

Teacher 1, Responses To Questionnaire – Parents' and Teachers' Understanding and Practices of Play and Learning

Questionnaire: Parents and teacher's understanding and practices of play and learning

1. What you understand by term the play for 3-4-year-old children?

Play is all about having fun. Whether, planned or free play, activities that a 3 – 4 year old child finds enjoyable and fun to do is considered play. Children may not realise it but through play they find themselves developing various skills that they will continue to use throughout their lifetimes.

2. How do you engage your children in play and learning?

Allowing children to embrace activities that encourage learning through play may involve a certain amount of planning. One needs to understand that there are various means of play and each child is unique in their approach to play.

Firstly, always ensure a safe, appealing environment and be sure to provide age appropriate resources and equipment to the child. Focus on activities that will be easily achieved and build a child's self-confidence to motivate him/ her to do more. The environment can be changed to suit the child's needs always ensuring that play is safe, challenging, inclusive and fun. Observe and adapt play to suit individual needs, allowing play to be led by the child, intervene to enforce boundaries whenever necessary and participate in play at the appropriate times.

It's also important to take note of a child's personality and pair them off with other children who will encourage their strengths and not their weaknesses. For example: for a child who is struggling to engage it is recommended that he is paired off with a calm and supportive personality.

Observe, communicate and listen to children while they are playing in order to assess how you can best improve on them in future.

3. Do you consider play as learning? Explain

Play as a mode of learning is most definitely an important contribution to any classroom. Both free and structured play can provide great benefit to your child.

With guidance from a parent, teacher or caregiver whilst working towards a specific learning goal, play allows a child the opportunity to develop important skills that they will need to succeed as adults.

Whether a child plays alone or with others, he/she develops speech, language and listening skills. Children often speak to themselves whilst maneuvering toys and action figures and when in the company of other children, they communicate with others and foster word learning, their exposure to additional vocabulary, enriches their own variety of words greatly.

Through play, children learn to work with others towards a shared goal, hereby developing their social skills. Through play, children learn to work through their own emotions, they express their feelings through play, by storytelling, through art or other activities.

Play fosters cognitive skill, critical thinking and motor skill development. Having a child point out that they always have storytime before naptime is an example of her using critical thinking. Children learn numeracy and literacy skills through playing with various toys and books and demonstrate their thinking as they talk about what they are doing.

Play inspires creativity and builds self confidence in children. By playing, they explore and learn to do many things by themselves, gaining confidence. By using household objects and equipment, children can role play and assume a variety of roles, fostering creativity and imagination.

4. Do you think play is more important than learning ? Why

Play is definitely essential to a child's development as it nurtures their mental growth, building a more confident being that is able to embrace learning with greater success in the future.

Play teaches our children about social relationships, creativity, strategic thinking, problem solving, and much more. Through play, our children improve their motor skills, explore adult roles, invent new ideas, learn to work with their peers, and relieve stress. Play, as a mode of learning is said to be a great way to boost a child's self-confidence.

Recent studies showed that children who learned to read early had no advantage over children who learned to read later when both were compared later in childhood, and in fact, children who read later had better comprehension specifically because their opportunities for more play improved their language development.

Personally, yes, play is more important than learning, specifically in younger years, providing more opportunities to develop a confident child that will eventually excel in learning.

5. Do you think learning is more important than play? Why?

Learning is best achieved if younger children are given the opportunity to build the necessary skills required to do so first. Personally in my opinion play is an essential and critical aspect to improve learning. So play is equally as important in nurturing a confident and successful learner.

6. Do you prefer that your children plays and learns? Why?

Yes, I always be encourage to allow children the opportunity to derive many of its great benefits. Play offers a less stressed approach to learning and children thrive when they can enjoy a sense of achievement in a fun and productive way. It is much easier for children to explore and attain skills by means of play.

7. Do your children like to play? Why?

Yes, most definitely. The most anticipated part of their day is free play. Children love to explore and have fun doing so. Children play instinctively and when they're playing, they are completely absorbed and concentrated and best of all, learning all the time.

8. When you are setting up the environment for activities, do you ensure that the children's choices are considered? Why

When planning any activities for children, yes children's choices are important to a certain extent to create a positive interest and to encourage participation in the activity. It is vital to ensure that your activity grasps the interest of your child to encourage positive interaction.

9. How do you ensure that children are happy/delighted with the learning activities?

Creating a positive fun, colourful and exciting environment is of utmost importance to engage children in learning. The environment must appeal to little ones and they must want to get involved. Making sure that kid's interests are included, the activities are challenging, yet fun and achievable and also interacting with them positively during the activity is very important. Encouraging and acknowledging their efforts, no matter how big or small always our little ones happy and motivated.

10. How does learning take place in the playroom and how does learning take place in the playground?

There are various learning areas in the playroom to facilitate a number of approaches to learning. Playroom rules assist with using all areas safely and effectively. Play based materials such as puppets, blocks, fantasy play, costumes and toys adds more play opportunities to the playroom/classroom. Young learners are concrete learners who learn by doing, so including various learning resources like puzzles, books, toy cars, art materials etc facilitate active learning. Guessing games, hide and seek and solving puzzles and discussions helps to practice and review concepts in class. Music and movement is also an essential part of our daily routine which most children enjoy thoroughly.

Kids need play breaks and time is always too short on the playground. Lots of learning takes place outside too. From gross motor activities to fun in the sandpit creating and exploring, we often get involved with our children in free play activities whilst outside. Learners are taught safety first at all times as they run and explore their surroundings. My favourite outdoor activity would be obstacle courses encouraging gross motor skill development. Fun and games is our greatest tool both inside of our classroom, as well as outside on the playground.

11. Describe how you set up the play learning environment for the children?

A learning environment is where a child feels safe and secure to explore and at the same time, it also needs opportunity for an adult to comfortably observe, guide and supervise. To set up a play learning environment, one needs to ensure that the following aspects are included. Space is important to allow the child to move around comfortably and freely. Resources and equipment should be easily accessible, safe and appeal to a child's interests and needs. I would use resources that would make the child comfortable in his/her setting. For example a soft, responsive environment where a child is comfortable with the textures around him/her. Be sure that it is not an environment that they have difficulty conforming to, like hard uncomfortable surfaces etc. Use resources that lead to open ended play opportunities. Children use these resources in so many ways that we wouldn't even anticipate. Observe and you may even find ways of adding or eliminating resources as you go along. One can introduce items that will further encourage various skill development.

12. From the pictures explain which picture best depicts learning? Explain

Picture 4 – Children with an Educator in a playgroup

In this particular picture a specific learning experience has been set up to achieve specific outcomes. Learners learn best by doing.

Hands on learning at preschool means that children are active participants throughout the day, exploring the materials, playing inside and outside, following their curiosities, and discovering things on their own and with each other in group tasks. Their teacher acts as a facilitator, not by telling them what to do, but by simply asking questions that challenge them to think creatively and deeply.

13. Do you consider certain play activities to be risky activities? Explain

Yes, movements that are often associated with risky play, include activities such as, swinging, climbing, rolling, hanging, sliding. Swinging on fast speed swings, climbing high up ladders to get to the top of jungle gyms, hanging from monkey bars and sliding down high slides all pose injury risks to children.

These are not only fun for children but also essential for their motor skills, balance, coordination, and body awareness. Children who do not engage in such movements are more likely to be clumsy, feel uncomfortable in their own body, have poor balance, and a fear of movement.

