

FACILITATING LEARNING THROUGH IMAGINATIVE PLAY

by:

LILIBETH C. INLONG

TEACHER III, GENERAL LIM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Imaginative play is actively present when children act out various experiences they have had or something that is of interest to them. They are experimenting with how to behave in certain situations and practicing their interpersonal skills. Children learn from their surroundings; from the things they witness as part of their life experiences. They need to engage in imaginative play in order to grasp those experiences and make sense of the world. Others may believe that play is simply playing, but in the eyes of teachers, play serves a variety of different and significant functions.

Imaginative play provides a safe space for children to explore the world and gain developmental experiences. They could use their next imaginative play presentation to work through their fears and preconceptions about the things around them. Perhaps they could play the role of "mom" or "dad" to gain a sense of control, which they have. Children can manage their thoughts and feelings by building strong relationships with other children through role-playing. Imaginative play is an excellent tool for learning the rules of friendship formation, negotiation, and interaction.

Teachers can plan for a role-play scenario in which children play together. They must first agree on a theme and then discuss roles and rules. All of this necessitates teamwork, collaboration, and empathy for others. The role-play activity is closely related to the concept of "theory of mind," or the recognition that another person's ideas, points of view, and feelings may differ from one member to the next, and that everyone is capable of adopting different perspectives. When a child engages in imaginative play, they are experimenting with the social and emotional roles of life, playing different

characters or managing situations in their own way and evaluating the result. It is about discovering who they are as members of the community and how they conform to society. Also, learning how the world works and understanding others by walking in their shoes carries significant lessons as children grow. Empathy and cooperation are built to equally share responsibility.

Imaginative play also provides an important opportunity for children to practice skills and concepts learned during teacher-guided learning. There are some simple changes that teachers can make to their classrooms to promote learning through imaginative play.

Importance of Imaginative Play in Learning Development

1. Encourages Physical Growth

Imaginative play involves the entire body and frequently involves running, hopping, skipping, crawling, or a variety of other movements. Children learn new skills and improve their fine motor coordination through play.

2. Stimulates Creativity

Playing with one's imagination fosters creativity in a variety of ways. Children create stories based on the characters they play and expand on the plot they have developed together, working out problems as they go. They take everyday objects and transform them into something completely different. Blankets and chairs transform into forts; rocks into food; and paper into a crown, a ticket, or play money.

3. Promotes Problem-Solving

Cooperation, negotiation, and conflict resolution are parts of imaginative play, especially when a large number of children are involved. Acting out scenarios teaches children

problem-solving skills as they solve problems that arise, either in real life or as part of their role-playing.

4. Builds Social skills

Having to work together, taking turns, and having compassion are all learned skills through imaginative play. Children act out situations, resolve issues, and come together to build a game that everyone can enjoy. As they add elements to their creative play game, they learn how to include others, how to ask for help, and how to make new friends.

5. Enhances Language Development

Children's imaginative play usually involves them pretending to be someone or something other than themselves. They do this by using different words and phrases to communicate with one another, frequently using phrases they've heard from adults in their lives or from a book or TV show. This use of language aids in the development of vocabulary and the understanding that words construct a story—a skill that also aids in reading. Imaginative play is both enjoyable and beneficial to children of all ages.

Encourage it by allowing time for playful learning and a participative environment.

References:

<https://www.learning4kids.net/2011/12/30/what-is-imaginative-play-and-how-to-encourage-it/>

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