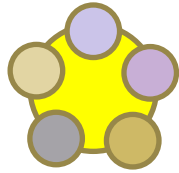


Playing and Learning: Friends or Foes?

Perry Else 2011

Session outline



- Playing happens everywhere
- Adults roles in children's play
- Exploring the links between playing, creativity and learning for all ages
- Time and resources for playing
- Playing back in formal settings such as public spaces and in school playgrounds
- The full benefits of playing
- Practical help

What gets in the way?

- Adult attitudes
- Focus on outcomes
- 'Rules'
- 'Fears'
- Partial solutions
- Resources??

Curriculum for Excellence (Scotland)

- Active, experiential learning
- A holistic approach to learning
- Smooth transitions
- Learning through play

Ministers: high-level vision

For the children and young people of Scotland:

- “In order to become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens...
- “All Scotland's children need to be: safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, included, respected and responsible”

Characteristics of Play Else 2009

- Immediacy of action and response
- Choice for the player
- A sense of control
- Accomplishment is self defined
- Timeless – ‘In the moment’

Benefits of play After Lester and Russell 2010

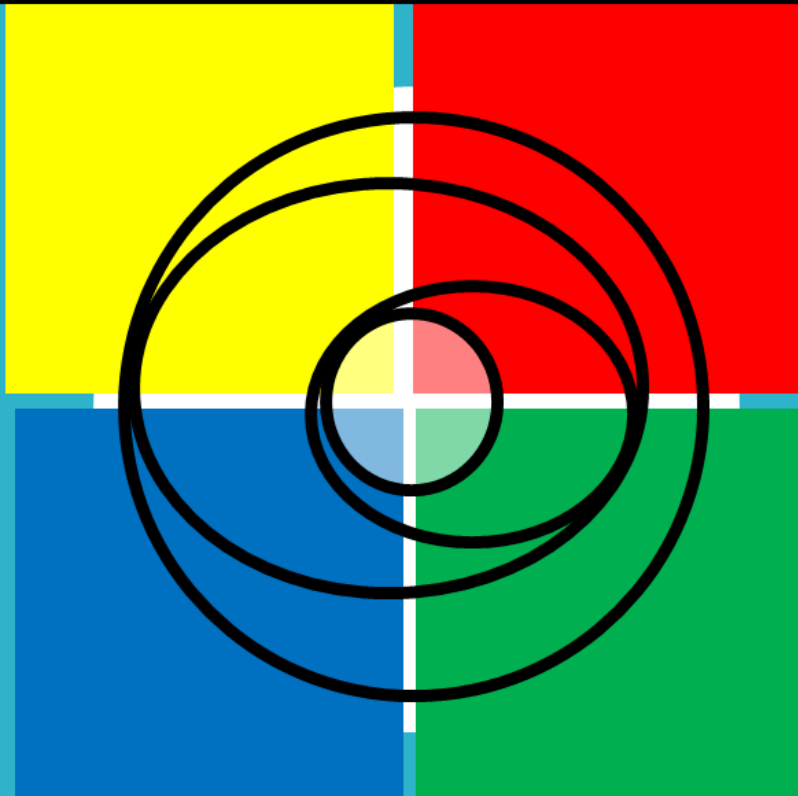
- Helps develop more efficient brains by enhancing cortical connections
- Contributes directly to good physical and mental well-being
- Helps children experience control over their world
- Contributes to resilience and problem solving
- Is undertaken for the pleasure it affords, helps with overcoming stress and aids learning and creativity

Ways of playing

| | |
|--|--|
| Confidence and intellectual ability | Physical abilities and attributes |
| Culture and beliefs | Power and relationships |

Ways of playing

Else (2009)



Myself Who am I? What are my feelings?

My body What can it do?
What is the world like?

Us Who are we? What are our beliefs?

Our society What is my role?
What status do I have?

Comparison

| Area | Play | Curriculum for Excellence |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Initial action | Play is innate, children do it for themselves | Adults lead |
| Focus | Holistic – encompasses all children’s interests | A holistic approach with an emphasis on active, experiential learning |
| Feedback | Self generated | Led by adults |
| Choice | Determined by child | Determined by adults according to ‘norms’ |
| Control | Determined by child | Limits set by adults |
| Outcomes | Accomplishment is defined by child | Assessed to adults’ vision |
| Timeframe | Timeless – ‘In the moment’ | Future focussed – ‘well becoming’ |

Summary

| Play | Curriculum for Excellence |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Children lead | Adults lead |
| Covers all areas | Focussed on experiential learning |
| No Limits | Limits set by adults |
| It's about Now – children as children | It's about the Future – children as 'little adults' |

BRAWGS Continuum Russell 2005



Focussed, curriculum led

Clear outcomes

Education

Organic, changing

No defined outcomes

Play

Feedback

Where was your focus?

Adult ?.....Child?

Benefits?.....Risks?

Everyday?.....Special?

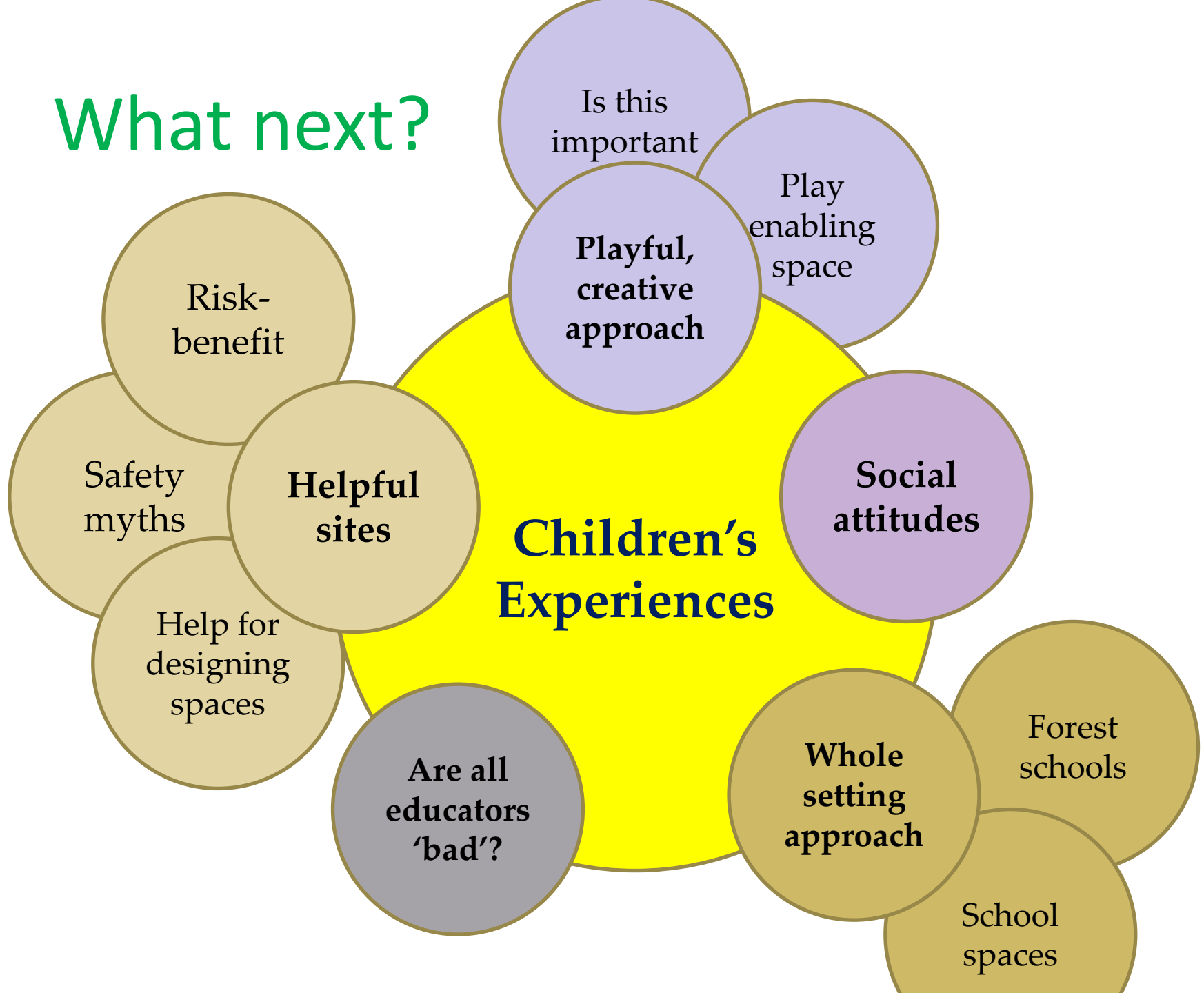
Planned?.....Emergent?

Play?.....Learning?

What helps?

- Changes of attitude/more open attitude
- Focus on experiences
- Respect for rules
- Risk-Benefit Assessments
- Whole setting approach – leaders, supervisors, staff, support staff
- Time
- Flexibility

What next?



Why a playful, creative
approach might be better

Towards a theory of creativity Rogers (1961)

The creative process

- Emergence in action
- A novel construction
- Growing out of the uniqueness of both the individual and the materials/context of their life



The inner conditions of constructive creativity

Rogers (1961)

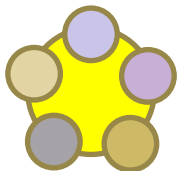
- Cannot be forced, it emerges
- Openness to experience
- An internal locus of evaluation
- An ability to toy with elements and concepts

Conditions fostering constructive creativity

Rogers (1961)

**Does this
look
familiar?**

- Psychological safety
- Accepting the individual
- A climate where external evaluation is absent
- Understanding empathetically
- Psychological freedom
- Freedom of symbolic expression
- Personal responsibility



Change is natural

The ability to maintain plasticity of perception and thought is the gift of childhood to human personality

Cobb (1977)



Neoteny

...where infantile qualities are retained into adult life

‘Without it, we would be spending our time eating, mating, fighting, sleeping and cleaning ourselves.

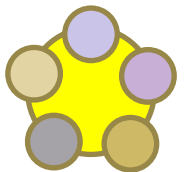
‘With it, we also have art, literature, music, theatre, sport, science and technology.’

Morris (2005)

Experience

Life is not a
problem to be
solved but a
reality to be
experienced

Kierkegaard



Social attitudes...

News > Education > Schools

School bans games and cuts playtime numbers after complaints of noise

Barlby primary school in Selby, North Yorkshire, says it wants to be a good neighbour so has 'sadly' taken the measures

Martin Wainwright

guardian.co.uk, Friday 17 September 2010 18.27 BST

[Article history](#)

A school has reluctantly banned hard-ball games and reduced pupil numbers in outdoor breaks after neighbours complained about "excessive" noise.

Boisterous children have played in the grounds of Barlby primary school, near Selby in North Yorkshire, for more than a century, but governors say that modern legislation has forced the move.

**STOP
PRESS!**

More good news

Adults who had engaged in more creative play as children



More likely to have a healthy diet and take regular exercise

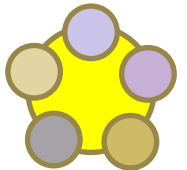
Adults reporting environmental restrictions on play (e.g. having less time to play)



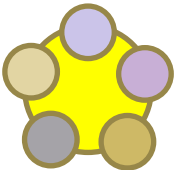
More likely to be overweight and have less healthy lifestyles

British Psychological Society

14 April 2010



Are all educators 'bad'?



Supporting a more playful approach?

nobody gets you closer

Saturday, April 23, 2011 Clas

Express & Star

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UK News | UK Sport

Schools ban games over safety fears

Tuesday 19th April 2011, 4:50AM BST.



Traditional playtime games such as conkers are disappearing from school playgrounds, a survey suggests

Midlands News



Names released in double murder

Blaze at recycling plant shuts roads and businesses in Lye

Centro cut prompts a shake-up on the buses

5,500 street parties to celebrate the big day

Tragedy as asthma attack kills boy, seven



Press release

ATL Annual Conference, April 2011



Press Office: 7 Northumberland Street, London, WC2N 5RD
Direct Line: 020 7782 1589 | Switchboard: 020 7930 6441
Annual conference direct line: 0151 239 6040 – 18 to 20 April 2011
Out-of-hours: 07918 617466 | Email: newsdesk@atl.org.uk
Website: www.atl.org.uk

18 April 2011 EMBARGOED to 00.01 hours on Tuesday 19 April 2011

Over-zealous schools ban British bulldog and conkers - ATL

Traditional playground games such as British bulldog and conkers have been banned in school according to teachers, lecturers, support staff and school leaders questioned by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL).

According to over a quarter (29%) of the 653 education staff surveyed, British bulldog has been banned in their school. While 14% of staff said their school has banned pupils playing conkers and nine per cent said leapfrog is banned.

Overall 15% of teachers, lecturers, support staff and school leaders said that fewer playground games and sports activities were played at their school than three years ago. The key reasons for the decline were fewer staff available to supervise activities and staff concerns over pupil safety.

A primary school teacher in England said: "Apparently the main problem with conkers is that nut allergy sufferers are increasingly allergic to them."

A play enabling space after Hughes 1996

Challenge

Earth, air,
fire & water

Engaging
senses

Playing with
identity

Fabricated &
natural
materials

Flexible &
creative

Movement

'Sufficient'
space

Cultural
connections

Social
interactions

Interesting &
varied

THE PLAY BALANCE



The 'risk-benefit balance' (Ball 2002)

BENEFITS

Play value

- social
- physical
- psychological learning

Learning

- how to cope with real risks

Reduced risk exposure

- relocates children from greater exposure

DISBENEFITS

Accidents

Costs of provision

- capital
- revenue

Litigation

Bad publicity

CHARACTERISTICS OF BENEFITS/DISBENEFITS

Intangible

A matter of belief

The whole picture

Not really amenable to measurement

Gestalt therapy

Value driven

Tangible

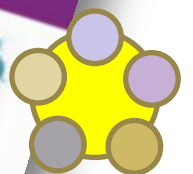
All too real

The reductionist view

Measurable by science

Evidence-based therapy

Value driven



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Myth of the month

- 2010 Myths

December 2010

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July 2010

June 2010

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April 2010

March 2010

February 2010

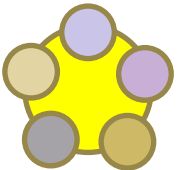
January 2010

Myth: Health and safety risks stop children playing 'pin the tail on the donkey'

June 2010



Help for designing spaces





Design for Play:

A guide to creating successful
play spaces

Aileen Shackell, Nicola Butler, Phil Doyle and David Ball



department for
children, schools and families



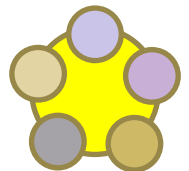
department for
**culture, media
and sport**

Whole setting approach



Conflicts and Concerns

| | | | |
|---|--|---|-----------------|
| <p>Do our staff feel confident? Do the staff support this type of activity?</p> | <p>Is it cost effective? Do our staff have the skills needed?</p> | <p>Setting</p> | |
| | <p>Is it safe - psychologically? Will the children like it?</p> | <p>Is it physically challenging? Is it safe - physically?</p> | <p>Children</p> |
| | <p>How do the children relate to others? Will anyone be excluded?</p> | <p>What roles will children take? Is it a reward?</p> | |
| <p>Is it culturally appropriate? Is it well organised?</p> | <p>Does it work within the policies? Does it achieve government targets?</p> | | |



What helps?

Playing and Learning: Friends or Foes?

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- Focus on experiences
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- Risk-Benefit Assessments
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- Time
- Flexibility

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