

Learning Through Play in the Elementary Classroom

Presented in Partial Fulfillment For the Degree in Bachelor of Science in Education

In the School of Education at Salem State University

By

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Overview

- Literature review of articles, books, and anecdotal experiences and analyzed to find the benefits of play
- Elementary Education majors

Elementary
Education



Research Context

“Children are biologically designed to pay attention to the other children in their lives, try to fit in with them, to be able to do what they do, to know what they know”

(Gray, 2016, p. 1).

Research tells us that young children are constantly developing communication skills and social-emotional skills through play. This set us up to conduct this research.



Methods

Research Question: What is the impact of play on elementary-aged children's development of social-emotional and communication skills? Can this information be translated into the classroom?

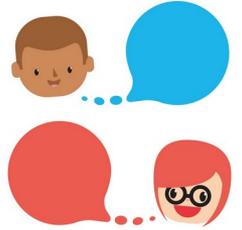
Due to COVID, we shifted from a research based project to a literature review paired with own-experience-vignettes



Findings



Benefits of Play: Communication



- Language-rich classroom: “Structuring a safe environment that lets children know that they, and their ideas and ways of communicating them, are valued and respected” (Seefeldt, p.1)
- Peer interaction: “Exposure to instances of interpersonal differences of opinion and thought with one’s peers” may occur during this playtime and that may lead to “opportunities for discussion and negotiation about these differences” (Coplan, Rubin, Findlay, 2006, p. 76).
- Communication development: how a student learns to talk with other children in a socially acceptable manner and the process through which this develops over time

Benefits of Play: Social-Emotional

- “Play reduces stress, improves self-expression, supports emotional development, strengthens physical development and much more” (Auerbach, 2006, p. 1)
- During these times, “children invent or adapt rules to enable play to go more smoothly, to be fairer, and also to be more fun” (Bergen, 2009, p. 419).
- “Learning is not compartmentalized into separate domains and as all learning is inextricably intertwined” (Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2011, p. 6)



Play-Based Learning Environment Benefits



Connection to the standards:

- “It is the way in which educators craft the learning environment and learning experience that will have the greatest impact on the way a child learns” (Hunter, 2019, p.19).



- An effective history and social science education develops social and emotional skills. Social and emotional learning has demonstrated an increase in academic achievement and communication skills, improve attitudes and behaviors, and develop empathy. (History and Social Science standards 2018)

Rejection in play

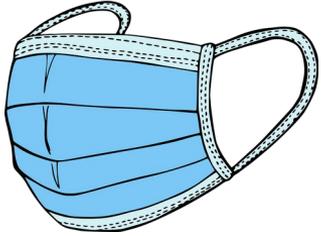
- “The rejected children know who they are, whether or not they tell us” (Paley, 1992, p. 15).
- “To connect the characters and situations in the book with the children’s experiences, Ms. Coz plans to read the book...[and ask] meaningful questions [such as] “How would you solve the problem?”, and “What could we do differently if this happens in our classroom? (Ho & Funk, 2018, p. 1)



Suggested Use in the Classroom

- Modeling behavior
- Academic games
- Reflecting and listening to students feelings
- Being intentional with the play opportunities





Pandemic & Age-related Gaps

- Less time/opportunities for play with virtual learning & social distancing
- Less research on children in the older elementary grades, but the benefits can be extended to these grades

Conclusions

- All forms of play can be beneficial to students and should be used in the classroom
- Supported by standards
- Supports the students social emotional development and communication development

