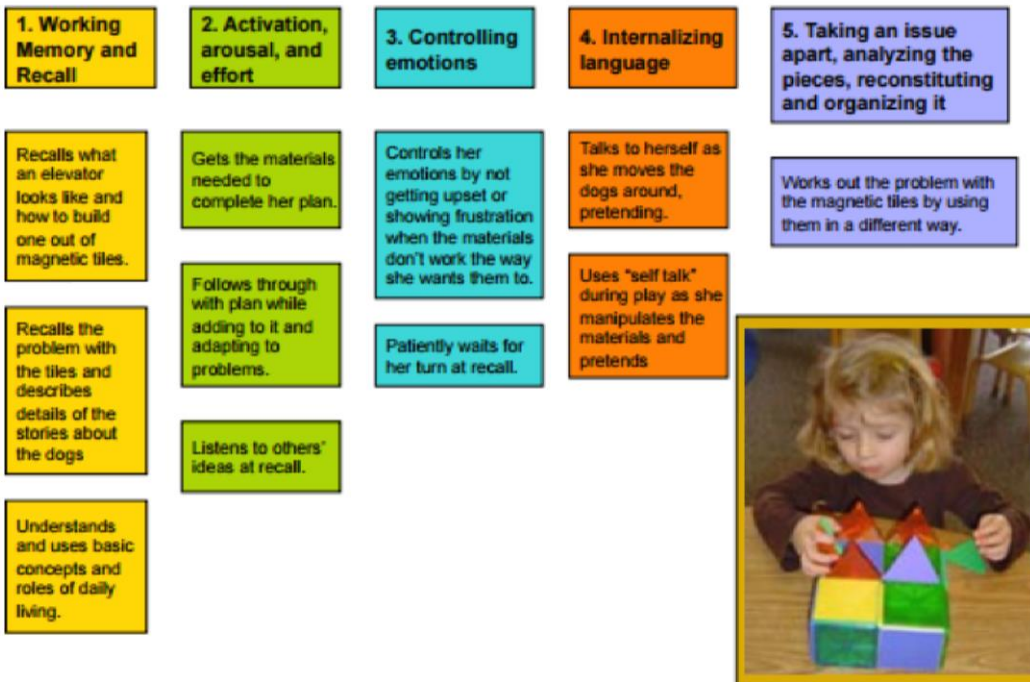
When children play they test their ideas about objects and people around them. They see what happens if they do such and such with two objects. This will promote their abilities in science in the future. Children can pay attention to their play for a long time if they are really interested in that play. Hopefully, this will enable them to become a learner who can stay focused on their tasks longer. (www.4children.org/play.htm) When children play with Play-Doh they not only use their fine motor skills, they also use their imagination and language skills. I still remember when I observed a little girl play with Play-Doh. She shaped some Play-Doh and said that it was a smiley face. One play activity can promote more than one skill.

Take a closer look at an example of play by a three-year-old girl

This observation was made by Shannon Lockhart, HighScope Senior Early Childhood Specialist. The three-year-old's name was Gabrielle and she played with magnetic tiles. At planning time, Gabrielle said, "I'm going to play with the doggies and Magnetic tiles in the toy area. I'm making a tall elevator." At work time, Gabrielle builds using the magnetic tiles while playing with the small toy dogs, as she planned. She stacks the tiles on top of one

another in a tower-like form—her “elevator”—then places some dogs in it. The elevator then falls over. She repeats this several times but the elevator continues to fall over. Gabrielle then arranges the magnetic tiles into squares, connecting them to form a row. Gabrielle says to Shannon, her teacher, “I’m making doghouses because the elevator keeps falling down.” Shannon says, “I was wondering what you were building, because you had planned to make a tall elevator going up vertically, and now you are using the tiles to make doghouses in a long horizontal row. You solved the problem by changing the way you were building.” Gabrielle uses pretend talk while moving the dogs around. At one point she says, “Mommy, Mommy, we are hungry” and opens one of the doghouses and moves the dog inside where a bigger dog is placed. Gabrielle says, “Mommy says the food’s not ready, so go play.” While moving the dogs around, Gabrielle says to herself out loud, “We have to find something to do until the food is ready.” Gabrielle says to Shannon, “Let’s pretend we are going to the park.” Shannon agrees and says, “I’m going to slide down the slide three times and then jump off the climber.” As Shannon pretends to do this with one of the dogs, Gabrielle watches, then copies her and says, “My dog jumped higher than yours.” She then says, “Mommy says we have to go home now. We need to move our dogs over there so they can eat.” The pretend play continues. At recall time, Gabrielle is using a scarf to hide some objects she played with. When it is her turn to recall, she gives clues about what is under the scarf. She shows the group a couple of magnetic tiles and dogs. Shannon asks her what she did with those materials during work time. Gabrielle talks about the problem with the falling “elevator” and then recounts the story about the doggies.”

Components of Executive Function in Gabrielle's Play



As you can see, Gabrielle's play is such a simple play but it is full of potential for learning and growing. Her play facilitated her memory recall. She had to think about what an elevator looks like and then make her own version. She learned to be patient. When her pretend elevators fell, she did not give up. She built new ones. She controlled her emotions during play. When her elevator collapsed, she did not get mad. She continued to play. Learning to deal with failure is not about suppressing negative emotions; it is about how to deal with it in a proper way. Gabrielle developed her language skills when she talked to herself and her teacher. She practiced her problem solving skills when she played. For instance, after her first elevator attempt failed, she had to find a new way to make her elevator work. When she played with those magnetic tiles, she had to figure out the properties of each tile and which tile was good for doing what. From the picture, she placed the square magnetic tiles on the bottom and the triangular magnetic tiles on the top.

I. What more we should know about play

A. Children are not designed to sit but to move around

Children sit in class more than they need to. Some schools have children sit and play at a table. I have noticed that many schools love to have children sit while children do their activities. If you walk into a childcare center and see a lot of chairs and tables, you can tell that the center has the children do their activities at the table. Children should stand while they perform their activities so they can get more of their muscles moving. When I interview with a director at the Newtown preschool in Cambridge, I saw that there were chairs, but they were stacked up next to the wall. The director told me that if children stand and do their work, they can use their muscles better. For instance, when they have to play with play dough while they are standing up, they can use both of their hands and shoulders to press the play dough down on the table. If they sat while performing this activity, their shoulders would not be used.

B. What will happen if children do not get to play or move around enough?

- Movement has an impact on how well our bodies grow and especially on bone formation. Bones cannot grow so well without moving and our muscles can get weaker as well. (Hunter, 2008)
- Brain growth relies on movement. When children move, their brain can develop better. Specific parts of brain like dendrites can perform work at their full potential. Sitting gives the opposite result. (Hunter, 2008)
- Dr. Stuart Brown did his studies with at least 6,000 cases and he discovered that lack of play can have an impact on children when they grew up. They will not perform creativity tasks that well, they are less productive when they work and they are likely to have slight depression. (Brown, Stuart. 2014)
- The most significant consequence of lost play is tragedy. In 1966 there was the most horriy mass shooting in the history of America. Charles Whitman murdered 14 people and wounded 41 students at the University of Texas, Austin. He also shot his wife, his mother to death. The governor of Texas assigned Dr. Stuart Brown and others researchers to study what caused Whitman to do this. The findings demonstrated that when Whitman was young until 18 years, he rarely went outside to play with his friends. He grew up in an abusive family and his father did not let him go out and play. “As a kid, I’d wonder why Charles couldn’t come over and play with us. Other kids and me, we’d climb the mulberry and mango trees in back of the house and in the woods, but not Charles. Charles never played with us. He wasn’t allowed to have friends; he couldn’t have friends over to his house.”– A neighbor who grew up next door to Charles Whitman©2006, The Palm Post. (Brown, Stuart. 2014)
- When children have a lack of play, they will see things in a negative ways. They have no hope and they are rigid. The do not practice to use their social skills with their friends and do not know how to cope with their stress. (Hanscom, Angela. 2015)
- Recently the Centers for Disease Control reported that the number of children whom are diagnosed with professionally diagnosed Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity

Disorder (ADHD) is rising every year. Angela Hanscom, a pediatric occupational therapist said that this rising number had something to do with the amount the children have to sit still in class. When children are forced to sit still, their bodies start to fidget and that is because it is their nature. There is nothing wrong with this behavior. The thing that is wrong is when the teacher tells students to sit still. Hanscom also wrote on her blog that many children today do not have balance compare children in the past. Children in the past climbed on trees and played outside more than children in the present. (Hanscom, Angela. 2015)

C. Should children learn from teachers in early childhood or it is better to letting them learn by themselves through play?

Children who are not instructed by teachers tend to be more creative and open-minded as compared to children who are taught by teachers. Children who follow their teachers' instructions on how to do things are more likely to mimic their teachers or try to do things that will please their teachers. A cognition lab at MIT and UC Berkley conducted experiments with four year old children. (Alison Gopnik, 2011) There were two groups of children. Researchers instructed the children in the first group on how they can play with new toys. The children in the second group were not instructed by researcher. They played and explored toys on their own. As a result, the children in the first group interacted with the news toys in the way their teachers demonstrated to them. The children in second group had more ways to manipulate the new toys and they played with toys longer than the children in first group

D. Playing is another form of learning

Playing does not only contribute to good health and support brain development but it is also facilitates children's acquisition in classroom. Children do what they are interested in which is play and it will motivate children to be interested in learning. Children can develop skills from play in order to pursue learning. For instance, when a child plays with play dough, this child develops his fine motor skills. When this same child learns how to write, he can control his fingers very well. He practices to control his fingers when he plays with the play dough. Children learn from their peers while they play with each other. Their social skills are also getting strengthened because of play with others.

E. Play can promote attention span

Letting children have free play before the start of class is not a bad idea. There is a large amount of research that has uncovered that after children play 10 to 20 minutes they can pay attention in class better than if they have not played at all. After children play they will be able to stay still. If they do not move or play at all they will want to move and play around when they are in class. The more the students have to sit still in their class, the more they need to move freely when they go outside. Play also increase archive learning in school. (Bohn-Gettler & Pellegrini, in press; Pellegrini, 2005) My experience working with

preschoolers is consistent with what many researchers have confirmed. In my experience, when children did not have a chance to go outside because of bad weather, when it was too hot or too cold for example, children would want to play in class or wander around. Sometimes they would be cranky and did not listen to the teacher. Many children would start to run in the classroom and bump into each other. It was chaotic. In order to avoid trouble that may come after we could not have recess time on the days that we had bad weather, my co-teachers and I would make sure to that we would do some movement activities with the children. We know very well that if the children in our class did not have recess time, things would get out of control.

II. Interview with a director of a play based school

Place: This school is a big church in Cambridge. It is located among Harvard's buildings and Lesley property. In front of the school is a playground and there are many big trees. When I arrived, I saw children playing with their teachers. They were laughing and giggling. I planned to meet with the director at 11:00 am but I arrived five minutes before the meeting time. I got lost and I asked at least three people to help me find the location I was seeking. They were so kind to stop and give me direction.

While I was waiting for the director, one teacher asked me if I wanted to go inside. I told her that I was waiting for the director. After I finished my sentence, the director showed up with a big smile on her face. She opened the door for my sister and me. I told her that my sister may wait for me inside the building somewhere. The director (Hilary) said that it would be okay if my sister joined us. She walked us to see different classrooms. We first walked into a big room. It was a chanting room. There was another big room for children to learn yoga, sports, and music. This second big room had a big stage. Parents volunteered there and worked with the teachers. They felt like they were the owners of this school.

At this school, each classroom is different. They are unique. Things that make these classrooms stand out are:

1. Different types of materials, most of which are recycled or come from natural materials.
2. The atmosphere is very comfortable and it looks like a good place to learn. When I walked into each classroom, I would like to explore and play with all of the materials that are in the classroom. Hilary told me that the design of each classroom came from the teachers, students and the Reggio Emilia approach. This makes it so that everyone feels like they are part of the classroom.
3. This is also an indoor and outdoor playground.

Interview Process

I prepared about ten questions for this interview. This is what I learned from the interview:

1. The director was friendly and she had a sense of humor. She said hello to everyone who walked by. She was optimistic. When she answered my questions she took care on every detail. She showed me her students' portfolios, her computer, and school file. She made me feel so comfortable. We had a good conversation and we exchange our ideas. I first followed my prepared questions. Later on there were more questions that I thought of asking during the interview. I felt like this was not an interview but it was two people who shared the same interests and each other's ideas.

2. Question and field study

. I had prepared one page of questions, but when I was at the interview site, things changed. There were many more good questions that popped-up during the interview. Things did not happen as I had planned, but flowed according to our conversation.

3. School

This is not only a school for children. It is a place for people who are interested in learning, such as teachers, parents and student teachers. Many teachers learn how to be a good teacher here. Parents learn how to deal with their children because they join in with some of the children's activities.

4. Myself

I am very fortunate to have found this school. This school has a good director, a good environment and good support from the parents. I am happy for the children that they have this good school.

Conclusions

This school fully supports children's ability to play and learn. Lessons are based on children's interest. I like how the director explained her ideas about leaning. She said the most important thing in learning is to figure out who you are and what you like and are interested in. This connects to self-esteem. When we know what we like and understand why we do things the way we do them, then we will see the value in what we do.

This school is run by parents and most of support is from the parents. Most of the parents who send their children to this school value play and that is why they chose this school for their children.

Teachers help each other grow and they also educate parents and help parents understand the value of play.

This school does not reject technology but use technology in research and learning. For instance, children can use i-pad as an encyclopedia.

The school survives because everyone feels like they are the owner of school.

Lesson Learned

- a) Going out to see a real place and talking to people who have many years of experience gave me a real sense of how research can be done.
- b) Teaching is not about drowning children with information and facts. Children can learn from play or doing activities with their friends. For instance, children four year old at this school learn half and whole concept from building a kinetic sculpture.
- c) Good environment in the classroom can motivate children to learn better.
- d) Being successful is not a one man show, but it is about helping and working with others.
- e) The important key in a play based school is learning how to lean on oneself and learn from oneself through play.
- f) Things did not happen like I had planned and I learned to manage my situation so things could go smoothly. My original plan was to ask the director of the school my questions following the list that I had prepared in a sequence. However, the director answered some of the questions before I asked her. Therefore I had to move my questions around.
- g) This play based school has a standard that they use to plan and follow their children's work. The director showed me the log book and portfolio of two students at this school. A teacher takes notes and writes a report that explains what children play and what skills they develop from that specific play.
- h) The director said that the reason she believes that play is really good for children is because she spent time rearing her own children for twelve years and she encouraged them to play. She said that her son went to a play based preschool. She believes that play promotes attention span. When children are free to play they tend to spend time with that activity longer than when people tell them to do things. When the director's son was in his first grade, his teacher assigned students to write one phrase. Her son was really in to this writing so he wrote one sentence and he started to write more and more because he enjoyed it. The director said that this was because when he was in a play based school, the school makes a lesson based upon the child's interest. This way it can keep children focused on what they have learned longer and the children have fun with the activity.
- i) The best advertisement for the school is that it is doing a good job and it's popularity is spreading by word of mouth.

- j) Setting up a cozy class room makes learners feel comfortable like they are at home.
- k) Natural materials connect children to nature.

III. My experiences working with academic base preschool and play base school

- Children at a play based preschool barely asked me what I think about their works while the children at the academic base preschool would ask me very often questions such as, “Do you like my drawing?” This implies that the children at the play base school are very confident they knew that they did a good job and they did not have to ask someone to confirm it.
- Children at an academic based school always fight because they have to spend most of their day working on their individual work. Children at the play based school by contrast, play together almost the whole time that they are at school. They have conflicts with friends but not much compared to the academic based preschool.
- Children at play based school can create whatever they feel like while the children academic base school had to follow teacher’s structures. Therefore play based schools can promote creativity better than academic base school.
- Children at an academic based school had more pressure than children at play based schools. The children at the academic based schools have to show their teacher that they have progressed in their learning, for example, they learned how to count beads and to demonstrate this, they had to do it over and over. You would think that children at a play based school may not know how to count, but they do. They learn from their parents.
- There are many times that children at academic based schools asked me to draw a picture for them. The funny thing about one school in particular is that this specific school that I worked for is well known as a school that is good for independent students. They are so worried that if they draw a picture by themselves the picture may not look real. This demonstrates that when children are taught to follow instructions too much, they became afraid to think or do things by themselves. Children at the play based school never asked me to draw them anything. I thought I was invisible when I was with them.
- Based upon my experiences and my research I think that I am quite convinced that play is very important for children. I also think that it means so much for children. Play is an enjoyable activity that people can do and want to do.

Next steps

We should not get fooled by word play and learning. Although these two words are spelled differently, both mean the same thing in preschool. Playing is another form of learning. Children learn through play and that is what they do.

From my literature review, the interview that I made late in November 2015 of this year for this project and from my experiences working with in preschools, I have a strong belief that play is important in early childhood. Play facilitates academic skills in classroom. Children who play are more likely to be active, healthy and happy.

Play is a source of joy and knowledge. It promotes cognitive skills, language skills, physical development, and social development. Play is a most meaningful activity for young children. Adults should view play from a different perspective. Adult should have an open mind to see and understand that play is not only a fun activity that kids love to do, but play is another form of learning. Learning is not only limited to the classroom with reading and counting numbers. Learning can be a fun activity.

There is still room for new research on play. Play is a big topic and it connects with many salient components such as the learning or playing environment, culture, different kinds of toys used, toys made from plastic or toys made from wood, etc.

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