

The Power of Pretend Play on Young Children's Oral Language Development

OMEP Asia Pacific Regional Conference 2017

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OVERVIEW

- Valuing Play
- The Research Project
 - 'Thinking differently about practice:
Developmental play'*
- Considerations
- Project Findings
 - Oral language
 - Play
- Summary

VALUING PLAY IN LEARNING

- Makes an important contribution to oral language, literacy, and social development
- Associated with enhancement in narrative
- Assists with the ability to initiate play, join peers in progressing play activities and resolve peer conflict
- Children with more complex pretend play are most likely to be more linguistically and socially competent

WHAT IS PRETEND PLAY?

- Pretend play is a cognitive ability that marks the child's capacity to represent the world as **symbolic**
- Differs from other forms of play
 - Uses symbolism in play
 - Attributes a property to an object
 - Refers to absent objects during play
 - Logically and sequentially orders play actions to form a story
 - Involves object substitution
- Encompasses the use of a story and story characters



PLAY & LITERACY LEARNING

- ‘Provides many informal opportunities for supporting children’s literacy learning and narrative abilities.
- Provides children with a flexible forum through which they can engage with literacy at their own level and in ways that are meaningful to them.
- Allows children to explore, manipulate and practise many different concepts, processes, forms and functions of literacy.’

(Roskos & Christie 2000)



THE PROJECT:

'Thinking Differently About Practice: Developmental Play'

RATIONALE

- Children starting Foundation year with low oral language, poor social skills & limited general knowledge

Participants 3 Foundation teachers & their 75 students

METHODS

- Meetings throughout year
- Classroom observations
- Video vignettes of practice
- Photographs of practice
- Language assessments for all 75 Foundation students
- Play assessments for 30 (of the 75) Foundation students

Inquiry process where teachers are supported to research their own practice in relation to implementing a play-based approach

CONSIDERATIONS

- Timetabling
- Resources
- Providing play stations
- Taking a more individualistic approach
- Following children's interests
- Mapping play to curriculum areas
- Thinking more about the complexity and continuum of play
- Teacher role:
 - onlooker
 - stage-manager
 - co-player
 - play leader

ASSESSMENTS

LANGUAGE

- ERRNI: Expression Reception & Recall of Narrative Instrument
- CELF-PRESCHOOL 2: Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals

PLAY

- CHIPPA: Child Initiated Pretend Play Assessment

ERRNI - Expression Reception & Recall of Narrative Instrument

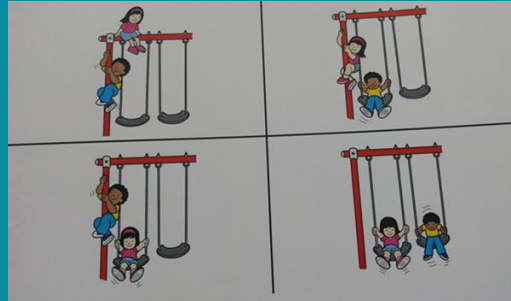
- Storytelling ideas & content
- Mean length of utterance



CELF - PRESCHOOL 2 - Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals

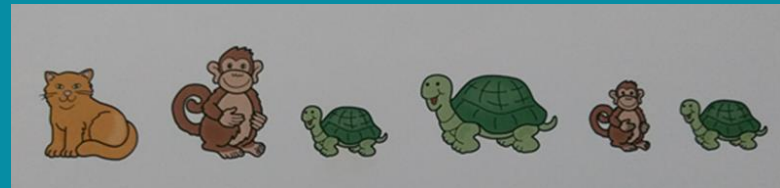
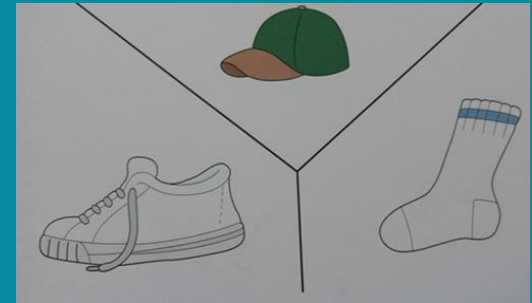
Receptive language

- *Sentence structure*
- *Concepts & following directions*
- *Word classes (receptive)*



Expressive language

- *Expressive vocabulary*
- *Recalling sentences*
- *Word structure*
- *Word classes (expressive)*



ORAL LANGUAGE FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS:

72% of children improved in their receptive language

78% of children improved in their expressive language

79% of children improved in ideas and content of their stories

63% of children produced shorter sentences in their narratives



CELF-P2 INDEXES

CELF-P2 Indexes	No. of Students w Lower Scores	No. of Students w Equal Scores	No. of Students Improved up to 1SD	No. of Students Improved 1SD – 2SD	No. of Students Improved over 2SD	<u>TOTAL NO. Students Improved</u>
Receptive Language Index	22%	6%	48%	21%	3%	72%
Expressive Language Index	7%	15%	60%	18%	-	78%

PLAY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS:

Complexity of children's play significantly increased over the year with both toys and unstructured objects

The ability for children to use objects as something else (symbols in play/ object substitution) significantly increased – again significance was very high



IN SUMMARY

- Importance of providing a rich, authentic learning environment
 - Encourages children to problem solve
 - Provides opportunities to expand vocabulary, expand discussion and conversation
 - Supports narrative structure – orientation, complications and resolutions
- Thinking differently about what teaching and learning looks like in a play-based program
 - The teacher role
 - Assessing learning

Thank
You

