Essentials in Pretend Play For Academic Achievement

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Overview

1. What forms of play influence academic achievement?

2. Why are these forms of play important?

3. What is the role of the teacher in leveraging pretend play for school learning?
Listening to play

What forms of play influence academic achievement?

Nursery rhymes: “Hickory Dickory dock…”
Songs: “May there always be sunshine…”
Read alouds: *The Three Little pigs*
Pretend play:
Carlos: “Ahhhh, haaa, here comes the wolf!”

Fernando: “Ahhhh, haa, here comes the wolf!”
One more form of play: children’s dictated stories that are acted out (3 & 4 yr olds)

**Keisha:** The wolf says, - ‘I will huff - and I will puff - and I will blow your house down.’ Little Red Riding Hood said, ‘I’ll go to my house.’

**Ana:** Once upon a time there was a girl. The wolf come and get her. And the pig came and got the big bad wolf and saved grandma. There was a princess with Snow White and the big bad wolf was their friend.
More stories from the same day

**Fernando:** The big bad wolf eat the three little pigs. They fix the house.

**Anthony:** Once there was a shark with a big eye. There was a sea horse who went hopping. The shark went up to the sea horse. Then a dolphin. It got the dolphin.
Zoe: My baby’s going to turn 6 years old. She going to eat nachos, potato chips, cupcakes, ice cream, Doritos, tacos. She know how to say, “I love mommy” (said in a baby voice). She know how to say, “Run, baby, run!” She know how to say, “Jump, baby, jump!” She even know how to say her own name. She can jump.

Isabella: One princess and one baby and one castle and one prince. The monster tear down the castle. He drag out the princess and the prince rescue the princess.
The Kindergarten Continuum

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Laissez-Faire, Loosely Structured Classroom</td>
<td>Classrooms Rich in Child-Initiated Play: <em>Fantasy play</em></td>
<td>Playful Classroom with Focused Learning</td>
<td>Didactic, Highly Structured Classroom</td>
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*Crisis in the Kindergarten*
E. Miller & J. Almon 2009
Why include pretend play in school?

Play is...

• Symbolic activity
• Language based
• Interaction, negotiation with others
• Requires multiple points of view
• Abstract logical thinking
Play creates a scene that is…

- Beyond the present time

- Creates possible worlds, hypothetical worlds

- Prepares children for problem solving and being resourceful in ways that they will need in their future home and workplace
What is the teacher’s role in pretend play that supports academic achievement?

- Create the environment; set the stage
- Provide open-ended materials (such as unit blocks) that allow for symbolic use
Teacher’s Role...

- Give permission to play
- Provide extended time for play
- Promote and encourage talk in pretend play
- Intervene to help extend and expand the plot
Teacher’s roles …

• Ask questions to help characters clarify their role: What story are you telling? Who are the characters?

• Ask questions to help children see connections

• Value children’s play
Teacher’s roles cont’d

• Support conflict resolution and coordination of ideas, not punishment or removal of child from the situation, when play is not going well

“Who are you trying to be?”
“Can you include a dinosaur in the story?”
# Development of Play in School

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Becoming someone else or something else</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Practicing verbal interactive play skills with another child (5 - 10 minutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Becoming someone else with another momentarily</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Participant in pretend play with more than 2 children, more than 5 minutes</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sustaining play of being someone else alone</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Full verbal participant in pretend play with 3+ children, more than 10 minutes, negotiates roles</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sustaining pretend play alongside another with awareness of other (more than parallel play)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Experienced in pretend play; 30+ minutes; multiple children</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beginning verbal interactive pretend play</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Experienced in all aspects of pretend play including negotiating roles, leading conflict resolution</td>
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Adapted from S. Smilansky 1990
Children’s Challenge in pretend play

- Initiate and create an imaginary situation
- Sustain it over time (30 + minutes)
- With numbers of other children
- Negotiate and follow rules set by the pretend roles and scene
- Use objects in a symbolic way
- Solve problems along the way
- Negotiate conflicts toward improving play
Pretend Play:

Pretend play is public social thinking and problem solving about the possible, about the future.
Vygotsky on Play

“In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development.”

Mind in Society, 1978, p. 102
Your Questions and comments