Play is the universal language

Debra Mayer MA
Early childhood consultant
ECE Unit, Manitoba Education
Early Childhood Education Unit

Through a collaborative approach, the unit partners with school divisions, other government departments (provincial, federal), Early Learning and Child Care, educational stakeholder groups, and parents to promote developmentally appropriate programming and services that help to prepare children for optimal early years learning and successful school entry.
3 Core Considerations of DAP: Developmentally Appropriate Practice
1. Know about child development and learning
   • ...what is typical at each age and stage of early development
   • provides a background to help us decide which experiences are best for children’s learning and development
   (where are those college textbooks?)
5 Developmental Domains (EDI)

- Social Competence
- Emotional Health & Maturity
- Language & Cognition
- Physical Health & Well-Being
- Communication & General Knowledge

The Holistic Child
2. What is individually appropriate?

• What we learn about specific children helps us teach and care for each child as an individual.

• Continually observe children’s play and interaction with the physical environment and others to learn about each child’s interests, abilities, and developmental progress.
3. What is culturally appropriate?

- Make the effort to get to know the children’s families and learn about the values, expectations, and factors that shape each of the children’s lives at home and in their communities.

- This background info helps us provide learning experiences that are **meaningful, relevant, and respectful** for each child and family.
As teachers begin to observe closely, they see children’s development played out in their own unique classroom contexts, always influenced by the potentially overlapping cultures of home and school lives.

Henderson, Barbara Daniel R Meier, Gail Perry and Andres J. Stremmel 2012
The ABC’s of DAP:

Practices based on decision making using

- Knowledge about development & learning
- Knowledge about individual children—Observe! Observe! Observe!
- Knowledge about children’s socio-cultural contexts for living and growing (Vygotsky)
The 123’s of DAP

• Procedures and routines that are consistent with children’s development
• Learning experiences that help nudge children from one ‘stage’ to another
• NOT a curriculum—but a way of thinking about and working with children=
• YOUR pedagogical approach!
CMEC Statement on Play-Based Learning

At the First World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, organized by the Canadian Early Learning and Child Care (CELC) Regional Network, the word "play" was not mentioned. However, the importance of play in early learning was clear, as play is one of the most effective ways for children to learn and develop. The conference emphasized that play is a fundamental right for all children and that it should be integrated into all aspects of early childhood education.

Learning through play is supported by scientific research.

The benefits of play are recognized by the scientific community. There is evidence that play is essential for the development of children's social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Children who engage in play develop better problem-solving skills, creativity, and imagination, which are crucial for their future learning, health, and well-being.

Learning through play is supported by experts.

Experts in early childhood education agree that play is essential for children's development. They argue that play is not only a way for children to learn, but also a way for them to explore their world and develop their skills. Play is a natural way for children to learn and develop, and it is a key component of early childhood education.

Learning through play is supported by children.

Children are active participants in their own development. They learn through play, and they are the ones who control their play activities. Children learn through play, and they are the ones who control their play activities. Children learn through play, and they are the ones who control their play activities.

Learning through play is supported by parents.

Parents play a vital role in supporting their children's play. They can provide opportunities for play and encourage their children to explore their environment. Parents can also support their children's learning by providing a safe and stimulating environment for play.

Learning through play is supported by communities.

Communities can support play by providing safe and accessible play areas for children. Communities can also support play by providing resources for parents and educators to support children's learning through play.

Learning through play is supported by governments.

Governments can support play by providing funding for play areas and resources for early childhood education. Governments can also support play by providing policies that promote play as a fundamental right for all children.

FROM THE EXPERTS

"Play is an essential part of children's development. It provides opportunities for them to express their creativity and imagination. Play helps children to develop their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Play is a natural way for children to learn and develop, and it is a key component of early childhood education. Children should have access to safe and stimulating play environments where they can explore and learn through play." - Dr. Jane Addams

"Play is an important part of children's development. It helps children to develop their motor skills, language, and social skills. Play is also a way for children to express their creativity and imagination. Play is a natural way for children to learn and develop, and it is a key component of early childhood education. Children should have access to safe and stimulating play environments where they can explore and learn through play." - Dr. John Dewey

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MIPs: Sharing Activity

• In your small group, read and discuss the Statement on Play Based Learning.
• Locate 2 or 3 *Most Important Points*.
• Then, take turns sharing a *MIP*-the most important finding or key idea from the reading.
• As a group, discuss themes or commonalities or differences that emerge from your reading.
• In what ways might the info from this reading apply to quality teaching and learning in your ECD program?
The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) states

- **Intentional teaching** is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have always been done that way.

- **Intentional teaching** involves educators being deliberate and purposeful in creating play-based learning environments — because when children are playing, children are learning.
Did you know?

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement that defines universally accepted rights for children.
- Article 31 of this agreement states that all children have the right to rest, leisure, play and recreation and to take part in cultural and artistic activities.
Think back to your own childhood... What kind of play do you remember enjoying?

- Where were you?
  - What were you doing?
- Who was with you?
- What smells/sounds/textures do you remember?
Why is play so important to the ECD community?

Your ideas?
Why is play important?

• helps to develop the “whole” child
• sculpts the brain
• the vehicle that most powerfully grows the executive function of a child’s brain

The First 2000 Days
Play

• **Play is** a universal right.
• **Play is** the universal language of childhood.
• It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them.
Why is play important for learning?

– **SCIENCE:**
  making and sharing observations about what happens when objects are put in water
Why is play important for learning?

- **MATH & NUMERACY:**
  - dividing toys or treats evenly, or what is bigger than, smaller than, more than or less than
Why is play important for learning?

- **LITERACY**: finding familiar words in signs, retelling stories or printing a list
Why is play important for learning?

–SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL:
  getting along with others, making friends and being respectful
Why is play important for learning?

- **INQUIRY SKILLS**: using thinking skills such as how to recognize and solve problems
Why is play important for learning?

– **PHYSICAL:**
  - walking, running,
  - hopping, balancing,
  - throwing and
catching (large and small muscle development, eye-hand coordination skills)
A truly play-based program is one where children participate in a balance of child-initiated and adult-guided activities in an environment where play is encouraged and nurtured.
The heart

• At the heart of a child’s healthy learning and development is honour for the child’s family, culture and community.

• Nurturing relationships and a circle of support help the child to start strong and be prepared for lifelong growth, learning and success.
The 100 languages of children

• Reggio-inspired metaphor that highlights the many ways of expressing our thinking and our feelings, using many modes to represent our experiences.

• In addition to talking and writing, the 100 languages might include building with blocks, creating with wire and clay, painting, acting, dancing, singing, and more!
Play in Other Languages

• How do children from diverse cultural backgrounds manage in a Reggio-inspired classrooms?

• used play and materials as their strongest voices in communicating their ideas and in overcoming the cultural and language barriers in the classroom.

• formed a productive learning group and with teacher support carried out complex imaginative project work and engaged in many of the pedagogical processes inspired by Reggio Emilia.

Fraser, Susan *Theory Into Practice*, v46 n1 p14-22 2007

Cross-Cultural Understandings of Play

Children’s play may be influenced by the dynamics of the family’s culture. How different cultures look at and interpret play is based on cultural values and points of view, including the very definition of play. Teachers are encouraged to further develop their cross-cultural understandings of play (Hyun).
Since children enter Kindergarten with various kinds of prior play experiences, expect to see some children who are highly skilled play partners, while others will require opportunities to expand their play repertoire further. In addition, some Kindergarten children born into refugee families may have had early childhood play experiences very different from those we may take for granted here in Canada. Play may have a restorative impact on development and relationships among children who have been affected by conflict and war (Hyder).
Its a small world...

David Sobel’s universal children and nature play motifs

Found around the world regardless of SES, ethnicity, ecosystem if children have time and access to safe places in nature
1. Adventure

- Children stalk, balance, jump, scamper through the natural world
- Activities with a physical challenge: mind/body link
- Walks are for adults, adventures are for children
2. Fantasy and Imagination

- Stories, plays, puppet shows, dreams
- “our role as storytellers and world creators precedes our roles as imparters of knowledge and cultural heritage”
3. Animal Allies

- Kinship relationship with animals
- Care and responsibility
- “What’s your favourite animal?”
- Caring for nature; emotional development
- Lassie, Rin Tin Tin, Free Willie, Beethoven
4. Maps and Paths

- Finding shortcuts, what’s over the hill, around the bend, following a map to a secret place...

- Inborn desire to explore local geographies
5. Special Places

• Where was your fort? Den? Clubhouse? Tent? Hidden corner in a closet?

• Needed: loose parts to “construct” with

• Create primitive shelters, form tribes, ‘battle’ over resources

• “a bridge between the safe, protected world of the family and the independent self in the wider world”
6. Small worlds

- Small worlds work wonders for children
- Provide emotional security and control over the micro-world
- Through creating miniature representations of ecosystems or neighbourhoods, children are helped to conceptualize the big picture—how it all fits together
7. Hunting and Gathering

- Genetically, we are still ‘hunters & gatherers’
- Searching for hidden treasures
- Children’s collections
A common pedagogical framework

How? Kagan (1992) offers these strategies to promote success:

- written transition agreements between early learning programs, which outline roles & responsibilities, including the transfer of names and records
- attention to children’s individual needs
- training for parents that offers information about early learning programs, the school system and available services
- visits by early years educators to early learning programs throughout the transition
Continuity

- What is in the K curriculum? (tip: watch for the release of *A Time for Learning, A Time for Joy*, 2015)
  
Developing Cultural Competence

• Get to know your families. Where do they live? What is the neighbourhood or community like? Where do families gather? (the hockey rink, the family centre, places of worship?)

• Engage in real conversations with families. What are their own strengths? How do they celebrate family milestones? What are their Holiday customs? If Newcomer, how did they come to Manitoba? How can their hopes and dreams for their children, their family history and customs enrich your day to day curriculum?

• from Teachers of Culturally Diverse Children.” NAEYC Young Children 60 (Nov. 2005): 1–8.
Developing Cultural Competence

• Reflect on your own bias, your assumptions, your values and beliefs when you encounter difference. “By placing yourself in situations that cause a sense of cultural disequilibrium, you can better understand how the children and their families feel ...” (Columbo, 2005 p. 6)

• Expand your knowledge base and form a professional learning community. Read about other cultures and belief systems and select educational books that recognize and celebrate differences in young children.

  from Teachers of Culturally Diverse Children.” NAEYC Young Children 60 (Nov. 2005): 1–8.
In Kindergarten...

• Belonging, learning, and growing are key themes in diversity education.
The Learning Environment

- **Grounded in the lives of children**: Good teaching begins with respect and concern for children, their innate curiosity, and their capacity to learn.

- Curriculum needs to be rooted in the real lives and contexts of the children in your classroom. Creating effective learning environments requires that the lives of the students, as well as the topics they explore, provide the content of the classroom experience.

- Children need opportunities to consider and inquire how their lives connect to the broader society.
The Learning Environment

• **Culturally sensitive:** since we “don’t know it all…”

• learn from your children, be a good researcher and listener as together you co-construct learning.

• As you work with children of diverse cultural origins and ethnicities, call upon families, your colleagues, and other community resources in order to understand and meet children’s needs and for insights into the communities you serve.
The Learning Environment

• **Equity-focused and anti-biased:** A curriculum grounded in social justice and awareness of social diversity is inclusive of every child in your class.

• With our increasingly diverse child population and nation, we must directly address issues related to race, class, gender, and other aspects of educational equity.

• We need to do more than simply “celebrate” diversity.

• We may take on the “hard stuff” of exploring why some differences translate into wealth and power, while others become the basis for discrimination and injustice. We can intentionally include the experiences and voices of diverse groups in our society.
Keep in touch!

Debra Mayer
204-945-3120
Debra.mayer@gov.mb.ca