

Development of Play based learning in Primary one across South Ayrshire

February 2019- March 2020



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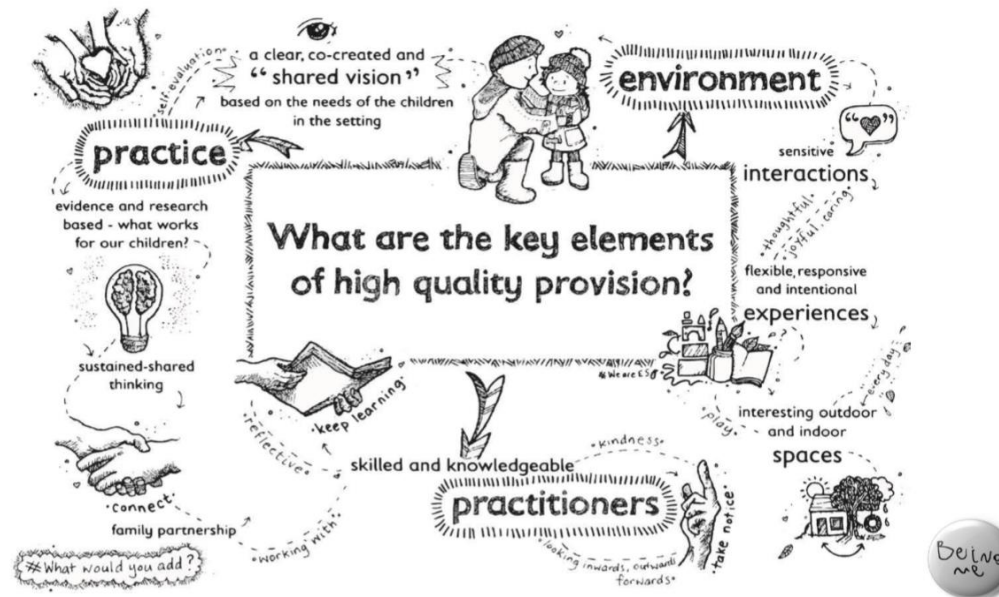
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Vision Statement

To improve children's experiences and attainment through a play based pedagogy in South Ayrshire Primary Schools

Aims

1. To support evolving practice to implement a quality play based pedagogical approach to learning and teaching.
2. To refresh learning environments to provide suitable space and resources to allow for best practice.
3. To provide ongoing training for practitioners, considering varying levels of confidence and experience.
4. To ease transitions from EYC into primary schools, to provide a more familiar and stage appropriate approach to learning for primary one children.




South Ayrshire Council's Vision and Aims mirror those identified as needed for high quality provision across early childhood in

Education Scotland's [Realising the Ambition](#), 2020. (1, p.87)

In line with the strategic priority to give children the best start in life, in 2019 South Ayrshire Council began supporting schools embedding a play based pedagogy.

An ever increasing body of international evidence shows that a play based pedagogical approach in lower primary classes supports children's all-round physical, emotional, social and cognitive development creating a firm educational foundation. ⁽²⁾ Nations adopting this approach have seen a direct link to increased attainment throughout the academic lives of their learners ⁽³⁾. Where play is the main vehicle for learning children are invested in their learning, display deep levels of engagement and are able to transfer skills form one context to another. ⁽⁴⁾ Play and inquiry based practice provides children with richer, more meaningful learning experiences which allow for greater pace and challenge. ⁽⁵⁾ The Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence encompasses Early Years and Primary 1 therefore it is essential that there is consistency and progression across this level. ⁽¹⁾ South Ayrshire is dedicated to ensuring its youngest learners benefit from a play based approach from their time in an early years centre right through P1 and beyond.

To support this improvement Educational Services employed a 0.4 FTE Principal Teacher, this role was filled by two teachers who had extensive Early Level experience which they have used over the past year to support schools and teachers on their journey into play based learning.



The environments in 84% of South Ayrshire schools have been developed to facilitate quality play based learning in Primary one. *

**including both special schools in South Ayrshire*

Over this time period South Ayrshire Council has improved the majority of P1 learning environments and supported teachers in effectively developing a play based pedagogy. Sylva 2014, as cited in Education Scotland's 2020 document 'Realising the Ambition' states research demonstrates that high quality provision promotes children's development and learning. ⁽¹⁾ It also enhances their educational and life chances in the longer term.

Scottish children are amongst the youngest to start formal schooling in Europe and have often had to learn in classrooms which directly contrast the early years centres they have just left. ⁽⁶⁾ South Ayrshire recognised this disparity and set up a process to make the necessary changes. To complete this process successfully schools were supported in a phased approach.

Phase One February - June 2019

Environment Refresh

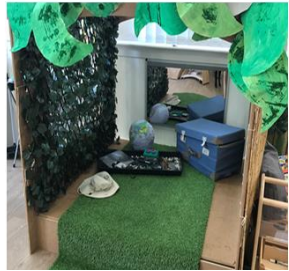
- Annbank Primary
- Cairn Primary
- Gardenrose Primary
- Holmston Primary
- Maidens Primary
- Muirhead Primary
- Saint Cuthbert's Primary
- Barassie Primary
- Dundonald Primary
- Girvan Primary
- Kingcase Primary
- Minishant Primary
- Sacred Heart Primary



Phase Two August - December 2019

Environment Refresh

- Coylton Primary
- Heathfield Primary
- Saint John's Primary
- Saint Patrick's Primary
- Doonfoot Primary
- Kincaidston Primary
- Tarbolton Primary
- Struthers Primary



Training Events

- Launch Event, March 2019
- Working Party Planning meeting, May 2019
- Pedagogy in Play: Deirdre Grogan, June 2019
- Play network session, June 2019



Training Events

- Play network session, September 2019
- Play Pedagogy, November 2019
- Working Party Assessment and Tracking meeting, December 2019



Phase Three December - March 2020

Environment Refresh

- Barr Primary
- Braehead Primary
- Crosshill Primary
- Dalmillling Primary
- Invergarven School
- Monkton Primary
- Southcraig School
- Dalmillling ELF
- Barhill Primary
- Colmonell Primary
- Daily Primary
- Fisherton Primary
- Kirkmichael Primary
- Newton Primary
- Troon Primary
- Doonfoot Communication Base one

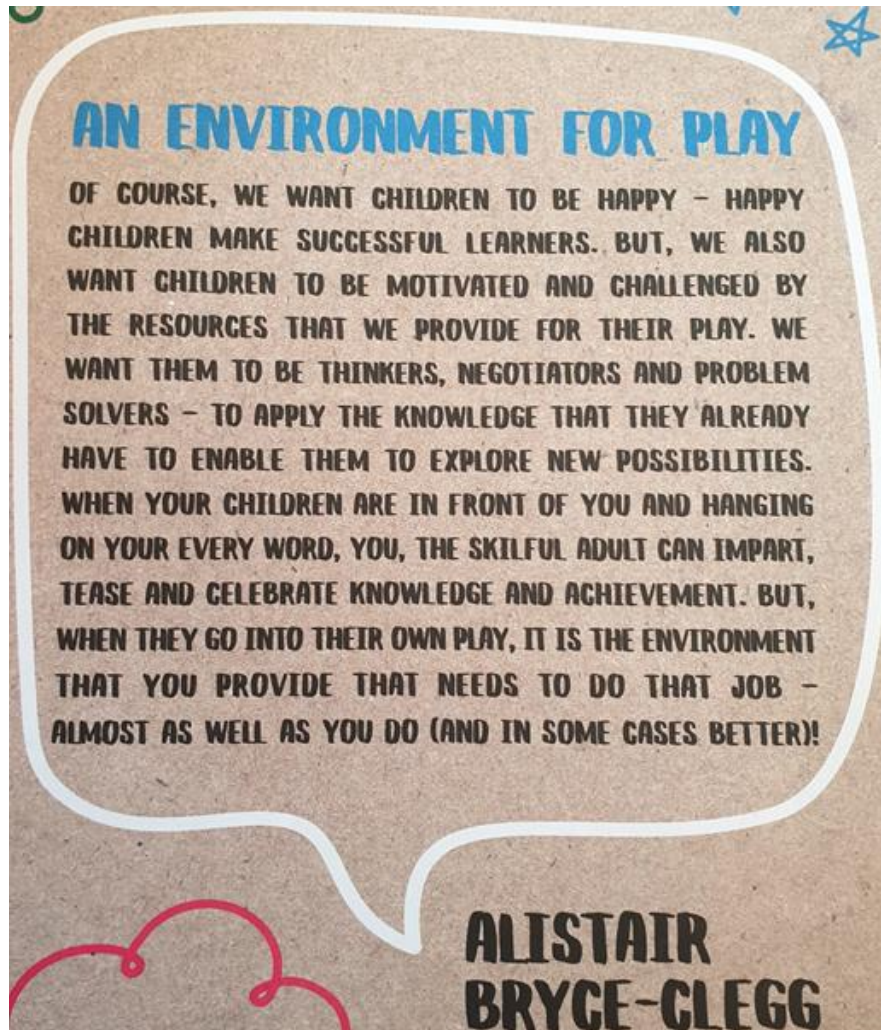


Training Events

- Investigative Numeracy across Early Level, February 2020
- Planning in the Moment: Anna Ephgrave, March 2020



The Importance of the Learning Environment



For children to learn effectively they need a caring environment that offers a wealth of experiences and interactions. An environment that is able to do this will support the curriculum and provide the foundations for deep learning to take place. ⁽¹⁾ Getting the learning environment right is a central component of the learning and teaching relationship, often recognised by Reggio Emilia educators as the third teacher. ⁽⁷⁾

As a result of practitioner's research and professional learning provided, Reggio Emilia and Froebel approaches are becoming more noticeable within South Ayrshire Council's P1 environments. These environments are evolving into more sensory rich, calming and creative spaces. Learning spaces that connect and flow together are being developed to foster creativity and encourage deep levels of engagement where children have increased opportunities to develop independence and self-regulation skills.

The two SAC staff providing support in taking forward play based learning have worked closely with head teachers and P1 practitioners to create environments that are multi-functional and multi-sensory. The use of muted colours has been encouraged to create a sense of space and light within classrooms. Using transparent surfaces and displaying children's work against a neutral background has helped to add interesting layers to the updated environments.

When developing environments schools were also given guidance on the importance of providing resources that are open ended and gender neutral. Choosing gender neutral materials is important, so that all children feel they can play. Using well thought out resources can counter gender stereotyping and have a positive effect on how children play. ⁽⁸⁾ From an early age children absorb gender-stereotyped messages and form opinions on what they can and cannot do according to their sex. It is important that these views are challenged before they become too ingrained. ⁽¹⁾

All Learning Environments

High quality learning outdoors can reduce anxiety in children and have a positive impact on children's engagement and interactions when they come back inside. ⁽⁸⁾ Outdoor learning provides unique learning opportunities for big movements and dynamic play that cannot be achieved indoors. With quality outdoor learning children have opportunities to develop movement and coordination skills, which have a direct link to the development of fine motor and concentration skills. ⁽¹⁾ Over the past year outdoor learning opportunities for P1 children have increased in many schools across South Ayrshire. Some schools have developed well-resourced areas using loose parts where children have the freedom to take risks in a controlled and supportive environment.

For more information on the use of loose parts follow the link:

<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Loose-Parts-Play-web.pdf>

Giving children opportunities for this type of play can help them to take more calculated risks in real life situations. ⁽⁸⁾ There is a need to build on the positive start made this year to continue to promote learning outdoors within the curriculum.

South Ayrshire Council is dedicated to ensuring children across all of its schools are given opportunities to learn through play within a quality environment and with access to quality resources. Children need these important opportunities, if they are lacking then children are not able to develop the skills needed to become effective and appropriate communicators or fulfil their true potential. ⁽⁸⁾



Aims for Primary One Environments



Promoting outdoor learning not just taking learning outside



Flexible environments that allow space for movement and exploration



Providing key quality, durable pieces of equipment from which hands on learning can take place



Environments that are literacy and numeracy rich - not just full of print



Spaces that promote independence in resourcing and options for learning



Calm, nurturing, welcoming spaces. Neutral backdrops provide less background distraction and encourage focus



Developing social, communication friendly spaces



Encouraging children's ownership and responsibility over resources, space and learning



Having meaningful displays that promote thinking and celebrating the child's view of success and creativity

Learning Environments- Practitioner's Perspective



"We were supported by the Play Based Learning Team with resourcing and setting up our classroom, with continued training and support on offer too. The children responded very positively to the changes and I found that the teaching and learning didn't change too much but just allowed the children to have more freedom and choice. They became more engaged and took ownership of their learning, confidently being able to explain what they were doing through play and how it 'helped their learning'. I myself became more responsive and was able to challenge and extend the children's learning through play. Play continues to have a positive impact within my class and injects fun into all areas of learning."

Aimee Clydesdale, P1 Teacher, Muirhead Primary



"The extensive resources have strengthened the continuous provision of play-based activities for all children P1 and P2. They have allowed for a better balance between adult-led, adult-initiated and child-led activities across discreet lessons and across the school day as a whole. There is now a stronger sense of ownership because rules, for example when engaging with the water tray, were negotiated with and displayed by the children. Loose parts and manipulatives are housed throughout the classroom for easy access and to allow for enhanced provision. Provocations are provided and the children's independence, problem-solving skills, independent enquiry and creativity have all grown.

Maths and Literacy resources are now accessible throughout the day rather than being tidied away because of timetabling demands. Importantly, children now have play based learning opportunities throughout the day: during discrete lessons and during dedicated play slots, including outdoors. The dedicated play slots have incorporated wider curricular areas such as IDL, Science and Health and Wellbeing. Seesaw was introduced school-wide for the session 2019-2020 and this has allowed children to independently record their learning using an I-pad and is then discussed by very engaged learners during our plenaries."

Amanda Clayton, P1/2 Teacher, Braehead Primary



"In Term 1 of this school year, Dundonald Primary staff and pupils enjoyed developing an outdoor space for play based learning. Working with our children and families, we created a story-telling area with a fabulous story telling chair and toadstools carved from wood. We are exceedingly grateful to our parent council for purchasing these for us. We are also very lucky that one of our parents was able to carve and deliver this exquisite furniture! The mud-kitchen and water trays provide a wide variety of opportunities for play based learning – as do the construction materials. The development of our outdoor spaces for learning will be a continued focus in Dundonald – we look forward to working on these next session."

Fiona Paterson, Head Teacher Dundonald Primary



"An open session early on the year for parents to visit the room was a great way to get parents on board. I had removed most of the tables in the room to give more carpet space; this meant that children did not have a fixed seat to work at. I was worried that parents would be concerned about this, particularly Primary 3 parents, but having seen the children in the room they could see the benefits of flexible seating. The children have loved it and there has been not one issue with seating arrangements. Children choose where to work and who with, this may be at a table, standing at a cupboard, sitting on a cushion, lying on the floor, wherever they are comfortable. All children are happy coming to school, they all talk about enjoying learning through play and they are good at seeing where learning is taking place.

The day is very much structured in three blocks, literacy and maths time is a combination of whole class teaching, small group teaching and planned for teacher activities, including games, workbooks and computers. The third block is free play, completely child led. If there is a must do activity, for example a science lesson as part of school planning or a task that the children have to do this is also delivered as a class lesson.

In free play groups are not taken to work on other things, there is no additional support during free play and I do not work with groups during free play. At free play we all play, me included. The benefit of this is that I can support and develop learning with the children as they play, I can add enhancements to the play, I can support children who are not engaging well in play that day. This has worked really well. There has been excellent learning that I would have missed if not involved. It also allows me to complete the floor book with children following play where we can discuss learning and next steps. I have observed so much wonderful learning through free play which I could never have planned for. The resources and set up in the room are open ended and flexible enough to challenge, stretch and adapt to children's needs and interests.

Michaela Hansbury-Brough, P1-3 Teacher, Ballantrae Primary



"We introduced social snack in class time. At first the pupils were unsure but once they got into the swing of the class routine they were racing for snack! Some pupils were so engaged in their learning they forgot to have snack until reminded. Pupils liked the concept that although they didn't have a set desk they could access their water bottle at anytime during the day at the snack table.

I notice my class were having conversations with other children in the class who they might not always have played with. It encouraged new friendships. It also gave pupils more time to play during break and learn new games with their friends.

We have a pupil who is part of our class but has their own teacher and mini classroom. I noticed a huge difference in their inclusion as part of the class as they brought their snack and water bottle with them and had snack in our class. Social snack provided an opportunity to for this child to build strong relationships with the rest of the pupils in the class."

Barbara Pettigrew, P1 Teacher, Girvan

Developing Block Play



At the beginning of phase one every school within South Ayrshire Council was given a set of unit and hollow blocks for their P1 children to use. Opportunities for block play training were organised for P1 practitioners to attend. These training sessions aimed to increase teacher's knowledge and understanding of block play and help them to set up the blocks for the most effective use in their classes.

Education Scotland promotes the use of block play and have created resources that can be used to support staff and deepen their knowledge and understanding of block play. <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/block-play-block-building-in-the-early-years/>

Block play can offer a vast range of learning experiences for children starting from the obvious links to mathematical concepts, through to social and communication development. Block play can also help children to gain confidence, persevere with challenges and actively problem solve. Encouraging adult interactions and open ended questions can positively impact on children's thought processes and learning when using blocks.

Unit and hollow blocks are an open ended resource, which appeal to both genders as children use them to create complex structures using their own imaginations. There are 7 stages of block play which children can progress through, until they are able to create complex structures with enclosures and bridges.

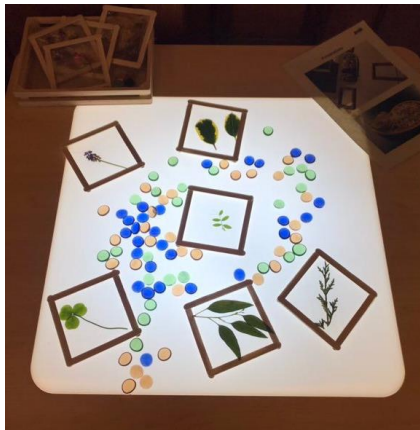
Continuous Lifelong Professional Learning (CLPL) Programme

The CLPL programme began with a play based learning launch event at County Buildings. Across the main session and the twilight session 86% of schools in South Ayrshire attended. Attendees across the day were a mixture of senior leadership (26%), class teachers (55%) and support staff (19%).

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Sue Palmer Key Note Speaker



The main outcomes of this event were:

- To explore why schools should be implementing a play based approach within primary one classes
- To dispel misconceptions around what a play based approach is
- To explore the challenges, faced when transitioning from more traditional forms of teaching
- To provide guidance on the first steps in evolving practice
- To provide hands on environmental set up for teachers to explore and gain ideas
- To open a dialogue around where schools currently are in their practice and what support is needed moving forward

CLPL Development

This initial event provided a platform for practitioners across the authority to share their views and provide anonymous feedback on the following four categories; Apprehensions, Excitement, Identified Training Needs and Partnerships. Illustrated are a selection of the most common responses in each category.

Apprehensions

- *Limitations of staffing and resources
- *Difficulty in a composite setting
- *Ability to use outdoor spaces
- *Will children meet targets and progress

Excitement

- *Keen to implement
- *Exciting new experiences and resources
- * Seamless transitions between EYC and P1
- *Huge possibilities for learning
- *Increased engagement with children leading learning

Identified Training Needs

- *Planning and Assessment
 - *Regular CLPL
- *Composite training around differentiation
 - *Outdoor Learning
 - *Block Play training
 - *Holistic Planning

Partnerships

- *Sharing resources with EYC
- *Parental involvement, Stay and Play sessions
- *Format for P1 inductions to share information and vision with parents
- *Linking with cluster schools/networking

Using this initial feedback and the vision statement, a timeline of training was developed to support the environmental refreshes already underway. Details of the training events provided in each Phase are included in the graphics on page 5.

Between March 2019 and March 2020 extensive CLPL has been provided both in house and by visiting specialists. Training has been well attended with 58 % of schools engaging in at least half of the CLPL sessions provided in this time frame. * Proactive feedback on training sessions has allowed adjustment of the training program throughout the session to best suit the development of a play based pedagogy across all South Ayrshire primary one classes. The following three pages detail a breakdown of the CLPL sessions provided.

**25 schools have had at least one representative attending four of more of the eight CLPL opportunities available (listed on page 5) between March 2019 and March 2020.*

**Play Network Drop In Sessions
(June/September)**



Seek advice

Provide Practical Examples

Time to build networks with colleagues

"Drop in sessions were very useful to share ideas and resources – very practical based which was really helpful"
Kingcase P1 Team

"I found it very reassuring speaking to both Clair and Nita at events that they had organised. I always left with new ideas and feeling positive about my approach to play in my class. These events were a fantastic opportunity to talk to other colleagues about their journey and gave us the chance to share concerns, good practice, planning ideas etc."
Stacey Logan, Principal Teacher, Barrhill Primary

"I loved yesterday's session. Feeling very inspired and really looking forward to getting into class after the summer to get my teeth into it all. Wishing my summer holidays away."
Melissa Devlin, P1 Teacher, Struthers

"This course, I would say, was my moment of epiphany and I came away with such a solid understanding of what Play Based Learning would look like in my classroom and the key principles of learning that would underpin it."
Naomi Sloan, P1 Teacher, Tarbolton

"Thank you for arranging such an interesting motivating session. I really enjoyed it and I am itching to begin our play based journey."
Katie Reid, Depute Head, Holmston

**Play Pedagogy
Deirdre Grogan, Strathclyde
University**



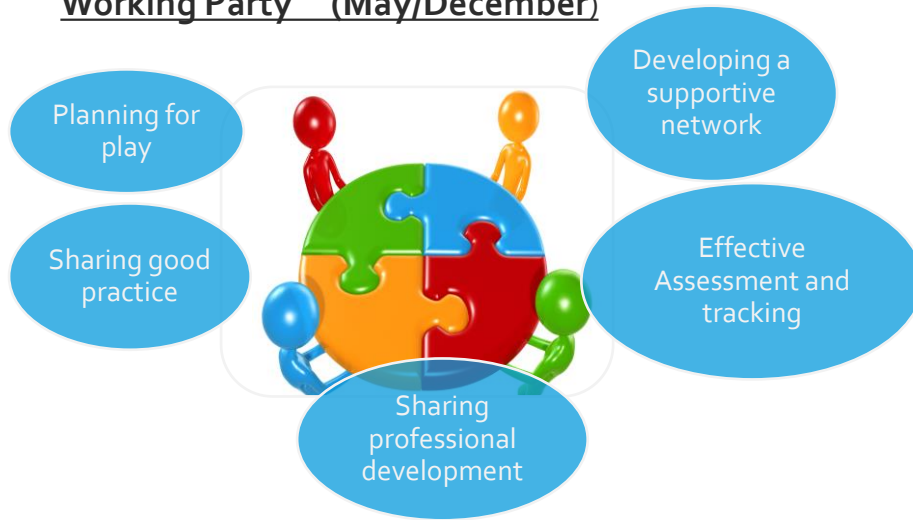
Connecting teaching to learning

How young children learn

Centrality of play

Effective learning environments

Working Party (May/December)



South Ayrshire Council
Primary 1 Curriculum & Assessment

Pupil Consultation: Please add children's voice in this box or alternatively record children's voice on a learning wall or within a Floorbook (if you are using a 'Talking Thinking Floorbook' please ensure you record PLOD's - possible lines of development).

Literacy	RME <small>Please change this to suit the needs of the class. Eg. Developing the young workforce might be a focus.</small>	Expressive Arts
Numeracy	Primary 1 Topic Title..... Date/Term.....	Science
HWB	Technologies	Social Studies

Provocations
A provocation provokes thoughts, discussions, questions, interests, creativity and ideas. It can also expand on a thought, project, idea or interest. Ideas for provocations could be:

- A thought-provoking question e.g.
- A selection of resources to provoke enquiry
- Setting materials up in a new and challenging way
- A selection of photographs

In this box add brief details of the provocations used. Children's thoughts, ideas and comments can be documented in this box or on a learning wall/ floorbook with photo evidence.

Public Assessment 1
These should cover more than one curricular area and worksheets should be avoided where possible. Children should be given opportunities to use their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts.

Public Assessment 2

Public Assessment 3

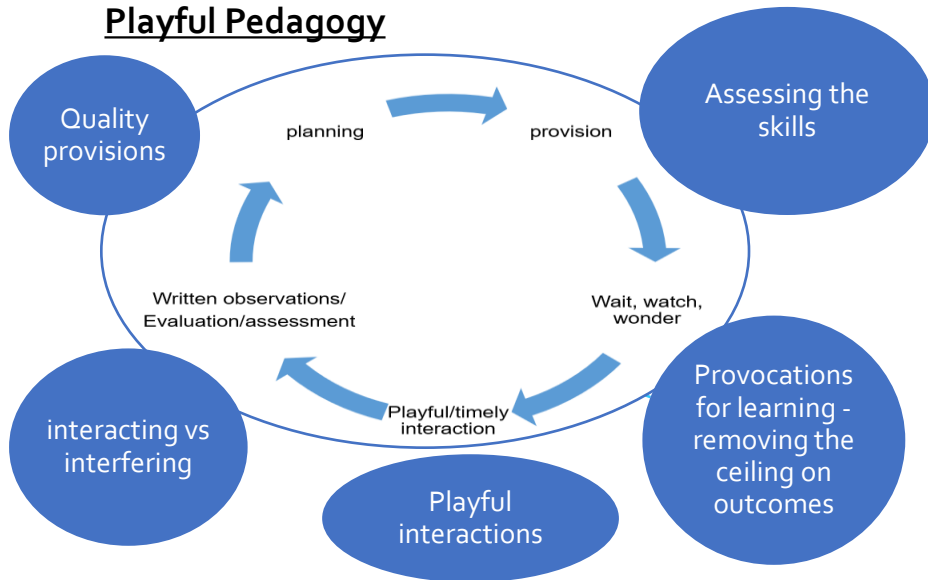
Public Assessment 4

Line of Development:

Week 1 <small>Week one is the introduction to the topic. ARTS and KWIL, or angles would be a useful tool to use at this point.</small>	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
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The play focused IDL planner that was adapted by the P1 working party. Original created by Ian Sturgeon.

Playful Pedagogy



"A fantastic session on how to assess, track and respond to play based learning" Laura Hutton, P1 Teacher, Tarbolton

"Listening to Holmston's experience was most useful. I will aim to alter practice to eventually reach this level of planned purposeful play" Carolyn Hall, P1 Teacher, Annbank

"Sharing experiences with others in different schools has been beneficial and has given me food for thought."

Andrea Hamilton, P1 Teacher, Monkton

"Loved the ideas for activities, especially the valentines tray, use of clip boards for ideas from others was useful too."

Forehill Primary Attendee

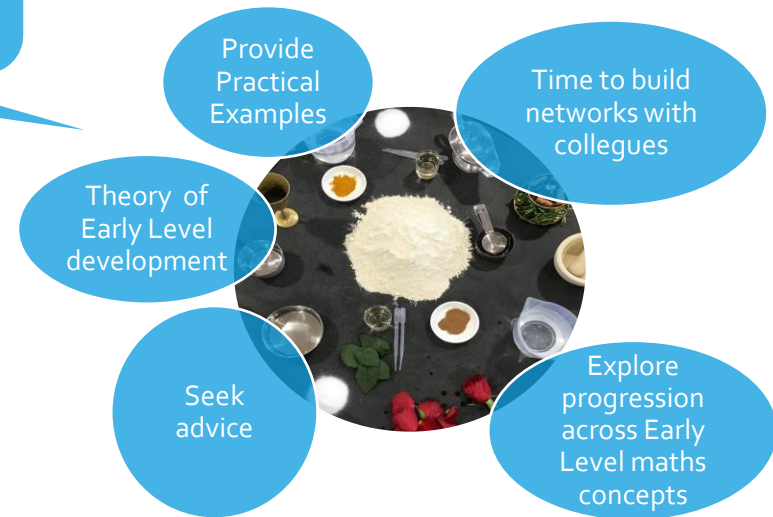
"Following this training I looked at the maths area and asked the pupils what they did/ not want to have and change in the maths area. I ensured there was a large space on the floor for pupils to extend their learning from the table.

I also looked at how I complete maths assessments and spoke with colleagues on ways we can make them more engaging.

In addition, I created an outdoor toolkit which has a variety of measuring and mark making tools which can be taken outside to explore maths"

Barbara Pettigrew, P1 Teacher, Girvan

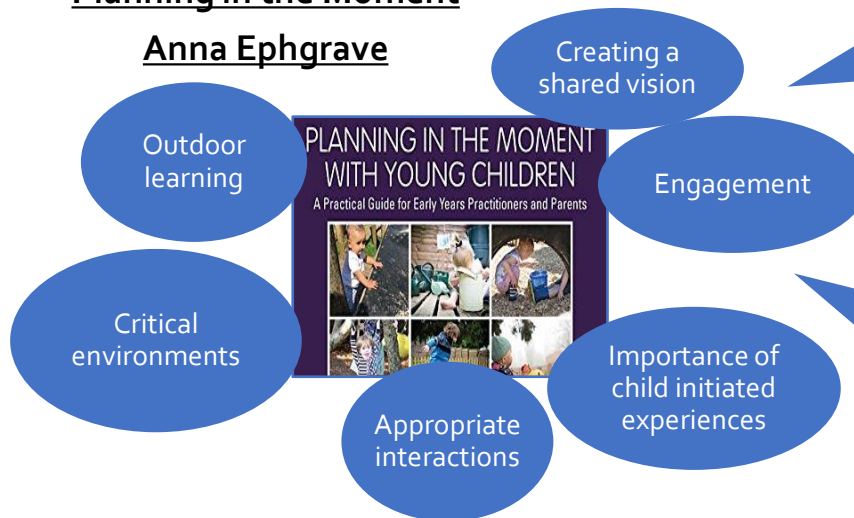
Investigative Numeracy across Early Level



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Planning in the Moment

Anna Ephgrave



"I took away reassurance that I'm on the right track and validation to stick on it. Thanks for organising Anna to come and speak, it's been one of the most beneficial CPD opportunities I've had."

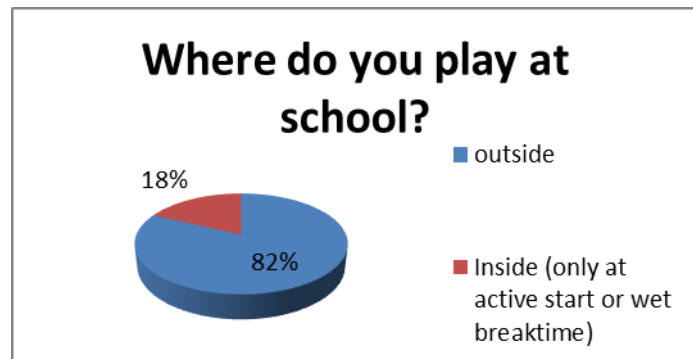
Michaela Hansbury-Brough, P1-3 Teacher, Ballantrae

"The practicalities linked to the pedagogy with actual real evidence to back it up – this was a fantastic day which provided me with an epiphany although still a long way to go to achieve the best balance. Fantastic, useful, amazing day." Amanda Pickard, P1 Teacher, Grammar

Children's Voice

Prior to altering learning environments pupil consultation sessions were carried out in a number of schools by the play based team to gauge children's views on playing at school and to gather their opinions on changes they would like to see to their learning environments. In phase 1 this was achieved by asking random samples of children from four different schools about their play experiences at school before teachers embarked on using a more play based approach. In the subsequent phases pupil consultations took the form of a 'big draw' project or were part of a Talking and Thinking Floorbook on the development of play in that class. The following is a sampling of responses from Phase 1 pupil consultations March 2019:

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Do you get the chance to pretend play – to be someone else?

- "Only on World Book Day"
- "Only when we do the nativity"
- "We get to play in the shop at Goldentime"

Not at break time or lunch time, do you get the chance to create your own art?

- During class time all children questioned said they do what the teachers directs them to do- all creating the same thing.
- Half of the children questioned also said they made their own art at choosing or golden time.

Further responses were:

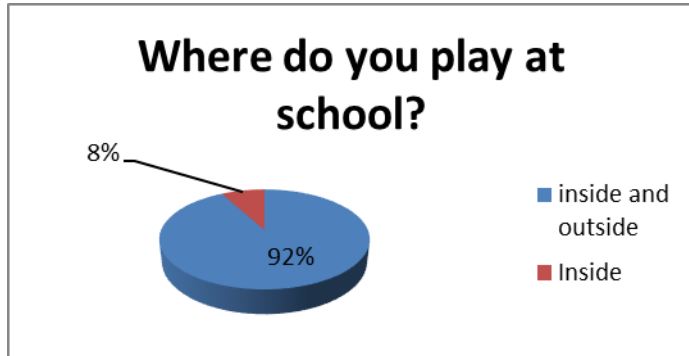
- "You do that at nursery"
- "We sometimes watch YouTube and copy that."
- "We did a topic about knights – I painted the gold bits."

At school, do grownups play with you?

- "The P3/4's play with us" (multi composite class)
- "P7's play with us at wet playtimes."
- "No, they need to do work."
- "Sometimes Mrs X (classroom assistant) plays when we play bingo."

Follow up Responses

After the teachers had been using a more play based pedagogy with their classes, the children's responses were very different. The following is a sampling of responses from the same children in June 2019:



Do you get the chance to pretend play – to be someone else?

"I like being a shop keeper and counting out the money."

"I chose playing Mums and Dads in the home corner."

"Yes, we have little bibs we can put our pens and paper in and pretend we are in a shop."

Not at break time or lunch time, do you get the chance to create your own art?

- 73% of children questioned said now they could create their own art.

"We get to draw what we want."

"We choose our own colours."

"We don't all need to do the same thing."

At school, do grownups play with you?

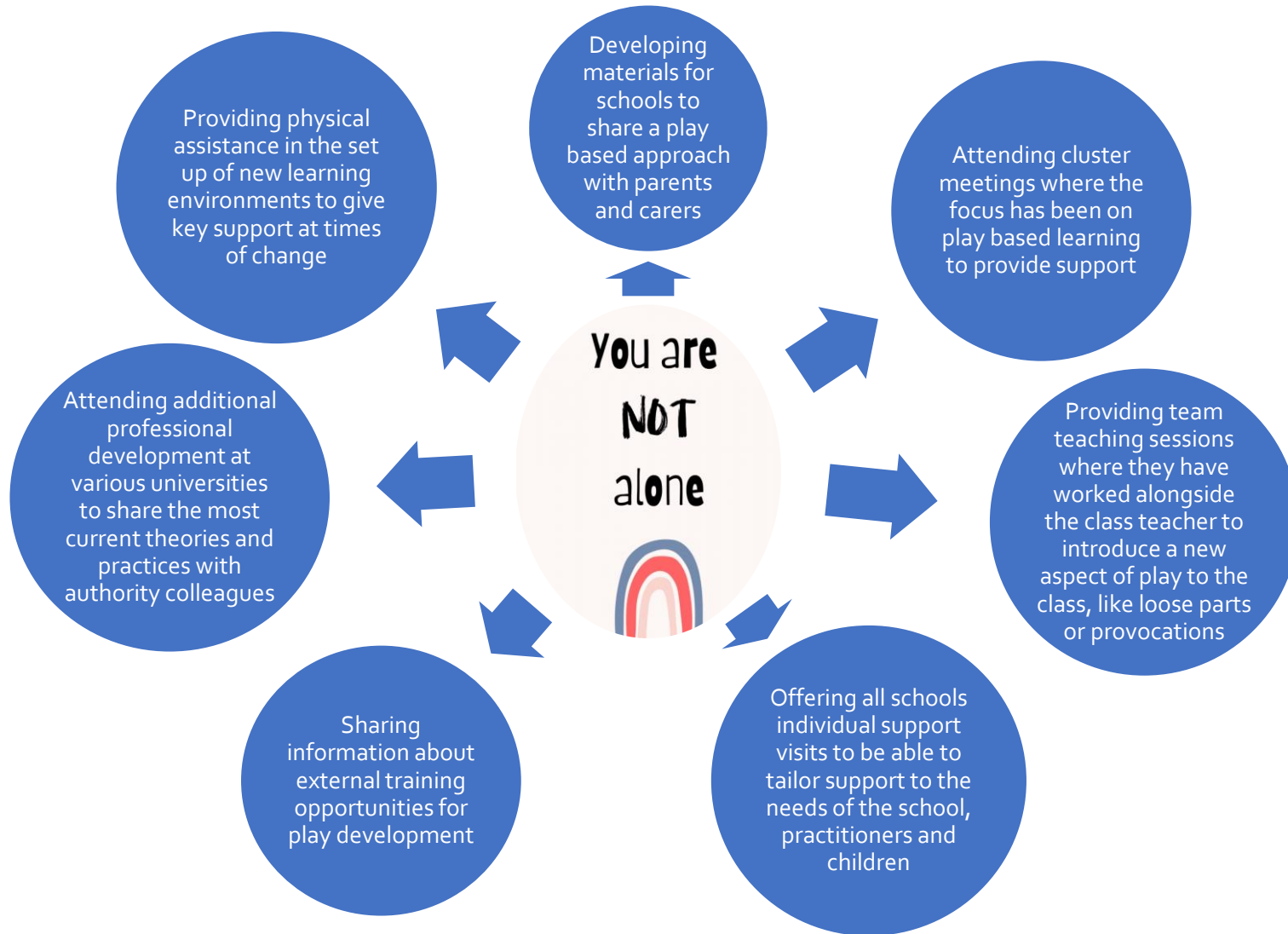
"My teacher plays games with us."

"Mrs Y (teacher) plays with us."

"My teacher joins in when we are playing."

Support

In addition to providing an on-going training program and assisting schools in choosing how to develop their learning environments, the play based team have provided support to schools and individuals in a number of different ways these have included:



Practitioners Perspective on Developing a Play Pedagogy



"As a teacher, the class space that has been redesigned this year for the larger items and resources has promoted the centrality of play as being pivotal to learning, rather than what was before; namely a peripheral add on to the day.

Observing the children during child initiated learning has been invigorating for me as a teacher. Their delight in controlling the learning environment and confidence in leading their play has been visible. What has also been apparent is that they appreciate me being part of their play, being accessible, whether that is to teach them needlework or just to sit down and play board games with them; this knock on effect on enhancing pupil –teacher relationships cannot be over emphasised.

On reflection, I would say that having started play based learning this year, the difference is that I feel I really know the learners in my class better, their likes/dislikes, their hobbies, social groups etc. which was not as easily visible before."

Alison McGinley, St.Patrick's Primary

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Our children are so responsible for their own learning journey and take great pride and ownership of learning as a result of PBL. The social relationships in our class are fantastic and children are able to negotiate and solve problems if they encounter any. Risk management has been a huge benefit of PBL and learners feel a sense of trust being imparted to them, by being allowed outside etc. Throughout the year we have enjoyed watching our learners grow and make connections through their play, whether that be in the rocket during role play counting back in 1's from 10 or when they are in the small world area recreating their big book story with natural resources. Every little thing the learners do in play, mirrors exactly what we hope from them, or even better sometimes, they come up with something we could have never dreamed of planning for!

We found that when going to training, rather than feeling overwhelmed, we felt reassured that we are doing a good job and that our PBL approach is in line with what specialists advise. We also felt confident and self-assured enough in our approach to be able to disagree with others' approaches and opinions to PBL and given meaningful and respectful justifications. We understand that PBL is not going to look the same in all schools – and that's okay! We are all at different stages in our PBL journey and we are proud of where we are in ours.

Laura Hutton and Naomi Sloan, Tarbolton Primary



"This has been the highlight of my year. The personal journey I have been on and the professional research and enquiry that I have done about play based learning has had a great impact on not only one me as a practitioner but also on the school moving forward to providing high quality learning and teaching opportunities for the children.

It was a fixed mindset that stopped me embracing play based learning in my classroom initially, however, after some time for reflection and time to develop a growth mindset towards this approach to learning and teaching the impact has been significant."

Stacey Logan, Barrhill Primary



"The children and I had a great year in Primary 1 following our interests and learning together. My class turned into a glee club with daily dancing, singing, drama and storytelling and I know this gave my class confidence that then helped them to learn in a more meaningful way.

I love Play Based Learning and I am looking forward to next year. In light of the current situation, Play Based Learning will be the key to helping children feel comfortable in the school environment again, supporting their health and wellbeing and allowing them to continue and share the excellent play they have enjoyed at home. "

Diane Buchanan, P1 Teacher, Doonfoot Primary



"Having Tracey, an experienced Early Years practitioner as part of our primary 1 team this year has had a significant effect on the development of play based learning. Tracey's involvement had a positive impact for staff, pupils and parents. Pupils have benefited from the transitional support of moving to a new stage with a familiar staff member who has an insight into their interests, learning styles and personalities.

Teaching staff have been able to draw on Tracey's wealth of experience in early childhood development, play approaches and prior knowledge of the learners in their class. Having an additional staff member with experience of observing, recording and enhancing play has allowed for greater development of children's learning through play.

Having Tracey as part of the primary one team has supported a raise in attainment and helped to embed play based learning across the school. Tracey has also been key in providing parental support hosting a school play day and parent workshop. "

Primary One Team, Kingcase Primary

Conclusion

Significant progress has been made in this first year, further support and development will be vital to give children the best start through a play based learning approach in all school across South Ayrshire.

Practitioners across South Ayrshire have embraced the challenge of changing the way children learn in P1 with some excellent practice emerging. Throughout all of the organised training opportunities, drop in sessions and working party meetings schools have been given the opportunity to share good practice. Together with the play based team, they have supported each other to adapt and change ways of working to suit their different classes and individuals. Continuing this supportive network will ensure that the journey into play based learning will flourish and develop as schools deepen their knowledge and understanding of the importance of a play based pedagogy.

Where to next for 2020-2021

- Continue to develop learning environments both indoors and out
- Provide further training to ensure progression and challenge in learning as children move through early level and beyond using a play based approach
- Support leaders in deepening understanding of the importance of a play centred curriculum
- Promoting networks of learning across the authority
- Assisting schools in developing best practice by embracing the guidance for Primary One in Realising the Ambition
- With the involvement of the working party continue to develop approaches to planning and assessment unique to South Ayrshire

Coronavirus Response

In light of the ongoing pandemic and the scheduled reopening of schools we have a responsibility to ensure the environment and approach that children return to and indeed transition into for the first time is developmentally appropriate and nurturing.

Research carried out on Adverse Childhood Experiences states that, Childhood adversity can create harmful levels of stress which impact healthy brain development. This can result in long-term effects on learning, behaviour and health.⁽⁹⁾ This pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives and routines of all members of South Ayrshire's community and children will come back to school with varying levels of impact. It is our responsibility to ensure the return to an educational setting is as gentle and supportive as possible.

From an infection control and social distancing perspective it would be easy to slip back to traditional forms of learning where children are sat in one place for the majority of their learning time. This approach would be detrimental on many levels and deny children the most developmentally appropriate way of learning. Fisher states (2013, Pg 20):

Children need opportunities to engage with a range of materials and stimuli. They need time to explore, investigate and question. They need a range of play experiences and appropriate resources of good quality. They need space to move around, to experiment, to create and to play.⁽¹⁰⁾

Young children need to experience the concrete and physicality of learning concepts before taking on abstract worksheets or jotter work. Finding a way with appropriate infection control measures to allow children to be active learners will allow for depth of learning and transference of skills to occur. As well as greatly encouraging the development of joy in learning at this key stage of development.

Children will not be transitioning into our primary one classes directly from their familiar EYC, they are transitioning from home and in some cases hub care. All children will have spent a considerable amount of time with the people in their household over the preceding weeks. It is only natural and logical that even the children that have been minimally impacted by this pandemic would have an element of separation anxiety. We need to ensure we take a nurturing approach to the introduction to primary one. Fulfilling children's basic needs of being cared for physically, kept safe and for emotional wellbeing.⁽¹¹⁾

Schools are relationship driven environments and young children, with ever developing independence skills require physical contact. South Ayrshire Council will be issuing operating guidance for Early Level therefore, an additional aim for the play based team in 2020/2021 will be to support schools and primary one practitioners to adapt their play pedagogy to adhere to the Coronavirus response.

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