



Getting started with play-based learning in early years

Transcription: Checklist

Interviewees:

Dr David Whitebread

Developmental Cognitive Psychologist and early years expert

Tania Swift

Early years specialist and trainer

Judith Amery

Early years practitioner

What's the most important thing adults can do to support play-based learning?

David Whitebread It's very important to show the children that you really enjoy being with them, that you are really interested in them and that you are emotionally warm towards them, and you show an enthusiasm for their interests.
Organizing your practice so that you spend time talking to children in small groups or individually is a very important part of early childhood educational practice. The practitioner follows the child's lead. That's really important. That helps the child talk about what they're interested in, helps them expand their meanings, and resists the temptation to sort of take over with an adult agenda.
So the quality of the personal relationships between the practitioner and the child are absolutely crucial.

How can adults create engaging play-based learning environments?

Tania Swift Children learn best through experience and exploration rather than being told or instructed or prompted.
Now your role is really important through support; making them feel secure. But the most important role is providing them with engaging and enriching environments.
What is an engaging environment?
Now this is an environment that's accessible to all, an environment where children feel safe and secure so they can feel comfortable to try new things and explore. An engaging environment is an environment that sparks the imagination and takes their interests into account. It challenges them. It prompts them to use problem solving and try new things.
These engaging environments can be inside and outside, but they are exciting environments that are going to help children to try new things to learn to grow and develop.

How can adults encourage positive behaviour in a play-based learning approach?

Judith Amery

Model your expectations and have clear systems and routines for them to be able to understand and follow. For example: at tidy-up time there could be a favourite piece of music played with the expectation that, by the time the piece of music stops, everyone is in place and ready for the next activity.

Routines and systems help to promote that sense of belonging and giving responsibility during tidying up time also encourages that sense of: this is my place, it's part of my responsibility to look after it well.

And for learners that are unable to read it's always a good idea to have systems and routines displayed around the setting on posters, in pictures or photographs to help them understand easily.

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