# IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN LEARNING

http://www.naeyc.org/play

***The Case of Brain Science and Guided Play: A Developing Story:*** Free play and guided play —together known as playful learning—are pedagogical tools through which children can learn in joyful and conceptually rich ways.

http://www.naeyc.org/yc/article/case-brain-science-guided-play

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A growing body of behavioral research establishes relationships between children's play and development in several areas, including language (Toub et al. 2016), executive functions (Tominey & McClelland 2011), mathematics and spatial skills (Fisher et al. 2013), scientific thinking (Schulz & Bonawitz 2007), and social and emotional development (Dore, Smith, & Lillard 2015).

An amalgamated research field called the *science of learning* has identified four key ingredients of successful learning: learning occurs best when children are *mentally active* (not passive), *engaged* (not distracted), *socially interactive* (with peers or adults), and building *meaningful connections* to their lives (Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2015).

Today, most researchers agree that play is fun, flexible, voluntary, and intrinsically motivated; it involves active engagement and often incorporates make-believe (Sutton-Smith 2001; Pellegrini 2009; Fisher et al. 2010; Lillard et al. 2013).

Adult-scaffolded play experiences might be particularly important because they help children develop what scientists call *proactive control*: neural mechanisms in the brain's prefrontal cortex that use clues from the environment to help the brain figure out what might happen next (Weisberg et al. 2014).

Play is a wonderful metaphor for active, engaged, meaningful, and socially interactive learning. And, as two of the authors of this piece described in their book, *Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells Us About Raising Successful Children,* play also prepares children to become social, caring, thinking, and creative citizens (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek 2016).

many researchers and teachers now concur that the "child-driven educational methods sometimes referred to as 'playful learning' are the most positive means yet known to help young children's development" (Lillard et al. 2013, 28).

# IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN TO EXERCISE THEIR DEVELOPING SKILLS THROUGH ACTIVITIES THAT FOSTER CREATIVE PLAY AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016). *From Best Practices to Breakthrough Impacts: A Science-Based Approach to Building a More Promising Future for Young Children and Families.*

**When children have opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills, individuals and society experience lifelong benefits.**

Growth-promoting environments provide children with "scaffolding" that helps them practice necessary skills before they must perform them alone. Adults can facilitate the development of a child's executive function skills by establishing routines, modeling social behavior, and creating and maintaining supportive, reliable relationships. It is also important for children to exercise their developing skills through activities that foster creative play and social connection, teach them how to cope with stress, involve vigorous exercise, and over time, provide opportunities for directing their own actions with decreasing adult supervision.

# LEARNING REQUIRES MEANINGFUL, INTERESTING, AND ENGAGING INSTRUCTION

Powerful instruction, by definition, must be interesting, meaningful, and engaging, for if children's attention and engagement are diminished, so too is their learning.

— Judith Schickedanz

— book ***Increasing the Power of Instruction***

The early childhood curriculum should be intellectually engaging and challenging in a way that expands children's knowledge of the world and vocabulary. Investigating real topics or events that are meaningful to children should be a primary feature of the curriculum. (NAEYC, 1998; Neuman, 1998).

**The Essentials of Early Literacy Instruction - NAEYC**

The general benefits of play for children's literacy development are well documented, showing that a literacy-enriched play environment exposes children to valuable print experiences and lets them practice narrative skills (Christie & Roskos 2003).

A Vygotskian approach to developing mature dramatic play also illustrates the value of tangible play plans for helping children to self-regulate their behaviors, to remember on purpose, and to deliberately focus their attention on play activity—foundational cognitive skills of reading and writing (Bodrova & Leong 1998).

# PHONEMIC AWARENESS OF SOUNDS NOT LIMITED TO THE 26 LETTERS BUT ALL SOUNDS INCLUDING (AND ESPECIALLY) “THE TRICKS.”

According to the National Institute for Literacy (2001), phonemic awareness is the ability to think about and work with individual sounds in spoken languages. Before children learn to read, they need to be aware of how sounds work.

According to the National Reading Panel (2000), "Phonics skills must be integrated with the development of phonemic awareness, fluency, and text reading comprehension skills." Developing skill in blending and manipulating phonemes has been found to permit many children to develop strong reading abilities who were otherwise struggling.

# WRITING

… there is no need to postpone children's functional writing until they all know the alphabet letters since many children develop strong writing skills simply through exposure to a print-rich environment (Schickedanz, 1998).

Teachers should provide flexible writing experiences that allow young children to use scribble, random letters, or invented spelling in the beginning, and over time move to more conventional forms (NAEYC, 1998; Teale & Yokota, 2000). When children write their own texts,

they are also developing their vocabulary and phonemic awareness (Slegers, 1996).

# ESSENTIAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN EARLY LITERACY

This document was developed by the Early Literacy Task Force, a subcommittee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN), which represents Michigan's 56 Intermediate School Districts.

Literacy knowledge and skills developed in kindergarten through third grade predict later literacy achievement.1
Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability 10 years later. Developmental Psychology, 33, 934-945; Sparks, R. L., Patton, J., & Murdoch, A. (2014). Early reading success and its relationship to reading achievement and reading volume: Replication of '10 years later'. Reading and Writing, 27, 189-211.

Classroom instruction can have an enormous impact on the development of literacy knowledge and skills.2
Connor, C. M., Morrison, F. J., & Katch, L. E. (2004). Beyond the reading wars: Exploring the effect of child-instruction interactions on growth in early reading. Scientific Studies of Reading, 8, 305-336; Tivnan, T., & Hemphill, L. (2005). Comparing four literacy reform models in high-poverty schools: Patterns of first-grade achievement. Elementary School Journal, 105, 419–441. 3 Michigan Department of Education. (201

**TEACHER: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS**
foster literacy motivation and engagement within and across lessons

promote phonological awareness development,17 particularly phonemic awareness development, through explicit explanation, demonstration, play with sounds in words, and engaged study of words, such as by:

helps establish purposes for children to read and write beyond being assigned or expected to do so, such as for their enjoyment/interest,

uses additional strategies to generate excitement about reading and writing,

Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Schatschneider, C., & Torgesen, J. (2010). Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3rd grade: A practice guide (NCEE 2010-4038). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ ncee/ wwc/pdf/practice_guides/readingcomp_pg_092810.pdf; Guthrie, J. T., McRae, A., & Klauda, S. L. (2007). Contributions of Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction to knowledge about interventions for motivations in reading. Educational Psychologist, 42, 237–250; Marinak, B. A., & Gambrell, L. B. (2008) Intrinsic motivation and rewards: What sustains young children's engagement with text? Literacy Research and Instruction, 47, 9-26

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child-friendly explanations of words within the text and revisiting of those words after reading using tools such as movement, props, video, photo, examples, and non-examples, and engaging children in saying the words aloud

includes explicit instruction, as needed, in word recognition strategies, including multi-syllabic word decoding, text structure, comprehension strategies, and writing strategies • is deliberate in providing quality instruction

Swanson, E., Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Petscher, Y., Heckert, J., Cavanaugh, C., ... & Tackett, K. (2011). A synthesis of read-aloud interventions on early reading outcomes among preschool through third graders at risk for reading difficulties. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 44, 258-275; Baker, S. K., Santoro, L. E., Chard, D. J., Fien, H., Park, Y., & Otterstedt, J. (2013). An Evaluation of an explicit read aloud intervention taught in whole-classroom formats in first grade. The Elementary School Journal, 113, 331- 358; Silverman, R. (2007). A comparison of three methods of vocabulary instruction during read−alouds in kindergarten. The Elementary School Journal, 108, 97-113; Greene Brabham, E., & Lynch-Brown, C. (2002). Effects of teachers' reading-aloud styles on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of students in the early elementary grades. Journal of Educational Psychology, 94, 465; Biemiller, A., & Boote, C. (2006). An effective method for building meaning vocabulary in primary grades. Journal of Educational Psychology, 98, 44-62.

# EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IN LETTER-SOUND RELATIONSHIPS

verbally precise and involving multiple channels, such as oral and visual or visual and tactile

Earlier in children's development, such instruction will focus on letter names, the sound(s) associated with the letters, and how letters are shaped and formed. Later, the focus will be on more complex letter-sound relationships, including digraphs (two letters representing one sound, as in sh, th, ch, oa, ee, ie), blends (two or three letters representing each of their sounds pronounced in immediate succession within a syllable, as in bl in blue, str in string, or ft as in left), diphthongs (two letters representing a single glided phoneme as in oi in oil and ou in out), common spelling patterns (e.g., -ake as in cake, rake), specific phonograms (e.g., -all, -ould), and patterns in multi-syllabic words. 20 High-frequency words are taught with full analysis of letter-sound relationships within the words, even in those that are not spelled as would be expected.

Lonigan, C. J., Schatschneider, C., & Westberg, L., with the National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). Impact of code-focused interventions on young children's early literacy skills. In Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel (pp. 107-152). Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy; Ehri, L. C., Nunes, S. R., Stahl, S. A., & Willows, D. M. (2001). Systematic phonics instruction helps students learn to read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel's meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 71, 393–447; Graham, S., & Hebert, M. (2011). Writing to read: A meta-analysis of the impact of writing and writing instruction on reading. Harvard

Educational Review, 81, 710–744; Ehri, L. C. (2005). Learning to read words: Theory, findings, and issues. Scientific Studies of Reading, 9, 167-188; Cheatham, J. P., & Allor, J. H. (2012). The influence of decodability in early reading text on reading achievement: A review of the evidence. Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 25, 2223–2246

# INCLUDE FAMILIES

Families engage in language and literacy interactions with their children that can be drawn upon and extended in kindergarten through third grade. Educators help families add to their repertoire of strategies for promoting literacy at home, including supporting families to: • prompt children during reading and writing and demonstrate ways to incorporate literacy-promoting strategies into everyday activities,

Sénéchal, M., & Young, L. (2008). The effect of family literacy interventions on children's acquisition of reading from kindergarten to grade 3: A meta-analytic review. Review of Educational Research, 78, 880-907; van Steensel, R., McElvany, N., Kurvers, J., & Herppich, S. (2011). How effective are family literacy programs? Results of a meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 81, 69-96; Jordan, G. E., Snow, C. E., & Porche, M. V. (2000). Project EASE: The effect of a family literacy project on kindergarten students' early literacy skills. Reading Research Quarterly, 35, 524-546. Kim, J. S., & Quinn, D. M. (2013). The effects of summer reading on low-income children's literacy achievement from kindergarten to grade 8: A meta-analys