**Jordan, Teachers Skills Forum 2015** (Queen Rania Teacher Academy)

Hand out for break out session

**Learning for life through play and inquiry**  
**Date: Sunday, December 6th 2015**

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| **3 lenses when planning for play** |

1. **Types of play organized around developmental stages**

### Physical play

This type of play is the earliest to evolve. It includes

* active exercise play (eg: jumping, climbing, dancing, skipping, bike riding and ball play),
* rough-and-tumble (with friends, siblings or parents/guardians)
* and fine-motor practice (eg: sewing, colouring, cutting, junk modelling and manipulating action toys and construction toys).

While most physical play is concerned with developing physical skill, strength and endurance (Pellegrini & Smith, 1998) rough and tumble has been shown to be mostly concerned with emotional sensitivity and regulation (see Jarvis, 2010, for a review).

### Play with Objects

This type of play concerns children’s developing explorations, as young scientists, of the world and the objects they find within it. It also has interesting and important links to physical, socio-dramatic and symbolic play. Play with objects begins as soon as infants can grasp and hold on to them; early investigative behaviours might be described as ‘sensori-motor’ play when the child is exploring how objects and materials feel and behave. From around 18-24 months toddlers begin to arrange objects, which gradually develops into sorting and classifying activities. By the age of 4 years, building, making and constructing behaviours emerge. Play with objects seems to be distinctively related to the development of thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills. It is in this kind of play particularly that young children appear to develop cognitive self-regulation abilities, as suggested by Vygotsky.

### Symbolic Play

This type of play has been studied as engaged in only by humans. The first of these is symbolic play, which involves playing with the variety of ‘symbolic’ systems that we use to convey meaning, including spoken language, various visual media, music, reading and writing, number and so on. It is no coincidence that, during the first 5-6 years of life, when children are beginning to master these systems, that these aspects of their learning are an important element within their play. This type of play supports their developing technical abilities to express their ideas , feelings and experiences through language (Christie & Roskos, 2006), painting, drawing & collage (Vygotsky, 1986; Thomas & Silk, 1990), numbers, music (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) and so on.

### Pretence/socio-dramatic play

This type of play includes all forms of pretence, playing with dolls, puppets and action figures, playing with mini-worlds, playing with computer-based adventure games and virtual worlds, playing with an imaginary friend and, arguably, playing with pets (when human emotions and motivations are consistently attributed to even the simplest of creatures). It typically emerges in children during their second year as solitary pretence play, where they use objects to pretend they are something else, then evolves into dressing-up and pretending the child is someone or something else (eg: a mummy, Superman, a dog). By 4/5 years of age, this play has become co-operative and social and involves role-play and developing stories, or narratives. (see Berk, Mann & Ogan (2006)

### Games with Rules

From a very young age children begin to enjoy games with rules, and to invent their own. These include physical games such as chasing games, hide-and-seek, throwing and catching etc. and, as children mature, more intellectual games such as board and card games, electronic and computer games, and the whole variety of sporting activities. In children from a very early age, a considerable proportion of time and energy playing any such games is devoted to establishing, agreeing, modifying and reminding one another about the rules.

As well as helping children to develop their understandings about rules, the main developmental contribution of playing games derives from their essentially social nature. While playing games with their friends, siblings and parents, young children are learning a range of social skills related to sharing, taking turns, understanding others perspectives and so on.

1. **Types of play organized according to relationships**

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|  | **Child-directed** | **Adult-directed** |
| **Child-initiated** | Free play | Co-opted play |
| **Adult-initiated** | Guided play | Direct instruction |

Table source: Weisberg et al. (2015)

1. **Types of play organized according to environments**



Graphic source: Miller, E. & Almon, J. (2009)

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| **3 crucial processes to record the learning that happens during play** |

A range of experimental psychology studies have consistently demonstrated the quality of learning and motivation arising from playful approaches to learning in children (Whitebread & Jameson, 2010) and has identified three crucial processes which underpin this relationship.

1. **Language development (representational skills development)**

A playful approach to language learning offers powerful support for the early development of literacy skills through:

* + language rich play environments
  + narration in play situations
  + cognitive-linguistic skills development (phonological awareness, symbolic representation, etc.)
  + sequencing of steps to problem-solve (plan for play, etc.)

Adapted from:

Christie & Roskos (2006)

Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff (2003)

Konishi et al. (2014)

Additional points on language:

* (Vallotton & Ayoub, 2011) American study of 120 toddlers in New England

At 14, 24 & 36 months, found strong relationship between:

* + Vocabulary size
  + Observed self-regulatory behaviour (ability to maintain attention on tasks; ability to adapt to changes in tasks and procedures)
* Christie & Roskos (2006): Play with language enhances development of phonological awareness and literacy

1. **Intellectual/emotional self-regulation**

Self regulation is the capacity to control one’s impulses to:

* + stop doing something, if needed (even if one wants to continue doing it)
  + start doing something, if needed (even if one doesn’t want to do it).

It can also apply to cognitive behaviors, such as remembering or paying attention.

These skills have been clearly demonstrated to be the key predictors of educational achievement and a range of other positive life outcomes.

Adapted from

Bodrova and Leong (2006)

Whitebread, (2010)

Additional points on self-regulation

* Developing awareness of one’s own mental processes and strategies to use them more effectively for one’s own purposes
* “The process whereby students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviours, and affects which are systematically oriented toward attainment of their goals” (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, p. 309).
* NOT necessarily the same as being well-behaved, or compliance with teacher’s goals

1. **Social interactions between children, adults and peers**

Additional points on social skills:

Tomasello & Todd (1983); Wells (2009): size of vocabulary related to amount of time spent with mothers in joint attention episodes

Several pedagogical techniques developed:

* ‘co-operative groupwork’ (Forman and Cazden, 1985)
* ‘self-explanations’ (Siegler, 2002)
* ‘reciprocal teaching’ (Palincsar & Brown, 1984)

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