

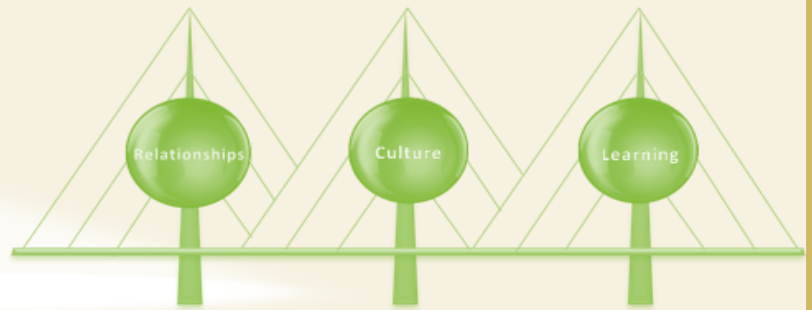
Promoting Playful Pedagogy

Progression in Early Level Learning, Teaching and Assessment



Spotlight on:

Early Level Playful Pedagogy



Introduction

Our Early Level Curriculum for Excellence spans the ELC and the early years of Primary School. It is intended to support the implementation of a **responsive, continuous, play-based** curriculum for children aged 3 – 6 to provide the foundations for future learning. A growing body of local, national and international research supports the belief that a play based approach to learning is the way that young children learn best because it is age and stage appropriate. For a number of years in Fife, we recognise the appetite to promote play but in order to ensure high quality learning and teaching experiences we must empower and upskill early years practitioners.

In Fife we promote a principled approach to play based to ensure a greater understanding of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in P1 to increase a consistency of children's experiences and outcomes.



CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO REST AND PLAY

Our case for change is this:

- Article 31, UNCRC

To ensure greater consistency, we aim to support early years practitioners to achieve:

- a hybrid model of nursery into Primary 1, which is 'reassuringly familiar yet excitingly different' (Liz Paterson, Education Scotland).
- continuous support for children's wellbeing, giving them a voice as they experience change and new challenges.
- effective transition from nursery to primary that builds on prior learning and takes account of previous learning experiences.
- a shared understanding of learning, teaching and assessment approaches, based on knowledge of childhood development.
- effective sharing of information is used to ensure continuity of learning to support pace, challenge and progression.
- continuity of existing approaches such as Workshop for Literacy and Conceptual Understanding of Numeracy.
- raising of attainment in P1 and more sustained attainment into the middle years and beyond.

KEY SOURCES OF PROFESSIONAL READING

- Bottrell, G. 2018, *Can I go and play now?* Sage
- Bruce, T. 2015, *Early Childhood Education*, 5th Edition, Hodder Education
- Bryce-Clegg, A. 2017, *Effective transition into Year One*, Bloomsbury
- Dweck, C. 2007, *Mindset, The New Psychology of Success*, Ballantine Books
- Ephgrave, A. 2018, *Planning in the moment with young children*, Routledge
- Fisher, J. 2013, *Starting from the Child*, Open University Press
- Fleetham, M. 2004, *How to create and develop a thinking classroom*, LDA
- Forde, C. McMahon, M. and Reeves, J. 2009, *Putting together Professional Portfolios*, an eBook via MyGTCs.
- Hargreaves, A. 2018, *Collaborative Professionalism: when teaching together means learning for all*, Corwin
- Ricci, M. C. 2013, *Mindsets in the classroom*, Prufrock Press

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

- Education Scotland. 2015, *HGIOS 4*, ISBN: 978-0-7053-1889-1
- Fife Council. 2019. *Fife's Playful Pedagogy Position Paper*
- Schfeicher, A. 2019, *International Summit on the Teaching Profession. Helping our Youngest to Learn and Grow*, OECD ISBN:9789264313873 (PDF)
- Scottish Executive, 2007, *Cfe, Building the Curriculum 2*. Crown
- Scottish Government, 2013, *Play Strategy for Scotland our Action Plan* ISBN:9781784120009
- Scottish Government, 2014, *Building the Ambition*, ISBN: 978-1-78412-753-4
- Scottish Government. 2019, *Realising the Ambition*.
- Scottish Government. 2019, *Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit*.

What are the key principles of Promoting Playful Pedagogy?

For play pedagogy to be effective, research has shown that a clear rationale and a shared understanding of the value of play is essential. It is important to remember that the children in our ELC and school settings may not have the same rich experience of play as previous generations; especially outdoor and free play.

Rationale for Change

“Teachers who have observed free play in schools have identified a wide range of curriculum experiences and outcomes that are being delivered without any formal input from teachers”

“One of the most important aspects of supporting play is ensuring that children and young people have the time, space and freedom to initiate, plan, lead and conclude their own play”

(<http://www.gov.scot/publications/2013/06/5675/8>)

We need “playful and creative pedagogies in the early years if we are to support children effectively now and into adulthood”

(Moyles, 2015: 21)

The Balance of the Day

When it comes to the timetabling there needs to be a good balance between **Teacher Directed**, **Teacher Initiated** and **Child Initiated** Learning. The three types of approaches to learning will rest with the teacher and will change from day to day and sometimes even teaching session to teaching session.



Teacher Directed Learning:

teacher intensive activity arising from planning supporting individuals' needs.

Teacher Initiated Learning:

Activities that arise from teachers' plans, which are significantly open-ended for children to respond to independently. Teachers can act as co-players, demonstrators and commenters at the beginning and end of the activity.

Child Initiated Learning:

Child-led learning that has purpose and meaning to the child, which is actively engaging, opportunistic, pleasurable and creative. The process is more important than the outcome.

Independent learning is not abandoned learning.

Using these three approaches to learning, teaching and assessment,, ensures all children are better able to access the curriculum, a greater challenge can be introduced to the more experienced learners and the teacher is able to give more uninterrupted time to the learners who require it.

The Learning Environment

When adopting a play pedagogy approach, getting the learning environment correct is vital.

“The learning environment should involve the mindful consideration of interactions, experiences and spaces. Each are important and interdependent. Each should start from the children's abilities and needs.”

Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit (March, 2020)

Our personal response to the learners sets the tone of their experience through the relationships and interactions we have.

Practitioners need to understand fully the impact their approach to learners has and be mindful of the significant influence warm responsive interactions have on brain and cognitive development.

The development of self-esteem, self-regulation and resilience, are all supported by a nurturing environment, where there are thoughtful and caring relationships.

Zoning of the Learning Environment - The Third Teacher.

In line with Loris Malaguzzi, who founded the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy, we can think of the environment as the *'Third teacher'*. In his work, Malaguzzi valued creating a rich, stimulating environment where children could explore and learn. The adult's role was to support their enquiries and allow them to lead the way in their learning.

- The classroom should consist of learning zones: social (e.g. book area, home corner), creative (writing area/art) and discovery (construction, loose parts, sand, water).
- The learning zones should be central and fully integrated into the layout of the classroom and therefore should not sit on the periphery.
- Through a process of consultation children are empowered to be fully involved in the establishment and development of their environment.
- Literacy and numeracy and STEAM experiences are woven throughout all of the zones, rather than having specific numeracy and literacy areas.
- Learning environments and resources should be well organised and labelled to allow learners to develop independence and take responsibility. They need to be well matched to the stage of development of the learners.

“There are three teachers of children: adults, other children, and their physical environment.”

Loris Malaguzzi

Transition

By creating a hybrid of a nursery playroom and school classroom and utilising all relevant documentation (e.g. PLI's, ELIPS, Leuven's) we are better placed to build on prior experiences and learning. This will support the delivery of familiar, high-quality, inclusive approaches for all children allowing them to settle quickly and continue on their learning journey. Parents are the prime educators of their children and by working in partnership we will gain a holistic view of the child ensuring that their pastoral needs are met. By valuing the child's voice and working in partnership with all stakeholders, we place them at the centre to ensure that we are 'getting it right' for every child. Through a well-planned transition programme, which can last for a year or more, all involved can begin to build trusting, open, honest and transparent relationships, which research shows provides a solid foundation for learning.

Interactions

From birth we are attuned to interactions with others and research shows that our brains develop as synapses connect through quality interactions with trusted adults. In order to co-construct learning, we need to establish trusting relationships which empower children to have a voice, to exercise choice and to take ownership of their own learning. By working in partnership with parents and families, we gain a holistic knowledge of the child, allowing us to tune into their world. This enables us to build on their interests and develop their lines of enquiry.

The key role of the adult in supporting and scaffolding the child's learning through play is crucial. Interactions should be seen as opportunities for learning, teaching and assessment. The role of the teacher is multifaceted and there has to be a meaningful connection with the children in order to facilitate successful learning. In turn, the children must be confident in the expectations of the adult and in how they are to access the learning environment and experiences.

"...learning in which students take the reins of their own learning and are able to apply their thinking to new contexts and situations."
(Hattie, Visible Learning, 2017)

'Children learn by doing, thinking, exploring, through quality interaction, intervention and relationships, founded on children's interests and abilities across a variety of contexts. All combining to building the four capacities for each child'.
(Building the Curriculum 2, p5, 2007)

The Role of Assessment in Play Pedagogy

Assessment is at the heart of effective play pedagogy and observation is a key assessment methodology to gain an understanding of learners' current abilities and how to take their learning forward. This is especially important when we consider that so many assessment activities frequently require the ability to read and write as prerequisite skills. Observation of the things learners make, do, write and say, allows us to make better informed judgements about their learning and enable us to better support them through:

- informed understanding of a child's current levels of competence
- reflection on the play provision - interest levels/levels of support or challenge being provided
- targeted assessment of specific children, groups, interactions or the learning environment. (e.g. Leuven Scale for involvement and engagement)

"Children need to learn things for themselves, but this does not mean they should always do so by themselves."

Realising the Ambition, p15, 2020

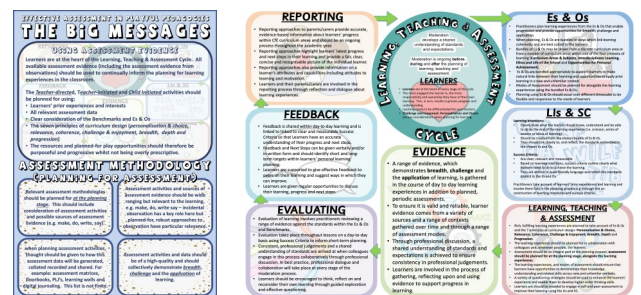
Observation does not always involve standing back from children's learning, independent learning is not abandoned learning. Observation provides the ideal opportunity to interact, to notice and provide teaching points in a very natural way and in context. Through well-timed and skilful interactions, good quality observations help to inform assessment of children's interests and lines of enquiry allowing them to lead learning. Well informed planning gives a means to review the appropriateness of pace and challenge within learning activities. This process of observation, assessment and planning enables progression by extending children's thinking, consolidating their learning, supporting the development of a range of skills and promoting creativity and independence.

Recently published research has identified the invaluable link between learning through play and raising attainment and achievement in the classroom. In order to enable all children to make good progress at Early Level we need to adopting these robust approaches to planning, observation and assessment ensuring that every child has the same opportunity to succeed. When children have access to experiences that challenge and engage them, they make rapid progress which has the potential to raises attainment and 'close the gap'.

Further Professional Reading & Support

There are further professional reading and support resources (like the thumbnails opposite), available from the Spotlight tile in GLOW.

For further detail and support, please see the Learning Teaching and Assessment Cycle, Series 2 Spotlight (Feb 20).



Assessment and observations are the most important tool that we have at our disposal for letting us know what to teach and when to teach. Observing and talking and to children about what interests and motivates them and following their interests helps teachers to identifying teaching points and supporting children's learning.

Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit (March 2020)

What are the benefits and impact of Promoting Playful Pedagogy in Fife?

HAPPIER CHILDREN

Children are:

- more 'ready to learn'
- more settled and happier
- visibly enjoying their learning
- better able to self regulate
- showing improved behaviour

Teachers have said:

"The children are really happy to come to school. They feel safe and secure and so are ready to learn."



IMPROVED ENGAGEMENT

Children are:

- more enthusiastic
- more proactive and learning more
- showing more confidence
- showing improved quality of their play
- developing their learning from adult initiated into child initiated activities

Teachers have said:

- *"Children are more engaged and the quality of play has improved. I am able to provide pace and challenge for more experienced learners and consolidation for the less experienced learners."*
- *"Children are more engaged for teacher directed learning and carry on learning during child initiated learning."*

CHILDREN LEADING LEARNING

Children are:

- becoming more independent
- taking ownership from their learning through child initiated activities and resources

Teachers have said:

- *"Children are engaged throughout all aspects of the day due to children's interests being used to plan and resource learning zones."*
- *"Children are directing their learning and initiating play in areas which are purposeful and reinforces prior learning."*



MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT THROUGH OBSERVATION

"Knowing the children "

- Children are more positively engaged in learning
- Improved relationships with the children

Teachers have said:

- *"...through observations I feel I am catering to learners' needs, making learning and 'zones' more personalised to each child."*
- *"I am more involved in children's play in a really meaningful way. I feel like I know children better."*
- *"... in literacy we have found learners are more engaged and we have an increased mark making and child questioning and chance for further discovery."*

COMMUNICATION AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Teacher assessing communication strategies to communicate more effectively
- Showing positive engagement with teacher and classmates
- Class working as a team rather than as individuals
- Increase in 'quality interactions' between adult to child and child to child
- More sharing, turn taking, kindness to others

Teachers have said:

"children are more engaged in outdoor play and using their imaginations and enhancing language through accessing and engaging with loose parts."



How does Playful Pedagogy support the delivery of the curriculum?

Respect, working with families and the importance of relationships link to the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence so children can become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners, and responsible citizens.

Using Curriculum for Excellence Principles for Curriculum Design is central to the delivery of a play-based curriculum. Curriculum design encompasses the following:

- **Breadth:** engaging children in a greater range of experiences, using a wider range of contexts for learning
- **Depth:** deepening children's understandings, taking children further and deeper in their inquiry
- **Progression:** building on what children know already, providing provocations and stimulations to extend learning
- **Challenge and enjoyment:** enabling children to be engaged, take responsibility, solve problems and lead and develop further, their passion for learning
- **Relevance:** connecting with the children's needs and interests, reflecting children's lives, interests and culture
- **Coherence:** helping children to make connections in their learning, using real life contexts that help children make sense of and apply their learning
- **Personalisation and choice:** tailoring provision to meet individual needs and interests, supporting children to make choices and share their perspective.

Children need to **PLAY** to
 BE ADAPTABLE
CONSTRUCT KNOWLEDGE
PROBLEM LEARN CREATE
SOLVE PROCESS EMOTIONS
 INTERNALISE EXPERIENCES
DISCOVER CHALLENGE
 BE HEALTHY THEMSELVES
LAUGH & HAVE FUN
LEARN TO WORK IMAGINE
 TOGETHER LEARN TO LEAD
EXPRESS EXPLORE SPEAK
IDEAS DEVELOP READ
 MANAGE AN INQUIRING
STRESS MIND COUNT
 Because **PLAY** matters.