

# Enabling, Engaging Environments for Learning through Play

Linda Burgar

Early Years Development Officer

# An effective, enabling environment for independent learners



# Activity based set up



# Storage & access to resources




# Open ended resources



Simple materials facilitate deeper-level play as they invite participation, engage all a child's senses, and fuel imagination.





Thinking of “aesthetic” as being the opposite of “anaesthetic”, a shutting down of the senses may help with appraising the environment in a richer way

How Learning Happens

# The home corner

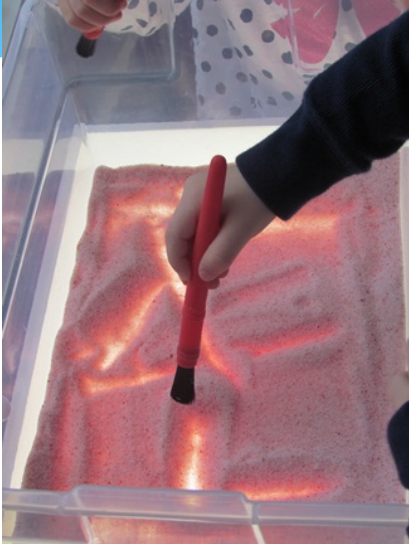




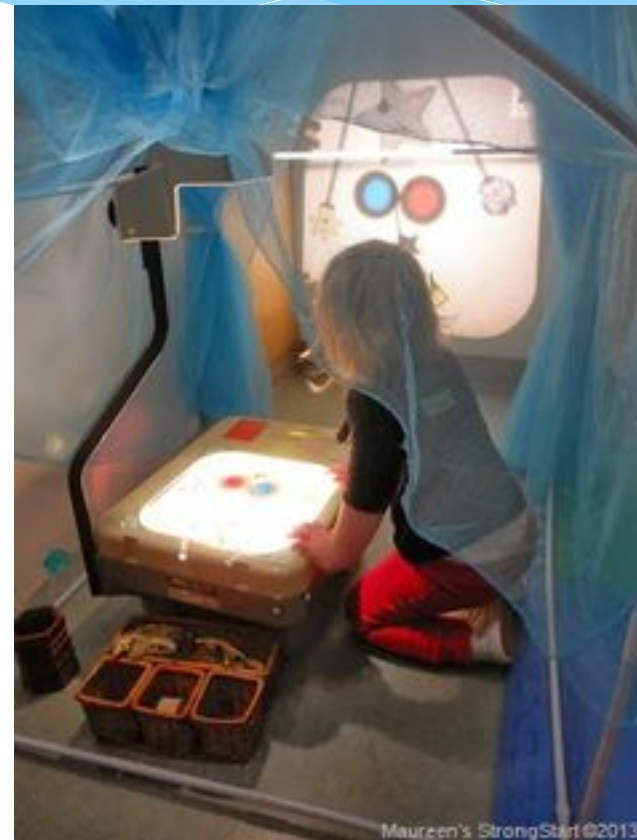
# The home corner



# Shed a little light



# Where did all the overhead projectors go?





# Mirror mirror





# Fairy lights, not just for Christmas



# Curiosity

*“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”*  
–William Butler Yeats

*“I am neither very clever nor especially gifted. I am only very, very curious!”*  
Albert Einstein





# Imagination

## Why is imagination so important?

Imagination is the basis of all creative activity – **the way in which the brain retrieves previous experiences & creatively reworks them to generate new proposals and new behaviours – to change objects into new things and see things in new ways**

Imagination enables the **‘possibility thinking’** essential for innovation

“if you want people to build ships  
don’t send them down to the wood to chop trees ,  
teach them to yearn for the immensity of the sea”

The Little Prince



The **wider** the range  
of **possibilities**  
we offer **children**,  
the more **INTENSE** will be  
their **MOTIVATIONS**  
and the **RICHER** their  
**EXPERIENCES**

Loris Malaguzzi

# Storytelling



# Tactile experiences



# Natural Materials



# Outdoor Learning



# A lot of learning going on









# When I Play Outside

## I am learning about

Absorbtion Adaption Action Arranging **Animals**  
 Autonomy Balance Belonging Calculating Caring  
*Cause and Effect* **Change** community *Creative Thinking*  
 Culture Chemical reaction **CONSTRUCTION** *Calm*  
**Co-operation** Creatures **CLASSIFICATION** Conservation  
**Communication** Confidence **Connection** Conversation  
 Depth DISTANCE Density Experimentation **Evaporation**  
**Friction** **Friendship** Force **Gravity** Height Inertia  
 Invention **Identification** **Insects**  
 Light Initiative *Language* Listening Literacy Independence  
 Investigation *Manipulation* **Myself** Measurement Mass  
 Movement Matching **NATURE** Negotiation *Nurturing*  
**Numuracy** **OBSERVATION** Ordering Patterning  
**Physics** Planning Problem solving  
 Plants Questioning **Reaction** Risk *Responsibility*  
 Resilience **Regulation** Representation Suspension  
*Size* Shape Seasons *Senses* Scientific Method  
 Temperature Team work Texture Volume **Vibration**  
 Weight Weather Speed Space **Collaboration**

...and much, much more!





# Fit for life



As Managers, how do you provide for high quality play experiences in your setting?

## The role of the adult

- Facilitate an enabling environment
- Provide open-ended sensory resources
- Allow time and space for play
- Observer
- Role model/Responder

# it's not "just play"

Play is an essential part of early learning.

It is the lifeblood of the learning process.

As children play they are developing the cognitive, socio-emotional and physical skills they will need to take them into a successful adulthood.

They are developing their curiosity, problem solving, intentionality, flexibility, and verbal & non verbal skills.

Socio-emotionally they are developing their emotional intelligence - learning confidence, cooperation, negotiation, sharing, empathy and how to communicate appropriately.

Physically their fine motor and gross motor skills are being practised and developed.

It's not "just play" they are  
**skills for life!**

*Children are born passionately eager to make as much sense as they can of things around them. If we attempt to control, manipulate or divert this process.. The independent scientist in them disappears* John Holt







Play is what I do when everyone  
stops telling me what to do.

“We are never more fully alive, more completely ourselves, or more deeply engrossed in anything than when we are playing” Charles Schaefer



“Investing in children’s play is one of the most important things we can do to improve children's health & wellbeing in Scotland”  
Sir Harry Burns, former Chief Medical Officer





**PLAY TURNS  
OUT TO BE SO  
STUNNINGLY  
ESSENTIAL TO  
CHILDHOOD,  
IT'S LIKE  
LOVE,  
SUNSHINE,  
& BROCCOLI  
ALL JUICED  
TOGETHER.**



*{Shane & Remember}* Lenore Skenazy

# Play

shapes our brains,  
creates our competencies  
and ballasts our emotions

