

HOW KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS FOSTER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

by:

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In early childhood education, play has long been seen as essential to fostering children's growth, learning, and wellbeing (Ashiabi, Citation2007; Kirk & Jay, Citation2018). Adult engagement has historically been characterized as a potential disruption to peer-mediated learning, whereas child-directed play has been emphasized as a crucial context for children's social and emotional learning (SEL) (Miller, Citation 2005). The link between play and learning, as well as the responsibility of the teacher in encouraging children's learning via play, has been highlighted by contemporary kindergarten play-based learning frameworks (e.g. Cutter-Mackenzie & Edwards, Citation2013). According to Pyle and Danniels (2017), high-quality play-based learning has been defined as a balance between opportunities for teacher-facilitated play, which can involve teachers and students collaboratively directing play or teachers creating and directing play themselves to help extend children's learning, and opportunities for child-directed play. The promotion of SEL by kindergarten teachers in various forms of play and the possible SEL advantages of direct teacher participation in classroom play, however, have not been extensively studied. Thus, the goal of the current study was to investigate how play-based kindergarten teachers foster children's social and emotional learning in various play scenarios within the classroom.

The term "social and emotional development" refers to intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities including forming and sustaining positive relationships with others as well as comprehending, controlling, and expressing emotions in line with one's developmental stage (Malti & Gil, Citation 2016). This broad concept has several

definitions and frameworks, but the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which is made up of a team of experts in education, research, and child advocacy, has been the focus of more recent literature (Borowski, Citation2019; Brackett, Elbertson, & Rivers, Citation2015).

Social awareness (the capacity to comprehend and empathize with different viewpoints), self-management (the ability to effectively manage one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors), relationship skills (the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships), self-awareness (the capacity to comprehend one's own emotions, thoughts, and values), and responsible decision-making (making positive choices regarding one's own behavior) are the five core competency clusters that make up the CASEL framework (Borowski, Citation 2019). The process of assisting individuals in acquiring these core skills is known as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in CASEL (Borowski, Citation 2019). Positive academic and life outcomes are linked to these competences, according to the framework's empirically supported and tested results (Borowski, Citation2019; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, Citation2011). Additionally, research indicates that over 70% of US states with SEL learning requirements are connected to the CASEL framework, meaning that practitioners and policymakers use this framework extensively (Dusenbury, Yoder, Dermody, & Weissberg, Citation 2019).

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