Play-based teaching approaches

PLAY-BASED TEACHING APPROACHES

Assessing learning through play

Professor Andrea Nolan; Dr Naomi David; Dr Natalie Robertson; Kat Cain; Professor Louise Paatch; Associate Professor Liz Rouse; Dr Virginia Kinnear; Associate Professor Anne-Marie Morrissey; and Dr Deb Moore

Deakin University

Play-based teaching approaches Copyright © 2025 by Deakin University is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

This book was published by Deakin University. The online version is available at https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/.

Disclaimer

Note that visual imagery, corporate logos and branding are specifically excluded from the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Licence of this work, and may not be reproduced under any circumstances without the express written permission of the copyright holders.

This book was produced with Pressbooks (https://pressbooks.com) and rendered with Prince.

CONTENTS

Cover vii
Contributors viii
A word on creation ix
Introduction and welcome 1
How to engage with this interactive textbook 1
About this resource 3

I. Chapter 1. What is play-based teaching and learning
1. Introduction to play-based approaches 7
2. What is play-based learning 9
3. Play and learning 13
4. Play and learning theoretical perspectives 15
5. Play and learning contemporary research 18
6. The teacher's role in play-based learning approaches 21
7. Play-based approaches and differentiation 24
8. Reflecting on the opportunities of play-based learning 26
9. References and resources recap 28

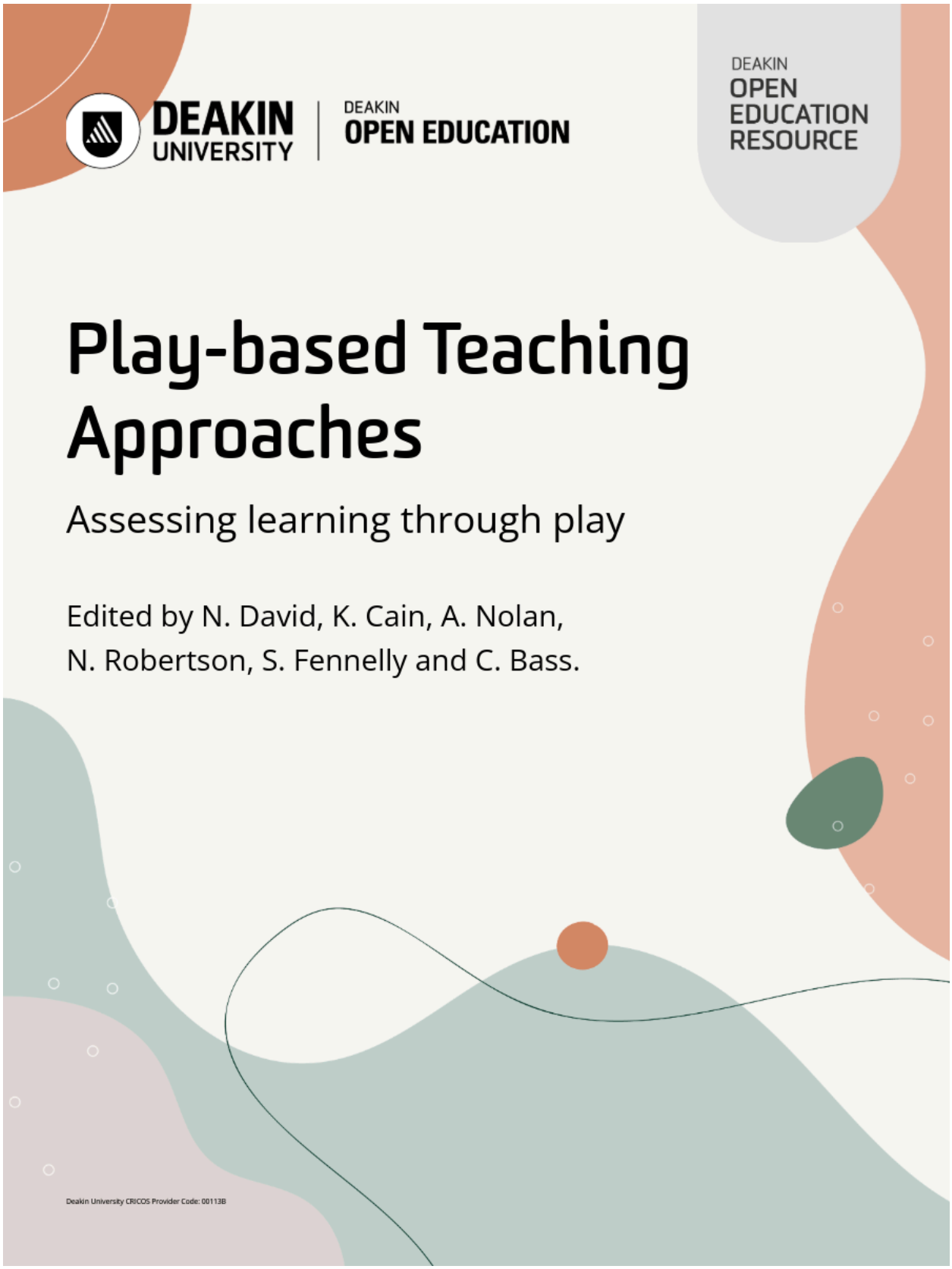
II. Chapter 2. Implementing play-based approaches in classrooms
10. Student learning outcomes and teacher practice 33
11. The teacher's role in play and learning 35
12. Stories from the classroom 39
13. Social and emotional capabilities 41
14. Language and literacy 44
15. Numeracy 47
16. Science and STEM 50
17. Types of play experiences 53
18. Indoor play-based learning - resourcing 58
19. Indoor play-based learning - organising 63
20. A note about outdoor play-based learning 65
21. References and resources recap 70

III. Chapter 3. Assessing student learning through play-based approaches
22. Introduction to assessment in a play-based approach 75
23. Assessing learning possibilities 78
24. Practice-based perspectives 81
25. Challenges for assessing learning in a play-based approach 83
26. Shifting pedagogical practice barriers 86
27. Implementation of assessment through a play-based approach 88
28. Supporting student learning through observation 93
29. Intentional teaching approach 95
30. References and resources recap 97

IV. Chapter 4. Different ways of looking at assessment through play-based approaches
31. Introduction to assessing learning outcomes 101
32. Planning with clarity when assessing play 103
33. Assessing learning outcomes: oral language, imaginary and dramatic play 106
34. Observing play: identifying the learning in oral language, imaginary and dramatic play 109
35. Assessing learning outcomes: mathematical conversations 113
36. Assessing learning outcomes: exploring maths through questions 116
37. Assessing learning outcomes: personal and social capabilities 121
38. Assessing play abilities and skills 123
39. Why assess play abilities and skills 125
40. References and resources recap 127

V. Accessible Content Appendix
41. Introduction – Accessible Content Appendix 131
42. Chapter 1 - Accessible Content Appendix 133
43. Chapter 2 - Accessible Content Appendix 141
44. Chapter 3 - Accessible Content Appendix 149
45. Chapter 4 - Accessible Content Appendix 156
46. Conclusion - Accessible Content Appendix 164

Conclusion 167
Continued growth and future learning 169
Our thanks to you 170


DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
DEAKIN OPEN EDUCATION
DEAKIN OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCE
Play-based Teaching Approaches
Assessing learning through play
Edited by N. David, K. Cain, A. Nolan, N. Robertson, S. Fennelly and C. Bass.
Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B

CONTRIBUTORS

Editorial team

The editorial contributors include Dr Naomi David, Kat Cain, Professor Andrea Nolan, Associate Professor Natalie Robertson, Sarah Fennelly, and Christian Bass.

Authors

The author contributors include Professor Andrea Nolan, Professor Louise Paatsch, Associate Professor Liz Rouse, Associate Professor Natalie Robertson, Dr Virginia Kinnear, Associate Professor Anne-Marie Morrissey, and Dr Deb Moore.

Production team

The production contributors include Dr Naomi David, Kat Cain, Sarah Fennelly, Emeka Anele, Christian Bass, Jeshmine Bajracharya, Lisa Hanlon, and Stephen Newnham. This interactive book has been designed to harness digital learning affordances; a goal supported by learning design, digital design, transcription, accessibility audits, videography, graphic design, desktop publishing, sound engineering, and platform developer skill sets.

A WORD ON CREATION

1

This interactive book was created by Deakin University, which is located on the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung people in the Geelong region, the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people in the greater Melbourne region, and the Gunditjmara people in the Warrnambool region.

The authors and the contributors of this interactive book acknowledge all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of Australia. As a community of educators, we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Education has a long and rich heritage on the Australian continent, which we hope to honour and reflect in the ways we have shaped the words, concepts, imagery, and activities in this interactive textbook.

In sharing our knowledges in this text, we also recognise the profound impact global Indigenous voices have had in education, learning, and human ontologies.

---

1. Attribution: Photo by Daniel Seßler on Unsplash and Photo by Luisa Denu on Unsplash

Catalysts for textbook creation

This book has been shaped by the generative power of people in three interconnected areas.

Firstly, the research and practice of academics in the School of Education and NIKERI at Deakin University. Specifically, an identified lacuna in assessment practices drawing from play-based learning.

Another inspiration for this text was an Australian professional learning program designed to develop and strengthen teachers' understanding of the role of play in children's learning. A team of diverse Deakin staff conceptualised and created this program for a Victorian Department of Education (Australia) initiative.

The final stimulus for the creation of this work was growing global concerns for teachers supporting children transitioning to school. This is particularly relevant when children have missed crucial preschool experiences that privilege social learning, learning through play and introductions to formal education due to the pandemic.

However, it's important to note that the many benefits of play-based learning and the ways in which play-based approaches strengthen young children's learning capabilities, dispositions, and learning processes remain of value in the school environment beyond the contexts of the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Image: © Getty Images

Play, assessment, and reflection

This interactive textbook provides opportunities for teachers to deepen their understandings of the nature of play and the assessment potentials of play. As you move through the chapters, consider the discussions and activities through the different lenses of research and practice. The text prompts you to read through theory-based content and teacher practice, with supported moments of self-reflection. The reflective questions are designed to provide evaluative moments that support your exploration of theory and practice.

Reflective prompts throughout this text

Throughout this text, we ask you to critically reflect on your own educational philosophies about play and children's learning. We then encourage you to take those reflections and engage in evaluative activities that link theory and practices in the classroom.

The knowledge-makers of this text intended to put a spotlight on play-based teaching and

assessment. As you engage with the text, we hope that the research and practice shared demonstrate the benefits of play, learning, and assessment. The voices in this text are both academic and practitioner-based. Their insights are designed to support your observation of children's play, identification of the learning, and making possible links to curricular outcomes.

Contextual COVID-19 narrative

Play-based and inquiry learning became particularly relevant during the pandemic as it impacted children's access to learning environments and play-based experiences in early-childhood settings. This text originated as a support resource for teachers transitioning children to school post-pandemic. However, the crucial role of play-based learning in relation to fostering educational outcomes for children continues to have currency in contemporary classrooms.

Recognising your current expertise and practices

Many of you will already be implementing a play-based and inquiry approach. This interactive textbook provides further knowledge to support your understanding and practices. We intend to build on your existing expertise.

For some, this will be confirmation of your practice. For others, this material is designed to provide a different way of viewing teaching and learning by presenting play-based practices in diverse contexts.

Whatever your current knowledges and practice—we hope by exploring the breadth of play-based and inquiry learning across all the chapters, you see the benefits of embedding play-based and inquiry learning in the early years of schooling.

HOW TO ENGAGE WITH THIS INTERACTIVE TEXTBOOK

The context of our learners

The interactive nature of this book celebrates diverse learning preferences. We recognise some learners engaging with this textbook are pre-service teachers, others are currently working in the field and have rich existing practices. We recognise some learners are exploring play-based approaches, in terms of possible strategies and assessment approaches that can be embedded in the classroom. We also recognise that adult educators will use parts of this textbook in tertiary settings. We welcome you all.

The nature of the learning

When constructing teacher knowledges like any other process one undertakes, there are several key moments designed in the text. Moments of encounter when faced with new knowledge, reflection, and practical actions. This text includes activities that support readers to consider definitions and terms, reflect on practice, and develop strategies for the educational setting. To engage with these activities, this interactive textbook uses a range of learning elements.

We ask you to consider closely the opportunities to read and, of course, the opportunities to watch. These are particularly interesting because they often showcase excellence in current practice, with educators in the field sharing their stories. There are also opportunities to listen and find out what experts in the field are saying about play-based approaches in classrooms. We encourage you to listen to those as well.

The writing is interspersed with opportunities for you to solidify your understanding by writing definitions, making lists of examples or downloading resources. There are listening, viewing, speaking, and reflecting interactives. Please be ready to capture your learnings by either writing them down with pen and paper or keeping a digital record.

Most of us need reflective moments where we can evaluate what we're learning; those are built into this textbook as well. You'll be asked at different points of the book to:

- speak a reflection into a microphone,
- or make notes,
- or make a link between something you've watched, read or heard and an example that you've seen in your own practice,
- or a strategy that you think you might implement.

We would like you to be open to hands-on participation with this book. Read it purposefully, but also contextualise it to your own practice.

Keep in mind

Play the below introductory podcast (1:43). It shares with you the best ways to engage with the structure of the interactive textbook and the ways in which it can support your learning.

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=29#oembed-1

Chapter outlines to guide your reading

The goal of the book is to provide teachers with theory and contemporary practice, as well as a range of pedagogical skills that further support your observations of children's play activities. Strong observation skills directly influence assessment and curricular outcomes.

This textbook is therefore focused on placing a spotlight on play-based learning possibilities and assessment potentials. To do this, the book has been broken up into four major sections covering important aspects and practices when connecting play-based learning to curricula and assessment:

- Chapter 1. What is play-based teaching and learning.
- Chapter 2. Implementing play-based approaches in classrooms.
- Chapter 3. Assessing student learning through play-based approaches.
- Chapter 4. Different ways of looking at assessment in play-based approaches.

In each chapter, learning objectives outline the key focus areas and practices that are discussed. In many cases, interactive exercises and examples are available.

This textbook is interactive, meaning that although each chapter has text content, it also has interactive digital content. For example, quizzes, podcasts, simulations, interactive videos, and images with clickable hotspots. Learners also receive instant feedback as they engage with the interactive content. This means you can learn, reflect on the experience, and check your understanding all in one place.

We have designed for equitable access to information when digital connectivity is not a consistent option for the learner. This means that the downloadable version of this book will have text-accessible versions of the interactions embedded in the page. Similarly, video or podcast content will be available on an appendix page at the end of each chapter.

We look forward to sharing this journey with you.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Published by

Deakin University Library

Disclaimer

Deakin University staff have compiled this textbook in good faith, exercising all due care and attention.

No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability of the information in this publication for any particular purpose. The publisher assumes no responsibility for any damage or injury to persons or property arising out of the use of any materials, instructions, methods or ideas contained in the book. Readers should seek appropriate advice when applying the information to their specific needs.

Attributions

This textbook includes material adapted or reused from third party works under Creative Commons licences. In the case of multiple downstream adaptations, links to original works are included within the attribution statement where possible.

Suggested citation

Nolan, A., Robertson, N., David, N., Cain, K., Paatsch, L., Rouse, L., Kinnear, V., Morrissey, A-M., & Moore, D. (2023). *Play-based teaching approaches: Assessing learning through play*. Deakin University Library. <https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/>

Suggested attribution

Adapted from Play-based teaching approaches by Professor Andrea Nolan et al., Deakin University Library, is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

Copyright

This book is provided under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International licence except where otherwise noted.

Using this OER

The text of this OER is licensed under a CC BY NC 4.0 license and may be re-used freely with the suggested attribution.

Please note that due to this resource drawing on previously authored research, some aspects of this Open Education Resource are open to access without the need for a subscription or licence, but are not available for re-use beyond printing or downloading a copy of the OER. This includes the use of Getty Images within the resource and the videos. If you wish to re-use these works, they are subject to copyright and require permission or a licence for your use.

External links

This textbook includes links to third-party websites that contain copyright protected material, your access to the sites will be covered by terms between you and the other operator/owner of the site. We are not responsible for any of the content, including links found on the site. Read and abide by the external websites' terms of use.

Credits

This open educational resource was created by staff across Deakin University.

Cover design

Sarah Fennelly

Images and videos

This textbook includes images created by Sarah Fennelly and images adapted or reused from third-party works, either under Creative Commons licences or from a restricted-purchased licence.

This textbook includes video materials created by Christian Bass, which also includes images or video adapted from third-party works, either under Creative Commons licences or from a restricted-purchase licence.

Due to these licensing conditions, the imagery and video materials included in this textbook are not covered under the Creative Commons licence applied to the text.

PART I

CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS PLAY-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING

1

INTRODUCTION TO PLAY-BASED APPROACHES

Key ideas

- Play-based learning impacts student's learning outcomes
- Teachers facilitate and guide student's learning outcomes in play-based approaches
- Teachers take on multiple roles in play-based approaches

This chapter aims to deepen your understanding about the nature of play-based approaches from an educational perspective. It lays the framework for how play-based teaching supports students' learning, wellbeing, and social skills. By the end of the chapter, teachers will see the potential of play-based approaches in relation to authentic assessment in the classroom.

Keep in mind

Play the below engaging with this chapter vodcast (1:29). As you listen to this chapter's introductory information, don't forget that all teaching is contextualised and is made meaningful through the unique application of strategies to different educational settings.

Encountering theory and practice provides opportunities for you to evaluate and add to your pedagogical skills. As you move through this chapter, consider links between play-based learning concepts, theory, and your own practices. When engaging in reflective practice as you move through the chapter, we encourage you to capture in some form your thoughts and considerations.

Engaging with chapter one vodcast (1:29)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=32#oembed-1

2

WHAT IS PLAY-BASED LEARNING

In simple terms, play-based learning is to learn while at play (Brook et al., 2014; Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Children are naturally motivated to play. During play, children inquire using their imagination to explore, experiment, discover, collaborate, improvise and create. Play-based learning is widely adopted as the foundation of early childhood education (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Fleer, 2017). Research has also shown that play has a prominent place in the education of primary aged students (Nolan & Paatsch, 2017; Stagnitti et al., 2020).

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, or listen

A play-based approach involves both child-initiated and teacher-supported learning. Integrated teaching approaches are adopted in play-based learning to engage students in experiences that provide opportunities (Wood, 2014). Explore some opportunities of play-based learning by **clicking on the plus (+) icons** in the interactive image below.

Opportunities of play-based learning experiences interactive poster

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=35#h5p-1

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Opportunities of play-based learning experiences – interactive image hotspots.

This interactive explains the different ways in which play-based environments create opportunities to support children in their understanding and consolidation of important learning. As you click on the hotspots, **reflect** on the environmental aspects, teaching interactions, and learning areas all strengthened by play-based learning.

The interactivity

The scene has clickable hotspots across the scene that describe and explain different ways integrated teaching approaches are adopted in play-based learning. The examples on each hotspot outline how to engage students in play experiences that provide learning opportunities.

Hotspot one: Exploring mathematics and science

Open-ended questions, challenges, and prompts can be directly related to mathematics to encourage students to count, compare amounts, determine how many, and identify and write numerals (Trawick-Smith et al., 2016).

Hotspot two: Communicating with others

Opportunities for communication in play are verbal, written, representative, visual, and physical. The multimodal affordances of play support children to express themselves in different ways through different resources, for instance, the labelled treasure map that is drawn in the classroom can become the basis of the game played in the playground.

Hotspot three: Asking questions

There are a diverse range of opportunities to ask questions in the play-based environment. Which often leads to questions asked by children, as the active learning space supports exploration and discovery. Questions are also asked by teachers to enrich the play.

For example, Teacher asks, "What do you think is going to happen next? How do you think we could build the roof for the cubby?".

Hotspot four: Co-constructing knowledges

Interactions that take place during play provide a rich opportunity for children to learn from their peers. The questions that are asked, the collaborative thinking, and problem-solving, all support the co-construction of knowledges. It's the talking, listening, and re-visiting of existing ideas that support increasing mastery.

For example, children building a cubby may plan the construction and, during the play, realise the plan requires adaption due to restrictions such as inadequate resources.

- Child 1: "We don't have enough blocks to make a door, we'll have to use a chair."
- Child 2: "Let's use a sheet instead because then we can walk through it."

Hotspot five: Making interpretations and forming arguments based on discoveries

Play-based and inquiry learning is advocated to best foster science and technology education. As children play, the opportunities to engage in science and technology support them to develop an interest in the world around them (Campbell, Jobling & Howitt, 2021; Sliogeris & Almeida, 2017).

Outdoor play, in particular, engages students with the knowledge of the world around them, allowing them to observe and explore changes, patterns, and properties of objects.

Hotspot six: Developing resilience and self-regulation

Play-based approaches support students to develop metacognitive and self-regulatory skills. These skills are important for higher-order thinking, creativity, planning, evaluating learning, and problem-solving (Whitebread et al., 2009).

The practical nature of play provides a meaningful environment that encourages resilience through repetition, compromise, and negotiation with peers and the activity.

Hotspot seven: Building narrative and literacies

Play-based approaches provide a literacy rich environment that prompts students to explore and engage with literacy knowledge (Roskos & Christie, 2001; Stagnitti & Lewis, 2014). For example, students can be guided to write shopping lists, write signs, document their stories, record their

planning, and report their findings. These artefacts can all be used as assessable documents of student learning.

Play-based approaches encourage students to investigate a concept further through multimodal resources.

Hotspot eight: Designing investigations

Play provides a springboard for active curiosity, but it also provides opportunities for teachers and students to design investigations. Opportunities emerge to identify questions, make observations, and critically reflect as the play progresses. These processes develop arguments, hypotheses, and stimuli to undertake further analysis.

Hotspot nine: Forming peer relationships

The development of relationship skills are supported by play. Play-based environments provide opportunities to collaborate, co-design, and experience a range of interactions. For example, children engaged in pretend play gain experiences through reactions, responses, and emotions. When children engage in play, they express their knowledges and insights. The children also learn to listen to the knowledges and insight of others.

3

PLAY AND LEARNING

How does play impact student's learning? Students learn in many ways. One of these ways is through play. Play has the potential to support teaching and learning in a classroom context. It can be a motivating force in a student's intellectual development (Laevers, 2000). Play also engages students in coming to terms with life and discovering themselves and their world (Brooker & Edwards, 2010; Nolan et al., 2006). Play-based programs provide a strong grounding for young children to develop as socially competent life-long learners, able to face challenges and create solutions (Robertson et al., 2018).

Read, look, or listen

Play the podcast (11:00) below. Consider the importance of play-based learning discussed by two education experts. Dr Louise Paatsch (Professor in Play-based Approaches, Teaching and Learning) and Dr Natalie Robertson (Associate Professor in Play-based Approaches, Teaching and Learning) talk together about the importance of play and learning.

Play within the classroom video podcast (11:40)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=37#oembed-1

Engage and extend

Reflect on your childhood or experiences you have observed of children playing. **Write down** that memory of how play enriched the learning. To help you internalise your definition, we encourage you to voice your words and **record yourself** using the interactive audio below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=37#h5p-2

4

PLAY AND LEARNING THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Early research recognising the relationship between play and learning

There is a long history of theories evidencing the strong interconnection between play and learning, particularly in the acquisition of social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Connections between play and learning date back to the early theories of Parten's social behaviour theory, Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, and psychoanalytic theories.

Mildred Parten image: The copyright status and ownership of this work is unknown. Further use of this work may be subject to copyright

Jean Piaget image from Wikimedia Commons (Public domain)

Parten's stages of play

In the 1930s, Mildred Parten identified six stages of play (Parten 1932; Parten 1933; Parten & Newhall 1943). These have been used over many years to support thinking about children's engagement in play. Initially seen as outlining a linear progression, they are now considered as non-hierarchical, with children moving between stages depending on many factors.

Read, look, or listen

Explore the interactive image below that describes Parten's stages of play. **Click on the plus (+) below** to read the definitions.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=40#h5p-3

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Opportunities of play-based learning experiences – interactive image hotspots.

This interactive shows a series of six illustrated graphics in a row

The interactivity

The scene has clickable hotspots on images that visualise Parten's six stages of play. The six images are labelled:

1. Unoccupied play
2. Solitary play
3. Onlooker play
4. Parallel play
5. Associative play
6. Cooperative play

Each hotspot outlines a description of each stage of play and relevant references where appropriate.

Hotspot one: Unoccupied play

Unoccupied play is when the child is not visibly engaged in play. Often seen in babies, this stage has no social interaction. Observations and movements occurring at this very early stage are building the child's initial perceptions, understandings, and movement control that are required for later play stages.

Hotspot two: Solitary play

Solitary play is when the child plays alone, focusing on the materials they are using. At this stage, children are so involved in their own play that they are not aware of or interacting with their peers, even when the play occurs in shared spaces.

Hotspot three: Onlooker play

Onlooker play is when the child plays alone but watches the play of others nearby. The child does not join the play of others but is aware of what is occurring.

Hotspot four: Parallel play

Parallel play is when the child plays alongside or next to other players engaged in similar activities and experiences. However, there are very few interactions between the children and minimal social exchange takes place.

Hotspot five: Associative play

Associative play is when the child's focus shifts from the activity or materials they are using to become more interested in other children and their play. There are attempts to engage in the play of others but this is not consistent nor ongoing.

Hotspot six: Cooperative play

Cooperative play is when the child plays with others, cooperating and collaborating. Group goals are developed, different roles are adopted, and collaborative rules are followed. However, a great deal of problem-solving also takes place at this stage as children experience the challenges of cooperative play.

Piaget's theory of cognitive development

Jean Piaget developed his learning theories over the 1920s and 1930s but continued his research throughout the mid-twentieth century (Boden, 1980). Piaget saw learning as a process that evolves through the interaction of the child with their environment (MacBlain, 2014). The child is seen as moving through certain stages of cognitive development as they assimilate and accommodate new knowledge.

Piaget believed that knowledge is built through conflicts with existing understandings, culminating in new and more sophisticated understandings. The idea that the child passes through developmental stages has implications for how children play (Garhart, 2013). The highest stage in Piaget's theory, which is reached during the school years, is seen as supporting children to engage in games with rules.

5

PLAY AND LEARNING CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

Research identifying the holistic benefits of play

Play has also been considered as having a therapeutic quality. According to psychoanalytical theorists Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Erik Erikson, and Leli Peller, play holds an important place in relation to children's emotional development (McMahon & McMahon, 2003). Play provides the opportunity to fulfil desires and overcome traumatic events (Smith, 2010). The foundations of psychoanalytical theory are used by play therapists to assist children's resolutions of problems and trauma (Russ, 2004). The findings and strategies of play-therapy provide a body of research that informs many teachers' understanding of play as a tool for the development of student's self-esteem, social processes, and social behaviours (Heidemann & Hewitt, 2010).

The importance of imaginary, pretend or dramatic play

In response to previous theories of play, Vygotsky proposed a more 'progressive' theory that encompassed imagination as a powerful tool to stimulate learning (Vygotsky, 2004). 'Pure play', as Vygotsky conceptualised, involves the activity of creating an imaginary situation, changing the properties of an object to become something else, and enacting the role of someone else (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1998). This draws attention to the importance of what is now called imaginary, pretend, or dramatic play.

Image: © Getty Images

Children as active learners and the significance of play

Research has identified play to be a vehicle for the learning and development of a wide range of capabilities and skills, such as self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978; Ivanova, 2000; Hoffman, 2020); language (Smilansky & Shefatya, 1990; Stagnitti & Jelli, 2006; Stagnitti, 2004; Stagnitti, 2014; Stagnetti,1998) and executive function associated with metacognitive learning processes (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Karpov, 2005; 2014).

Play serves important functions for young learners to be:

- active explorers of their environments through child-initiated discovery (Nolan, Kilderry & O'Grady 2006),
- creators of new experiences, and
- participants in constructing their own knowledge (Stevens, Raban, & Nolan, 2014).

The research highlights that the cognitive processes used by students in play, stimulate and integrate a wide range of intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and creative capabilities to foster high-level learning (Hall & Robinson, 2000; Whitebread et al., 2009). For example, it's well documented in the literature that play makes a significant contribution to a child's oral language (Stagnitti, Paatsch, Nolan and Campbell, 2020), as well as literacy and social development (Suhonen et al., 2015).

Image: © Getty Images

Keep in mind

Play is regarded as a mechanism through which young children become powerful learners, competent problem-solvers, and develop higher-order cognitive functioning (Whitebread et al., 2009). Play, in particular imaginative play, has been directly linked with children's abilities to think abstractly and realistically to take the perspectives of others, and to strengthen their narrative development (Ferholt et al., 2015).

6

THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN PLAY-BASED LEARNING APPROACHES

All theories demonstrate that play holds value in a student's learning. However, more recent research highlights the importance of teachers' interaction with students (Robertson, Yim & Paatsch, 2020). Teacher's interactions have the potential to maximise the learning potentials of play experiences. Play-based learning is much more than setting up a classroom with play resources and then standing back to let students play. Teachers must engage with students to scaffold and support their learning during play.

Image: © Getty Images

How does the teacher facilitate student's learning through play?

A play-based approach involves both student-initiated and teacher-supported learning. Student initiated learning is where the student selects and guides their own learning within a play experience. Teacher supported learning takes place when students are provided with guidance from teachers in their play through interactions that extend on learning concepts, capabilities, and skills. For example, while students are playing with blocks, a teacher can pose questions that encourage problem solving, prediction, and hypothesising. The teacher can also bring the student's awareness towards mathematics, science and literacy concepts, allowing them to engage with such concepts through hands-on learning and discipline-specific language. Both student-initiated and teacher-supported learning have an important role in play-based classrooms. This concept is explored further in Robertson, Morrissey, and Rouse's (2018) article, 'Play-based learning can set your child up for success at school and beyond'.

Read, look or listen

As this interactive textbook recurrently states, it's essential to remember that teachers have a critical role in children's play experiences. The teacher's role in supporting play-based learning is more active and complex than providing play resources and then standing back to let children play. Teachers must flexibly adjust their role as children move through different phases of play and inquiry.

Engage and extend

The interactive diagram below illustrates how learning can be facilitated through student-initiated and teacher-supported learning. **Click on the plus (+) icons** to see the intersections between the two types of play-based teaching and reflect on times when one type of teaching may be more beneficial than the other.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=47#h5p-4

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Teacher's role in play-based learning approaches

Hotspot 1: Guided play and learning

Refers to a teacher's involvement in student's play and learning by 'responding to spontaneous

learning opportunities as they arise' (VEYLDF, 2016, p. 15). This may include the use of open-ended questions and in-depth conversations, the co-construction of knowledge by problem solving together, and the provision of resources and materials to prompt further learning through play.

Hotspot 2: Child-directed play and learning

Defined as 'an exploratory process that occurs when children lead their learning through exploring, imagining, experimenting, investigating, and being creative in ways that they control' (VEYLDF, 2016, p. 15). In a school context, the teacher's role in child-directed play and learning may be through their observations, assessment, and analysis of what the student has drawn, written, constructed, and/or spoken about. Teachers use this information to extend students' learning in later learning sequences through adult-led learning. Teachers also support child-directed play and learning through the management of space, time, and resources. Teachers' interactions support and extend play.

Hotspot 3: Adult-led learning

Adult-led learning occurs when teachers introduce a concept, topic, or idea for exploration. Explicit teaching of concepts, topics, and/or ideas are made possible through play-based teaching strategies and resources. While students have agency in this pedagogical approach, students' experiences and inquiries are primarily planned for by teachers. Teachers' plans are based on their understanding of students' current interests and prior knowledges.

7

PLAY-BASED APPROACHES AND DIFFERENTIATION

Differentiation is an approach to teaching and learning popularised by American academic Carol A. Tomlinson (2014). The key features of differentiated instruction can be summarised as "a way of thinking about teaching" that:

- is student-focused,
- incorporates teacher knowledge of individual student's learning preferences in conjunction with curriculum content,
- establishes clear and substantive learning goals,
- closely observes students and their learning processes to identify their skills and needs, and
- make appropriate adjustments in the learning context.

These key features of differentiated instruction align well with a play-based approach in classrooms. Play-based approaches differentiate the process of learning because students choose how they work on a specific concept by selecting experiences available to them. Therefore, making it possible to work at their own levels of proficiency. The guidance and interactions used by teachers during play are important so that learning experiences can be adjusted in response to individual student's interests, strengths, and learning needs. Adjustments might include the type of role that teachers have in student's play.

For example, a student may benefit from more complex methods of inquiry, hypothesising, and discovery to enhance their learning in play. One way of doing this occurs when teachers provide more opportunities for collaborative learning with peers. In contrast, other students may require teachers to provide them with more explicit instruction, direction, and questioning to guide their learning during play. In play-based experiences, being responsive to student strengths and interests provides a meaningful source for differentiated teaching and learning strategies.

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, or listen

Play the video (3:00) below that shares the experiences of a primary school teacher. Elise talks about how she uses play-based learning to support the learning and development of all learners. As you watch the interactive video, think about Elise's comments in relation to:

- knowing children's individual interests, and
- adjustments to teaching strategies.

Differentiation in practice (3:00)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=50#oembed-1

8

REFLECTING ON THE OPPORTUNITIES OF PLAY-BASED LEARNING

As already discussed, play-based learning brings opportunities for children to stretch their thinking to higher levels and to build capabilities across a broad range of areas (Robertson et al., 2018). Play stimulates and integrates a range of intellectual, socio-emotional, physical and creative capabilities.

The expansive potential of play-based learning was outlined in the "Opportunities in play-based learning" interactive by explaining these nine learning and general capabilities.

1. Asking questions
2. Exploring mathematics and science
3. Developing resilience and self-regulation
4. Communicating with others
5. Making interpretations and forming arguments based on discoveries
6. Building narrative and literacies
7. Developing resilience and self-regulation
8. Forming peer relationships
9. Designing investigations

Engage and extend

Having looked through the different areas of play-based learning, reflect on your experiences and think of examples of when you have seen one of these areas in action. Solidify the reflective connections you have made between theory and practice by writing down your brief example or examples. It can be helpful to draw a picture or find an image that visualises your examples.

Image: © Getty Images

9

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES RECAP

Chapter 1 – References

Bubikova-Moan, J., Næss Hjetland, H., & Wollscheid, S. (2019). ECE teachers' views on play-based learning: a systematic review. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 27(6), 776-800. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2019.1678717

Brooke, E., Edwards, S., & Blaise, M. (Eds.) (2014). The SAGE handbook of play and learning in early childhood. SAGE. http://digital.casalini.it/9781473907164

Brooker, L., & Edwards, S. (Eds.) (2010). *Engaging play*. Open University Press.

Danniels, E., & Pyle, A. (2018). Defining play-based learning. In R.E. Tremblay, M. Boivin, R. Peters (Eds.) & A. Pyle (topic Ed.), *Encyclopedia on early childhood development*. https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/play-based-learning/according-experts/defining-play-based-learning

Fleer, M. (2021). *Play in the early years* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108908153

Laevers, F. (2000). Forward to basics! Deep-level-learning and the experiential approach. *Early Years: An Educational Research Journal*, 20(2), 20–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/0957514000200203

Nolan, A., Kilderry, A., & O'Grady, R. (2006). *Young children as active learners*. Early Childhood Australia.

Nolan, A., & Paatsch, L. (2018). (Re) affirming identities: implementing a play-based approach to learning in the early years of schooling. *International Journal of Early Years Education,* 26(1), 42-55.

Robertson, N., Morrissey, A.M. & Rouse, E. (2018). Play-based learning can set your child up for success at school and beyond. *Science Education News*, 67(1), 50-51.

Roskos, K., & Christie, J. (2001). Examining the Play–Literacy Interface: A Critical Review and Future Directions. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 1(1), 59-89. doi:10.1177/14687984010011004

Stagnitti, K., & Lewis, F. M. (2015). Quality of pre-school children's pretend play and subsequent development of semantic organization and narrative re-telling skills. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 17(2), 148-158. doi:10.3109/17549507.2014.941934

Stagnitti, K. E., Paatsch, L., Nolan, A., & Campbell, K. (2020). Identifying play skills that predict children's language in the beginning of the first year of school. *Early Years*, 1-15. doi:10.1080/09575146.2020.1865280

Wood, E. (2014). The play-pedagogy Interface in Contemporary Debates. In L. Brooker, M. Blaise, & S. Edwards (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Play and Learning in Early Childhood* (pp. 145–156). SAGE.

PART II

CHAPTER 2. IMPLEMENTING PLAY-BASED APPROACHES IN CLASSROOMS

10

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TEACHER PRACTICE

Key ideas

- Student learning outcomes are supported by play-based teaching strategies
- Play-based approaches have affordances in different learning areas
- Students develop general capability skills through play-based approaches
- Environments and resources that foster play-based teaching and learning

The link between play and learning is well documented. Accordingly, play-based learning approaches provide a meaningful context for student learning and the development of general capabilities (Justice & Pullen, 2003; Korat et al., 2003; Nicolopoulou et al., 2006).

Play-based approaches are combinative; they privilege teaching strategies that educators use to enrich students' learning, the environment, and available resources. Furthermore, teachers' using play-based approaches must recognise the importance of understanding the characteristics of different learning areas. Children can develop greater conceptual understanding through active play in their environment, with the support of teachers. Teachers enrich children's experiences while playing through verbal engagement, role-modelling, extensions, or the provision of diverse resources.

Active play and teacher's strategies create opportunities for problem-solving and reasoning in different learning areas. Play based approaches provide opportunities for teachers to take their

expert knowledge in discipline areas (e.g. such as mathematics, music or science) to create learning opportunities that draw children's attention to specific concepts and knowledges. For example, box construction activities are full of mathematical concepts that can be explored through play; such as, size, surface, balance, and shape. When teachers ask discipline-specific questions during play, they actively draw the child's attention to important foundational concepts.

Keep in mind

Play the below engaging with this chapter vodcast (1:27). As you listen to this chapter's introductory information, discover how this chapter seeks to expand on teaching strategies, learning areas and the affordances in the environment that support children's learning.

Engaging with chapter two video podcast (1:27)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=58#oembed-1

11

THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN PLAY AND LEARNING

The teacher's role is critical in a play-based learning classroom. A purposeful balance of child-directed, adult-led and guided play is the most effective for students' learning.

Research is increasingly showing that settings where students are predominately left to engage in only student led play, are the least successful environments for student learning, development, engagement, and behaviour (Mashburn, 2008; Robertson, Yim & Paatsch, 2020; Sylva et al., 2010; Zosh et al., 2018).

Teaching practices that support student learning outcomes in the Australian context

To further support teacher's teaching practices in Australian classrooms, the Victorian Department of Education and Training have identified high impact teaching strategies (HITS). These can be useful for teachers when thinking about implementing a play-based approach in school classrooms.

Read, look, or listen

High Impact Teaching Strategies – interactive video experiences

Click on the icons in the interactive below to engage with short video experiences. Each of the eight videos covers a different teaching strategy and has reflective prompts embedded. You can explore all eight experiences or just one depending on your individual need. Whether you watch one or all eight, we encourage you to consider how teachers can use interactions, planning and teaching strategies in an integrated way to support students' learning in a play-based learning approach.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=62#h5p-5

Engage and extend

A summary of information shared in the interactive video experiences can be found in this handout poster.

MAKING CONNECTIONS - HITS STRATEGIES & PLAY-BASED LEARNING

STRATEGY 1
SETTING GOALS

Setting goals support teachers to think about the objectives for their play-based and inquiry learning experiences.

Goals should be differentiated for individual children based on their interests, capabilities, and funds of knowledge.

STRATEGY 2
STRUCTURING LESSONS

Teachers plan the sequencing of adult-led learning, guided play and learning, and child-directed learning so that play and inquiry experiences are meaningful.

Being intentional about the learning supports teachers to plan for aspects of the activity that will be adult-led or child-led.

STRATEGY 3
EXPLICIT TEACHING

Play-based and inquiry learning requires regular explicit teaching as teachers model, direct, and guide the play.

Explicit teaching strategies are informed by learning intentions and can have success criteria to guide the assessment of student outcomes.

STRATEGY 4
WORKED EXAMPLE

Teachers can provide worked examples in play-based and inquiry experiences in order to provide a suggestion, support skill acquisition and reduce a learner's cognitive load as they progress through their Zone of Proximal development.

STRATEGY 5
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

At its core, play-based and inquiry learning is collaborative and thrives in places where there are many different forms of collaboration taking place.

The physical environment is designed to foster small group learning where students need to negotiate roles, responsibilities, processes, and outcomes.

STRATEGY 6
MULTIPLE EXPOSURES

Play-based and inquiry learning provides multiple opportunities for teachers to create spaces for new knowledges to be nurtured in the classroom, in meaningful and diverse ways over time.

STRATEGY 7
QUESTIONING

Questions deepen play and enrich students' understanding. They provide a framework for assessment in the play-based and inquiry environment.

Teachers use questioning to understand what students already know about a concept or skill. This provides formal and informal assessment data to inform their teaching strategies and further planning.

STRATEGY 8
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

In a play-based and inquiry approach, teachers can prompt children to plan for their play, document their processes, and report on their outcomes.

Thinking about the planning of play provides teachers and students opportunities to think deeply about the planning and outcomes of the experiences, activities, and shared roles.

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/high-impact-teaching-strategies.pdf

As you reflect on the strategies, consider how you could apply them to your practice. In addition,

write an example of ways in which you have applied these strategies in your classroom. You can download the poster and either print or digitally annotate the strategies with your own teaching stories.

12

STORIES FROM THE CLASSROOM

A Foundation teacher describes how sometimes sitting back and noticing students can be the most effective strategy to inform further planning and implementation:

> *"...It's a bit of trial and error, sometimes you don't hit it right... just knowing the [student] builds up an understanding. I think teachers need to sit back and take the lead from the children and then you know what will provide some challenge for them."* (Dockett and Fleer, 2002, p. 189)

Read, look, or listen

Role of the teacher in play – video (6:57)

The following video re-emphasises the vital role of the teacher in implementing play-based approaches. Marie is a foundation year level teacher, the children in her class are in their first year of primary school education in Australia. Her experiences of play-based teaching and learning provides a series of examples and descriptions of the teacher's role in the play-based classroom.

As you **listen and watch**, consider how teachers can use interactions, observations, and teaching strategies in an integrated way to support students' learning in a play-based environment.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=64#oembed-1

Engage and extend

A teacher's interactions with students in their play and inquiry experiences fosters problem-solving strategies and extends understanding. Play also provides opportunities for teachers to observe and assess areas of knowledge and skill that children have acquired.

Having listened to Marie, reflect on your own practice and **think about the following questions:**

- When have you observed children learning while they are engaged in play?
- How have you supported children in their play?
- How did you enrich their experiences?

Remember, a meaningful interaction can range from asking questions to the provision of resources that students are interested in using, for example, supporting children to find seats for the imaginary aeroplane.

To help you capture this reflection, we encourage you to use your voice and your words, to record yourself using the interactive audio below.

Record your recollection

Speak aloud your reflection and use this opportunity to unpack the incident and the learning that took place. You can re-record as many times as you like. Don't forget to **download the mp3** to keep a copy. This book doesn't save your audio.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=64#h5p-6

13

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CAPABILITIES

Social and emotional learning is fundamental in a child's journey to positive outcomes in both school and life in general (Weissberg et al., 2015). Having recurrent opportunities to learn and practice social skills in play-based learning supports the development of these essential capabilities in several ways.

Play-based learning provides a way for students to practice, re-enact, and master a range of emotional ideas, feelings, and experiences. For example, when students take on the role of someone else in pretend play, they explore a range of emotions that support their capacities for empathy, abstract levels of thought and reflection. This prepares them emotionally and intellectually for the future (Wieder, 2017).

Students also develop metacognitive and self-regulatory skills that are important for higher-order thinking, creativity, planning and evaluating learning, and problem-solving (Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson & Lander, 2009). This means that social and emotional learning fosters skill-building in responsible decision-making (Weissberg et al., 2015).

In all types of play experiences, students are involved in collaboration with peers which facilitates friendships, promotes pro-social behaviours and attitudes, and fosters the experience of responding to peer suggestions and resolving conflict (Scott & Panksepp, 2003). The opportunity to build social awareness, relationship skills, and self-management is also linked to wellbeing and academic success, with lowered levels of emotional distress and conduct issues (Duncan et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2011).

Image: © Getty Images

The teacher's role in supporting capability building

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of education across all ages and stages. To support students' exploration and application of social and emotional capabilities in play-based learning experiences, teachers can:

- provide an environment that promotes student collaboration,
- guide students to initiate interactions and solve conflicts through open-ended questions, modelling, and direct interactions,
- provide students with sufficient time to engage in play-based learning.

When designing for opportunities that build social and emotional capabilities, the ideal is a planned, ongoing and systematic approach across different years of learning (Jones & Kahn, 2017). However, students benefit in myriad ways from any play-based opportunity to build social and emotional capabilities.

Image: © Getty Images

14

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

A strong relationship exists between play-based learning and the development of language and literacy (Han et al., 2010; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2013). For example, in pretend play and constructive play, students form imaginary stories that support the development of narrative skills, including story comprehension and story production. They will also develop the ability to symbolise and use an object as something else, which has been found to be a predictor of a student's expressive and receptive language ability (Stagnitti et al., 2020).

In all types of play experiences, students engage in greater social and linguistic interaction to collaborate with peers. In particular, the development of narrative in pretend play supports:

- the emergence of early multi-word speech,
- more complex grammatical speech, and
- greater growth in linguistic knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar.

Research highlights the benefits of pretend play during the first years of school in comparison to learning through direct, didactic instruction (Fekonja et al., 2005; Stagnitti et al., 2016).

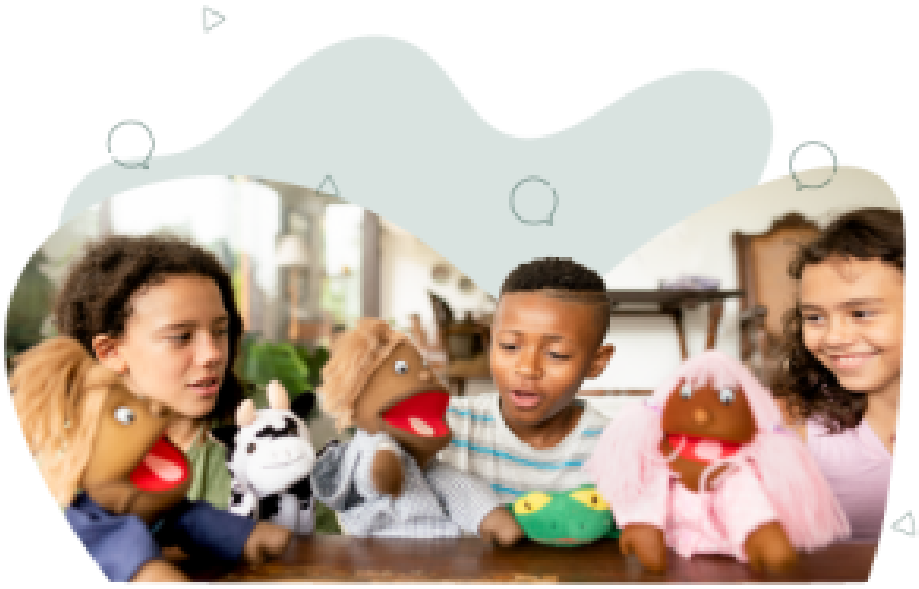


Image: © Getty Images

The teacher's role in supporting capability building

Communication skills are an important part of children's development and learning. There is ample evidence that points to the role of play based learning in cultivating language and literacy skills, particularly in the early years (Roskos & Christie, 2013; Sharp, Escalante, & Anderson, 2012). Building student literacy and language skills through play-based approaches is effective, whether it's teacher-guided play or child-directed play that is supported by the teacher (Roskos, 2010; Weisberg et al., 2013; Zosh et al., 2017).

To support students' exploration and application of literacy and language in play-based learning experiences, teachers can:

- Use meaningful and planned interactions to guide students towards emergent reading and writing skills. For example, understanding the function and form of print, the relationship between oral and written language, recognising words as discrete elements and showing an understanding of phonological structure (Justice & Pullen, 2003; Sliogeris & Almeida, 2017).
- Provide a literacy rich environment that prompts students to explore and engage with literacy knowledge. For example, students can be guided to write shopping lists, write signs, document their stories, record their planning, and report their findings. These artefacts can all be used as assessable documents of student learning.
- Encourage students to investigate a concept further through multimodal resources. For example, students may be constructing a story using loose parts, or other props. The students might record their narrative using an iPad and come back to it later to develop the story further. The recording captures the children's voices, and the play that is inspiring the story.

Image: © Getty Images

15

NUMERACY

Mathematics has developed from our social activity and as a way of making sense of our world. Play-based and inquiry learning in its many forms involves students in mathematical experiences because mathematics is part of their world and everyday lives.

Through play-based learning experiences, students explore and apply many areas of mathematical knowledge. Play-based experiences provide rich opportunities to represent number via written and spoken signs and symbols (Emfinger, 2009). Common examples include subtraction, counting, addition, one-to-one correspondence, and understanding of money (Emfinger, 2009).

This is why mathematics has practical or 'real life' applications that play-based and inquiry learning can reveal. It is also where we see students' numeracy in action, as they draw on their mathematics skills and knowledge and use these purposefully in a range of situations and interactions. Furthermore, interactions between students in play-based learning experiences will often support students' mathematical language (e.g., large and small, big and little, more and less), logical reasoning, shape and space, pattern and order, and counting (Reikeras, 2020).

Image: © Getty Images

The teacher's role in supporting capability building

Children are naturally curious and many of the activities that take place during the day have mathematical significance. However, the teacher's unique role is to notice mathematics and draw attention to it. Children need the opportunity to see their activity, play, or construction through a mathematical lens. This might relate to the shapes that the children are working with, or comparisons in terms of size during block play.

To support students' exploration and application of mathematical knowledge in play-based learning experiences, teachers can:

- Provide a mathematically rich environment to prompt students to explore and apply mathematical knowledge in their play (Worthington & Van Oers, 2016). For example, if setting up a shop, students may be provided with money and a cash register.
- Guide students to document their mathematical planning and/or findings in a book or worksheet.
- Use planned and meaningful interactions to guide students towards mathematical knowledge. Open-ended questions, challenges and prompts can be directly related to mathematics to encourage students to count, compare amounts, determine how many, and identify and write numerals (Trawick-Smith et al., 2016).

Image: © Getty Images

16

SCIENCE AND STEM

Play-based learning is advocated as an approach that fosters science and technology education. Experiential inquiry in science and technology supports students to develop an interest in the world around them (Campbell, Jobling & Howitt, 2021; Sliogeris & Almeida, 2017).

Outdoor play, in particular, engages students with the knowledge of the world around them, allowing them to observe and explore changes, patterns, and properties of objects.

In the last decade, the outdoor space as a site of learning has been experiencing a renaissance as early childhood settings and schools are rediscovering the potentials of outdoor spaces. This has been realised in many ways, one way is through the establishment of Bush schools and Bush kindergartens. In parts of Europe the schools are often referred to as Forest schools or Forest Kindergartens. There are many principles underpinning these programs. One key principle in these teaching and learning communities, is that as children play, engagement with the outdoor setting catalyses children's curiosity about the natural world.

Image: © Getty Images

The teacher's role in supporting capability building

A teacher's role in this area can support students' exploration and application of scientific and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) knowledge. In STEM play-based learning experiences, teachers can:

- Provide opportunities in the environment to engage with digital technologies in new, dynamic ways that support multi-modal learning, meaning-making, and representative thinking (Arnott & Yelland, 2020).
- Provide opportunities to explore a concept they are enquiring about through pretend play. For example, students inquiring into topics about insects, animals, or plants could benefit from opportunities to creatively extend their thinking through relevant toys and materials. Teacher-selected resources (such as insect or animal figurines, sticks and loose parts) can prompt students to further explore their knowledge in an imaginary context.
- Provide opportunities for students to extend their inquiry by offering tools for investigation. For example, magnifying glasses, books, iPads with YouTube or encyclopedia applications set up (Sliogeris & Almeida, 2017).
- Prompt students to document their findings and share them with the class.

Image: © Getty Images

17

TYPES OF PLAY EXPERIENCES

There are different types of play experiences that teachers can use to structure their play-based and inquiry learning approach. Each type of play has a purposeful role to engage students in meaningful exploration, investigation and imaginative experiences. Different types of play offer multiple opportunities to encounter, engage with, and elaborate on new knowledge and skills with peers and teachers.

Each type of play has a role in supporting student's learning processes, and knowledges in different curriculum areas as well as personal and social capabilities.

Read, look, or listen

Let's look closely at different types of play and possibilities for the classroom. This interactive slideshow below provides a description and visualisation for some common types of play you can foster through play-based learning approaches.

Clicking on the icons below to explore the different types of play. Investigate all eight types or just one depending on your interest and individual need.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=82#h5p-7

OPEN TEXT CLOSE

VERSION TEXT

VERSION

Types of play experiences – interactive poster

This interactive poster provides a short description of eight types of play and visual images to reinforce your understanding.

The interactivity

This poster scene has eight different graphics displayed in two rows of four. These graphics represent the eight types of play. Each graphic is clickable and leads to the description and visual images of the associated type of play.

Graphic 1 (toy rocket): Pretend Play

- Play type: Pretend play.
- Description: Exploration of experiences through the creation of an imaginary world where children take on roles and substitute the meaning of objects and actions.
- Image 1 description: Child playing with a toy torch, like a doctor, who is peering into an adult's ear.
- Image 2 description: Micro-habitat farm with fabric, toy animals, blocks and toy cars.
- Image 3 description: Child wearing an apron and holding toy wooden pizza on a tray, pretending to be a cook delivering the meal.
- Image 4 description: An outdoor table setting in a pretend kitchen.
- Image 5 description: A child filling up a toy truck, pretending to move like a construction vehicle.
- Image 6 description: A child with painted hands pretending to be an angry animal, snarling and curling fingers.
- Image 7 description: A child with a sheet around their neck holding a cardboard cylinder pretending to be a superhero.

Graphic 2 (building blocks in the shape of houses): Constructive Play

- Play type: Constructive play.
- Description: Building of structures and/or objects using blocks, sticks, logs, recyclable materials or other loose parts.
- Image 1 description: Child building a construction with sticks.
- Image 2 description: Plastic crates used to build a tower in a play area.
- Image 3 description: Child constructing with small rectangular wooden blocks.
- Image 4 description: Child kneeling on concrete path and looking through piles of electronic bits, plastic parts and other materials. The child is holding a partially built object with a microchip base.
- Image 5 description: Child constructing an outdoor workspace with natural materials, toys trucks and plastic figurines.
- Image 6 description: Child interacting with a wooden object, hammering in a nail, while an

adult and other child hold the object steady.

Graphic 3 (aprons and cooking tools): Physical Play

- Play type: Physical play.
- Description: Active exploration of movement using gross and fine motor skills.
- Image 1 description: Children playing a movement game with a large parachute game together.
- Image 2 description: Child using fine motor skills to cut-out dough, their hands gripped around a glass jar to stamp out the dough on a flat surface. The child has also placed the round shapes on the back of a muffin tray.
- Image 3 description: Two children climbing in trees, stretched across multiple branches and in extended positions.
- Image 4 description: Group of children doing full-body stretches in an outdoor space.
- Image 5 description: Child riding a trike through a puddle of water, with their legs stretched out and balancing in the air.
- Image 6 description: Group of children in a green outdoor space, the ball has been thrown up high and the children are leaping to be first to catch it.

Graphic 4 (swingset in a garden): Outdoor Play

- Play type: Outdoor play.
- Description: Imaginative, physical, and social explorations of places, objects and experiences in an outside space.
- Image 1 description: Child playing with woodchips in an outdoor space, scooping up dirt and woodchips with a shovel and tipping it into a toy truck.
- Image 2 description: Child climbing a tree by carefully stretching and placing feet and hands.
- Image 3 description: Child sitting high in a tree, holding on with hands on different branches and looking off into the distance.
- Image 4 description: Child running on grass, reaching out for a red balloon floating in front of them. Another child runs behind then with arms wide to also catch the balloon.
- Image 5 description: Close-up of child's feet in sneakers as they walk across, balancing carefully, on a tree trunk.
- Image 6 description: Child playing in a puddle, reaching down with one hand and reaching out for balance with the other.

Graphic 5 (instruments and shells in discovery baskets): Discovery Play

- Play type: Discovery play.
- Description: Investigation of the world and the concepts, objects, and experiences within it.
- Image 1 description: An open shelving unit full of natural materials presented in different shape baskets.
- Image 2 description: Close-up of a bubble balanced on the bubble wand, being held out for viewing by the child.

- Image 3 description: Child crawling and climbing in the outdoor space, looking for natural materials like leaves and bark.
- Image 4 description: Tabletop play experiences set up, with torches and globe to simulate the sun orbiting the earth.
- Image 5 description: Child intensely peering into a microscope and making adjustments to the settings.

Graphic 6 (dice and rule book): Games with Rules

- Play type: Games with rules.
- Description: Experiences that follow a set of rules to reach a shared objective.
- Image 1 description: Children on a grass field, walking on the lines of a floor game. They are in a row and jumping one after the other.
- Image 2 description: Children playing a creative board game with a board, board pieces, moving parts and using a digital tablet.
- Image 3 description: Children playing chess.
- Image 4 description: Child and adult playing the floor game 'Twister', stretching and balancing.
- Image 5 description: Child playing hopscotch on concrete, having drawn the hopscotch game with blue chalk.

Graphic 7 (laptop screen and tablet): Digital Play

- Play type: Digital play.
- Description: Experiences that involve the exploration and use of a digital tool.
- Image 1 description: Child seated next to an adult while playing a digital game on a tablet and holding a block creature on their lap.
- Image 2 description: Child playing with remote controlled robots with a remote screen pad.
- Image 3 description: Child taking a picture with an instant camera ("Polaroid"), they have their eye looking through the view finder and a ready to take the shot.
- Image 4 description: Child using digital tablet as a communication tool.
- Image 5 description: Child wearing virtual reality (VR) headset with their arms held out before them as they explore a digital space.
- Image 6 description: Child on couch reaching forward to work with a touch screen.

Graphic 8 (painting easel): Creative Play

- Play type: Digital play.
- Description: Self-expressive experiences that engage with the multiple art forms.
- Image 1 description: Child drawing an insect on concrete with chalk.
- Image 2 description: Artworks made by children using leaves and other natural materials.
- Image 3 description: Child playing percussion drums with their hands.
- Image 4 description: Children creating through drawing and colouring onto paper.
- Image 5 description: Child decorating rocks with paints, crayons, and stickers.

- Image 6 description: Child tearing different coloured paper to make a picture of a rainbow.

Engage and extend

Consider some types of play you might introduce into your classroom.

Create a list of potential play experiences to support you with your planning.

We also suggest you reflect on the types of play that children gravitate towards in your class. What are some extensions to those activities or areas you could plan for in the future?

18

INDOOR PLAY-BASED LEARNING - RESOURCING

Indoor play-based learning is a hands-on, exploratory approach to learning where children engage in structured or free play activities inside a classroom or indoor space (Curtis & Carter, 2015). Building an understanding of how spaces can be arranged and resourced supports teachers to effectively implement play-based approaches indoors.

Resourcing the indoor space

Open-ended resources are materials that can be used in multiple ways, allowing for creativity, exploration, and problem-solving (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2016). They are an excellent resource to encourage imaginative processes in play and can include:

- blocks and construction toys,
- dominoes, dice and counters,
- natural materials like sticks, leaves, seedpods,
- lengths of material, yarn, wool, and string,
- mirrors, torches, or lightboxes, and
- boxes, crates, containers, and baskets.

Compare these with realistic props, such as plastic toy fruit, toy cars and plastic money, which may limit the opportunities for students to use their imagination to symbolically and creatively transform materials, objects, and spaces in their play.

Image: © Getty Images

Open-ended resources used effectively provide an environment where students are enabled to manipulate and transform materials. Loose-parts play is often mobile and students are able to use their imagination to re-organise their play spaces.

Image: © Getty Images

Research has also shown that plentiful open-ended materials and resources, along with carefully selected realistic props and objects, encourage more complex and engaging play (Rendon &

Gronlund, 2017). For example, a sociodramatic playspace based on a supermarket scenario can contain:

- empty boxes (e.g. cereal, biscuits, etc),
- pretend cashier station made by the teacher or students, or
- money/credit cards from paper, cardboard, bottle tops, etc.

Having a supply of open-ended materials challenges the student to imaginatively transform them, while the realistic props provide a 'stepping off' point for students' play. This supports imagination, symbolic thinking, creativity, communication of ideas, planning, and metacognition.

Image: © Getty Images

In construction and block play, much of the value is the manipulation and imaginative use of abstract materials, with selective use of realistic props such as vehicles and figures so that these enhance the play, not 'drive' it. For example, consider bringing in toy vehicles only after children have worked on a construction, to ensure that it is not limited to the building of simple 'roads' for driving cars or trucks. Complex constructive play supports an understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts, a sense of aesthetics, symbolic thinking, collaboration, creative expression, planning, metacognition, language, communication, and more.

Image: © Getty Images

Drawing from a contextual example

In Reggio Emilio schools, students can work in art studio spaces, with a wide range of materials and resources to select for their creative use. Reggio Emilia principles and practices privilege students' artwork in the display and availability of materials. Privileging children's creativity values individual expression and is not restricted by stereotypical expectations for realistic reproduction. Open-ended and recycled art materials can be sourced from different local businesses that specialise in multiple off-cuts and excess materials from factories. These diverse resources can be used for recycled artwork:

- cotton spools,
- lengths of material,
- plastic containers, and
- timber shapes.

When teachers provide props and resources for play that recognisably relate to current lesson content, it provides meaningful links that can be further explored and extended. Books that have been read provide a foundation for scientific or mathematical concepts that can be experienced through play. Play experiences support discussions that have taken place in the classroom. The two areas are fundamental elements of an integrated curriculum across learning areas. This encourages students to make connections between ideas, reinforces concepts, and extends students thinking through their play. For example, students' socio-dramatic play can be enriched by providing links to stories, with relevant props and materials for costumes. Another scenario might be tape measures, scales, architect planning documents and rulers added to block construction to further extend students' mathematical concepts in their play.

Image: © Getty Images

19

INDOOR PLAY-BASED LEARNING - ORGANISING

Teachers can design areas that are versatile in terms of resources and social engagement. Play spaces can be adapted for small groups, pairs, and individuals.

Planning for social interactions and the development of relationships with peers can implicitly take place through the design of environment. Furthermore, creating spaces for individual play can support student's concentration, creativity, and special interests. The cues teachers provide signpost to students how an area can be used most effectively. For example:

- providing just one or two chairs at a table for individual or pair play, or
- making a large space with plentiful resources for a larger group.

Open-ended play enables children to creatively make connections between different playspaces. As children move resources to different areas, they imaginatively extend their play. For example, having blocks near a socio-dramatic play area may inspire children to incorporate the blocks into their dramatic play, or bring home corner props into their block play. Effectively designing indoor settings takes into consideration the space, the resources, and children's agency.

This supports creativity, flexible thinking, and organisational skills.

Collaborating with children to organise the indoor space

As students progress in their play, think about providing resources for a play area but ask them to organise it. For example:

- Provide resources and furniture (chairs, tables, home corner furniture) for a play area.
- Ask your students to arrange them for their own play themselves.

This provides children with creative challenge, supporting a sense of agency, ownership, and belonging. It also encourages planning, organisational skills, metacognition, communication, and

collaboration. Teachers can supportively challenge students to create or decide on their own props for play, such as hats and costumes, pretend money, credit cards, tickets, menus, newspapers, or books. Ask them to think about what they could use to create their props. This helps with creative thinking and planning. Embracing open-ended materials in play-based approaches encourages creativity, flexibility, planning, communication, and listening.

Image: © Getty Images

20

A NOTE ABOUT OUTDOOR PLAY-BASED LEARNING

Research has shown school playgrounds are effective but often under-utilised, places for learning (Chancellor, 2008). Another common misconception is that school playgrounds are only a space for students to 'get rid of excess energy'. However, there is compelling evidence that students use the spaces in their school playgrounds in multiple ways. For example, students may be engaged in socio-dramatic play. They may seek out places for solitude. Students may also purposefully create places for their self-directed play. School playgrounds are a significant site for social play as well as physical activity.

> *'Where there is wholehearted support for learning outside the classroom, where it is embedded in planning and integrated into practice – then children are learning outdoors regularly and they thrive... There is convincing evidence that the quality and use of school grounds has a significant impact on children's learning and well-being...'* Robinson (2018), p. 117 The importance of school grounds

Read, look, or listen

The outdoors is full of potential for learning, and play creates avenues for children to make connections, build skills, and encounter concepts in curriculum. The interactive poster below provides some important points, practical tips and examples of environments for you to consider when planning and organising play-based learning outdoors.

As you **click on the different hotspots (+)** in this interactive poster, you're encouraged to think about these links. In some cases, it might be a site to visit, in other cases, it could be a resource inspiration, or planning tip.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=95#h5p-8

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Opportunities of play-based learning experiences – interactive image hotspots.

This interactive explains the different ways in which play-based environments create opportunities to support children in their understanding and consolidation of important learning. As you click on the hotspots, reflect on the environmental, teaching interactions, and learning areas all strengthened by play-based learning.

All Images in activity: © Getty Images

The interactivity

The scene has clickable hotspots on images. The seven images are labelled:

1. STEM links
2. Sites to visit
3. Learning in the outdoors
4. Props & open-ended materials
5. Teaching outdoors
6. Resources
7. Benefits of the outdoors

Each hotspot provides a description and explanation of different ways integrated teaching approaches are adopted in play-based learning. Also, examples outline how to engage students in play experiences that provide learning opportunities.

Hotspot one: STEM links

1. Consider setting up kitchen-garden beds, providing real tools and equipment for students to be engaged in meaningful work and learning as a team of inquirers.
For example, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation program or a version adopted by school community, families, or grandparents.
2. Students and teachers can engage with sustainability programs (such as ResourceSmart or AuSSI schools) through the collection and audit of energy, waste, water and biodiversity within the school, inside and outside.
This can lead to student engagement in meaningful, important work relating to real life experiences where students feel empowered to make a difference within their school community (STEM, numeracy, literacy).

See more information online at Sustainability Victoria and CERES ResourceSmart.

Hotspot two: Sites to visit

1. MelBirds – online resource for bird-watching with children.
Explore https://cindyehauser.wordpress.com/melbirds/ for more details.
2. Museum Victoria free Field Guide digital app for identification of insects, birds.
Explore https://museumsvictoria.com.au/apps/field-guide-app-to-victorian-fauna/ for more details.

Hotspot three: Learning in the outdoors

1. Teachers' planning and implementation of play-based and inquiry learning experiences outdoors can provide time, space, and opportunities to move beyond a curriculum that is restricted by classroom walls, desks and limited space.

2. Teachers can provide multiple play-based and inquiry learning experiences through the planning, collection and use of affordances from the outdoor space.

For example, collections of loose natural materials, such as gumnuts, pebbles, leaves, twigs, and bark can be used for counting, one-to-one correspondence, scientific experiments, comparing and contrasting the attributes of natural and man-made objects.

3. Teachers can purposefully use available features and spaces outdoors to extend students' mathematical and scientific conceptual understanding.

For example, measuring tree heights; exploring water flow and gravity through PVC pipes; exploring and identifying natural ecology and biodiversity; investigating change of state of natural materials, sand, mud, and water; measurement of different spaces and lengths using natural materials as measuring tools.

Hotspot four: Props & open-ended materials

As with the classroom indoors, a mix of open-ended and selected realistic props and resources can support play outdoors.

For example, an outdoor (mud) kitchen can consist of a box as a pretend stove, a couple of old pots and pans, plates and access to natural loose parts, such as dirt, sand, pebbles will be sufficient to support sociodramatic play.

Lengths of materials, clothes and hats supply costumes are a useful inclusion for socio-dramatic play.

Timber off-cuts, boxes, branches, logs, and fabric can also provide resources for constructive play.

Hotspot five: Teaching outdoors

1. Begin by discussing with the students the parameters of the space, similar to Forest schools and Bush Kinders where the teachers and students establish the rules together on being in the outside classroom.

2. Consider the use of props to mark the space, using singing and/or musical instruments as a strategy to regroup students in the outdoor space.

3. Ask the students for specific outdoor topics for the basis of inquiry questions and investigations.

4. Look for learning opportunities in natural play spaces onsite at school or close by, such as a park or local reserve.

Hotspot six: Resources

1. Students' autonomous investigations of living things in the outdoor spaces can be encouraged by organising sets of 'Discovery backpacks' with binoculars, magnifying glasses, insect and bird identification books or posters, clipboards with paper/textas for data collection (STEMM, biodiversity).

2. Consider providing baskets of picture story books for reading under/amongst trees on mats or rugs in small groups or individually (literacy).

3. Consider providing collections of open-ended 'cubby' construction materials, such as bamboo garden stakes, fabric/material, string, tree branches, logs (technology, logico-mathematical thinking, collaborative play).

4. The provision of clipboards for writing, drawing, recording thinking and representing discoveries for outside investigations can enable new writing and drawing opportunities for students (literacy, art).

5. Physical play is important for the overall development of students. The purposeful provision of balancing on logs and stumps and uneven surfaces as well as man-made equipment encourages upper arm strength and core muscle development.

Hotspot seven: Benefits of outdoors

1. Research evidence has found that multiple opportunities for students to experience play-based and inquiry learning outdoors fosters a sense of positive wellbeing in students (Elliott, 2008).

2. Research has shown some students are better able to focus in outdoor, natural environments.

For example, Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms have been found to diminish significantly in 'green leafy places' where a restorative effect is evident (Kuo, 2004).

3. There is compelling evidence that shows that students' concentration improves on return to the classroom after spending time in green leafy places (Bogat, 2005).

Engage and extend

Having engaged with the interactive, **think about** some services, parks, and outdoor environments in your area that you could access to support your play-based practice. Consider how you could collaborate with other educators to **create a resource list** for your context.

21

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES RECAP

Chapter 2 – References

Arnott, L., & Yelland, N. J. (2020). Multimodal lifeworlds: Pedagogies for play inquiries and explorations. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 9(1), 124-146.

Campbell, C., Jobling, W., & Howitt, C. (Eds.). (2021). *Science in early childhood.* Cambridge University Press.

Curtis, D. & Carter, M. (2015). Designs for living and learning: Transforming early childhood environments. Redleaf Press.

Daly, L. & Beloglovsky, M. (2016). *Loose parts 2: Inspiring play with infants and toddlers.* Redleaf Press.

Department of Education and Training (DET). (2020). High Impact Teaching Strategies: (HITS) *Excellence in teaching and learning*. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/improve/Pages/hits.aspx

Dockett, S. & Fleer, M. (2002). *Play and pedagogy in early childhood: Bending the rules.* Southbank Victoria: Thomson.

Duncan, R., Washburn, I.J., Lewis, K.M., Bavarian, N., DuBois, D.L., Acock, A.C., Vuchinich, S., & Flay, B.R. (2017). Can universal SEL programs benefit universally? Effects of the Positive Action Program on multiple trajectories of social-emotional and misconduct behaviors. *Prevention Science*, 18(2), 214-224. doi: 10.1007/s11121-016-0745-1

Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

Emfinger, K. (2009). Numerical conceptions reflected during multiage child-initiated pretend play. *Journal of Instructional Psychology,* 36(4), 326-334.

Fekonja, U., Umek, L. M., & Kranjc, S. (2005). Free play and other daily preschool activities as a context for child's language development. *Studia Psychologica*, 47(2), 103-117.

Han, M., Moore, N., Vukelich, C., & Buell, M. (2010) Does Play Make a Difference?: How play intervention affects the vocabulary learning of at-risk preschoolers, *American Journal of Play*. 3(1), 82-105.

Jones, S.M. & Kahn, J. (2017). The evidence base for how we learn: *Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development – Consensus statements of evidence from the Council of Distinguished Scientists*. The Aspen Institute.

Justice, L. M., & Pullen, P. C. (2003). Promising interventions for promoting emergent literacy skills: Three evidence-based approaches. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 23(3), 99-113.

Korat, O., Bahar, E., & Snapir, M. (2002). Sociodramatic play as opportunity for literacy development: The teacher's role. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(4), 386-393.

Mashburn, A. J. (2008). Quality of social and physical environments in preschools and children's development of academic, language, and literacy skills. *Applied Development Science*, 12(3), 113-127. doi: 10.1080/10888690802199392

Nicolopoulou, A., McDowell, J., & Brockmeyer, C. (2006). Narrative play and emergent literacy: Storytelling and story-acting meet journal writing. In D.G. Singer, R. Michnick, D. G. Singer, R. M. Golinkoff, & K. Hirsh-Pasek (Eds.), *Play= Learning: How play motivates and enhances children's cognitive and social-emotional growth* (pp. 124-144). Oxford University Press.

Reikerås, E. (2020). Relations between play skills and mathematical skills in toddlers. *ZDM*, 52(4), 703-716. doi: 10.1007/s11858-020-01141-1

Rendon, T., & Gronlund, G. (2017). *Saving play: Addressing standards through play-based learning in preschool and kindergarten.* Redleaf Press.

Robertson, N., Yim, B., & Paatsch, L. (2020) Connections between children's involvement in dramatic play and the quality of early childhood environments. *Early child development and care*, 190 (3), 376 – 389.

Roskos, K., & Christie, J. (2011). The play-literacy nexus and the importance of evidence-based techniques in the classroom. *American Journal of Play*, 4(2), 204-224.

Sliogeris, M., & Almeida, S. C. (2019). Young children's development of scientific knowledge through the combination of teacher-guided play and child-guided play. *Research in Science Education,* 49(6), 1569-1593. doi: 10.1007/s11165-017-9667-6

Scott, J.P., & Panksepp, J., (2003). Brain-mind dynamics and emotional feelings. *Journal of Psychophysiology*, 17(4) 235-235.

Sharp, A. C., Escalante, D. L., & Anderson, G. T. (2012). Literacy instruction in kindergarten: Using the power of dramatic play. *California English*, 18(2), 16-18.

Stagnitti, K. E., Paatsch, L., Nolan, A., & Campbell, K. (2020). Identifying play skills that predict children's language in the beginning of the first year of school. *Early Years*, 1-15. Doi: 10.1080/09575146.2020.1865280

Stagnitti, B., Bailey, A., Hudspeth, Stevenson, E., Reynolds, E., & Kidd, E. (2016). An investigation into the effect of play-based instruction on the development of play skills and oral language. *Journal of Early Childhood. Research*.14 (4).https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X15579741

Sylva, K. (2010). Quality in early childhood settings. *Early Childhood Matters Evidence from the Effective Pre-School and primary Education Project*, Routledge.

Trawick-Smith, J., Swaminathan, S., & Liu, X. (2016). The relationship of teacher–child play interactions to mathematics learning in preschool. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(5), 716-733. doi: 10.1080/03004430.2015.1054818

Van Oers, B., & Duijkers, D. (2013). Teaching in a play-based curriculum: Theory, practice and evidence of developmental education for young children. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(4), 511-534.

Weissberg, R.P., Durlak, J.A., Domitrovich, C.E., & Gullotta, T.P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present, and future. In J.A. Durlak, C.E. Domitrovich, R.P. Weissberg, & T.P. Gullotta (Eds.), *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3-19). Guilford Press.

Weisberg, D., & Zosh, J., & Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. (2013). Talking it up, play, language development, and the role of adult support. *American Journal of Play*, 6(1), 39-45.

Whitebread, D., Coltman, P., Jameson, H., & Lander, R. (2009). Play, cognition and self-regulation: What exactly are children learning when they learn through play?. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 26(2), 40-52.

Wieder, S. (2017). The power of symbolic play in emotional development through the DIR lens. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 37(3), 259-281.

Worthington, M., & van Oers, B. (2016). Pretend play and the cultural foundations of mathematics. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 24(1), 51–66. Doi: 10.1080/1350293X.2015.1120520

Zosh, J. M., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Hopkins, E. J., Jensen, H., Liu, C., Neale, D., … & Whitebread, D. (2018). Accessing the inaccessible: Redefining play as a spectrum. *Frontiers in psychology*, 9, 1124.

Zosh, J. M, Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., & Dore, R. A. (2017). Where learning meets creativity: The promise of guided play. In R. Beghetto and B. Sriraman (Eds.), *Creative Contradictions in Education: Cross Disciplinary Paradoxes and Perspectives* (pp. 165-180). Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-21924-0_10

PART III

CHAPTER 3. ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH PLAY-BASED APPROACHES

22

INTRODUCTION TO ASSESSMENT IN A PLAY-BASED APPROACH

Key ideas

- Play presents possibilities for assessing students learning
- Assessing learning through play can raise challenges for teachers
- Authentic assessments in play-based learning can use a range of methods
- Assessment methods can support teachers to develop an holistic picture of each child

Assessing student learning through play enables a teacher to capture a more holistic understanding of the student as a learner. This chapter focuses on the possibilities and challenges for assessing learning in a play-based approach. An overview of the methods utilised by teachers to assess student learning is presented.

A note about assessment

Assessment for learning views assessment and teaching as intertwined and not separate to each other. Student learning is shaped by the teachers' use of practices such as questioning and provision of timely feedback. It is considered a continuous process, involving teachers finding out what students know, understand and can do, and then modifying their teaching to help students to be successful on a daily basis. This enables teachers to refine their teaching approach, build on

students previous learning and support new learning. It is ongoing and occurs in context. This is formative assessment. Assessment for learning is the only form of assessment 'which extends students' learning because it enhances teaching. All other forms of assessment serve as checks on whether or not learning has occurred, not as a means – in themselves – of bringing about learning' (Nutbrown, 2006, p.126).

Assessment is powerful and diverse. It supports teachers to understand what students know, to enable them to guide their own learning and shape teaching practices. Teachers observing students during their play and documenting what they see captures a rich understanding of what students know, understand and can do. For example, during play, teachers can pay attention to the kinds of behaviours the students use and their interactions with materials, objects and people to assess signs of progression in their learning, achievement against learning intentions and success criteria, new abilities and student enjoyment in accomplishment.

Image: © Getty Images

Keep in mind

Play the vodcast (1:59) below. As you listen to this assessment focused chapter, consider the different types of assessment methods that are used in play-based approaches. While this chapter asks you to think more about assessment in terms of identifying the learning, there are no cookie cutters approaches advocated here and each setting has its own context and diverse learners.

Engaging with this chapter three vodcast (1:59)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=101#oembed-1

23

ASSESSING LEARNING POSSIBILITIES

What are the possibilities for assessing learning in a play-based approach

Assessment of student learning through play provides teachers with the possibility to assess multiple areas of learning at once. In this way, cross-curricula learning can provide teachers with a holistic approach to assessing learning outcomes.

The holistic affordances that assessment through play provides was reflected on by teachers participating in a study conducted in Victoria, Australia. This discussion examined the possibilities of play-based approaches for teaching and learning in primary school classrooms (DET, 2021). **Click on the plus (+) icons** below to see what two teachers stated play-based learning provided the opportunity to:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=103#h5p-9

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

This interactive shows two images of teachers, a female holding some books smiling and a male teacher smiling in a classroom. Both are looking at the camera.

The interactivity

Speech bubble one –

'assess the total development of the child rather than the assessment of what the teacher has taught'

Speech bubble two –

'delve deeper into student's learning through how they structure their questioning, and to build relationships to get to know the students better

Images: © Getty Images

Case study – voices from the field

The 'Differentiated/Play-based inquiry learning in the early years of schooling' project' (DET, 2021) asked participating teachers to continually reflect and evaluate their experiences. Specifically, they were asked to reflect on the transformation of their teachers' knowledge and practice of play-based teaching and learning, during and following their participation in a 6-month professional learning program. During the program, participants contributed their perspectives and reflections on practice to an online sharing board. Following their participation, participants completed an online questionnaire.

A strong theme from the responses was that a play-based approach supported students to demonstrate their abilities *"without boundaries"*. Play was seen as providing opportunities for students to show their *"true understandings"* in a relaxed, stress-free and *"authentic way"*. Student learning as evident during play was considered *"true learning as it is in real time"*.

Assessment through a play-based approach was considered by one respondent as a "more natural" way to assess student learning, affording a "genuine form of assessment". This is because assessing through a play-based approach positions learning as "child-centred and directed", giving students choice, and building from the student's interests. This enables students to "express themselves in a way that is meaningful and purposeful to them".Accordingly, through play teachers have the possibility to check "for student understanding as opposed to them getting the right answer". Furthermore, as another teacher pointed out, play offers teachers the opportunity to better assess general capabilities, such as "social and emotional learning or ethical capabilities".

Engage and extend

A good place to start extending your knowledge of assessment possibilities in play-based teaching is to first think about what your current understanding is. Reflect on your current assessment practices, what methods of formative assessment are used in your educational setting. **Write down** your list of assessment methods. To help you ground your understanding and to grow into new learnings, we encourage you to record yourself talking about your understanding of those assessment methods using the interactive audio below.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=103#h5p-10

24

PRACTICE-BASED PERSPECTIVES

Authentic assessment and observation

As we explored in earlier chapters, learning is a process. Authentic assessment captures the learning as it occurs naturally. Teachers observe students during their play, evaluating behaviours that students engage in and their interaction with materials, objects and people. Assessment can often take the form of noting down if these behaviours and interactions evidence:

- signs of progression in their learning
- achievement in relation to learning intentions and success criteria
- new abilities or skill extension
- student enjoyment and collaboration with peers

Teaching is a practice that continues to evolve over time and the experiences of fellow teachers can be invaluable in providing insights and ideas about classroom strategies and in the case of this chapter assessment and play based approaches.

Read, look, or listen

Watch the video (58:51) below for a current practice-based perspective on assessment and play-based learning. The teachers and lecturers' share their experiences in the classroom and the findings of their research. Pay close attention to the teachers from primary schools in Australia as they discuss why they choose to assess student learning through a play-based teaching and learning approach. This webinar captures key ideas about assessing play but it also effectively links theory to practice, making the hour of viewing a worthwhile investment.

Assessing learning through play (58:51)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=105#oembed-1

Engage and extend

Having listened to the practitioner discussions and their perspectives in the video. Consider the importance of teacher's observational data and the ways in which they provide authentic opportunities to assess children's learning. Did you notice while watching the video that, on more than one occasion, the significance of formative assessment is mentioned?

In order to reflect on the diverse assessment opportunities in the play-based classroom, **draw a mind map** that captures the different types of formative assessment that can take place as children engage in their play.

Remember that mind mapping is a particularly strong visual note taking approach that can be either drawn on paper or digitally created. You arrange or map out your notes, often with a central idea in the middle and main concepts or details branching out. You can then draw lines to other branches to show connections.

Keep in mind:

- don't spend too much time on your mind maps
- use colours and images when appropriate
- you can use digital templates but don't feel restricted by them

Click on the text areas in the digital mind map below if you would like to use this template to capture your thinking. After filling in the boxes you can print the slide to have keep a digital copy. Look for the print icon at the bottom of the activity.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=105#h5p-11

25

CHALLENGES FOR ASSESSING LEARNING IN A PLAY-BASED APPROACH

Assessing learning in a play-based approach is not without challenges. Related research points to the challenges of classroom management and planning, implementing assessment techniques that don't interrupt the learning, and play being seen as a legitimate way through which to assess learning (Nolan & Paatsch, 2018.)

Image: © Getty Images

Case study – voices from the field

In the 'Differentiated/Play-based inquiry learning in the early years of schooling' project discussed earlier, the teachers who are assessing learning in a play-based approach in their primary school classrooms held concerns relating to classroom management and planning which act as barriers to their ability to assess learning through play. One teacher explained the situation:

> *"The main challenge I would find assessing play, is managing the whole class and behaviour while the play is occurring. This would take a lot of practice to have the whole class either engaged in learning and having a small group only in a 'play' setting. Or being able to manage the whole grade engaged in play. In reality things don't always go as you plan."*

When teachers step back and observe student play, or enter the play as a player, a deeper insight into the student as a learner is possible. This challenges teachers to think differently about their role as it moves away from a common assessment practice of taking students aside to assess them individually on set tasks.

Read, look, or listen

What does the research say?

A study by Nolan and Paatsch (2018) found that the teachers in their study appeared to view the learning that occurred in play as separate from the learning that occurred in other planned curriculum activities. This misses the opportunities that play affords to assess a student's skills and knowledge across curricula areas.

One teacher noted their challenge *"I believed that I had to pull students away from what they were 'playing' with to 'play' with a numeracy activity. I didn't make the connection that building blocks could not only be a great focus for identifying colour, or number of blocks but also the communication as to how they made their creation."* This teacher's reflection demonstrates how teachers who are alert to leaning outcomes across the curriculum can assess many aspects of student's learning through student's play.

Interrupting student's play to assess their learning is something that teachers are often concerned about. This is where taking observations while the students are playing and then talking with them after the session about what they did during the play and what they learnt is less intrusive. This means finding time within a very busy school day for play to develop without interruptions and then scheduling time to reflect on the learning. The following questions (used in the DET case study shared throughout this text) could be useful for you, the teacher, as you support children to reflect

on their own learning. Children benefit from teachers who encourage them to think about their learning as they play.

The key questions you coud use include:

- What are you learning?
- Why are you learning this?
- How are you learning this?
- How will you know when you have learned it?

Image: © Getty Images

Engage and extend

Watch the video (1:57) below from the DET case study. Marie, an experienced Foundation teacher, expresses her initial hesitancy when a play-based learning approach was to be implemented at the school where she taught. Marie reflects on concerns that relate to assessment and what she found in practice. Note how Marie now views the assessment she is able to carry out during the student's play as "authentic". What were the examples and reasons she shared to support this reading?

Module 3: Assessing Learning Through Play (1:57)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=109#oembed-1

26

SHIFTING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE BARRIERS

What is perhaps the greatest challenge is shifting pedagogical practice within a school environment if a play-based approach has not been implemented previously or extensively. Some schools place less emphasis on play pedagogies which leads to a devaluing of play (Stagnitti et al 2015). If a play-based approach is not fully understood by colleagues and parents then there is the possibility of it being undervalued as a legitimate form of learning (Nolan & Paatsch 2018). This casts doubt on the value of assessing play. Finding ways to document the learning that occurs during play helps teachers to validate their work and supports them with their accountability for students learning.

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, or listen

What does practice reveal?

Teachers need to consider how they can support parents/families to understand and value the learning that comes from play in a play-based learning program. This means being thoughtful, deliberate and purposeful in the way the information is utilised in discussions with families. In the video below, a teacher outlines how she and her colleagues demonstrate learning and student progression to parents. Sharing information with parents can assist in building their understanding of the learning that is occurring in play and emphasise that play is purposeful with goals and expectations that students can achieve.

In the video below, a Foundation teacher outlines how she and her colleagues demonstrate learning and student progression to parents. Sharing information with parents can assist in building their understanding of the learning that is occurring in play and emphasise that play is purposeful with goals and expectations that students can achieve. **Watch the short clip (3:37) below** to hear about different ways that teachers can use to communicate the assessment of play-based learning to parents.

Connecting with parents about assessment (3:37)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=113#oembed-1

Engage and extend

To embed your understanding of the challenges found in play-based teaching, create a two-column list. In the first column write down any challenges you have experienced or observed in this area. In the other second column write down any possible solutions to that challenge or whether there are other ways of approaching the play-based learning that move it away from challenge towards opportunity.

You can **download this word document template** as a starting point with your list creation. Reflective teaching activity – challenges for assessing learning template

27

IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSESSMENT THROUGH A PLAY-BASED APPROACH

Learning is a process and authentic assessment captures the learning as it occurs naturally.

What assessment methods can teachers use in a play-based approach?

In play-based approaches, teachers choose assessment methods and techniques to create a holistic picture of each child's knowledge, understandings, skills and capabilities. Teachers will use a range of assessment instruments and techniques to shape their responses to children. Authentic assessment is receptive to and includes children's views of their own learning.

Assessment and documenting learning

Documenting learning in play-based approaches can take the form of observations, portfolios, video and audio recordings, work samples, anecdotes, language transcripts, running records and student's self-reflections. Each of these methods are detailed in the table below. It is not an exhaustive list but demonstrates the variety of tools teachers can use to identify and document learning outcomes achieved through play-based experiences.

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, or listen

Diverse assessment methods and their associated purpose

Assessment method	Description and purpose
Note taking	Writing down short notes can be a very effective method of quickly **keeping a record of something a child or children did**, furthermore it **enables things of significance not to be forgotten such as a phrase a child used, or a questioned that emerged**. Notes often play an imperative part in annotating samples of children's work or photographs of children in action (McAfee & Leong, 2011).
Anecdotal notes or records	The focus of an anecdotal record **is on 'how' a child or children approached something, completed something, discussed something or problem solved.** Anecdotal records are contextually focused and written retrospectively, as the teacher records their memory of a child or group of children (Martin, 2013). Anecdotal records can be thought of as a written photograph, it describes the **context, who, what and where and it captures the learning of significance by drawing attention to important developmental, behavioural or cultural play and interactions.** Anecdotal observations are often quite brief as they rely on the memory of the teacher (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2018).

Assessment method	Description and purpose
Photography and videos	Photographs are purposeful **records of samples of children's work** (for instance a microhabitat built by the children or when the children are engaged in an **activity where the actions carry some of the atmosphere.** For instance, when children are working together to problem solve or achieve an outcome. It is essential that the emphasis is not on the best-looking photograph but the most purposeful photograph in terms of planning, rarely of photographs of finished products have a meaningful planning purpose unless they are accompanied by summary of the process undertaken. **Furthermore, photographs and videos can be shared with children to support them to reflect on their learning, creating opportunities to plan collaboratively.** **Photographs and videos are the accompaniments** that lend themselves to future reflection and planning. It is important that educational settings develop practices and policies that ensure that children's images are used in ways that are ethical and safe. This includes developing safe practices in relation to taking, sharing and storing images. Consider the guidelines outlined by DET Victoria.
Checklist	As a closed method of observation checklists can provide teachers with **quick data about children's development**.
Narratives	Are open methods of observation that enable the observer to use a multi-layered approach. **This considers the learning, the activity, the children in the narrative, the language of the play and the context.** The richness of **narrative forms of observational assessment is that they lend themselves to capturing the whole picture,** they are ways of entering the exploration, conversation or creative process and **can be shared by a diverse audience for example, parents and children.** (McLachlan, Fleer and Edwards, 2018, p.116).

Engage and extend

Authentic assessments use a range of methods, the above table provided a brief overview of some possible methods. Consider which methods you might use in the classroom. Consider what research you have read already which would add to the evidence of purpose for different methods. Would you add another assessment method to this list and how would that method support you to capture important data? **Write down** in your learning journal or other reflective space, these considerations.

28

SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH OBSERVATION

In the classroom observations are often used to document children's learning. When students are involved in play, they engage with experiences, materials and equipment that interest them, which means that teachers can observe things about a student that they may not otherwise see. In the case studies below, you will find examples of how teachers use observations to support their planning and assessment of children's abilities in order to plan the next extension.

Image: © Getty Images

Case study – voices from the field

In the 'Differentiated/Play-based inquiry learning in the early years of schooling' project teachers shared their observational methods to facilitate assessment. Overall, observation appeared to be the most utilised method for documenting student learning. The teachers tended to record students play by writing or videoing while the play was occurring for later reflection. As one teacher explained, she implemented a "dedicated" play-based session to take observations of the practical skills students use, such as problem solving, and the ability to build and extend concepts. Other teachers identified observations of student's play as being a useful tool for assessing their capabilities to take turns, negotiate, persist, compromise, work in small or large groups and use oral language.

Read, look, or listen

There are many observational methods that can be used in the classroom. 'How to get into play-based learning: Part 4 – Assessment in a playful classroom' is a video that follows the practice of a primary school teacher Katie from Ontario Canada. Katie uses qualitative observations to plan alongside the children. While the guiding curriculum differs from those that you may use in your school, the video offers many good tips such as how to collect evidence of learning though observations, conversation and products. It discusses pedagogical documentation that makes the learning visible for both the teacher and the student.

Engage and extend

Watch the video (5:55) below. Note how Katie uses the **ICE model** to classify qualitative observations and to be able to cater for each student:

- **I**deas – supporting students to state their ideas and knowledge
- **C**onnection – seeing links /relationships between concepts
- **E**xtensions – prompting students to think beyond the immediate thereby expanding their world view.

How to get into Play-Based Learning: Part 4 – Assessment in a Playful Classroom (5:55)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=119#oembed-1

29

INTENTIONAL TEACHING APPROACH

In the video from the previous page, Katie presented the assessment strategy of teachers sitting beside children to engage in discussion about their experience to capture the learning as it is occurring in 'real time'. By engaging in discussion with students about learning about their play, teachers are also able to extend the student's learning and bring their attention to specific concepts. Edwards (2017) identifies this as an intentional teaching approach in play-based learning, whereby teachers engage with students in the play to improve learning outcomes. To assess learning through these discussions, teachers can use open-ended questions, prompt students to ask questions and explain their ideas or discoveries, provide students with explanations or clarifications about concepts, prompt students to extend their thinking and encourage reflection on experiences.

Image: © Getty Images

Case study – voices from the field

In the Differentiated/Play-based inquiry learning in the early years of schooling project, teachers identified the usefulness of listening while having discussions with students during play. The tool of listening was identified to support the assessment of student's understandings or misconceptions of concepts.

In particular, teachers in the project shared how open-ended question support children to share their ideas about their plays in authentic ways that did not use prompts from the teachers but rather expanded on what the children focusing on in their play.

Read, look, or listen

The DET case study also provided rich video creations that featured the voices and perspectives of practicing teachers. **Watch the video (1:03) below** and listen to the teachers as they share their experiences in the classroom. Their insight is encouraging because it demonstrates that play-based approaches develop over time.

An insightful view of student learning video (1:03)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=122#oembed-1

Engage and extend

Now that you have moved through chapter three, consider and reflect on the prompt questions below. Take some time to record your reflections by either writing down or adding to a digital notebook.

Reflective questions on assessing learning in a play-based approach:

1. How do you assess student learning in your play-based learning program?
2. What challenges do you encounter assessing during play?
3. What would help/ or has helped you to embed assessment when taking a play-based and inquiry learning approach in your classroom?
4. Reflect on observational methods that you have used which do you use the most and why?

30

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES RECAP

Chapter 3 – References

Arthur, L., Beecher, B., Death, E., Dockett, S., & Farmer, S. (2018). *Programming & planning in early childhood settings* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning Australia Pty Ltd.

Department of Education. (2021). *Professional learning program orientation materials: Differentiated/ Play based inquiry learning in the Early Years of Schooling*. State Government of Victoria. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/professional-learning-program-orientation-materials.aspx

Edwards, S. (2017). Play-based learning and intentional teaching: Forever different?. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 42(2), 4-11. https://doi.org/10.23965/AJEC.42.2.01

McAfee, O., & Leong, D. J. (2011). *Assessing and guiding young children's development and learning*. Pearson Education, Inc.

McLachlan, C., Fleer, M., & Edwards, S. (2018). *Early childhood curriculum: Planning, assessment and implementation* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Nolan, A., & Paatsch, L. (2018). (Re) affirming identities: implementing a play-based approach to learning in the early years of schooling. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 26(1), 42-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2017.1369397

Nutbrown, C. (2011). *Key concepts in early childhood education and care*. Sage.

Stagnitti, K., Bailey, A., Hudspeth Stevenson, E., Reynolds, E., & Kidd, E. (2016). An investigation into the effect of play-based instruction on the development of play skills and oral language. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 14(4), 389-406. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X15579741

PART IV

CHAPTER 4. DIFFERENT WAYS OF LOOKING AT ASSESSMENT THROUGH PLAY-BASED APPROACHES

31

INTRODUCTION TO ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Key ideas

- Learning outcomes are essential in effective assessment approaches
- Curriculum areas provide different ways of looking at assessment
- Assessing play abilities and the noticing the levels of play skills that children engage in

As children play they develop a range of skills and abilities, this chapter privileges different areas of learning and development. It also considers how the assessment methods that teachers use support clarity around learning out comes as well as an intentional approaches to interactions, questions and resources. Planning and designing environments around learning goals is an important part of play-based approaches and the interactions and collaborations with students can promote further learning.

Image: © Getty Images

How are learning goals used in a play-based approach

Learning goals are at the centre of a play-based approach. Through your interactions with students in their play-based experiences, you're able to redirect and/or refocus students' actions, efforts and activity towards a clear outcome that aims to achieve the set learning goal. Teachers can also choose to encourage and support students to take responsibility for their learning by contributing to the goal setting of their own learning (McBlain, 2014). For example, during a play experience, you can give students set tasks that require them to record their findings or write a narrative about their activity. Such documentation in hard copy form, provides an authentic opportunity to provide formal written feedback to students on their playful learning.

Keep in mind

Play the below Engaging with this chapter video podcast (1:56). As you listen to this chapter's detailed exploration of assessment and its connection to learning outcomes in play-based approaches, consider how this builds on the previous chapter.

Engaging with this chapter video podcast (1:56)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=128#oembed-1

32

PLANNING WITH CLARITY WHEN ASSESSING PLAY

In the interactive videos that you have engaged with throughout this book, you would have noticed that the teachers have clarity about the learning intentions and the success criteria they use to assess the students' learning. Teachers need to constantly reflect on how they are designing learning experiences and the intent behind these, as a way to ensure they are providing opportunities where children can demonstrate their learning. Think about how the design may influence what learning is able to be captured.

In fact, during a play learning experience, you can give students set tasks that require them to record their findings or write a narrative about their activity. Such documentation in hard copy form, provides an authentic opportunity to provide formal written feedback to students on their playful learning. Throughout this chapter, ways of assessing and evaluating different types of play are explored. Associated with this exploration are different, relevant frameworks for assessing specific types of play.

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, listen

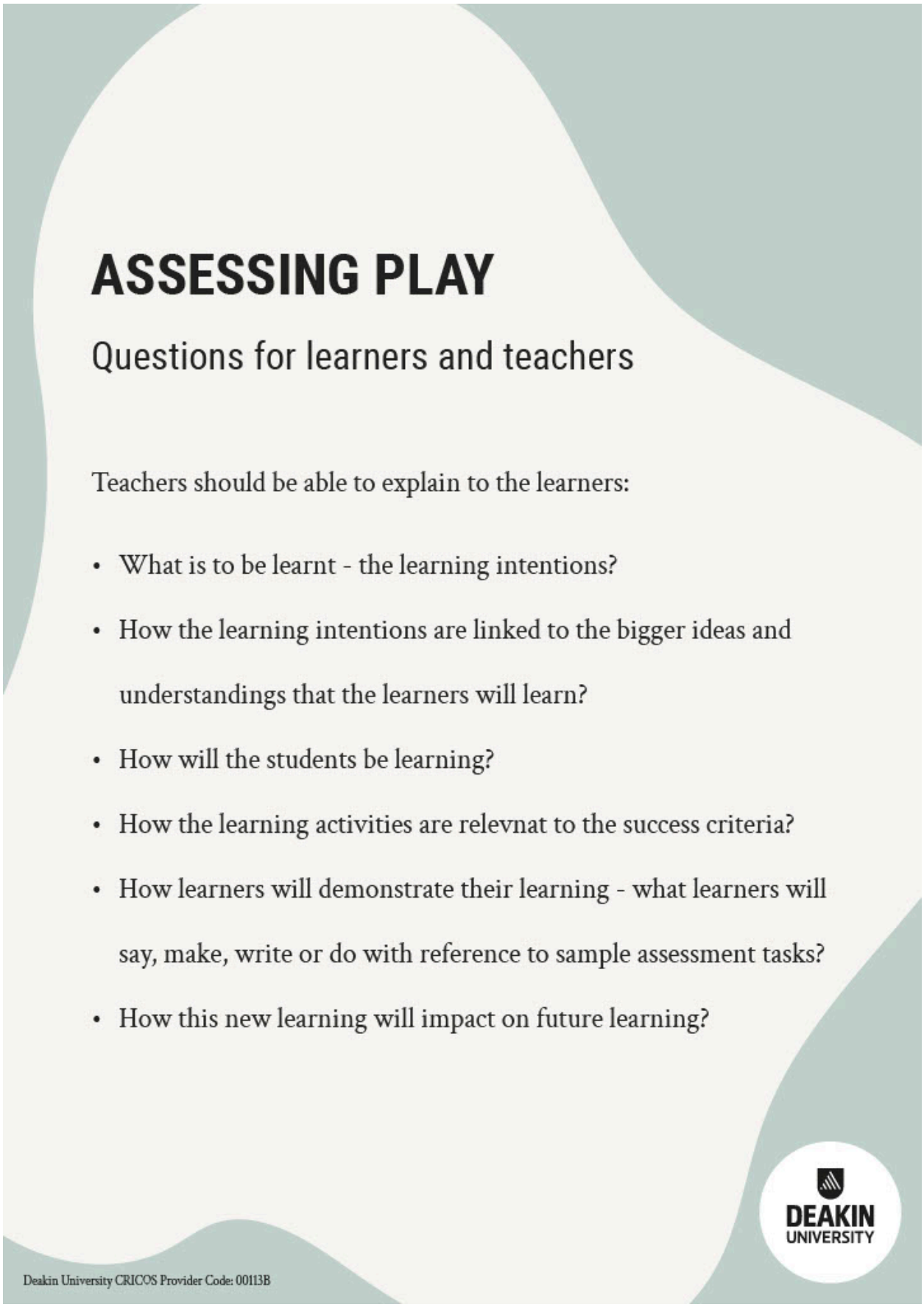
Using questions as framing provides a prompt and guide that can check for clarity around assessment in a play-based program. For example, although designed for Victorian schools, the content within the High Impact Teaching Strategies (DET 2022) can guide any teacher in terms of planning, setting goals, and assessing children's learning. Drawing from the strategies, we developed the questions listed below that teachers in any context should be able to explain to their learners:

- What is to be learnt – the learning intentions
- How the learning intentions are linked to the bigger ideas and understandings that the learners will learn
- How children will be learning
- How the learning activities are relevant to the success criteria
- How learners will demonstrate their learning – what learners will say, make, write or do with reference to sample assessment tasks
- How this new learning will impact on future learning

Engage and extend

Download this Assessing play questions for teachers and learners handout. **Add it to your teaching toolkit.** When designing a new lesson or learning experience, use the questions as prompts to both guide your planning, your teaching and your assessment practices.

Assessing play – questions for learners and teachers



33

ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES: ORAL LANGUAGE, IMAGINARY AND DRAMATIC PLAY

Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between play-based learning and language and literacy development. Play has been found to support the development of emergent reading and writing skills, semantic organisation, and narrative re-telling skills (Stagnitti, Paatsch, Nolan & Campbell, 2020). Specifically, object substitution has been found to predict oral expressive and receptive language abilities. In addition to this, complex play sequences predict emergence of early multi-word speech and narrative skills, such as story comprehension and story production. While children are engaged in imaginary and dramatic play there are several language and literacy abilities that children demonstrate. Play therefore provides teachers with the opportunities to assess students' speaking and listening, language and literacy skills.

Image: © Getty Images

The Literacy Teaching Toolkit

The Victorian Department of Education has developed a Literacy Teaching Toolkit that explains benefits and features of Sociodramatic Play (interacting with others) that has value for teachers outside Victorian context. This toolkit offers practical advice that supports teachers to plan for, and observe, children's landing in this area. The principles that are discussed are often relevant to more than one context and can be adapted. As you reflect on your context think about the different ways that you could embed socio-dramatic play in your setting.

Voices from the field

Watch the video (4:57) below for additional viewing and voices from the field. The video *Assessing Language and Literacy* (Deakin & DET, 2021) captures the experience of multiple teachers, who share the assessment potentials they have found in play-based approaches. You will notice that they discuss students' oral language, stories, speaking and listening, vocabulary and reading throughout play-based learning.

Assessing Language and Literacy (Deakin & DET, 2021) (4:57)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=134#oembed-1

34

OBSERVING PLAY: IDENTIFYING THE LEARNING IN ORAL LANGUAGE, IMAGINARY AND DRAMATIC PLAY

By observing children's play teachers are able to notice the inclusion of cultural knowledge, physical skills, cognitive reasoning and an emerging use of contextual language. In the activity below the focus is on observing language and literacy abilities that the children demonstrate in their rich play.

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, listen

The following interaction focuses on a sample of students' imaginary and dramatic play. Our sample is taken from *An Early Years Foundation Stage: Children play at being travel agents* video (United Kingdom Department for Education) which presents three school students role playing as travel agents. **Watch the video (3.59) below** and take note of the many language and literacy abilities that the children demonstrate.

Keep in mind that while this video is narrated to observe particular aspects of the students' learning, there are many opportunities for assessing the students' language and literacy. We encourage you to write down any observations you make.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=137#oembed-1

Engage and extend

By rewatching the video with different lenses, you will be able to closely observe the complexity of language and literacy skills that students demonstrate during play. Let's extend your initial evaluation of the imaginary and dramatic play learning occurring in the travel agents play video above.

We analysed this video sample to look closely at a number of language and literacy abilities that are evident in the children's play in the travel agency. Move through the interactive below that provides four "Watch and Reflect experiences" in relation to the video. Each experience ends with our analysis or a prompt to capture your observations, which you can view by **clicking on the plus (+) icons**. Compare our analysis of the children's language and literacy abilities to your observations.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=137#h5p-12

It's important to note that the interactive prompt seeks to scaffold this experience and the notes that you made on the interactive are not permanent. Please ensure valuable notes and jottings that you have made are recorded in another notebook or device.

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Watch and Reflect interactive – student imaginary and dramatic play video and analysis

Watch and reflect 1 – speaking and listening

Plus (+) icon message: Read our analysis – speaking and listening

Did you notice two key language elements as you watched the video? Firstly, the questions and answers occurring in the play? Secondly, the ways in which children sound out their name. Speaking and listening are very evident in the interactions within the sample.

For example, the boy playing the role of the customer (James) demonstrates a number of language and literacy abilities. At the beginning of the session, he is able to seek clarification by asking the travel agent (Callum) if the word on the sign says "Open". This not only shows his ability to ask a question but also demonstrates that James understands features of print. Throughout the interaction, this student, James, is also able to listen to his friends during the play, using appropriate interaction skills to respond to them in this imaginary and dramatic play scenario. James is also able to identify rhyme, letter patterns and sounds in words. This student also uses his knowledge of phonics to sound out the sounds in his name to help the travel agent. You may also have noticed that James understood the days of the week and could negotiate with his peers.

Watch and reflect 2 – interacting and communicating

Plus (+) icon message: Read our analysis – interacting and communicating

Now that you have rewatched this video, what were the interactions and the ways in which children communicate with others that you observed?

For example, throughout this play segment, it is evident that James is able to listen to and respond to the communication of others using interaction skills, including listening, while others speak. Specifically, James is able to:

- listen to, remember and follow simple instructions
- sequence ideas in spoken texts (i.e., the story script being developed by all three students)
- listen for specific things, for example the main idea of a short statement, the details of a story, or to answer a given question
- participate in informal situations, for example play-based experiences which involve the imaginative use of spoken language
- ask and answer questions to clarify understanding.

Watch and reflect 3 – your observations about Callum and Eve

Plus (+) icon message: What were your observations about Callum and Eve? What language and literacies are used by them in this imaginary and dramatic play?

The learner is prompted to add their thoughts about language and literacies by typing into the interactive.

Watch and reflect 4 – your observations about all three students

Plus (+) icon message: Looking at all three students: Can they set the scene, are there distinct characters, are there problems with resolutions, how complex is the sequence of events?

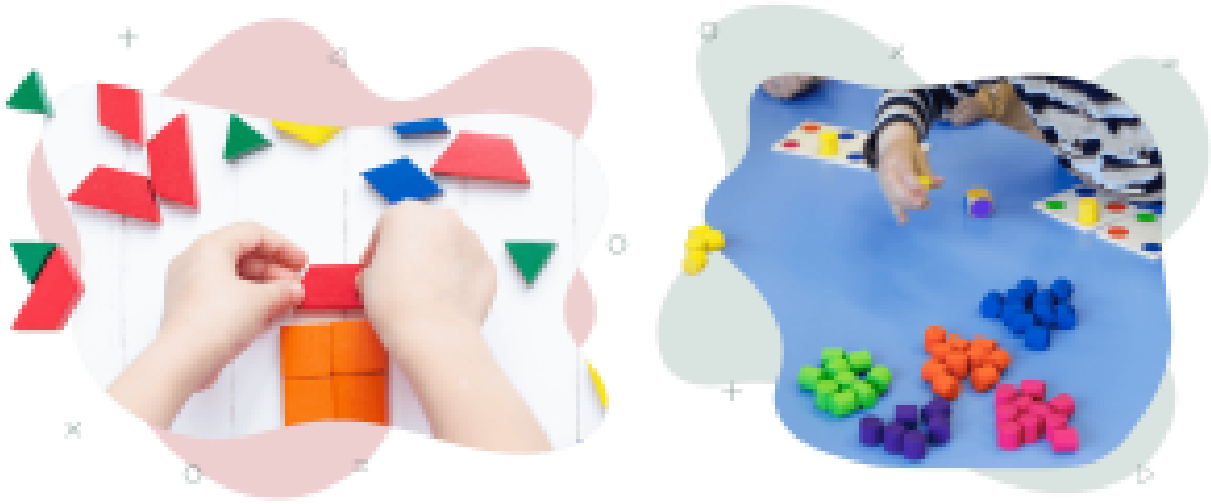
The learner is prompted to add their thoughts by typing into the interactive.

35

ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES: MATHEMATICAL CONVERSATIONS

Mathematics has developed from our social activity and as a way of making sense of our world. Play-based and inquiry learning in its many forms involves students in mathematical experiences because mathematics is part of their world and everyday lives. This is why mathematics has practical or 'real life' applications that play-based and inquiry learning can reveal. It is also where we see students' numeracy in action, as they draw on their mathematics skills and knowledge and use these purposefully in a range of situations.

Play for mathematics learning develops students' mathematical ideas through their language use, as the development of mathematical language enables students to reflect on their learning. Student language use, along with observation, is therefore a key indicator for assessing mathematical knowledge and mathematical thinking. An article by Caroline Cohrssen from the ECA Blog 'The Spoke' (2018) encourages teachers to think carefully about the role of questions and conversation when assessing play in mathematics.



Images: © Getty Images

Assessing mathematics in play

To assess mathematics, teachers have to know what to look for, and what learning can come next, so an understanding of mathematics and mathematical learning trajectories is central to effective assessment. Perry and Dockett (2010) highlight that for teachers to assess students' mathematical knowledge and understanding in play, they need "…mathematical knowledge; understanding the nature of students' play, particularly the characteristics of play that promote mathematical learning and thinking and awareness of the role of adults in promoting both play and mathematical understanding" (p. 715). The teacher's openness to the opportunities play presents for mathematics assessment is also important. Let's look more closely at these ideas.

We can make students' learning visible through the actions we take and the data we collect about what students do and create. Teachers need a range of strategies to gain access to students' current and developing mathematical knowledge and thinking, beginning with what mathematics they notice students engaging with in their play and inquiry.

How do teacher's assess mathematics outcomes?

Mathematical ideas shared during meaningful conversations

Teachers can see students playing with mathematics even when they are not playing with objects. Mathematical ideas lend themselves to play. Teachers can observe in the conversations that takes place between each other and teacher and student.

Move the slider to read the interactions between teachers and children. As you move through the examples, **consider how do teacher interactions support students' mathematical thinking.**

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=140#h5p-13

Ways of assessing mathematics

Although free play provides opportunities for mathematics learning, play that best supports mathematics learning, includes scaffolded dramatic and make-believe play (Clements, Sarama, Layzer, Unlu & Fesler, 2020), and is characterised as guided, where students experience choice and control in their play while the teacher brings the mathematics in the play into focus. In this role, the teacher uses questioning and discussion to guide explicit and extended exploration of the mathematics the students are engaging with and supports them to make connections between the mathematics and their play (Lee & Ginsburg, 2009).

36

ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES: EXPLORING MATHS THROUGH QUESTIONS

Language plays a critical role in mathematics and can often be overlooked in our approach to mathematical skills. Questions, conversations and interactions provide key opportunities for children to explore their play mathematically. The thinking that teachers catalyse through their interactions with children provide moments of extension, suggestions that support problem solving and reasoning all of which draws the child's attention to the conceptual ideas that are present in the play.

How do teacher's assess mathematics outcomes?

Asking mathematically rich questions

An essential role for a teacher as students explores, play with, and inquire about mathematical ideas, is to talk. Questions, particularly higher-order questions, and conversations that promote thinking critically and reflecting on the mathematical ideas and actions students are using, provide opportunities for assessment of and for learning, and encourage students to represent and think about their mathematical ideas in different ways.

As you look closely at the Questions starter interactive poster, **click on the plus (+) icons below** take note of the category of each question and the question starter. How do these questions support your practice?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=142#h5p-14

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Asking mathematically rich questions – interactive image hotspots.

This interactive provide questions that promote thinking critically and reflecting on the mathematical ideas and actions for students undertaking different activities. As you click on the hotspots, consider the category of each question and the question starter. How do these questions support your practice?

Images: © Getty Images

The interactivity

The scene has six images with a clickable hotspot above each image that provide a category for each question and a question starter/s.

Hotspot one: Suggesting a line of inquiry (Child playing with colourful matchsticks)

What would happen if add another stick and make a new shape? What shape could you make?

Hotspot two: Focusing attention (Child playing with colourful blocks)

Why did you choose the red rectangle?

What did you notice about it when you were choosing it?

Hotspot three: Eliciting strategies (Two children playing with sand)

How did you get the wheel to turn using the sand?

What was the first thing you did, and what did you do next?

Hotspot four: Connecting (Child cutting paper with scissors)

What is the difference between cutting the wiggly lines and cutting straight?

Do you always end up with a curved shape if you cut wiggly lines?

Hotspot five: Clarifying (Two children playing a board game)

Can you describe what dice roll you will need to win? Can you show me many spaces you would move?

What would it look like if I had two dice and I need 7 to win?

Hotspot six: Comparison (Child putting blocks in a buckets)

How many blocks do you think you have in each bucket?

What could you use if you had to swap all the blocks in one bucket for something else that weighs the same?

Stepping into playful assessment – numeracy and mathematics

Strategies teachers can use, that lend themselves to play and inquiry contexts, include ways of sparking students' dispositions for curiosity, pretence, sense of humour and playfulness (Gifford, 2005, as cited in DET, 2020b).

Research has found that statements made by the teacher, that engage these dispositions, provoke more discussion than questions, and statements can foster learning and provide opportunities for assessment.

In this interactive poster we would like you to consider the mathematical vocabulary that students use in their play. **Click on the plus (+) icons below** to explore playful mathematics from a "What do I see?" and "What do I hear?" perspective.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=142#h5p-15

OPEN TEXT VERSION CLOSE TEXT VERSION

Stepping into playful assessment: numeracy and mathematics – interactive image hotspots.

This interactive provide consider the mathematical vocabulary that students use in their play. As you click on the hotspots, consider how would approach each scenario from the perspectives of, "What do I see?" and "What do I hear?"

Images: © Getty Images

The interactivity

The scene has eight images with a clickable hotspot above each image. The eight images are evenly divided to sit underneath two categories:

Playful mathematics: What do I see?

1. Sort familiar objects (Children playing with wooden colourful shapes)
2. Shapes, position and pattern (Child drawing a picture with a house)
3. Counting (Child counting on their fingers)
4. Sorting (Child sorting beans into piles)

Playful mathematics: What do I hear?

1. Child holding cards with objects
2. Child playing with Play-Doh
3. Child playing in cupboard box
4. Child playing with toy gears

Hotspot one: Sort familiar objects (Children playing with wooden colourful shapes)

- Sort familiar two-dimensional objects in the environment
- Sort and classify familiar objects
- Create patterns with objects

Hotspot two: Shapes, position and pattern (Child drawing a picture with a house)

- Sort familiar two dimensional shapes
- Describe position
- Copy patterns with drawings

Hotspot three: Counting (Child counting on their fingers)

- Establish understanding of the processes of counting

Hotspot four: Sorting (Child sorting beans into piles)

- Sort familiar objects

Hotspot five: Listen – two aspects (Child holding cards with objects)

Listen for mathematical language **when children use** it in play. Don't forget to listen for opportunities **where you can use** this language to enrich children's play.

Examples of mathematical language:

- count, group, all, same, more, less, share, not enough, this many, put together, doubles, take away.

Hotspot six: Listen – two aspects (Child playing with Play-Doh)

Listen for mathematical language **when children use** it in play. Don't forget to listen for opportunities **where you can use** this language to enrich children's play.

Examples of mathematical language:

- big, small, full, empty, fit, cover, fill, empty, too much, holds more, holds less, around.
- thick, thin, long, short, longest, shortest, tall, heavy, light, heaviest, heavier.

Hotspot seven: Listen – two aspects (Child playing in cupboard box)

Listen for mathematical language **when children use** it in play. Don't forget to listen for opportunities **where you can use** this language to enrich children's play.

Examples of mathematical language:

- behind, top, bottom, over, under, inside, outside, beside, next to, up, down.
- straight, curved, pointy, wide, long, short, corner, fit, edge, side.
- turn, flip, slide, backwards, forwards, turn, left, right, this side, that side.

Hotspot eight: Listen – two aspects (Child playing with toy gears)

Listen for mathematical language **when children use** it in play. Don't forget to listen for opportunities **where you can use** this language to enrich children's play.

Examples of mathematical language:

- pattern, again, first, second, different, next, tomorrow, yesterday, today, beginning, end, middle, after, end.

Mathematics develops in socio-cultural contexts

Mathematics learning is a culturally embedded and socially mediated activity. Research has shown that children's free and spontaneous play are also important in students' development of mathematical graphics. Social play provides opportunities for students to draw from their cultural knowledge and create and use drawings, signs and representations to solve problems, and make and communicate mathematical meanings (Worthington, 2020). These informal mathematical representations can be used to gain insight into students' mathematical thinking, knowledge and understanding and can be harnessed by teachers, to assess their current knowledge and to use that assessment to plan for ways to promote further mathematical thinking.

37

ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITIES

Personal and social capabilities afford students the opportunity to be aware of the self, family and community. Such awareness contributes to children's connectedness, acceptance and experience of positive reciprocal relationships.

Porter (2016, as cited in DET, 2020c) notes that when young students develop a range of prosocial skills, they are more likely to build positive relationships with peers. These peer relationships promote students' feelings of belonging and acceptance, as well as positive self-esteem. Collectively, these personal and social capabilities and dispositions contribute to students being more likely to engage, learn and succeed in school.

Image: © Getty Images

How do teacher's assess personal and social capabilities?

Metacognitive and self-regulatory skills

Students also develop metacognitive and self-regulatory skills that are important for higher-order thinking, creativity, planning and evaluating learning, and problem-solving (Whitebread, Coltman, Jameson & Lander, 2009). These are capabilities that are important for students' self-management and social management.

In all types of play experiences, students are involved in collaboration with peers which facilitates friendships, promotes pro-social behaviours and attitudes, and fosters the experience of responding to peer suggestions and resolving conflict (Scott & Panksepp, 2013, as cited in DET, 2020c).

In terms of social skills, it is important to be alert to the contribution of culture and language to learning. Barblett and Maloney (2010) note when assessing social skills, teachers need to understand that students bring their own cultural lens to their learning and social experiences which informs the ways they interact with others. While many differences may be well known and obvious, there will be other unexpected areas of divergence.

38

ASSESSING PLAY ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Students enter school demonstrating many different play skills and levels of ability. For example, some students will be able to play with a group of friends, negotiate, debate, and cooperate with others. Some students will be able to pretend to be someone else for an extended period of time, including understanding what that person would say, act and do.

What are play skills?

Play skills are a collection of abilities that students demonstrate and apply when involved in play. As identified by Stagnitti and Paatsch (2018as cited in DET, 2020a), play skills include developing playscripts, sequencing play, object substitution, imposing meaning, role play, and metacognition. What is important for teachers to consider is the role peer collaboration and teacher guidance plays in supporting students during their play.

Image: © Getty Images

Read, look, or listen

Observing and assessing play

It's important to identify play skills in order to assess them. The interactivity below—based on the research of Stagnitti (2021) and Stagnitti and Paatsch (2018)—describes six types of play skills that you might see in a classroom. These six types of play are often found in imaginary and dramatic play.

Engage and extend

Look through your own childhood photos or those of your family. Or maybe you have video footage to explore. Can you observe any imaginary or dramatic play in those memories? Make a collage of photos or screenshots from video footage, then add notes to different images that outline which play skills were visible.

39

WHY ASSESS PLAY ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Assessing students' play, provides teachers with important information on how a student understands their world, how they interact with those around them, and how they build narrative and cognitive understandings. However, pretend play, is often not assessed for its own sake, but rather for the learning that is taking place, such as mathematics, literacy and science (Thompson & Goldstein, 2019). As such, the assessment of the student's actual play skills are overlooked.

Research shows a link between a student's level of play ability and language (Stagnitti, Paatsch, Nolan & Campbell, 2020), cognitive development (Karpov, 2005) and social skills (Reunamo et al., 2014). Many researchers and teachers observe student outcomes such as creativity, self-regulation, social skills, language and literacy, and social understandings during play (Lillard et al, 2013; Stagnitti, Paatsch, Nolan & Campbell, 2020). However, it is also important to assess the student's level of play abilities from simple skills, such as manipulating objects and exploring their surroundings, to the more complex abilities of imposing meaning on what they are doing and substituting an object for something else.

Watch the video (5:39) below. Professor Louise Paatsch gives a deeper overview of the research that shows the impact pretend play skills have on a student's broader learning and development.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=150#oembed-1

How to assess play abilities and skills

During pretend play, teachers can observe the student's level of play development within and

outside the classroom and can use these observations to report to parents and other teachers, to plan for future play sessions, and to determine their own role in supporting students to develop their play abilities. The research of Stagnitti and Paatsch (2018) has culminated in the development of The Pretend Play Checklist for Teachers (PPC-T), which is a non-standardised criterion-referenced assessment of a student's ability to play. This checklist which encompasses play skills with levels of ability, provides a framework for teachers to observe the play of children and assess the student's pretend play.

Engage and extend

Remember the children playing travel video from earlier? **Use the checklist as you watch the video (3:59) below**. This time play close attention to the pretend play skills that you can observe students demonstrate.

Reflect on the assessment methods you could implement to observe and analyse the learning the students are demonstrating through these play skills. Add these reflections to your learning note book or other reflective documentation space.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=150#oembed-2

40

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES RECAP

Chapter 4 – References

Barblett, L., & Maloney, C. (2010). Complexities of assessing social and emotional competence and wellbeing in young children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(2), 13-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911003500203

Clements, D. H., Sarama, J., Layzer, C., Unlu, F., & Fesler, L. (2020). Effects on mathematics and executive function of a mathematics and play intervention versus mathematics alone. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 51(3), 301-333. https://doi.org/10.5951/jresemtheduc-2019-0069

Cohrssen, C. (2018, June 6). Assessing children's understanding during play-based maths activities. *The Spoke: Early Childhoods Australia's Blog*. https://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/assessing-childrens-understanding-during-play-based-maths-activities/

Department of Education and Training (DET). (2020a). *Module 3.4 Assessment of play. State Government of Victoria*. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/Module-3-4-Assessment-of-play.aspx

Department of Education and Training (DET). (2020b). *Module 3.6 Assessing numeracy and mathematics. State Government of Victoria*. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/Module-3-6-Assessing-numeracy-and-mathematics.aspx

Department of Education and Training (DET). (2020c). *Module 3.7 Assessing Personal and Social Capability. State Government of Victoria*. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/profdev/Pages/Module-3-6-Assessing-numeracy-and-mathematics.aspx

Department of Education and Training (DET). (2022). *High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)*. State

Government of Victoria. https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/improve/Pages/hits.aspx

Karpov, Y. V. (2005). *The neo-Vygotskian approach to child development*. Cambridge University Press.

Lee, J. S., & Ginsburg, H. P. (2009). Early childhood teachers' misconceptions about mathematics education for young children in the United States. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 34(4), 37-45. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693910903400406

Lillard, A. S., Lerner, M. D., Hopkins, E. J., Dore, R. A., Smith, E. D., & Palmquist, C. M. (2013). The impact of pretend play on children's development: a review of the evidence. *Psychological bulletin*, 139(1), 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029321

Perry, B., & Dockett, S. (2010). What makes mathematics play?. *Proceedings of the 33rd annual conference of the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia*, Fremantle, Western Australia, Australia.

Reunamo, J., Lee, H.C., Wang, L.C., Ruokonen, I., Nikkola, T., & Malmstrom, S. (2014). Children's creativity in day care. *Early Child Development & Care*, 184(3), 617–632. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.806495

Stagnitti, K. (2021). *Learn to play therapy: principles, process and practical activities*. Learn to Play.

Stagnitti, K. E., Paatsch, L., Nolan, A., & Campbell, K. (2020). Identifying play skills that predict children's language in the beginning of the first year of school. *Early Years*, 1-15. doi:10.1080/09575146.2020.1865280

Thompson, B. N., & Goldstein, T. R. (2019). Disentangling pretend play measurement: Defining the essential elements and developmental progression of pretense. *Developmental Review*, 52, 24-41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2019.100867

Whitebread, D., Coltman, P., Jameson, H., & Lander, R. (2009). Play, cognition and self-regulation: What exactly are children learning when they learn through play?. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 26(2), 40-52.

Worthington, M. (2020). Mathematical Signs and Their Cultural Transmission in Pretend Play. In A. MacDonald, L. Danaia, & S. Murphy (Eds.), *STEM Education Across the Learning Continuum*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2821-7_4

PART V

ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

41

INTRODUCTION – ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

This page shares text accessible versions of different interactive elements in the Introduction. This includes transcripts for any audio-visual material such as vodcasts and videos that formed part of the introductory materials.

"Reading" this textbook with purpose: Play-based teaching approaches. Vodcast content and transcript

Introductory information on screen

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

"READING" THIS TEXTBOOK WITH PURPOSE. PLAY-BASED TEACHING APPROACHES.

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a single narrator sharing with you the following advice:

Hello and welcome. We are delighted that you've picked up this book and we hope there are going

to be some insights into the play-based classroom. As well as some teaching tips and perhaps some insights into how play-based learning can support you as a teacher, in particular in the area of assessment.

You will no doubt note that as you go through this text, there are in fact many times that you are asked to perhaps watch something, or listen to a podcast, or click on some hotspots in an interactive. We encourage you to immerse yourself in the different actions and activities that are part of enjoying this textbook. We hope that as you move through the content, or perhaps focus on a chapter that is of most interest to you, you will be able to make the most of those opportunities to reflect on your learning, write down an example, or record a thought, to solidify some of the understandings that really are emerging for you.

We hope that the interactive elements of the book in fact privilege you as a reader – by giving you different ways of thinking about the play-based environment, as well as different viewpoints.

So enjoy!

The vodcast then finishes with a fade to black screen.

42

CHAPTER 1 - ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

This page shares text accessible versions of different interactive elements in our first chapter. This includes transcripts for any audio-visual material such as video podcasts and videos that formed part of Chapter 1 learning.

Introduction to Chapter 1: What is play-based learning, Engaging with this chapter – transcript

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

WHAT IS PLAY-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING. ENGAGING WITH THIS CHAPTER.

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a single narrator sharing with you the following advice:

This first chapter plays a fundamental role in this book as it really situates what we mean by play-based learning. You'll notice that part of this chapter looks closely at definitions and provides a language to start thinking about what we refer to as a play-based environment.

And I think that like in any good fundamental chapter, you'll also note we start talking about the teacher's role at the benefits for learning. And these threads are really so essential to any dialogue about play-based learning its benefits for children.

We hope as you get through chapter one those fundamental elements put you in a very good place to consider some of the discussions that are going to emerge in the following chapters. Just as we encouraged in the introduction, and I'm about to do again now, please make sure you get on to those interactives and you use the different resources that are made available to you throughout the text.

The vodcast finishes with a fade to black screen.

Play and Learning video with Dr Robertson and Paatsch – Play within the primary classroom. Vodcast content and transcript

Introductory information on the screen

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the appearance of photographic images of Dr. Natalie Robertson and Louise Patch.

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a discussion between the pair sharing the following advice:

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Hi everyone and welcome to this discussion on play within the primary class. My name is Doctor Natalie Robertson and I'm a senior lecturer at Deakin University. I'm joined today by Louise Patch who is a professor at Deakin University.

We have both researched children play and play-based and inquiry learning in the early and middle years of childhood. In national and international contexts.

Louise Patch: Hi everyone, thanks for listening.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: So to begin, we would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We would like to pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

So Louise, we're holding a discussion about play and its relationship with learning today. What do you think? Best explains the concept of what play is?

Louise Patch: Well, what a huge question to answer Natalie.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Sorry.

Louise Patch: Play can be just so many different things to different people. And for me it's the nature of play, that makes its meaning really complicated and it's multifaceted.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: It is, isn't it?

Louise Patch: I see where students inquire about the world around them, using their imagination to explore or discover, collaborate, improvise or create. And it's an engaging experience for young children where they can ask questions, build narrative. They build their literacy skills, they can design investigations.

Louise Patch: What else? Explore mathematical and scientific concepts. They co-construct knowledge of the world around them. And what we also see is huge opportunities for interacting and communicating with others. And that's how they form their peer relationships, as well as they interact and communicate.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yeah, and those peer relationships and the process of interacting and communicating. It's such a great way for children to build their resilience and their self regulation as well.

Louise Patch: Absolutely.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: They make those interpretations and form explanations, and form such great arguments based on their discoveries as well. I think that's such a great way to explain what the key elements of play is.

Louise Patch: Absolutely.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: What I also find is important to understand about play. And perhaps could also be the most complicated aspect, is that it's not defined by anyone experience.

Louise Patch: No, not at all.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Play incorporates a wide range of activities. So you might have children that are engaged in play when they're playing construction with blocks.

They might be in play, when they're running around on the playground, running climbing, swinging. They could be wrestling on the grass with their friends, or maybe creating artefacts, or creating a dance.

It's just so wide in variety, but I think that the most important aspect that we need to consider about play, is that there's always, or almost always, a component of imagination involved.

Louise Patch: That's such an important point, I think Natalie. I think in their play-based and inquiry learning approach in the classroom.

The main aims are to use your imaginary context and for students, you know their internal motivation. To support that inquiry of their world and through these experiences students are using their imagination. They're learning.

And I think when teachers identify this learning. They can support these students in what they're playing, but also in other parts of the curriculum as well.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yeah, and it reminds me of when we visited that school last year and we saw children involved in a play-based and inquiry approach.

Louise Patch: That's right, yes. When they were learning about mammals. Oh yes, that's right.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: So they would be introduced to the concepts of mammals, through a whole group discussion.

Louise Patch: That's right. And then they had the small stations.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yes yes. So they were set up by the teacher. And remember they had that science area.

Louise Patch: Oh they had the lab coats.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yes and they would be able to learn in that section, more about mammals through books or the computer or iPads.

Louise Patch: And then they had the toys and the blocks as well, that's right.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yeah yeah, and they were prompted by the resources in that section to build something and then act out with the toys.

Louise Patch: Absolutely. I remember that classroom really well Natalie. I also remember that this classroom had two other important features. I think for me the first was about the powerful role of the imagination played in the student's enquiries, and I think the second was the role of the teacher.

Such a critical role for me, because I saw that teacher how she made the students play, and they're learning really purposeful.

She used a whole lot of integrated teaching approaches, that allowed the students the time to explore with their peers, but also time on their own.

She also knew when she needed to step in though. She wasn't just watching them. She stepped in, she asked more questions. She provided some direction. And she also prompted them to engage multiple learning areas while in the play.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yeah, it was truly amazing and I remember they were writing their findings, discoveries and stories up from their play into books. Which was corrected by the teacher using the Victorian Curriculum English focus areas for writing.

Louise Patch: Yeah, that's right. They were making assessments and while she was doing that, she was looking at the children's text structure, their punctuation and expression of ideas.

She was also looking at prompting and adding a problem, that they could then write about. And

then further to this, the teachers were getting involved in the students play, so they always supported them.

Whether it was, as I say, prompting with a problem and therefore the children were then saying, "Oh, we've got to resolve this."

And they had to work it out and problem solve. So the teacher was also making language assessments and she was also supporting general capabilities, particularly the one around the social and emotional.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Very, very integrated and I think I also noticed the mathematics in there too. Students were recording measurements of animal footprints and counting incorporated into their play enquiries as well.

Louise Patch: Absolutely, there's so many opportunities for the children's learning, when they were using play-based and inquiry.

And I suppose this is why so many researchers that we know suggest that when you examine children's play you can actually gain insight, into their conceptual awareness of a topic.

The link with their social capabilities, the link to their communication language and cognitive abilities.

As well as their mathematical concepts, numeracy, etc. And I think we can capture both the processes and the outcomes of children's learning.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yeah, so I'm finding that there's a lot of common misconceptions of play. For example, I'm constantly hearing adults saying how fun or joyful plays the young children and that children learn through play because they find it to be fun. However, play is not always a place of joy or pleasure for children.

Louise Patch: No, not always.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Sometimes, for example, it could bring up some strong social biases, or children could be exploring some complex and challenging ideas. Often for example, children will be exploring the concept of death, or they'll be exploring concepts and fear that they've experienced, they've heard about or they have seen on TV.

Louise Patch: Absolutely agree with you.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: And so I just worry, that such a romanticised view of play just being fun. Can take away that significance and depth of the experience for the child. And also, we can't assume that children are having fun when they're playing.

Louise Patch: Oh absolutely, I remember one of the schools I was out watching the children play and they were working with their topic of safari and building their knowledge around mammals, and they were all allocating roles. One girl said she didn't want to be a cheetah, which was very funny, but the other children told her that only boys. Because boys were fast. And the girl said that there

were girl cheetahs in the wild and that she was a faster runner than Daniel. Who was a boy in the class.

Anyway, there was conflict and they had to resolve it, but she ended up being a zebra, so.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Oh no, was she upset?

Louise Patch: Yes, absolutely, but she did not mean it. You know they worked it out and they end up resolving it and that's part of that whole conflict resolution. That's really important for them in social skills.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yeah, yeah. Look, I've seen very similar situations unfold as well. Children can be left out of the play altogether. But as you said, that's an important part of building up those general capabilities in social and personal skills. So I think that it's just important for us as adults to just acknowledge that children will internalise experiences and knowledges during play.

Louise Patch: There's another common misconception that I often hear too. It's around that whole notion that play-based learning is led holy by the child. And the adults have a minimal role in their play and learning. And they see it kind of as a time for just free play. And children can do what they like.

Dr. Natalie Robertson: Yes, I know in my research I often find that this free play approach will often become a situation where the teacher then becomes a security guard, overseeing the children. And intervening only if there's a behavioural issue or if someone's safety is at risk. And it creates a bit of a strange situation, because there's that big belief by teachers and adults that free play best supports children engagement in play. Because they're giving children all this time to run free and interact and play with each other.

However, what I found is that children are less engaged in play and learning. When there's not an appropriate or good balance of play. Where the child leads the experience, and situations also where the teacher gets involved and guide children in the experience as well.

Louise Patch: In the research that I've done with Andrew Nolan. We've seen that was a real issue for the teachers to say, what is my role in this play? And what we saw was that those teachers, that actually became in certain situations the player.

It was really important then for the children to see what a player does. To role model that and then they will be able to move it into their own play context later on.

So the adult has a crucial role here. And probably one of the most challenging parts for teachers is actually to know when to come in and when to remove and when to observe and just look at the children playing.

The vodcast finishes with a fade to black screen.

Differentiation in Practice. Video content and transcript

Introductory information on the screen

The short video begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

DIFFERENTIATION IN PRACTICE. CHAPTER 1.

Narrated content

The video has Foundation teacher Elise Fraser, speaking to camera with the following advice:

To differentiate our learning for diverse learners, it's making sure that you do have different opportunities for them. So just because we as an adult might get really super excited about a scene you've setup, doesn't mean other children will.

Other times it might be that we've picked up on some language or something they're needing more support in. And so we might set up a play scene for that or a mini-world to direct that language, that then builds that confidence for them to then take it and use it at other times as well.

We've got different settings. So our role-play setting, construction. But we've also then – it's the hands-on in other ways as well.

It looks like children engaged. That's the main benefit we've definitely seen, is that everyone's in there having a go. Or if we do notice something, that's when we'll jump in with some guided play just to get them rolling.

My role as the teacher, it can differentiate. So sometimes it is that guide if you're needing to help them along the way.

Sometimes you're in there as the character. So they can pull you in and say: "Oh, you're the robber now!" And if not, I'm changing into another role as well. And sometimes the mediator between the sharing and those sorts of things.

But it's those life skills that we're just trying to build them up for.

If we're looking at say, a literacy or some oral language, sometimes I do need to be more of that guide to bring that language in.

Other times, if it's in a supermarket setting: "Can you go get me four apples…"and you're bringing that counting in.

So guiding and teaching. But other times it can be: "Hey, you know, you're this…" Putting on a superhero cape and you've turned into Superman. And yet you're going along and having some fun with them as well.

Play-based learning has many benefits for children's learning. It comes down to also just that engagement. Anytime that they're given that opportunity, they're in having a go, they're directing it, they're leading it, they're bringing others in who they might not consider friends out in the playground.

But also it's just that again, you get to hit so many things from the curriculum, so your oral language, but also those other skills of sharing, even just problem-solving. Oh, so you know: "The fire's hot!… What should we do?" Let's step back. Giving those opportunities as well.

So as an adult or a teacher in this space, it's just seeing that everyone's having a chance and an opportunity guiding them if they need it.

The video finishes with a fade to black screen.

43

CHAPTER 2 - ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

This page shares text accessible versions of different interactive elements in the Introduction.

This includes transcripts for any audio-visual material such as podcasts and videos that formed part of Chapter 2 learning.

Introduction to Chapter 2: Implementing play-based approaches in classrooms. Engaging with the chapter. Vodcast content and transcript

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

IMPLEMENTING PLAY-BASED APPROACHES IN CLASSROOMS. ENGAGING WITH THIS CHAPTER.

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a single narrator sharing with you the following advice:

Chapter 2 is all about the teacher. The emphasis is on the role of the teacher in terms of interactions with the children. But also the role of the teacher in being able to notice or observe the learning that's taking place.

And as you start thinking about the teachers' role, you'll notice that some of this chapter also looks at the environment. How does the environment and the resources you choose support children with their learning. And how do play based approaches embrace the affordances, both indoors and outdoors.

It's interesting to notice as you read through this chapter, there will be times that we ask you to think about your own experience of when you've observed children playing. But we've also got some interesting stories coming from teachers. Who are practising today in Australia. Have a listen. Think about some of the opportunities they've encountered using play-based approaches. But also think about the strategies that they are that they found particularly useful.

The vodcast finishes with a fade to black screen.

Interactive HITS video experiences – transcripts

An H5P interactive course presentation containing eight videos that cover different High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS). The information from the videos is to encourage you to consider how teachers can use interactions, planning and teaching strategies in an integrated way to support students' learning in a play-based learning approach. Below are the transcripts for the videos on HITS.

HITS 1: Setting goals – transcript

Identify your goals for play and inquiry learning. Whether they are about extending your students' play, deepening their learning, or both.

As you get to know your students' interests and capabilities, you will be able to move from surface to deep learning, as well as provide challenges.

Knowing your goals, you will be able to assess students' progress towards them, as well as knowing where to go next.

HITS 2: Structuring lessons – transcript

Think carefully about how you plan for and structure play-based and inquiry learning experiences. This includes organising play spaces according to the numbers of children you want to be involved.

- What resources will you need?
- Are you going to provide opportunities for students to access and select resources for themselves?

- What concepts and ideas do you want to be the focus of the experiences?
- How will you introduce these concepts and ideas and expand on them?

Be ready to identify spontaneously arising teaching opportunities that were not in your plan. Feel free to adapt your lesson structure on the spot if you think that will lead to further learning.

HITS 3: Explicit teaching – transcript

Teachers may take an explicit teaching role in play-based inquiry learning experiences.

Sometimes teachers may need to demonstrate or model play and social actions.

For example, negotiating roles or story lines in pretend play. Or introducing and exploring concepts around block play, such as planning constructions or the importance of strong foundations and balance to counter the effects of gravity.

HITS 4: Worked example – transcript

Teachers can present an example for students to work towards in their play-based an inquiry learning.

This can include the provision of examples, explanations, and demonstrations to scaffold your students' play and inquiry processes as they work towards meeting a new challenge.

Effective use of worked examples means that students acquire new skills and develop independence in working on the task. Perhaps even extending the experience with their own ideas.

HITS 5: Collaborative learning – transcript

In setting up stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environments where students are encouraged to play, learn, and work together, collaborative learning is promoted. Students are encouraged and empowered to use their own sense of agency and voice to negotiate their own learning.

This strategy also links back to the basic premise of pretend play, involving students stepping in and out of negotiated roles and rules of play together, in imagined scenarios based on many real-life experiences.

With peers and adults, students connect cognitive understandings with associated emotions and re-imagine how this can be adapted and created into something new. This supports collaborative problem-solving, creating a product or understanding new knowledge.

HITS 6: Multiple exposures – transcript

One of the fundamental aspects of a play-based and inquiry learning approach is to encourage students and teachers to co-design, co-construct, and set up multiple and varied learning environments.

With the addition of space and opportunity, students are further encouraged and enabled to work through their understandings of new topics, concepts, and knowledge in these rich, self-constructed environments.

Students learn best when given ample time to be creative and imaginative in their thinking.

In providing the opportunity to explore knowledge and understandings through multiple and varied experiences, students have the ability to modify existing situations into new ways of thinking and doing. This facilitates the opportunity to move from superficial to deep levels of understanding in their learning.

HITS 7: Questioning – transcript

The use of authentic, open-ended questioning is used to ascertain students' prior knowledge or their funds of knowledge. Students bring past knowledges to their learning experiences.

Rather than assuming what your students already know. It's important to observe, assess, and analyse this information preferably in an informal formative way, through a range of individual or small group conversational discussions.

It's also important to demonstrate to students that the questions you ask as the teacher, a genuinely seeking the students' responses, not merely gathering data for later use. A sense of belonging and connection with the teacher and their peers can be further encouraged through this process of asking engaging questions.

HITS 9: Metacognitive strategies – transcript

Play-based and inquiry learning creates the optimal learning environment for students to re-examine what they already know, reflect on how they know it, and think about what else I would like to learn. They can also reflect on how they want to learn about a topic or a concept.

In this way, the students are self-reflecting on their learning and deeply thinking about the processes, that they have undertaken to problem-solve and creatively work through their own learning progress.

Student voice, and sense of agency come to the fore when they're highly motivated to learn. Especially when the learning is based on their observed and discussed interests, capabilities, and funds of knowledge.

Role of the Teacher. Video content and transcript

Introductory information on the screen

The short video begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PLAY. CHAPTER 2.

Narrated content

Then another animated title screen appears reading:

IMPROVING OUTCOMES. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PLAY.

The video then has principle Jenny Deeble, speaking to camera with the following advice:

Foundation teachers have been telling me in the last few years, how much richer our oral program has become by using a play-based approach.

We've had a regular group of teachers who've all grown and worked together to develop a really strong program. They share resources, they share ideas, they come together to discuss what's working, what's not working. And they feel as if they're getting a lot more experiences from the children and from there children express themselves through their written work and through their communication skills as well. And they're seeing some real improvements in that area.

I think a play-based approach, especially with our inquiry and they are transdisciplinary it. So it's not just working through ways to improve literacy skills, but we can incorporate a lot more of the STEM, lots of numeracy talk comes out of that.

We do maths talks through those. Getting children to use those experiences to develop their math concepts. As well is really a powerful tool to use, the teachers are finding really successful.

Then another animated title screen appears reading:

PLAY IN PRACTICE. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PLAY.

The video then has Foundation teacher Marie Apostolou, speaking to camera with the following advice:

I always think about what I'm going to put out. For me today when I was working on the numeracy,

we've been talking about tenths frames. And I actually had ten trains. But I wanted to see who was going to make that connection. Who was going to look at those ten trains and go… "Ah, that looks like our tenth frame."

We can put our Unifix. We can match it with the cards when the numbers that were there.

So I got to sit around with that table and ask them questions:

If you've got three teddies in that tenth frame. How many are left?

Who can subitise? We've got three teddies here, I have four teddies here. Can you tell me how many teddies are sitting in that ten train and straight away.

That's automatic assessment.

I go, yep. We're subitising at the moment. They're learning how to do it. They're able to do it, or maybe they're not able to do it. How can I help them?

Effective strategies for my classroom are about planning and having a reason for the things that you bring out for play-based learning. Really thinking about what is it you're teaching in your classroom. Some of the activities I bring out, are to support things that we've taught and I want children to consolidate that concept.

Sometimes it's a new concept that we're learning. For example, pattern, something we're learning at the moment. So this morning I had a few things out and while they were playing and we were talking about different things. It was in the cafe actually. I actually picked up an ice-cream and there were some colours on top and I said to them, does anyone say a pattern?

And so then I know what is a pattern? So I asked a few children. They were all jumping in and give me answers. Now we were all playing, but at that same time, I was assessing.

I was able to see. Who's able to answer? Who's able to tell me what a pattern is? Who's able to show me and you're not sure bet or a pattern is, you actually can't show me.

Then one of the students actually got up and, even though she wasn't able to explain what a pattern is, she was able to show me what a pattern is.

Then another animated title screen appears reading:

PLANNED CHOICES. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PLAY.

The video then has Foundation teacher Marie Apostolou, speaking to camera with the following advice:

Even though as a teacher, you plan it, it's structured, but, they get to choose what they want to do.

For example, with the writing on the whiteboard, the sounds. Now the two children actually that were doing the writing, I would've never thought that that would be something that they would choose. That they would actually choose to sit with a whiteboard and do sounds.

When y'know, there were blocks out. There were other things that they could've done. So, that was their choice. They wanted to do it.

Now at the moment, Foundation students are very wary about writing. They're not sure, but putting the paper and pencil there, we actually had a little bit of a discussion about:

Why would I put a … ?

Why would I put paper and pencil out of the café?

They came up with, "Oh, we could write a menu Marie." Or "the chef could write a recipe."

And even children that are not writing as such, they were doing little scribbles. And they had their pictures and so they knew exactly what the list was. It's giving them that choice and that opportunity where you know what? I don't know how to write yet, but I'm still going to have a go at something that looks like a menu or a recipe. Having that choice there. And different choices.

They're still learning, but they've got the choice to choose what they want to focus on.

Then another animated title screen appears reading:

FINDING THEIR INTERESTS. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PLAY.

The video then has Foundation teacher Toby Marquette, speaking to camera with the following advice:

Seeing what they actually gravitate towards, especially first few weeks, when we're just putting different things out and then just seeing what they go to and then seeing whether we can make that better. Different.

Did they like that? Did they go near that?

Sometimes they need a little bit of a push. They'll, generally go to things that are quite familiar for them. For instance, like Lego or things that they really enjoy. Sometimes you need to sort of prompt them a little bit to get out of their comfort zone a little bit.

So yeah, we've tried to do a bit of social engineering in that way by pairing them up with different people, asking that they go and meet with different people. So therefore they have different interests. And that's worked really well, actually.

Then another animated title screen appears reading:

OPEN ENDED AND EXPLICIT PLAY. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN PLAY.

The video then has Foundation teacher Toby Marquette, speaking to camera with the following advice:

We try to have a mixture of both. Sometimes the open-ended activities can actually become more explicit. We opened up our doors and we're all together. So we will go around and we will explain how you might use the different things.

In some ways, it's sort of open-ended and explicit. So the children can be explicit with what we've actually told them what to do. For those kids who maybe feel a little bit unsure about what to do or how to start something. And then we might stop them during a session. Show the kids what other kids have been doing.

"So, wow, look at this amazing thing that this child has done."

It's sort of, it's open-ended, but then it is explicit. You are, sort of, showing them maybe a way that they hadn't thought of before.

The video fades to a black screen with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen, then finishes with a fade to black screen.

44

CHAPTER 3 - ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

This page shares text accessible versions of different interactive elements in the third chapter.

This includes transcripts for any audio-visual material such as video podcasts and videos that formed part of chapter's learning.

Introduction to Chapter 3: Assessing student learning through play-based approaches. Engaging with the chapter. Vodcast content and transcript

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH A PLAY-BASED APPROACH. ENGAGING WITH THE CHAPTER.

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a single narrator sharing with you the following advice:

Hello everyone and welcome to Chapter 3.

The focus of this chapter is a close look at assessment, in terms of the general principles that enable us to define what assessment is, but also in terms of the specific assessment methods that support teachers to identify the learning that's taking place in play.

And of course when children are playing the wonderful cross curricular nature of play, supports teachers to observe, listen and interact with children. And actually develop quite a holistic view of the child and their capabilities and interests.

It also is a really wonderful vehicle play, for children to be able to share their knowledges. Whether it's through language, or collaboration or as they work with a resource.

And some of those knowledges and capacities are ones that really wouldn't come out in everyday routines or experiences. But naturally come out in the course of play. For example, dramatic play provides a landscape for children to do, say, imagine and act in ways that perhaps aren't part and parcel of the everyday in a classroom.

So as you consider these things while you're working through this chapter. Pay close attention to those different assessment methods, and perhaps consider them in relation to assessment methods that you're currently using.

The vodcast finishes with a fade to black screen.

Module 3: Assessing Learning Through Play

Introductory title screens

The short video begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

Assessing Student Learning Through Play.

Narrated content

The video then has Foundation teacher Marie Apostolou, speaking to camera with the following advice:

I've been teaching the Foundation years for six years now. In the past we used to have discovery time. A lot of people think of that as free time.

So the concerns I had with play-based learning was – are the children still going to be able to learn while they are playing?

Am I going to be able to see growth in children and in what areas am I going to see it?

So assessment was very – was new and it was something that worried me because I thought, well, I don't wanna waste childrens' time because there's so much to get through.

But I have found that it's actually authentic assessment.

So as a Foundation teacher, when you pull up a child and you ask them to do sounds for example.

So you say, "write me the 'sss' sound", "write me the 'a' sound". You're pulling aside and you're doing it as one-on-one.

Whereas today, perfect example, even though it was the numeracy table, I had whiteboards out and two of my students were doing our new sounds. They were already copying the sounds from the whiteboard, from the big whiteboard onto the little whiteboard.

So then I was able to go up straightaway, go, "Oh, you're not doing numbers" and they went "No, but we're doing our new sounds."

So then I asked them straightaway, "What was that sound?" "What's that sound?" So already I know which sounds they know – which sounds they don't know.

The video fades to a black screen with a State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Training logo appearing on screen, then finishes with a fade to black screen.

Connecting with Parent About Assessment

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

CONNECTING WITH PARENTS ABOUT ASSESSMENT. CHAPTER 3.

Narrated content

The video then has Foundation teacher Marie Apostolou, speaking to camera with the following advice:

When communicating to parents about assessing play-based learning, we do it in different ways. One way is we have displays outside our classroom where they see photos of what their children are doing, but also after play-based learning or sometimes in-between.

Sometimes we stop play and we do a bit of a scribe. We have a look at our goal:

- What is our goal?
- What have we achieved so far?

And I write down what children say. So children will tell me what they're doing and I'll put a name next to it so their parents know what they're getting out of it. But when parents see the pictures, they understand that it's not just playing. They actually understand that there's planning behind it. They understand there is a purpose to the play. It's not we're just walking in and we're just playing.

At the beginning of the year, some parents had the opportunity to see this and how it works. Also during our information evening at the beginning of the year, we went through and we explained what play-based learning is all about.

That there are goals, there are learning intentions. It's not just free-for-all and see what happens. We have, but we haven't jumped on yet, but we're going to be using Seesaw, which is something we used last year with our Preps. And it's just sending photos out to parents so that they could say that their child is playing with someone different.

Their child is using vocab. Their child is learning while they're playing, what it is that they're playing. And we actually talk about the things that we do. And then when we have reflection time with the children, we actually scribe for the children:

- What did you learn?
- What did you learn at the you know – today – during play-based learning?
- What did you learn when you were playing so-and-so?
- What did you learn when you were working in that area?

So when you have children, when I talk about things that they've learned, they then take that home. We have some children that are writers. Like, I have a little boy in my class this year who's just beginning to sound out words. So today when he actually was talking to a group about apple seeds being poisonous. And I said, "Well, that's really interesting. "And I said, "Well maybe you can write it in our reflective diary?" Which is a big diary that we have at the front that we usually scribe for them. And he was happy and he went and wrote on there.

So he wrote the statement. And that is a big learning diary that we use in the classroom. And kids, as we go along, students will have that opportunity. They draw pictures and they stick it on. And then I scribe:

- What did we learn?
- What did we get out of today's play-based learning activities?
- What did you learn when you went to the maths table?
- What did you learn on the table that had all the food there, etc.

So then when parents come in, they actually get to see that. When we have Seesaw, we will be posting up photos and what children say. So they can't come back and think well, my child's not learning, because they are.

The video fades to a black screen with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen, then finishes with a fade to black screen.

How to get into Play-Based Learning: Part 4 – Assessment in a Playful Classroom

Introductory title screens

The short video begins with an animated title screen appears reading:

PART 04. Assessment in a Playful Classroom

Narrated content

The video then has a narrator speaking over video of teacher running a class with children:

Narrator: The purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. How can we find out where students are in their understanding, and to meet them where they're at? Evidence of learning can be collected in multiple ways, including through observation of learners, conversations with learners, and examples of student work. A concept map is one way to capture student knowledge and wonderings about a topic. Students can create a map at the beginning of a unit, and expand on that original as they learn and explore.

Katie's students use journaling to document their science investigations. Pedagogical documentation captures student thinking and makes it visible. Katie observes her students, and documents their daily explorations with notes and photographs. Later in the day, she will ask the students to help her interpret what she recorded.

Katie: What was happening here Aleeza? What did you think about them?

Student: They're cool and I like how they go around and help us by making soil.

Narrator: Katie's students have provided some interpretations of their investigations:

At first, Katie wanted to record almost everything, which was impossible. Establishing a guiding

question has helped Katie to be more selective in her documentation. Currently, she's trying to help her students reflect on their learning.

Katie: So tell me a little bit more.

Student: Well, we're going to make the castle.

Narrator: Katie considers her audience when deciding how to display her documentation. Annotated photos of student work are placed as student height. Samples of student work are assembled in binders, which can be taken home and shared with students' families.

Katie has allocated two minutes each day for documentation. Later, she will review her documentation with students or other educators, and together they add notes and captions.

Katie uses the ICE model to classify qualitative observations, and to meet students where they're at. ICE can also be used to classify qualitative observations into a rubric. Idea verbs are easily found in the Ontario Science and Technology curriculum.

Katie: Can you feel it? I want you to feel it. What does it feel like?

Student: Sharp.

Katie: It feels a little sharp. What else?

Narrator: As student learning deepens, they begin to see relationships between concepts.

Katie: Look at it. Why don't we put a little bit of paper towel on top and see if it can get out from there. Oh, look at that! Do you see it?

Narrator: Extensions get students thinking beyond, applying concepts to their worldview. Sample educator prompts include predicting outcomes, or proposing solutions to problems.

Katie: What do you think would happen if I put blue food colouring in here.

Student: It would turn blue.

Katie: Why do you think the celery stalk would turn blue?

[Students suggest possible reasons.]

Katie: The celery is a stem, right?

Narrator: A large portion of the Ontario elementary progress report card is devoted to non cognitive abilities, which, educators nurture by integrating play and inquiry into their classroom. Research shows that persistence and perseverance are predictors of future success.

Student: I found the mouth!

Narrator: What does innovation look like at the primary level? To learn more about assessment, a good starting point is the Ministry of Education document, Growing Success.

This document describes how observations, conversations, and student products all provide evidence of learning.

In the next video in this series, learn about how to incorporate the curriculum into a playful classroom, how to nurture student curiosity, and some tips for collaborating with families.

The video finishes with a fade to a white screen with the Ontario Science Centre logo appearing on screen.

An Insightful View of Student Learning

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

An Insightful View of Student Learning

Narrated content

The video then has Foundation teacher Maria Mandilas, speaking to camera with the following advice:

During play-based learning, sometimes we are lucky enough to witness things that we normally wouldn't otherwise see.

We might discover that we have a writer or a reader. Somebody who has a better understanding of some maps concepts that we normally wouldn't see.

So this helps us plan for those children, to their point of need in the classroom for literacy and numeracy ways that we can extend them and in the same way, ways that we can support them.

The video fades to a black screen with a State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Training logo appearing on screen, then finishes with a fade to black screen.

45

CHAPTER 4 - ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

Chapter 4 – Accessible Content Appendix

This page shares text accessible versions of different interactive elements in the fourth chapter. This includes transcripts for any audio-visual material such as video podcasts and videos that formed part of chapter's learning.

Introduction to Chapter 4: Different ways of looking at assessment through play-based approaches. Engaging with the chapter. Vodcast content and transcript

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

ASSESSING PLAY ABILITIES. ENGAGING WITH THE CHAPTER.

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a single narrator sharing with you the following advice:

Chapter 4 looks closely at assessment and assessment potentials that are in play, the lens that is used in this chapter privileges learning outcomes. Then teachers are intentional about the objectives and learning outcomes that they are looking at and that shapes the play that is focused on. Learning objectives enable teachers to engage with the play in a very specific way, in terms of the questions, materials, supports and their own role as players, playing alongside children.

One of the key features of this chapter is that we do spend a little bit of time looking at assessing language and literacy in play, looking at assessing mathematics in play, and looking at assessing social and personal capabilities.

We are also going to ask you as you move through this chapter to really consider your role, the teacher's role in assessing children as they play and the ways in which this can be done, quite organically. However, in terms of your own practice quite specifically privilege learning outcomes. Keep in mind this key question, what is the learning outcome for this experience and your activity?

It doesn't mean that it isn't open ended, and it doesn't mean that the children can't extend their play on their own. It does, however, mean that you're very purposeful in what you're assessing and what you're noticing or looking for.

The vodcast finishes with a fade to black screen.

Assessing Language and Literacy

Introductory title screens

The short video begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

Assessing Language and Literacy.

Narrated content

The video then has Foundation teacher Marie Apostolou, speaking to camera with the following advice:

You know, we have the hospitals, the fire brigade. Lots of language comes out of that as well.

So I get to hear the oral language that children are using – the vocab.

Do we all know what a hospital is?

Why we have fire brigades?

So, lots of playing. Lots of playing, lots of questioning for me.

The felt stories. We've been talking a lot about stories at the moment, about what happens at the beginning of a story.

- What happens in the middle of a story?
- What happens at the end of the story?

And I had three little pigs and Little Red Riding Hood there. And I said to them, you can change the end.

Because for me it's like, okay, let's see when I come back to you and I ask you, "Is it the end that you changed? Have you understood that that's the end part of the story?"

So that's assessing along the way. So there's always lots of planning that goes into what comes out. And it's about concepts that they're learning in the classroom. The other assessment I find really and it's probably the most authentic assessment is the speaking and listening. Because you're actually walking around and you're listening to children speak.

- Can they speak in full sentences?
- Is it grammatically correct?
- Listening to other children ask questions.
- Are they actually answering the question?
- Are they answering correctly?
- Are they answering in full sentences?

So that's really important in Foundation. I find play-based learning is the most authentic way to find to actually assess that area. So even when we're reporting for me as a teacher, I always say it's not just the conversations that I have with the child.

When we're doing play-based learning:

- How are they communicating?
- How they speaking, what vocab are they using?

We have goals. Every time that we do play-based learning, we have a different goal. And today one of our goals was to create, to create or discover something different. So we had lots of discussions about that. And we talked about that.

Even though you might be doing an activity that you've done before, you can still create something different, doesn't have to be the same creation.
And that you did last time. And what I found really interesting this today, is when I walked around, children use the word create. I am creating. You know, when I was playing with so-and-so, I created

this. Whereas I think if we didn't put that up, there is a goal and we didn't use the word – create – that vocab, then they won't use it either.

So I find that the vocab, the communication between themselves, when are going with questions, the assessment I get out of that is authentic.

The video then fades to a black and white image of an school with an animated title that reads:

Vocabulary and Reading

The video then has Play Coordinator Luisa Kalejuk, speaking to camera with the following advice:

I had a conversation with a child a few weeks ago and it was just their vocab. Their vocab about architecture and was – it blew me away. So it's just knowing that that child has – is so articulate and has such an amazing knowledge.

It's a great way to support them in their writing to take them further and although he wasn't able to spell these words, but just to know that he is able to articulate them and therefore encourage him to take his learning to – his writing to that next level.

The video then has Foundation teacher Maria Mandilas, speaking to camera with the following advice:

I have an example of one particular student. I think it was Week 2 or Week 3 of school. And I hadn't had the opportunity to sit down with any of the children to read a book as such, but due to play-based learning, and during that time, I sat with a little girl and she was reading a book. And if it wasn't for that – for that time, I wouldn't have known that she was a reader. So yes, that was… (Yeah, that was a special moment…) That was a very special moment, so I discovered something new about that student, but I wouldn't have otherwise, have probably picked up until a little bit later on when assessment comes into play.

The video fades to a black screen with a State Government of Victoria Department of Education and Training logo appearing on screen, then finishes with a fade to black screen.

Early Years Foundation Stage: Children play at being travel agents

Introductory title screens

The short video begins by panning down to three primary school students at a desk in a classroom. The are playing in a pretend flight agent office. James has come to the flight agents want to book a trip to Japan. Flight agent Callum and his assistant Eve are there to help organise James' trip.

Narrated content

The video then has a narrator speaking about the play that is occuring:

Narrator: It's towards the end of a term during which this class have learnt about Japan. We join three in the travel agent's role play.

James: Is that… Does that say "open"?

Callum: Yeah.

Narrator: They look to each other for help, like confirming the reading of the sign.

Callum: How do we write your name?

James: OK. J – A –

Callum: Wait a second. J – A –

James: And… And a… And a…

Narrator: Calum is secure to ask for and get support from James to write accurately.

Callum: What day are you going on? Monday.

Narrator: But there is an administrative error.

Callum: That's Monday. Um, could you change your mind to go on Wednesday? Because I was writing… I was about to write Wednesday.

James: OK, Wednesday.

Narrator: Calum explains naturally and with clear reasons engaging James' attention with his openness, eye contact, and clear gestures.

Eve: Choose.

Narrator: Eve sifts through the pictures of available excursions.

James: That Mount Fuji.

Eve: In Japan.

Callum: Um, in the afternoon or the morning?

James: In the afternoon, please.

Narrator: The agent progresses the deal skilfully, tying details down. His efficient assistant picks reference material to help James decide on a mode of travel to Mount Fuji.

Eve: You have to say questions.

Narrator: Calum makes appropriate records, reading them back to his customer for affirmation.

Callum: James. Wednesday. In the afternoon. Seeing Japan.

Eve: Look in the book.

Callum: The right one is Mount Fuji.

James: That. I want to go on the bullet train to Mount Fuji.

Callum: Right. OK. Let me just call the coach firm and see if they have a space.

Narrator: James is decisive and communication with the coach firm can be clear, friendly, polite and relevant.

Callum: He wants to go on the coach, to the bullet train and the bullet train wants to take him to Mount Fuji. You think you could do that?

Narrator: His questions clearly summarise the request.

Callum: Is there a lot of space on the coach? Oh, good. There's two spaces.

Narrator: Calum is obviously delighted that the arrangements are going smoothly for James.

Callum: OK, bye. Wait, I've got to call the bullet train man.

Narrator: Sensing completion, Eve writes the ticket for the excursion.

Callum: Oh, hello. Four more customers want to go on the bullet train to Mount Fuji. There's ten spaces? Oh, good. There's ten spaces.

Narrator: James is amazed. Even more spaces on the bullet train than on the coach.

James: What… What's that?

Eve: Mount Fuji's trip.

Narrator: The ticket is safely with the happy customer and for all three, the fruits of their year together are obvious.

James: So, can I go now or not?

The video finishes with a fade to black screen.

More About Pretend Play Webinar

Introductory title screens

The webinar begins with an animated title screen appears reading:

MORE ABOUT PRETEND PLAY. DIFFERENT WAYS AT LOOKING AT ASSESSMENT THROUGH PLAY-BASED APPROACHES.

Narrated content

The webinar then has a single narrator sharing with you the following:

The back story of the work that I've been doing, as I said, with Karen Stagnitti, Andrea Nolan, and also with you Natalie in more recent times, is that we often get approached by schools' leadership, but also teachers in different professional learning environments. They're saying and noticing that young children are coming into school with very low levels of language. They have also noticed that these same children are the ones that are also struggling when you see their NAPLAN results Year 3 and again at Year 5.

For many schools, they're looking for a greater opportunity to support the young children's learning and have gone specifically through a play-based and inquiry approach to support that. So, our research is actually investigating whether this is actually supporting what we would hope. One of the studies that we did just recently, with 77 foundation children entering Foundation level, we did formal play assessments on these children, as well as their formal language assessment.

What we noticed were that many of these children, in fact, two-thirds in this particular group, were entering schools with very low language levels, both expressive and receptive. So they're listening, as well as they're speaking. We also noticed that their levels of play, we're quite delayed in many aspects. They were below their expected age range if you like.

When we looked closer, we saw that these children had difficulty with elaborating their place. So, making stories, building stories up over time. We also noted that they were not able to self-initiate in their own play. We saw many of these children who were imitating others. They were just watching and what we're seeing even this year, when we've gone into a school with Peter and Elise, is some of these children are doing a lot of imitation. We're guessing in this project that with many of these children, it's an impact of COVID.

We're also seeing that for many of these children, that they are unable to substitute an object for something else. So in other words, a pen could be a person, but even more that the child is able to use this pen in all sorts of different ways. Not just the way it actually looks. They could turn it into a rocket ship. They could turn it into anything to tell their story.

So when we look at this kind of play, we're also noting that many of these children's narrative, we're seeing that they don't set up with characters and a setting, for example. As you would know, for the genre of narrative, there's a problem. The problem needs a resolution. For many of these young children, we're seeing that there were no problems in their story. Therefore, obviously, there was no resolution either.

So, our research then showed that in fact, that those children who could substitute an object where they could use any object for anything, or they could use an object for anything, and actually talk about what it was and the function of that object. So that very high level of object-substitution. That then their language was kicking off, and it was very very high and usually quite complex.

We saw that they had multi-word languages. They had greater complex of grammatical speech as well. We also saw an enormous amount of more complex narratives. Some of these children actually

had two problems or three problems in their story that they were then able to resolve throughout the play. This play was also occurring over a period of two to three days. So these children just didn't come in and play and then start another story 5 minutes later. They didn't come away and then come back the next day. This play continued on for two to three days. For some children it was carrying over for two to three weeks, which is a really high level of play script.

Yeah, and so some of the other things we saw. When we look at an aspect of language called pragmatics, which is the social use of language:

- How children enter a group?
- How they make friends?
- How they enter with their peers that have already started up a story?

We saw that play provided a really strong way for these children to master emotional ideas, their feelings, and their experiences. It was also a way for facilitating friendships and promoting that pro-social behaviour and attitude.

So, all of these learnings we see from a large number of projects over time with a large number of schools that we're seeing.

The webinar finishes with a fade to black screen.

46

CONCLUSION - ACCESSIBLE CONTENT APPENDIX

This page shares text accessible versions of different interactive elements in the conclusion. This includes transcripts for any audio-visual material such as video podcasts and videos that formed part of chapter's learning.

Conclusion. Vodcast content and transcript

Introductory title screens

The short vodcast begins with a Deakin University logo appearing on screen. Followed by the below Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first sovereign people of this land. As a community of educators we recognise with deep respect their continuing connections to lands, waters, knowledges and cultures. In doing so we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

An animated title screen appears reading:

A FEW WORDS OF THANKS. CONCLUSION

Narrated content

The vodcast then has a single narrator sharing with you the following advice:

Thank you well you've reached the end, well done!

Thank you for engaging in this listening, reading, viewing and hopefully reflective experience.

It is of course our intention to give you some insights into play-based approaches in terms of their

theoretical underpinnings, the research, and of course their potential in terms of assessment in the educational setting.

However, we recognize that the nature of any experience or knowledge is that it is often just the beginning or part of a larger journey, or something that you're looking for in a specific context.

Our hope is that as you've engaged with this text, you found pockets of information that you'll be able to return. To download, that you'll be able to use in your everyday practice, and perhaps most importantly, what we really hope we've achieved is that we've given you part of a larger story.

An element of knowledge and examples and voices from the field that are going to inspire you in your further discovery about play-based approaches, and the rich ways in which they support children's learning and development.

Thank you very much for sharing this text with us. We hope it's been very useful for you.

The vodcast finishes with a fade to black screen.

CONCLUSION

Concluding thoughts

A key concept framing this interactive book was that play-based learning supports children's development and learning holistically, providing benefits in the classroom and beyond (Robertson, Morrisey & Rouse 2018). We shared the considerable evidence and research that outlines how play has a critical place in the education of children (Stagnitti, Paatsch, Nolan & Campbell, 2020). The editors and authors recognise the existing expertise that our audience of educators possess, and we hope to have built on the valuable knowledge you already have as a teacher. For some of you it will have confirmed your classroom pedagogy and for others it may have added more depth to your knowledge base in play-based teaching. The design was therefore shaped to allow for both introductory needs and to extend your current understanding of best practice resources to support play-based learning.

Learnings throughout

The book began by unpacking the concepts of play-based learning. It outlined how during play provides children with opportunities to use their imagination to explore, experiment, discover, collaborate, improvise and create. Relevant theories and practice examples were connected to grounding concepts of play-based approaches. This enabled us to outline the clear and wide-ranging benefits of play-based approaches for children's learning, development, social, and emotional capabilities.

Another core concept throughout this textbook has been recognising the critical role of educators in successful play-based learning contexts. As the book reiterates play-based teaching approaches can be embedded in a wide range of classrooms. Play-based approaches are contextually developed and combine different pedagogical strengths and enhance the learning, contexts and children in an environment.

We hope that this book gives you some clear examples and visual practical illustrations of different types of play. We aimed to support your observation of children's play and for you to identify the learning that was occurring in these contexts. We then focused more closely on identifying the learning to making connections with curricular outcomes.

You play a key role

No doubt the central message in this book is that the educator's role in supporting children's

experience of play is key. You're shaping and provision of personal and social learning environments facilitates young children's learning capabilities, dispositions and processes on their life- long learning narrative.

Keep in mind

We have some key take-aways and messages from *Play-based learning: Assessing learning through play* to share with you. Professor Andrea Nolan, part of the editorial team and one of our contributing authors, has brought her extensive understanding of play-based learning and the material covered in this book together into a final thought. **Play the below podcast (1:48)** to hear.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://deakin.pressbooks.pub/playbasedteachingapproaches/?p=167#oembed-1

CONTINUED GROWTH AND FUTURE LEARNING

Throughout this interactive textbook we have sought to ground play-based teaching and learning. We have also provided moments for you to extend your understanding. We asked for you to engage with the material as reflective learners and practitioners. That reflection and extension enables you to voice your learning and evaluative you're understanding as an active participant.

Future iterations of *Play-based teaching approaches: Assessing learning through play* are planned as new research and implications for practice emerge. Your experience of the content in this book can also play a role in its continued growth. We would love to have your input. Let us know if there is an area of play-based learning we didn't cover that you would like to learn more about. Or tell us if you would like us to extend the information and research shared in existing chapters.

Click on the plus (+) icon in the corner of the discussion board below to make your contribution to the continued growth of *Play-based teaching approaches: Assessing learning through play*.

https://padlet.com/kat_cain/noxijc99z3nmlzih

OUR THANKS TO YOU

All of the creators of this interactive textbook, from the authors through to designers, believe passionately in the critical importance of play-based learning approaches in all areas of education. We are grateful for the time and energy you have invested in engaging with the reflective learning in *Play-based teaching approaches: assessing learning through play*. We have spent countless hours bringing this book into being, discussing research and areas to focus on, debating what interactivity would best suit that learning moment, and refining our writing to ensure clarity for the reader. But without you that effort would have meaningless. We therefore want to thank you for opening up this digital book and working your way through it. Our true hope is that this work has strengthened both your teaching approaches to play-based learning but also given you advocacy tools.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." – Helen Keller