

A North Lanarkshire Facilitation Guide to Play Pedagogy



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Key Definitions

It is important to define some key concepts that will be used throughout this guidance.

Teacher

Encompasses class teachers, early years practitioners and all other educators.

Environment

Encompasses indoor and outdoor environments, classrooms and playrooms.

Establishment/Setting

Encompasses schools and Early Years buildings.

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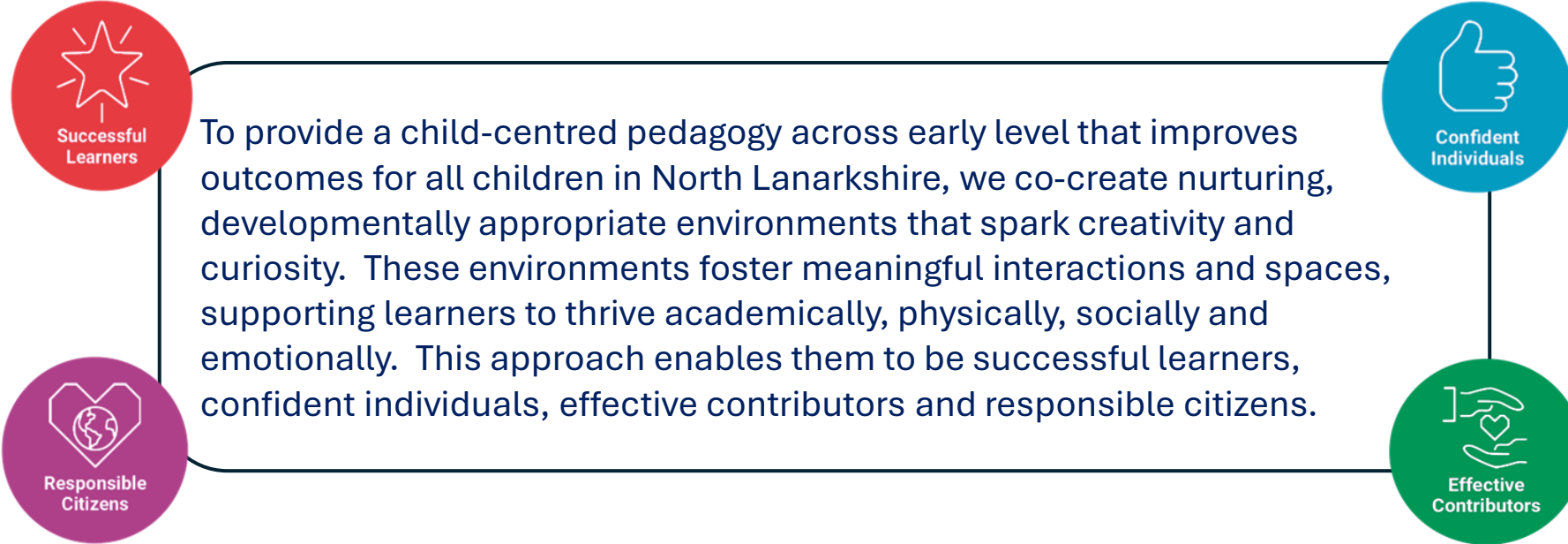
**NLC's Mission
Statement**

**Section 1: what
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Introduction and Background

North Lanarkshire is committed to Getting it Right for Every Child. To support children's fundamental right to learn through play and exploration, we have created the following mission statement:



This facilitation guide will assist educators in implementing a child-centred pedagogy in our ELC settings, primary one, and beyond, aligning with our mission.

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National Context

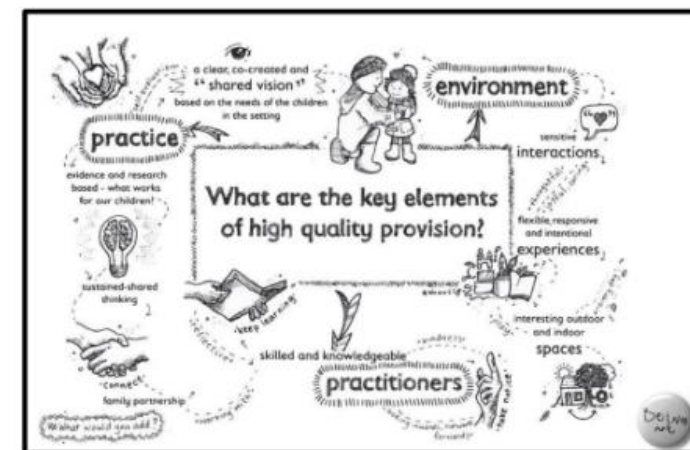
Since 2013, there has been a focus by the Scottish Government to aspire for Scotland “to be the best place for children to grow up and learn”, where children are placed at the centre (Realising the Ambition: Being Me, 2020:9).

We have a national guidance framework that supports practitioners to build foundations in the early years and ensure we are meeting the developmental needs of all children by providing high quality interactions, experiences and spaces.

A child-centred pedagogical approach is versatile, however, to implement highly effective practice, it is crucial that there is a **shared understanding** of the principles and values that underpin the Early Level curriculum.

There are three key components that are key to ensuring high quality provision through play pedagogy:

- A clear rationale and shared understanding of the value of play.
- Learning environments which feature thoughtful interactions, experiences and outcome.
- Skilled and knowledgeable practitioners.



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Section 1: Defining Play and Play Pedagogy

Play

Defining play in an educational context can be challenging due to its various connotations. The Scottish Government recognises the importance of play and states that it:

“...encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development which seeks to improve play experiences for all children.” (2013b, p.14)

Therefore, it is fundamental that our education system affords time for ‘free play’ to meet the needs of all children.

Play Pedagogy

Play pedagogy is a systematic and **child-centred approach** that facilitates powerful learning and teaching practices. It supports settings in developing a shared language and understanding of how to nurture the holistic development of children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical capacities (Realising the Ambition: Being Me, 2020).

Defining Play
Pedagogy and Play

A Continuum
of Play

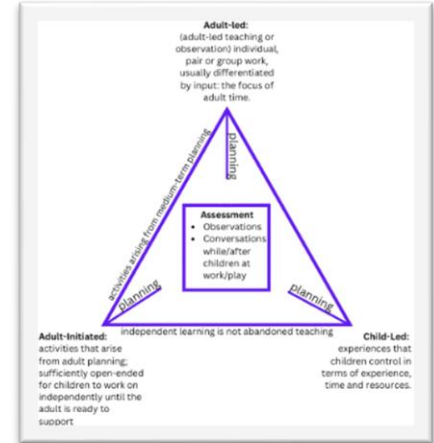
Characteristics
of Play

Twelve
Features of
Play

Section 2:
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For Play Pedagogy to be implemented effectively, there must be a **balance** of adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led learning contexts (Fisher, 2016). The balance of learning experiences is determined by the needs of the children in each setting and may shift throughout the day or week to meet the needs of all learners.



Continuum of Pedagogical Strategies for Play-Based Learning

Child-Directed ——— Educator Guided ——— Educator Directed



Adapted from Pyle and Danniels, 2017

A Continuum of Play

This Continuum outlines the types of play experiences that children should be offered across learning contexts and defines the role of the adult in each. Educators can play different roles along the continuum e.g. from being non-obtrusive observers to providing direct instruction about how to play a prescriptive game.

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Characteristics of Play

A framework created by leading practitioners, researchers and policymakers around the world, outlines five characteristics of playful experiences: Joyful, Actively Engaging, Meaningful, Iterative and Socially Interactive (Lego Foundation, 2018). This helps to articulate the essential link between play and learning, where play pedagogy can help to transform children's educational experiences and strengthen their learning, motivation and outcomes ([see Appendix 1](#)).

Play offers children: enjoyment and fun, a sense of agency and wellbeing, opportunities for creative and critical thinking, refinement of skills since birth, development of skills that will last a lifetime and consolidation of skills learned more formally (Fisher, 2020). Bruce's "Twelve Features of Play" (1991, 2015) offers a comprehensive explanation of the essence of play.

Tina Bruce 12 features of Play

1. Children use first-hand experiences from life.
2. Children make up the rules as they play [in order to keep control](#).
3. Children [symbolically represent](#) as they play, making and adapting play props.
4. Children choose to play; they cannot be made to play.
5. Children rehearse their future in their role play.
6. Children sometimes play alone.
7. Children pretend when they play.
8. Children play with adults and other children cooperatively in pairs or groups.
9. Children have a personal play agenda, which may or may not be shared.
10. Children are deeply involved and difficult to distract from their deep learning as they wallow in their play and learning.
11. Children try out their most recently acquired skills and competences, as if celebrating what they know.
12. Children coordinate ideas and feelings and make sense of relationships with their families, friends and cultures.

[For further information click on this link](#)
[Twelve Features of Play](#)

**A Clear, Shared
Vision**

**A Continuum
of Play**

**Characteristics
of Play**

**Section 2:
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Section 2: A Rationale for Play Pedagogy

By exploring the theory, research, and policy underpinning play pedagogy, we can establish a clear rationale for why learning through play is impactful in our ELC settings, Primary One, and beyond.

Child Development

Early childhood, defined as the period from birth to age eight, is a time of significant growth with brain development at its peak (UNESCO, 2017). During these years, the development of emotional wellbeing, cognitive skills, social competence and sound mental and physical health build a strong foundation for success into adult years (UNICEF, 2018). Therefore, as educators, it is essential to ensure our pedagogical practices in the early years (birth to 8 years old) build these competences in children.

**Child
Development**

Play Theory

**Policies and
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Six dimensions of development that are central to learning, surviving and flourishing (Realising the Ambition, 2020:23 Adapted from West Partnership Improvement Collaborative):



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

- Begins to be developed as a baby and continues as we grow.
- Helps us plan, organise, solve problems, manage tasks, persist with a task, adapt to new situations and decision-make.
- Need adult support to practise and develop this.



SELF-REGULATION

- The skills and processes that help us to get through the day.
- A skill that helps us to control our own thoughts, behaviours, emotions and impulses.
- A child needs support/reassurance when they are experiencing more than one thought/feeling.



COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

Communication underlies our ability to interact with and make sense of our world.

Children begin to understand language and communication through their social interaction with others. This then allows them to develop skills required for discussion, negotiation, argument and debate. (Locke & Beech, 2006)



CONFIDENCE, CREATIVITY & CURIOSITY

Creativity is closely linked with play, imagination, problem-solving and innovative, creative thinking.

Research suggests that child-initiated play, particularly pretend, collaborative play outdoors is a powerful context for creative thinking. (Robson, 2017)



MOVEMENT & COORDINATION

The development of movement and coordination is linked to communication and cognitive development e.g. a child needs to develop this to possess the fine motor skills required for writing.

To support this, children need to have daily opportunities for physical play, especially outdoors.



SELF AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Children develop their sense of self over time which supports children's social development.

As children develop, they have the task of building a secure sense of self, and of developing an understanding of how to be with others collectively. This is not easy for children and can take time. Children require executive function and self-regulation to participate in social play.

Child Development

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Policy and Frameworks

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Play Theory

For many years, theorists have recognised that play is central to children's development and can be used to support their learning (Froebel 1782-1852; Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).

“...play at this time is not trivial, it is highly serious and of deep significance” (Froebel, 1826)

Psychologists

International
evidence

UK Department of
Education (2004)
research

Realising the
Ambition

Child
Development

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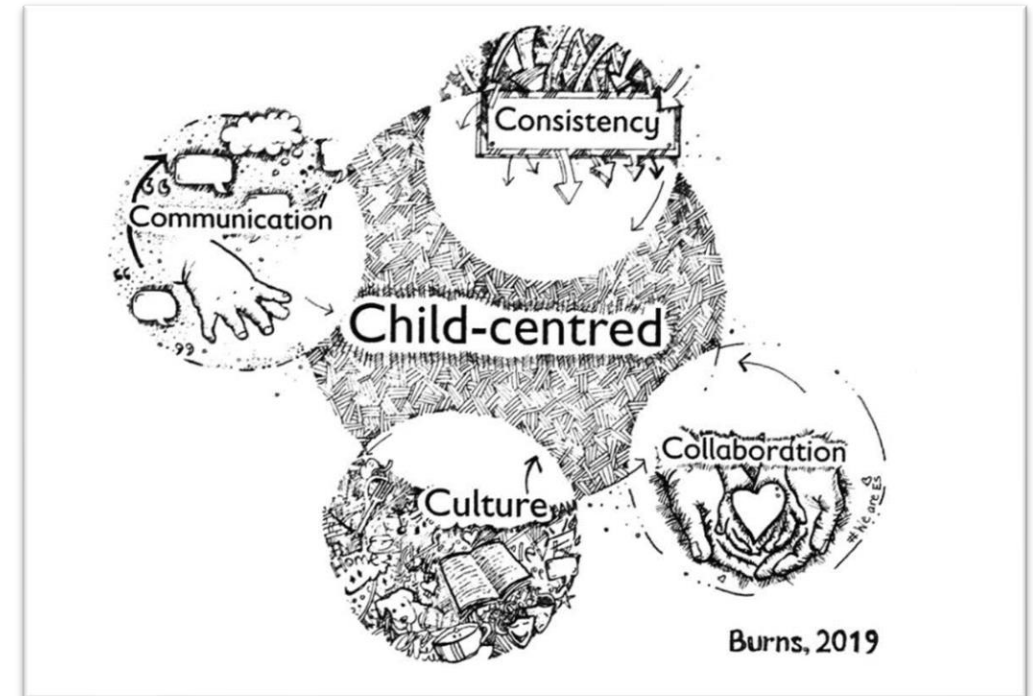
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Our national practice guidance document emphasises the crucial element of '**consistency**,' reiterating a key message from the Curriculum for Excellence (2004), which states that the early level spans from nursery through to Primary One, ensuring progression and continuity.

“After nursery education children continue to learn by playing. They do not stop learning through interactive processes and direct experience just because they change classes.”
(Fabian, 2002).



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Policy Drivers and Frameworks.

There are numerous policy drivers and frameworks that support play pedagogy and collectively highlight the value of play in fostering holistic child development.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)



Curriculum for Excellence (CfE, 2004)



Realising the Ambition: Being Me (2020)



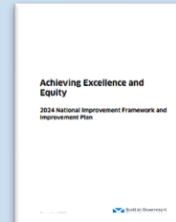
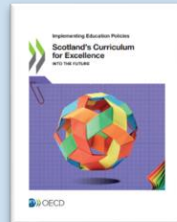
Early Level Play Pedagogy Toolkit (2019)



Play Vision Statement and Action Plan (2025-2030)



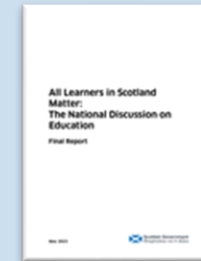
OECD (2017, 2021) NIF (2024)



Ken Muir Report (2022)



The National Discussion on Education (2023)



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Section 3: Implementing Play Pedagogy

Understanding the rationale underpinning play pedagogy helps inform decision-making about universal provision at the Early Level. But it is also important to consider **how** to support educators in implementing effective play pedagogy in their settings.

“Every learning environment in terms of interactions, experiences and spaces – both indoors and outdoors – tells a story about how play is valued. The learning environment in the early stages of primary school should not look or feel starkly different from a motivating ELC environment. The level of provocation might be greater, the interaction might be more challenging, and the experiences on offer might be different, but the school environment should be conducive to learning through play. Achieving a consistent pedagogical approach across ELC sector and the early primary stages should be a key aspiration.” (Realising the Ambition 2020)

Creating classrooms that encourage rich learning experiences through play and choice, with children moving freely, can seem challenging given the need to meet attainment targets and implement programmes like NLC Active Literacy. This raises the question: how can we deliver effective learning and teaching while providing a play-based pedagogy?

Features of
Highly Effective
Practice

Structuring
Teach, Target,
Time

Self-Evaluation
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Assessment
and
Observation

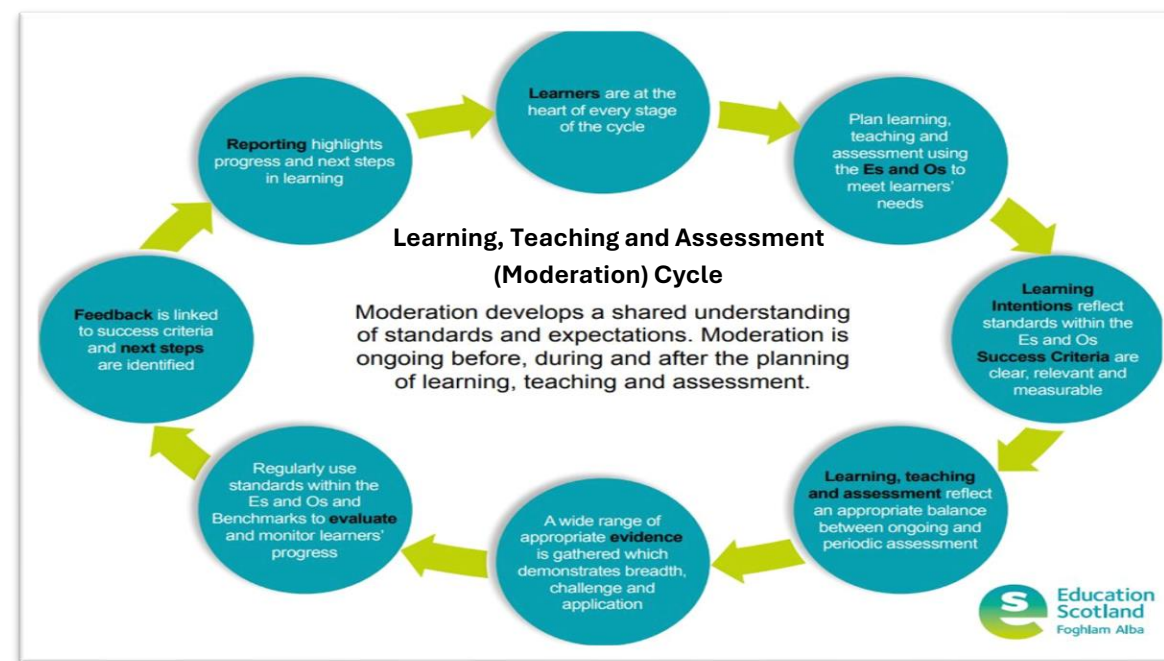
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The answer is that practitioners need to be skilled in providing both and there need not be a clash. Practitioners should aim to provide strong, effective learning and teaching whilst also providing opportunities for children to explore, create, develop and lead their learning. Julie Fisher states that “there is no contrast between child-led and adult-led learning. It is the one without the other that gives young children an impoverished experience.” (Fisher 2016) Therefore practitioners need to be providing experiences which ensure a balance of high quality, adult-led teaching and developmentally appropriate, child-led learning to ensure we are providing the best learning and teaching opportunities for children.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Cycle

No matter what type of pedagogy is being used, the LTA Cycle is central to self-evaluation and moderation of the learning, teaching and assessment happening in schools.



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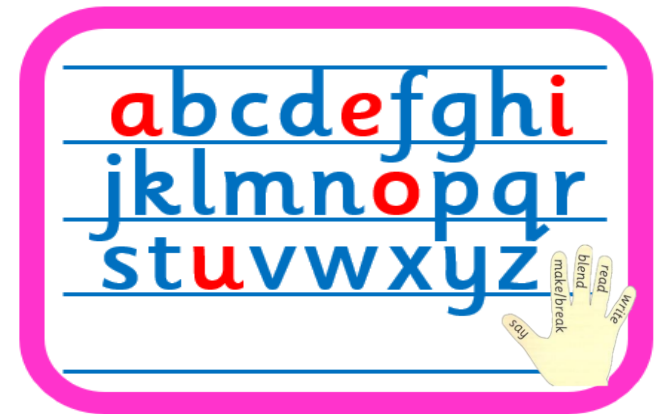
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High quality learning and teaching should involve:

- Learning Intentions and Success Criteria which reflect the standards within the Experiences and Outcomes.
- Effective questioning to elicit learning, understand children's thought processes and provoke further thinking and learning.
- Opportunities for self-assessment, self-regulation and metacognition.
- Opportunities for peer-assessment and reciprocal learning.
- Effective feedback linked to the learning and next steps.

In North Lanarkshire Council there is a strong, research-based approach to the teaching of literacy. This approach has been robustly verified and should still be the foundation of teaching literacy. Practitioners may adjust the pace or structure of the lessons to adapt to the needs of the learners, but the core methodologies e.g. a systematic synthetic phonic approach should remain the key methodologies for teaching, as they have been proven from extensive world-wide research to be the most effective way to teach young children.



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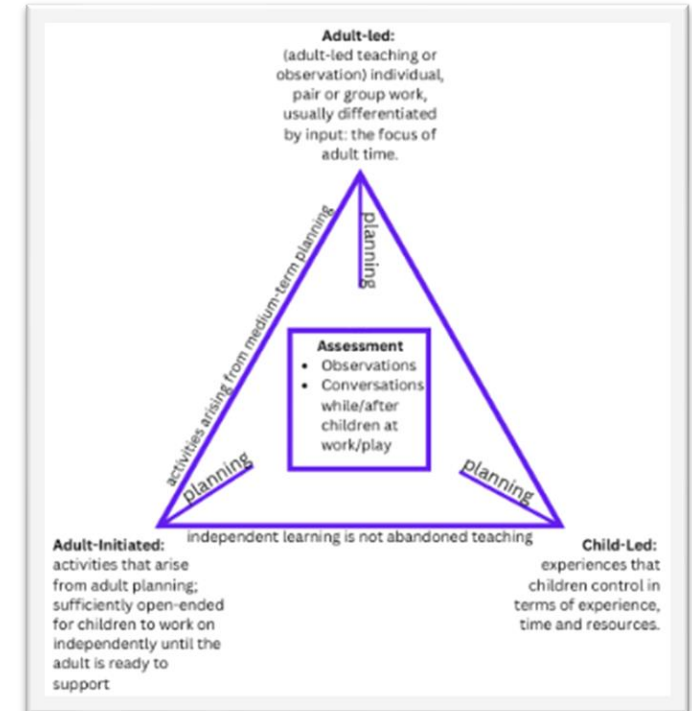


The Balance of the Learning Contexts

There should be a **balance** of learning contexts that collectively create high-quality provision of learning and teaching.

Fisher (2016) describes the three contexts in which children learn well in any high-quality learning establishment:

- Adult-led learning - Practitioners **focus** children's thinking. The practitioner has planned objectives and stays with the child or group of children while the learning takes place
- Adult-initiated learning – Practitioners **fathom** (come to understand and then develop) children's thinking. The practitioner sets up resources or experiences with planned intentions, which children then engage in independently until the practitioner is ready to come and observe or interact.
- Child-led learning – Practitioners **follow** children's thinking. Resources, experiences and outcomes are freely chosen by the child and are under the control of the child. This may or may not have the direct involvement of the practitioner.



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“Developing the right balance between child-initiated, adult initiated and adult-directed experiences, will depend on the uniqueness of the needs of each setting’s children and wider contexts; including the cultural environment in which children learn and play.” (Realising the Ambition 2020)

Similarly, the balance will shift and adapt throughout the day or week, in that there may be a need for more adult-led or adult initiated learning, in for example literacy teaching, but many more opportunities for child-led learning through IDL.

	Child Led	Adult Initiated	Adult Led
Informed By	Observations Experiences and Outcomes and Benchmarks Curricular Progression Pathways Pupil Voice and Collaboration		
Planned For	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context Zones and spaces Resources Skills Role of adult/interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context Zones and spaces Resources Skills Activities Role of adult/interactions Assessment of Learning Questions LI and SC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context Zones and spaces (direct teaching) Resources Skills Activities Role of adult/interactions Assessment of Learning Questions LI and SC
Planned Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observations Retrospective tracking of Experiences and Outcomes Photos/Videos both (adult and learners documenting) Self Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observations Assessment questions and Success Criteria Say Write Make Do Photos/Videos both (adult and learners documenting) Self/Peer Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observations Assessment questions and Success Criteria & HQA Say Write Make Do Photos/Videos both (adult and learners documenting) Self/Peer Assessment
Play Plenaries			

Features of Highly Effective Practice

Structuring Teach, Target, Time

Self-Evaluation – How Good Is Our Play?

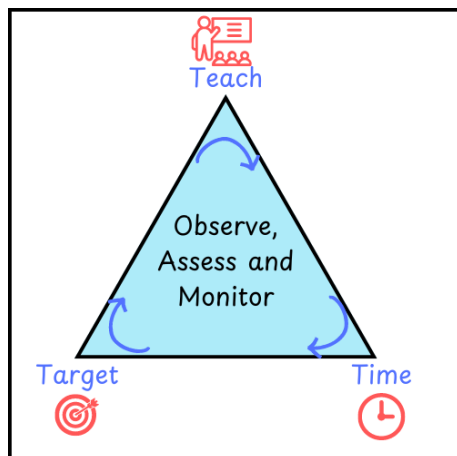
Assessment and Observation

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Structuring the Day to manage the Balance in Primary One

Curriculum for Excellence was designed to give practitioners some flexibility in how to use their day and time to meet the needs of their learners. Therefore, any guidance on a potential structure of the day is just that – guidance, which can be adapted as suited, but many practitioners have found the following method to be useful in organising their blocks of time. This method was taken from the work of Deirdre Grogan.



Teach – the adult-led section of traditional teaching, e.g. whole class introduction, teaching your reading or maths groups. Short, sharp and punchy works best for young learners.

Target – an adult-initiated task which children will complete independently. This would be a follow up task to the previous day's teaching. The task would be differentiated, at the learner's level. The task could be a jotter task, or it might be an activity designed to consolidate previous learning or to explore concrete materials further. These tasks must be independent to allow the practitioner to teach another group. To start with they would be very simple to just train the children in the routine but as learning progresses, activities taught by the teacher at the teaching table can become future target tasks. The learner can choose when they want to complete the target task but are given a time frame e.g. by playtime or lunchtime. Some practitioners allow the child to choose where they want to complete the activity while others have a designated table for target tasks.

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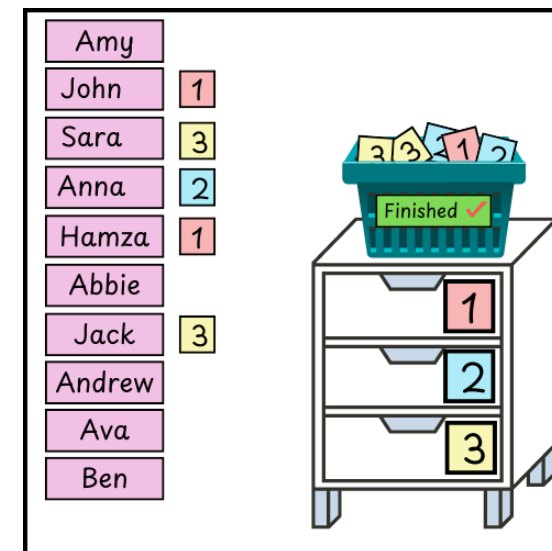
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A useful way to organise target tasks is to have numbered or graphic labelled trays or drawers with the task, jotters, etc. ready inside. Then learners' names have the corresponding number or picture next to their name, so they know what task to complete. When they have completed the task, they remove the number or picture card and put it in a box or basket, so that the practitioner can see who has completed the task and who needs a reminder when it is nearing the completion deadline. As children progress, they can have more than one target task or for older children they can have a more detailed target task with a longer deadline e.g. for the week.



Where the target task is an activity rather than a jotter piece, children can be trained to evidence their work by taking a tag with their name or photo and placing it beside the completed activity and using the iPad to take a photo. Reminder cards can be added to the activity to show children how the learning would be recorded or self-assessed e.g. photo, video, audio description. The practitioner can then look at this evidence as part of their play plenary and discuss how well they have met the intended learning. In these examples the practitioner uses a Learning Ladybird and a Successful Spider to talk about learning intentions and Success Criteria.

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Time – this is the child-led part, the **time** for children to engage in play. They can freely choose from the provocations and equipment available to them. It is important that practitioners take time to observe and assess and join in with the children through their play.

Using this method of Teach, Target, Time means some children will be working with the teacher, some will be completing a directed task, and some will be engaged in free play activities, and they will move between the three throughout their day. During some periods of the day there may be a greater focus on adult led learning and at other times a greater focus on child-led learning, but it is a balance across the three throughout the week that we should aim for.



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Pace of the Day in ELC Settings

This section will provide guidance on the pace of the day, which can be adapted to suit your own establishment.



Practitioners in high quality provision:

- value and promote child-initiated experiences and provide spaces to capitalise on children's interests and motivation,
- tune in to child-initiated activity and sensitively intervene to extend children's inquiry, problem solving and thinking skills,
 - extend learning based on an understanding of developmental stage and interests, rather than providing adult-directed activities that have little meaning for children,
- enable children to lead their own learning, including planning projects and solving their own problems.

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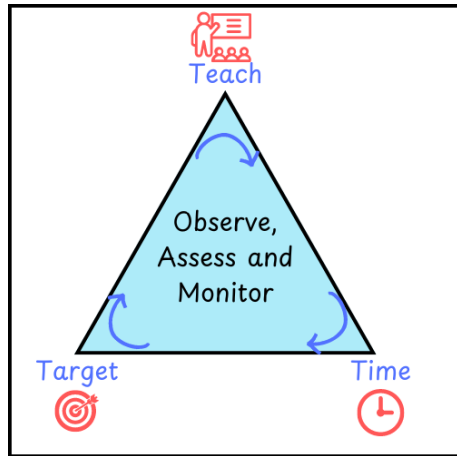
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The following guidance on a potential structure of the day can be adapted, but many practitioners have found this method useful for organizing their blocks of time. This approach is based on the work of Deirdre Grogan.



Teach – The **adult-led** traditional ‘group time’ involving differentiated groups gathered together to focus on a specific planned learning experience.

Target – An **adult-initiated** experience within the environment, e.g. a provocation, that relates to and extends children’s current interests and learning. It is typically initiated to facilitate current planned learning (intentional planning) and is developed through responses to observations (responsive planning). This involves the child exploring independently or with peers, with or without a practitioner. The practitioner's role can vary and may involve observing, scaffolding, or extending learning.

“The role of the adult is a delicate balance of supporting, enriching and proposing on the one hand, and keeping back to give the children space and time to build their own ideas on the other”

(Realising the Ambition, 2020:50)

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Time – This is **child-led**, the **time** to allow children to engage in play and learning. They can freely choose from the planned spaces, experiences and opportunities available. It is important for practitioners to take time to observe, assess, and join the children in their play and learning.

“Stepping back and noticing what the children are involved in is a skill that must be embedded into practice both in ELC and school settings. After reflecting on the key learning for the child we can facilitate a provocation or response to allow the child to further pursue their own thinking. The provocation/response allows further time for us to capture what the child’s thinking is prior to interacting with them and then developing a plan for building or extending the child’s thinking”.

(Realising the Ambition, 2020:44)

Using the Teach, Target, Time method enables children to engage and learn in a variety of play contexts, ensuring their voices are heard. It allows children to have input on how they choose to learn and the pace of their own day.

During some periods of the day, there may be a greater focus on adult-led learning, while at other times, the focus may shift to child-led learning. However, we should plan for a balance across these approaches throughout the day.

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This document can be used as a self-evaluation tool to assess our provision across the three contexts of learning, as well as the interactions, experiences, and spaces we provide for our learners (Adapted from How Good is Our Play for Learning from the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative).

Interactions

The social environment of **interactions** should provide children with opportunities to continue to develop positive relationships with others; whilst also supporting and developing an understanding of the **notion of boundaries; self-regulation, negotiation and choice**. As the complexity of the child's play develops, learning should be facilitated through a cyclical process of **responsive and intentional planning**. This should include **observations, interpretation and documentation of learning**, and **facilitation** in order to extend children's thinking.

The following statements carry across all three contexts of Adult-led, Adult-initiated and Child-led learning as they underpin the foundations of play pedagogy within each environment:

- Interactions are playful, nurturing, positive, relevant and focussed on enhancing learning
- Adults support children as enthusiastic and motivated lifelong learners, developing the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence.
- Adults ensure they only intervene where and when appropriate to move learning forwards
- Adults regularly reflect on the impact of the learning and their own interactions with children
- Adults step in to reassure, give unspoken encouragement and provide children with quiet, unassuming support if overcome with uncertainty
- There are opportunities for play to be limitless and allows learners to develop at their own pace supported by adults and peers
- Adults skilfully scaffold learning through 'think alouds' and open questions or musings when intervention is required

Adult-led	Adult-initiated	Child-led
<p>Adults <u>focus</u> children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adults value children as agents in their own right; actively listening to them and acting upon what they hear. o Effective non-verbal communication and tone of voice are used by the adult to ensure interactions are positive, purposeful and reciprocal. o Adults are attuned to each child, listening carefully to them and responding to their unique needs and interests. o Adult-child interactions build effectively on, or scaffold the children's existing knowledge, understanding and spoken language. o During adult-led / directed experiences, the adult leads the interactions around planned objectives / outcomes and stays with children whilst learning takes place. o Adult led / direct teaching is developmentally appropriate and flexible o Adults are responsive to children's learning dispositions needs and interests. 	<p>Adults <u>fathom</u> children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The adult provides an activity, provocation or stimulus which acts as a starting point in order to solve problems, try out new theories and develop new skills. o Adults provide rich opportunities for children to work independently or collaboratively. o WAIT – Is the child progressing on their own? o WATCH – What is the child trying to achieve? o WONDER – How have they arrived at this line of enquiry? o WHAT – What could I provide to extend future learning? o Adults make judgements on when a shift in learning is required. Through scaffolding, explaining, informing or posing problems to extend thinking. o Adults are skilled at enticing reluctant learners to interact and engage in learning. o Adults can join play but should follow the child's lead where possible. They use interactions and observations to strengthen and deepen trusting relationships. 	<p>Adults <u>follow</u> children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o True play is owned by children themselves; they lead it, drive it forward and react to experiences, spaces and resources. They take control of the time and outcomes. o Children engage individually or in self-chosen groups during their self-guided investigation and explorations. o Children develop self-awareness and understanding of their world by pondering, imagining, wondering, and revisiting real life situations during play. o Children are relaxed genuine, natural and respectful with each other, and with warm and attentive adults. o Children are learning to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings through holding meaningful conversations, explaining, suggesting, reasoning, and negotiating through child-led play. o Children are confident in self-directing their play, they respect boundaries, negotiate and are resilient. o Children may notice the available adult during play, choose to ask questions to consolidate their ideas or invite into play as a partner, to share an experience.

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Experiences

To support cognitive development the learning environment should be **rich in opportunities** for children to engage with concepts and **foster skills for learning, such as reasoning, creativity and problem solving**. The choice of **experiences** on offer should reflect an environment of open-ended possibilities in which children can feel **intrinsically motivated to explore and investigate through play - including taking calculated risks and learning from mistakes**.

The following statements carry across all three contexts of Adult-led, Adult-initiated and Child-led learning, as they underpin the foundations of play pedagogy within each environment.

- Adults have adopted a child's curriculum – a child-centred outdoor, indoor curriculum delivered through play pedagogy.
- Adults understand that each child arrives at school with a different relationship with 'Play' and model play individually.
- Adults balance the time they themselves spend observing and engaging in child-initiated, adult-led and adult-initiated playful experiences, and plan appropriately for all.
- Children's interests and playful learning remain central to the potential learning outcomes.
- Digital pedagogies are embedded.

Adult-led	Adult-initiated	Child-led
<p>Adults <u>focus</u> children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adults recognise the immense value of Play and promote learners 'Right to Play' within curriculum delivery. o Children are actively engaged in their learning. o Adults use children's natural dispositions for learning and prior experiences to plan responsive, playful and motivating learning episodes. o Adult led learning is short, sharp and focussed to introduce new and specific concepts and skills. o Adults differentiate experiences to secure the progression of each child across the totality of their learning and development. o Adults reflect on significant observations to enhance and improve their approaches to teaching and learning, to surprise, personalise, mesmerise, energise and to inspire wonder. 	<p>Adults <u>fathom</u> children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adults' knowledge of learners is crucial to providing experiences that will optimise children's learning. o Target tasks are planned and utilise open-ended resources. o Target tasks motivate and challenge children to sustain a high level of thinking, practice new skills and extend learning. o Adults are skilled at enticing reluctant learners to interact and engage in learning. o Homework tasks can revisit, reinforce or extend adult initiated learning. o Adults respond, teaching in the moment, using observations to build on children's strengths to plan meaningful next steps in learning. o Children engage in adult and child co-constructed experiences. o Adults show they value play by joining in. o Adults give children time and resources to practice, rehearse, repeat and revisit learning through play. 	<p>Adults <u>follow</u> children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adults value child led play. Time for this is planned for and protected. o Self-directed approaches are viewed as an integral part of the day where children initiate and demonstrate mastery and control of their learning. o Children demonstrate high levels of engagement, are relaxed and appear happy (Leuven Scale). o Children facilitate and celebrate individual lines of enquiry during this true, self-directed study. o Children bond together, for a shared purpose. They develop social skills such as empathy and inclusivity, disagreeing and compromising in a way that is productive, meaningful and successful. o The fear of failure is removed, as importance is placed on process over outcome. o Children can experiment and test hypotheses by applying skills and previously taught concepts in a relaxed manner. o Children understand that they learn through making mistakes. o Children self-select play resources to structure their own active play, to assess risk, learn respect and keep safe. o Children have ownership of resources and space.

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Spaces

As previously mentioned, designing learning environments requires consideration of the **interactions, experiences** and **spaces** on offer. Physical **spaces**, both outside and indoors, should be constantly reviewed to incorporate a wide range of **responsive, familiar, and exciting** new play opportunities. **Notice** how the children interact with their environment and **respond to their interests and use of their spaces**.

The following statements carry across all three contexts of Adult-led, Adult-initiated and Child-led learning, as they underpin the foundations of play pedagogy within each environment.

- Play is valued by all.
- Spaces are set up to empower children's curiosity, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication.
- Adults and children reflect on their significant observations, to plan relevant environmental changes.
- Adult-led learning is delivered in parallel with adult initiated and child-led play.
- Spaces and routines within the environment are flexible to allow for shorter or extended periods of play as appropriate.
- The environment is warm, welcoming and nurturing enabling children to develop a sense of self and belonging.
- Opportunities for outdoor learning and the use of spaces out with the classroom are maximised.

Adult-led	Adult-initiated	Child-led (both outdoors and indoors).
<p>Adults focus children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adults harness the school values within the spaces. They model kindness and respect and support and encourage children to do the same. o Adult-led spaces remain consistent with child-centred play pedagogy, e.g. spaces created for small groups. o Adults ensure the space is welcoming, authentic, aesthetically pleasing, culturally representative of diverse family and community, and embraces nature. o Adults ensure there are open spaces, opportunities for music, soft lighting, rest areas, a wide range of objects, stimulating materials and loose parts to inspire curiosity. o Visuals and meaningful wall displays are used to aid positive relationships, effective communication and support learning. o Children's learning and achievements are made visible e.g., on wall displays, in floor books. o Adults ensure children have regular access to outdoor spaces for play and learning. o Adults and children share and celebrate their experiences, and learning from, and within home and the community. o Adults reflect with children to plan improvements to the spaces. o Adults use a variety of spaces, both indoors and outdoors, for adult-led learning experiences i.e. 'teaching' does not always take place at a teaching table. 	<p>Adults fathom children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Adults provide an environment to support and challenge by providing open-ended provocations to spark interests and aid exploration and enquiry. o Spaces are well organised, flexible and responsive to enhance flow, interdisciplinary learning and promote children's application of new learning. o Spaces are communication and language, maths and numeracy rich. o Spaces are reflective of current learning and offer new provocations. o Spaces are co-constructed between adult and child. o Adults are mind-minded and attuned to notice how individuals and groups of children are using spaces. o Open-ended resources are added and removed at appropriate times to support, challenge and extend children's learning. o Open-ended resources allow for intentional and unintentional learning opportunities. o Children are encouraged to record their learning and celebrate success. o Spaces allow for different types of play and encourage both physically active and quiet, calm play both indoors and outdoors. 	<p>Adults follow children's thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The space will give children the opportunity to develop essential life skills; creativity, problem solving, self-help and digital skills. o Spaces should include a rich variety of new and familiar textures, colours, shapes, sizes and origins to enable children to find the extraordinary in the ordinary. o The environment influences the nature of interactions and allows the adult and child to share a context. o Spaces support and empower children to be in control of their own learning. o The space offers children home from home comforts. o Children are encouraged to revisit learning, map events and real-life experiences through role play, malleable play, social play, sensory play and risky play. o With learner's permission, work can be shared and celebrated when the class is together again, which will boost individual confidence and wellbeing as well as inspire their peers. o Spaces, both outdoors and indoors have designated areas that children can go to, if they find the environment overwhelming. o Spaces are adaptive and responsive to children's emotions, interests and needs. o Displays reflect play in progress, creations may be displayed to celebrate and inspire. Learners may also revisit their creations and develop further.

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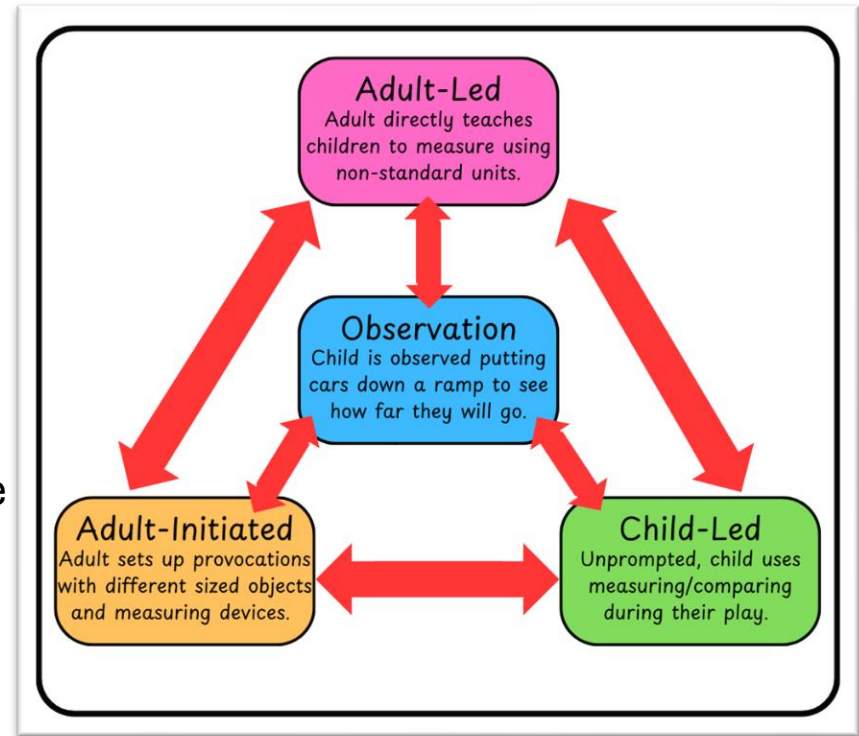
Assessment and Observation

Assessment and observation are key components of learning and teaching, and they are integral parts of the continual learning, teaching and assessment cycle.

Summative assessments, such as assessments of phonic knowledge or common words, are part of the ongoing assessments conducted during adult-led activities.

Formative assessments are ongoing through pupil learning conversations, peer and self-assessment, effective use of questioning, and observation of play as it happens.

Observation is crucial in play pedagogy because there isn't always an end point to assess, such as a finished piece of work. Learning focussed observations help us to understand the child's interests and stage of development. They support us in considering what to do next to build on the child's learning. Accurate and useful assessments through observation require a comprehensive knowledge of the curriculum and the skills children are developing. These assessments are essential for supporting and enhancing further planning.



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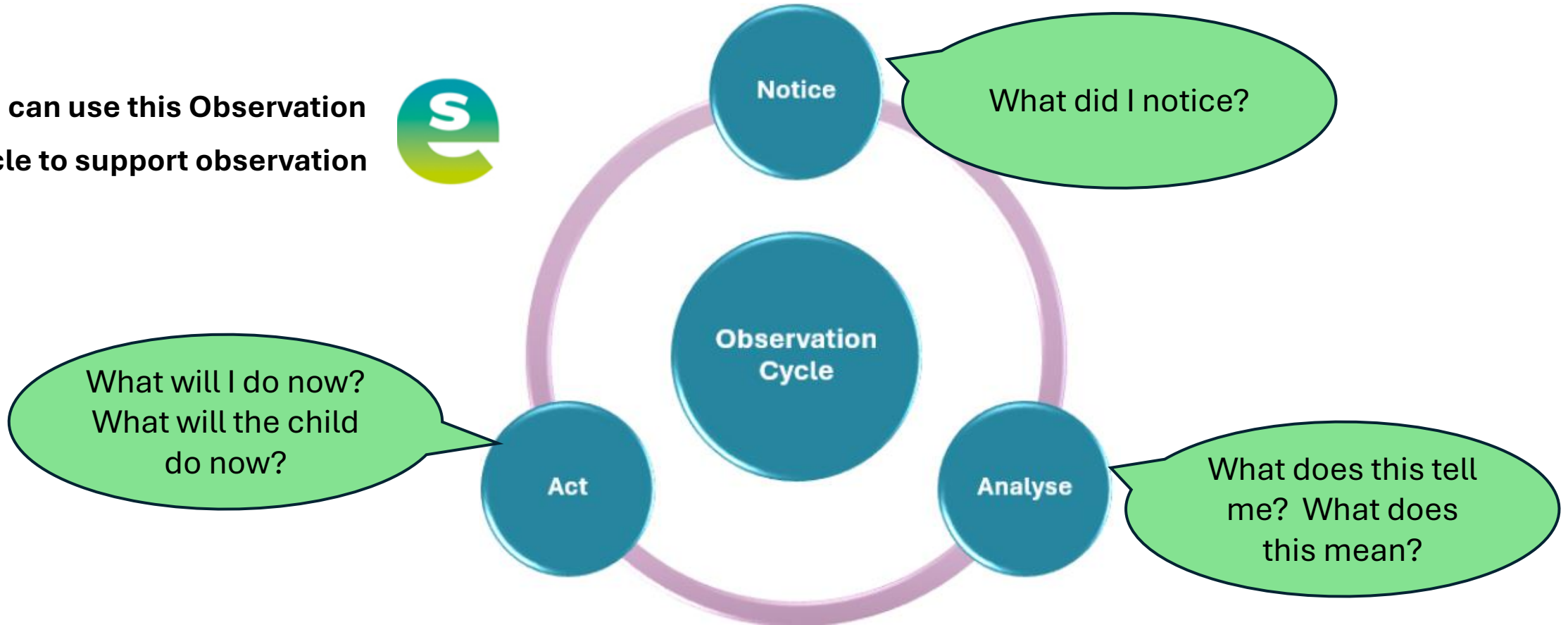
Assessment
and
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Observations should be meaningful and purposeful. Some observations will be written down, but other things will just be noticed and actioned.

We can use this Observation cycle to support observation



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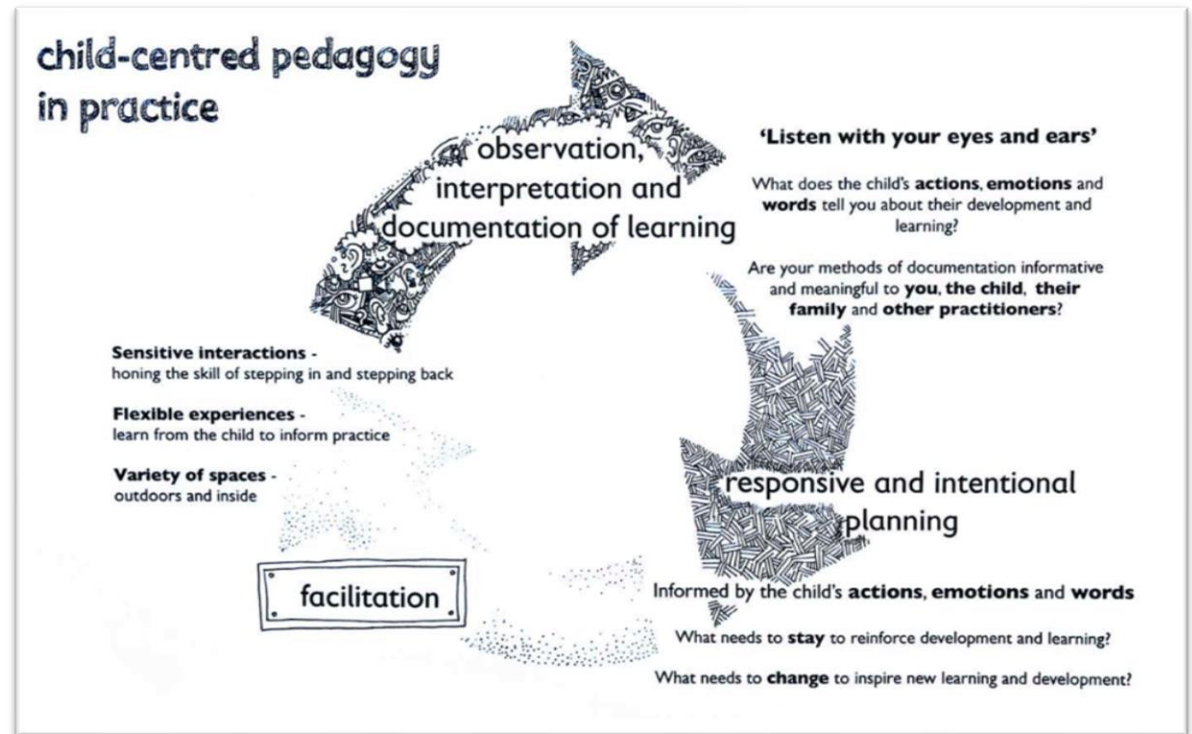
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The child-centred pedagogy in practice model from Realising the Ambition tells practitioners to “Listen with your eyes and ears.” What does the child’s actions, emotions and words tell you about their development and their learning? Yes, it is useful to know that they enjoy playing with the mud kitchen, but it is much more useful to notice the extent to which a child is curiously and creatively exploring how textures change when materials are mixed together. **Science > Materials > Properties of substances and their uses > SCN 0-15a.**



An observation template for a detailed individual observation can be found here in [Appendix 4](#)

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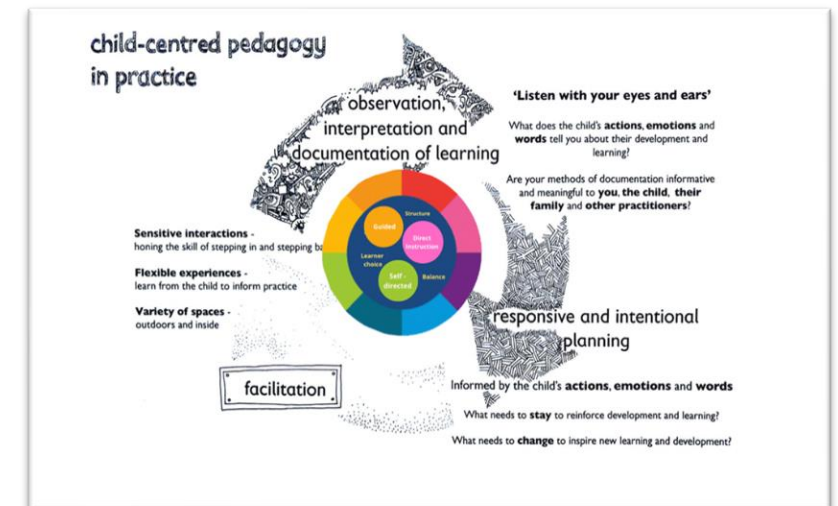


Section 4: Interactions, Experiences and Spaces (Primary One)

Interactions and the Role of the Adult in Primary Settings

Quality interactions are key to supporting children through their play. Interactions which try to follow the child's lead and develop their thinking are key to achieving deeper learning. When an adult interrupts a child's play to ask questions and make unsolicited suggestions, it can break the flow and can hinder children's thinking. Instead, when practitioners feel some intervention is required, using think alouds to scaffold ideas, or asking open ended questions can help to support the child's thinking without taking over and changing the agenda. VERP training which is offered throughout NLC can be a useful tool to help practitioners reflect on their interactions with children.

Quality interactions are also the focus of Realising the Ambition guidance which emphasises the importance of providing high-quality interactions, experiences and spaces. The West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative places the balance of the three learning contexts at the heart of the Realising the Ambition Model for Child-Centred Pedagogy.



Interactions

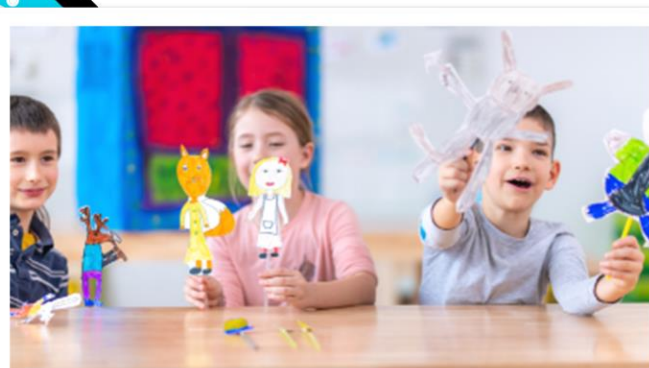
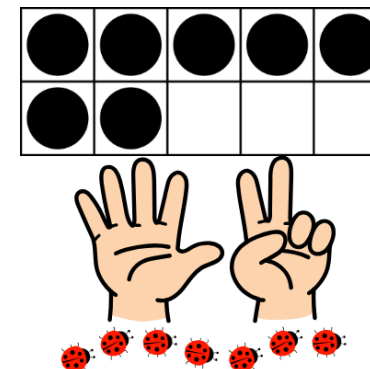
Experiences

Spaces



Role of the Adult - Adult-Led Learning

This is the role practitioners are most familiar with. It involves the direct teaching of the skills and concepts that need to be specifically taught e.g. phonics or addition and subtraction. This may be a mixture of whole class input and group teaching. However, there are still opportunities even within the adult-led learning to make the pedagogy playful. SEAL for example by its very nature is a playful way to learn, moving and manipulating the concrete materials. An adult-directed game to reinforce taught concepts is playful. It is not free play but it is a playful way to engage the children at their level.



Role of the Adult - Adult-Initiated Learning

The role of the adult during adult-initiated learning, is to plan activities or experiences which build on children's current skills, understanding and interests. There is still a clear intended purpose to the activity or provocation that is offered. Will that experience allow children to deepen understanding of the concepts recently taught? Does it allow for exploration of next steps or to highlight children's misconceptions?

Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



The children should be able to take part in these experiences independently while the adult is perhaps working with another group, but once the adult arrives, they should be using the opportunity to observe and understand where the children are with their learning. Has the intended learning taken place? If not, why not, where did it lead instead? Do they need to intervene to move the learning on or would that just interfere with the flow of the current learning? How will they record or evidence the learning? What will they plan next to enhance the learning further. In adult-initiated learning, the control of the learning is shared. Practitioners initiate the learning, but children take it on in the way they are motivated to do so.

Role of the Adult - Child-Led Learning

The role of the adult in child-led learning is similar to that of adult-initiated in that the adult should avoid intervening unless there is a valid reason to do so. Some children will need scaffolding to help them to explore resources and environments, but most will be happy that an adult is nearby taking an interest in the play and therefore providing it with importance.



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



Fisher (2026) says practitioners should Wait, Watch and Wonder during play whether that be adult-initiated or child-led.

- Wait and do nothing to begin with. Children will often naturally invite the adult to join or comment on their learning with what they value rather than the adult jumping in with questions. When waiting it allows the practitioner a genuine opportunity to respond to the child's thinking.
- Watch includes active listening. It allows practitioners to observe relationships between children and whether these need support. It allows practitioners to see who is leading and who is following, who is fully engaged and who is on the periphery of the play. Watching allows practitioners to understand more fully the purpose of the activity the children are engaged in and then decide if intervention is required and how.
- Wonder reminds the practitioner to think about what the child is trying to achieve in order to understand what the child might need to stimulate the learning further. Asking themselves questions such as I wonder what...? I wonder why...? Helps to focus practitioners on understanding the child's thought processes and to support them appropriately.

• **WAIT**



• **WATCH**



• **WONDER**



Interactions

Experiences

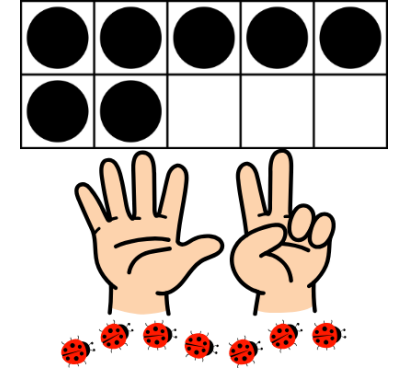
Spaces



Interactions and the Role of the Adult in ELC Settings

Role of the Adult - Adult-Led Learning

This is similar to traditional group-time learning and teaching. It is the direct teaching of the skills and concepts that need to be specifically taught e.g. turn-taking, talking and listening or numeracy. This may be a mixture of large or small groups, however, it is essential to set the planned learning within a playful context which follows the children's interests.



Role of the Adult - Adult-Initiated Learning

The role of the adult is to plan activities or experiences which build on children's current skills, understanding and interests. There is still a clear intended purpose to the activity or provocation that is offered, however, children's responses may differ as they pursue their own thinking. (Click on section 4.4 of this link for further information

<https://education.gov.scot/media/3bjpr3wa/realisingtheambition.pdf>)



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



Role of the Adult - Child Learning

The role is similar to that of adult-initiated in that the adult should avoid intervening unless there is a valid reason to do so. Some children will need scaffolding to help them to explore resources and environments, but most will be happy that an adult is nearby taking an interest in the play and therefore providing it with importance. There should be opportunity for the adult to observe and children's progress and development.



The children should be able to access these experiences independently. The role of the adult can vary depending on the experiences and the children involved. However, the adult should have the opportunity to observe, scaffold and interact with children to understand and extend their learning.

- *WAIT*



- *WATCH*



- *WONDER*



(Fisher, 2006)

Interactions

Experiences

Spaces





Experiences

Types of Play

Play Scotland's document Types of Play (2017) exemplifies the work of Bob Hughes (2006) who identifies 16 types of play that children experience and that "engaging in each one is a necessary corollary for a child's healthy development." (Hughes, 2006) Practitioners then need to be aware of the different types of play, what they might look like and what kind of opportunities should be provided to allow for these types of play to be experienced.

An effective learning environment is not just the physical spaces, it is the totality of the interactions, experiences and spaces that our learners are provided with.

"To support cognitive development the learning environment should be rich in opportunities for children to engage with concepts and foster skills for learning, such as reasoning, creativity and problem solving. The choice of experiences on offer should reflect an environment of open-ended possibilities in which children can feel intrinsically motivated to explore and investigate through play - including taking calculated risks and learning from mistakes." (Realising the Ambition 2020, pg 47

Interactions

Experiences

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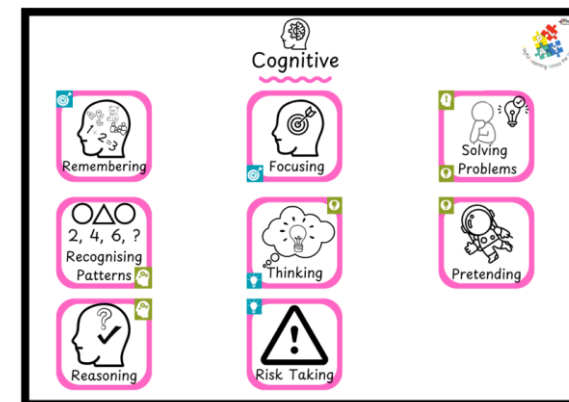
Self-management	Social Intelligence	Innovation
Focusing	Communicating	Curiosity
Integrity	Feeling	Sense-making
Adapting	Collaborating	Creativity
Initiative	Leading	Critical thinking



Part of the planning for the experiences which practitioners provide should take account of the skills learners will develop through those experiences. Discussing skills with children and how they can practise and develop these should be part of play plenaries and they should be visibly displayed within the environment. SDS Scotland has developed a progression framework for the Meta Skills and has included a toolkit for younger children called Meta Skills Land.

NLC Learning Pathways have also been adapted to include natural links to skills development through the current curricular pathways. Highlighting how these skills are developed all the time, but learners might not be aware of them and what they mean so we should be more explicit in discussing skills development.

An expanded version of skills development for Early Level with pictorial representations and icons showing the links to the Meta Skills is included in the appendix. It shows some of the key skills being developed under the headings of cognitive, creative, social, physical and emotional skills. Click [here](#) or on the picture to go to the appendix.



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces





There are 3 teachers of
children: adults, other
children, and their
physical environment.

LORIS MALAGUZZI

Spaces

The physical environment is a vital part of children's learning and development: it is the **Third Teacher**.

The 'spaces' the children learn in should encourage independence, curiosity and creativity. Resources should be clearly labelled in an age-appropriate way and children should be taught to look after and take responsibility for their learning environment, tidying up and using equipment respectfully.



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



Outdoor Spaces

The outdoor environment, where possible should be accessed as an extension to the indoor learning, some creativity may be required depending on the building and the opportunities for outdoor access. A nearby forest area could be accessed on a regular basis if there are limited opportunities within the grounds of the establishment. Playing outdoors should include learning about responsibility for the environment and learning for sustainability.

“Playing outdoors enhances learning and is fundamental for children and young people to thrive in health, wellbeing and development. It is our shared responsibility to support and enable all of Scotland’s children and young people to access our diverse greenspaces and natural landscapes and to empower them to enjoy these spaces for the purposes of playing and learning.” (Scotland’s Outdoor Play and Learning Coalition 2018)



Interactions

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Spaces



It is important to think of the space children are learning in as a changing environment which adapts to the needs and interests of the children and not just to look 'pretty' in the eyes of the adult. Since all classrooms have limited space, it is important to be mindful and selective about the resources and pieces of furniture that are put in. What is their purpose? Can they be used in an open, multifunctional way or is there only one purpose that that object can be used for and how valuable is that purpose?

Consider tables and chairs. Traditionally, children would each have a seat at a desk and would stay there for much of the day. There are advantages to this; some children like to know this is their own space and are comfortable with



the boundary of it, some children appreciate knowing exactly where to head to when they enter the classroom. Sitting at a desk is a good position to write in or to manipulate table-top toys and games. Some disadvantages are that they take up a lot of space and young children are not necessarily ready to sit down for prolonged periods of time. Allowing children to stand, move around freely and work with objects at a variety of heights allows them to develop core strength, strengthen muscles, develop their balance and vestibular system and improve coordination. Research has shown that sitting for prolonged periods of time can lead to health problems such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It also leads to poor posture and in children can lead to difficulties in developing gross motor skills, coordination and balance.

Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



Children who are encouraged to move and explore their bodies develop better cognitive function, emotional regulation and overall health and wellbeing. Research has also shown that physical activity can enhance cognitive function and improve academic performance. (The Curiosity Approach – Freedom to Move) It is therefore useful to reflect on items like tables and chairs and on how many are needed in our spaces to best meet the needs of the children.

As mentioned previously, equipment or toys that only have one clear purpose (e.g. a superhero figure, or an electronic game) are not as useful to have in our spaces as open-ended objects that can be used in whatever ways children imagine. That doesn't mean that there should never be these closed-ended toys but consider the balance when making use of limited space. Open-ended resources, often known as loose parts, allow children to use their imagination to make them into anything they want. A stick can be a wand, a light sabre, a sword, a fishing rod, an oar or many more things. This imaginative play develops children's creativity, problem solving, social and communication skills as well as building their confidence and allowing them to experiment and explore their thinking. (Play Scotland Loose Parts leaflet) An example of possible Loose Parts is included in the appendix.



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



Spaces in a Playroom: A Continuous Provision

Providing an appropriate balance of furnishings is equally important within an ELC setting. For example, whilst tables and chairs are developmentally appropriate and should be available within a writing space, other spaces should offer opportunities to enhance these skills and learning e.g. offering a standing height play-doh station develops both gross and fine motor skills that enable the progression of pre-writing skills.



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



Zones/Areas

It can be useful to think of providing zones within the environment for example Discovery Zone, Social Zone, Creative Zone and Outdoor Zone. These are just suggestions and literacy, and numeracy opportunities should be present throughout each area. Specific details on what might be present in each of the zones are included in appendix 1, click on the icons to jump to appendix 1.



Interactions

Experiences

Spaces



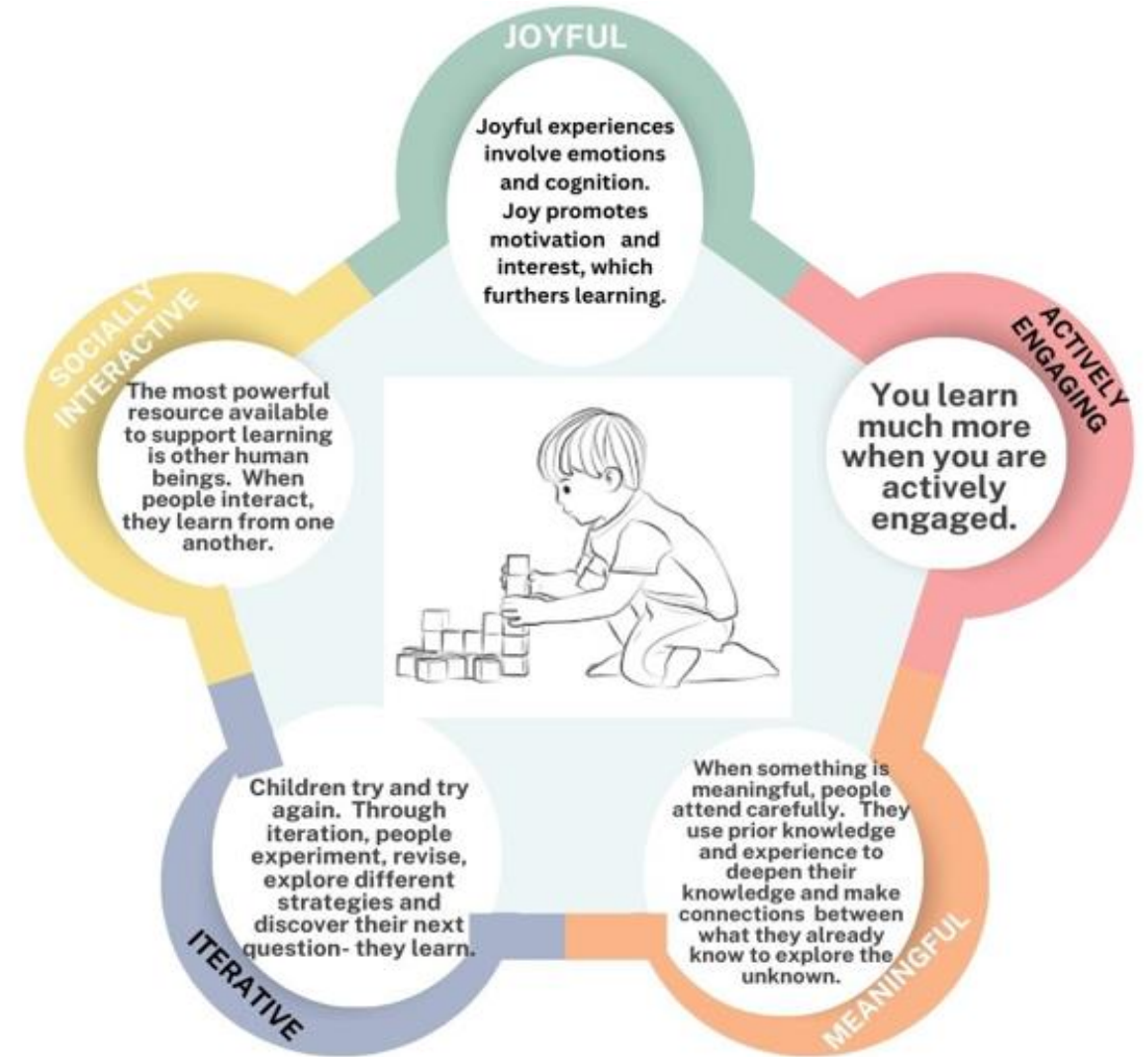
Play Pedagogy Audit Toolkit

This audit will help you identify areas for development and strengths of your practice in Play Pedagogy. It will support you to identify next steps in your play journey. It can also be used to measure and compare practice before and after a focus for improvement.

Click on the logo to open the audit.



Appendix 1: Five Characteristics of Play (Lego Foundation, 2019)



Appendix 1 –
5 Characteristics of Play

Appendix 2 –
Zones

Appendix 3 –
Loose Parts

Appendix 4 –
Skills

Appendix 5 –
Observation



Appendix 2 - Zone and Area Suggested Materials

The Discovery Zone

Construction

- Construction materials such as Lego, K'nex, Kapla, loose parts such as blocks and planks, magnetic shapes, pipes and connectors, robotic or electronic elements, gears, pulleys etc.
- Tools and equipment e.g. basic hand tools, measuring tools such as tapes, programmable robots, circuit components, Microbits, 3D printer pens.
- STEM tools or kits e.g. magnifying glass, microscope, electronic kits, chemistry kits, physics kits, renewable energy kits, coding kits or games that teach coding skills.
- Reference books and resources e.g. STEM related books- science, maths, computing related books and magazines
- Software and digital resources e.g. iPads with apps for programming and coding, online platforms for games related to maths and science or coding, YouTube channels or links to experiments.



Sand and Water

- STEM Materials e.g. Measuring cups, beakers, and graduated cylinders, funnel sets, sifters and sieves, magnifying glasses or microscopes, thermometers, plastic tubes or pipes, waterwheels or turbines, water pumps or syringes.
- Language and Literacy resources e.g. water-resistant picture books or laminated cards for reading and storytelling near the water area. Writing materials like clipboards, waterproof markers, and paper for recording observations and discoveries.
- Natural Materials and Additives e.g. shells, rocks, or pebbles, twigs, leaves, flowers, sand-friendly toys like diggers, sieves, or moulds for creative play. Coloured sand or water-safe dyes for experimenting with colour mixing and patterns. Waterproof mirrors or reflective surfaces for observing reflections and light refraction.
- Water Play Enhancements e.g. tater tables or tubs with adjustable heights or draining options for various experiment setups. Water pumps or fountains, floating objects or boats, water timers or hourglasses.
- STEM and Language Resources e.g. STEM-themed books or magazines related to water, sand, engineering, or natural sciences. Scientific experiment books or guides for hands-on projects and investigations. Informational resources about water ecosystems, geology, or environmental topics. Digital resources like educational apps or websites offering STEM-based water or sand activities.
- Safety and Maintenance e.g. aprons or smocks to protect clothing during water and sand play, non-slip mats or trays to contain spills and promote safe play, sponges, towels, or mops for cleanup and maintenance, water-safe sanitisers or cleaners for maintaining hygiene in the area.

Appendix 1 –
5 Characteristics of
Play

Appendix 2 –
Zones

Appendix 3 –
Loose Parts

Appendix 4 –
Skills

Appendix 5 –
Observation



Appendix 2 - Zone and Area Suggested Materials **(all of these don't need to be available at once)**

The Social Zone

Home Corner

- Play Kitchen.
- Cooking and Baking Supplies.
- Grocery and food items.
- Writing and reading materials.
- STEM materials such as magnifying glasses, scales, measuring tapes, tools.
- Technology Integration: age-appropriate technology such as tablets or interactive kitchen appliances. Digital resources can provide opportunities for children to explore cooking-related apps, watch educational videos, or engage in virtual cooking experiences that reinforce literacy, maths, and scientific concepts.
- Recycling Centre: designated area for recycling bins or containers, along with materials such as cardboard, paper, and plastic bottles to encourage environmental awareness, sorting skills, and discussions about sustainability.
- Home related props to provide familiarity and comfort e.g. seating, pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, baby doll etc.
- Communication tools e.g. telephone.
- Safety and Hygiene Materials e.g. oven mitts, aprons, and safe cleaning supplies.



Other role-play areas

- Themes and topic related based on children's interest e.g. café, vet, post office, shop, hospital, space station.
- Props and materials related to the theme, always include writing materials.
- Role-play – encourage children to take own different roles and scenarios.
- Language and communication – encourage use of topic specific vocabulary.
- Cooperative play – include props that encourage cooperation and multiple children.
- Bring in related areas of the curriculum e.g. maths and money if shop or health and wellbeing - medicines and safety if vet or hospital.

Small World Area

- Assorted small world figures e.g. people, animals, and objects. Small vehicles such as cars, trains, boats, or airplanes. Loose parts e.g. fabric, building blocks, rocks, sticks, playdough or modelling clay for creating scenery, features or landmarks. Natural materials like sand, gravel, or leaves for sensory experiences and landscape textures.
- Maps, globes, atlases – age-appropriate atlases and resources about the world and cultures. Jigsaws of for example famous landmarks or historical places or events.
- Books and magazines of different countries and cultures, travel guides or pictures from other countries. Books about folk tales, fairy tales, myths and legends.
- Writing materials such as picture cards, notebooks, paper, pens.
- Language and Vocabulary Resources: Word cards with vocabulary related to different cultures, countries, or historical periods. Multilingual dictionaries or tools to explore words and phrases in different languages. Language learning resources or games to introduce basic phrases in different languages.



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- Cultural Artifacts and Music: Artifacts or crafts representing different cultures, such as masks, traditional clothing, or musical instruments. World music CDs or playlists featuring music from different regions or cultures. Postcards or images showcasing famous artworks or cultural symbols.
- Digital Resources: Educational websites or apps that provide virtual tours, interactive activities, or cultural information. Online videos or documentaries about different cultures, landmarks, or historical events. Virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) experiences that allow children to explore places and cultures virtually.



Reading Area

- Books – age-appropriate books covering a wide range of themes, topics and cultures
- Age-appropriate magazines and newspapers
- Reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, atlases,
- Support materials such as bookmarks, stuffed toys to read to, coloured overlays if needed etc.
- Digital resources such as eBooks, audible books etc.
- Writing materials
- Literacy games e.g. common word games, junior scrabble or Bananagrams, board or card games
- Comfortable environment e.g. cushions, books displayed on shelves of various heights etc.

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Appendix 2 - Zone and Area Suggested Materials

The Creative Zone

Art Area

- Paints, brushes, pencils, pens, charcoal, chalk, playdough, clay, print making materials, different sizes and colours of paper, card, collage materials, mood boards to inspire with colour, artists, techniques etc.
- Scissors, rulers, glue, tape, beads, buttons and feathers. Fabric and wool scraps, lolly sticks, empty boxes and tubes, sewing and threading materials
- Sewing equipment, e.g. threads, aida fabric, plastic needles, sewing machines
- Technology and Digital tools – iPads or digital devices to take pictures or videos. Stop motion animation apps. Links or tutorials for techniques and creative ideas.
- Reference books and pictures of famous artists and their work, their style or technique.

Music/Dance Area

- Space to move to music
- Headphones and devices to listen to music
- Simple Instruments or noise makers
- QR codes linked to dances/performances suitable for children

Malleable Materials

- Playdoh
- Clay
- Salt dough
- Cutters, rollers, tools



Writing Table

- Variety of writing materials
- Variety of formats e.g. paper, notebooks
- Examples as stimulus e.g. postcards, letters, lists, books

Tinker Table

- Woodworking materials if appropriate
- Parts of machines or opened machines like an old DVD player or computer with chips etc exposed, keyboards, old phones
- Wires, cables, clips
- Simple hand tools like screwdrivers, hammers, wrench, pliers, magnifying glasses
- Hi-vis vest, goggles, hard hat, gloves
- Measuring tapes, spirit levels
- Scraps of wood, wheels, lollipop sticks
- Nuts, bolts, screws, nails, washers
- String, elastic bands, cable ties



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Appendix 2 - Zone and Area Suggested Materials



The Outdoor Zone

- Large loose parts such as tree logs, wooden blocks, plastic or wooden crates, pipes, hoses, wheels, planks, pipe connectors, half pipes, ropes, tarpaulin or fabric, ramps, hoops.
- Garden equipment such as tools and gloves, planters, digging areas.
- Water play area with range of objects.
- Mud kitchen
- Risky Play opportunities e.g. climbing, swinging and balancing.
- Sports and Physical equipment such as balls, bikes, scooters, roller skates, skipping ropes, hula hoops etc.
- STEM and exploration materials e.g. magnifying glasses, bug collectors, identification charts, compasses, birdhouses or bird feeders, bug hotels, weather instruments such as rain gauge or windsock.
- Outdoor musical instruments or equipment that can make noise such as pans and spoons
- Natural materials to play with and collect or sort such as leaves, pebbles, sticks



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Appendix 3 – Loose Parts Ideas

Natural Loose Parts		Creative Messy Play	Metal	Wood	Household Items		Building Materials
Acorns Bamboo Earth Feathers Leaves Mud Pinecones Pebbles Sand Shells Sticks Stones Tree Stumps Twigs Branch slices Seeds Dried Beans, Rice and Pulses Straw Bales Long Grass Reeds Sand Soil	Mud Clay Water Bark Seed Pods Dried flowers, berries, leaves Moss Fruit stones e.g. peach Cinnamon Sticks Star Anise Dried orange slices Corn Kernels	Beads Bottle Tops Cardboard Boxes Corks Glass Stones Glue Googly Eyes Glitter Greetings Cards Paint and Brushes Pipe Cleaners Pom Poms Sponges Wrapping Paper Yoghurt Pots Different Papers and Card Paint Sample Cards	Baking Trays Bottle tops CDs Cooking Utensils Muffin Tins Spoons Pots Lids Chains Pipes Joints	Building Blocks Curtain Rings Dolly Pegs Wooden Pegs Driftwood Pastry Brush Spoons Lolly Sticks Wooden bowls or Plates Wooden cotton reels Twigs Stumps Branch Slices	Basin Basket Blankets Buckets Cardboard Clothes Pegs Foam Sponges Ice Cube Trays Lampshades Lego Magnets Potato Masher Pillows Sieves Sheets Shoe Polish Tins Trays Vinyl Records Washing up Brush Plastic Pots Buttons Dried Pasta	Empty Milk Bottles Empty Cans (check edges are safe) Jugs Teapots Empty Picture Frames	Cable Ties Guttering and Pipes Gravel Hammer and Nails Hose Milk Crates Paint Brush Planks of Wood Sand Tarpaulin Tyres Washers Screws Bolts Cogs Rope String

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Sensory Materials	Others	Warning
<p>Cotton Wool</p> <p>Hessian</p> <p>Netting</p> <p>Felt</p> <p>Ribbon</p> <p>Silk</p> <p>Shoelaces</p> <p>Tin Foil</p> <p>Velcro Rollers</p> <p>Wool</p> <p>Fabric Scraps</p> <p>Ice and Snow</p> <p>Ice with loose parts frozen in it</p> <p>Cinnamon Sticks</p>	<p>Chalk</p> <p>Plastic Bottles and Tops</p> <p>Hula Hoops</p> <p>Wallpaper Samples</p> <p>Corks</p> <p>Marbles</p> <p>Tires</p>	<p>Always be mindful of the risks associated with loose parts. The risk of choking, sharp edges, allergies etc. should be risk assessed.</p>



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Appendix 4 – Skills Pictorial Cards

Stacked cards showing skill categories:

- Cognitive
- Creative
- Social
- Physical
- Emotional

Early Level Skills

Cognitive	Physical	Creative	Social	Emotional
Remembering	Cutting	Drawing	Sharing	Naming Feelings
Focusing	Drawing	Writing	Listening	Describing Feelings
Solving Problems	Folding	Inventing	Speaking Clearly	Resolving Conflicts
Recognising Patterns	Jumping	Building	Taking Turns	Resilience
Thinking	Balancing	Designing	Being Gentle	Self-Control
Pretending	Climbing	Experimenting	Good Manners	Empathy
Reasoning	Running	Modelling	Personal Space	Confidence
Risk Taking	Throwing	Storytelling	Eye Contact	
	Squeezing	Asking questions	Teamwork	
	Pinching	Curiosity		

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Grid of skill pictorial cards:

- Remembering** (Head with numbers)
- Solving Problems** (Lightbulb)
- Recognising Patterns** (Shapes: 2, 4, 6, ?)
- Pretending** (Astronaut)
- Cutting** (Scissors)
- Drawing** (Pencil and paper)
- Focus** (Eye with target)
- Think** (Head with gears)
- Reason** (Head with gears)
- Risk Taking** (Warning triangle)
- Fold** (Paper being folded)
- Jump** (Person jumping)
- Balancing** (Person balancing on a beam)
- Climbing** (Person climbing a wall)
- Squeezing** (Hand squeezing a ball)
- Pinching** (Hand pinching a piece of paper)
- Designing** (Hand drawing on a screen)
- Building** (Person building a structure)
- Run** (Person running)
- Threat** (Person in a dynamic pose)
- Draw** (Hand drawing a line)
- Invent** (Person with a gear and lightbulb)
- Write** (Hand writing on a document)
- Model** (Person with a model)
- Experimenting** (Person with a test tube)
- Sharing** (Two hands exchanging a block)
- Listening** (Ear)
- Being Gentle** (Feather)
- Good Manners** (Person saying "Please/Thank you")
- Teamwork** (Two hands shaking)
- Resolving Conflicts** (Two hands shaking)
- Naming Feelings** (Smiley face)
- Describing Feelings** (Person with a lightbulb)
- Resilience** (Person with a heart and a star)
- Empathy** (Two hands holding a heart)
- Confidence** (Person with a star)
- Self-Control** (Person with a brain and a star)
- Personal Space** (Person with a circle around them)

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Appendix 5 – Detailed Observation Template

Play/ Enquiry Observation		Adult - Initiated	Adult - Led	Child - Led												
Name:		Date:		Observed by:												
				Play area:												
Skills Observed (highlight / tick)		Observation notes Notice, Analyse, Act														
<div> <div>  Cognitive Remembering Focusing Solving Problems Recognising Patterns Thinking Pretending Reasoning Risk Taking </div> <div>  Physical Cutting Drawing Folding Jumping Balancing Climbing Running Throwing Squeezing Pinching </div> <div>  Creative Drawing Writing Inventing Building Designing Experimenting Modelling Storytelling Asking questions Curiosity </div> <div>  Social Sharing Listening Speaking Clearly Taking Turns Being Gentle Good Manners Personal Space Eye Contact Teamwork </div> <div>  Emotional Naming Feelings Describing Feelings Resolving Conflicts Resilience Self-Control Empathy Confidence </div> </div>		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Wellbeing</th> <th>Engagement</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Extremely low</td> <td>1. Extremely low</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Low</td> <td>2. Low</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Moderate</td> <td>3. Moderate</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. High</td> <td>4. High</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Extremely high</td> <td>5. Extremely high</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Wellbeing	Engagement	1. Extremely low	1. Extremely low	2. Low	2. Low	3. Moderate	3. Moderate	4. High	4. High	5. Extremely high	5. Extremely high
Wellbeing	Engagement															
1. Extremely low	1. Extremely low															
2. Low	2. Low															
3. Moderate	3. Moderate															
4. High	4. High															
5. Extremely high	5. Extremely high															
Action Plan/Possible Lines of Development		Pupil Voice														

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