Welcome to CHD104

Play is not a form of entertainment or a way to pass the time: for young children, play is absolutely essential for mind and body. This course provides information about different types of play and ways to incorporate it throughout the daily curriculum.

Course Objectives:

By taking notes on the handout and successfully answering assessment questions, participants will meet the following objectives as a result of taking this course:

- Identify ways in which play promotes cognitive development
- Identify the relationship between play and the development of the executive brain functions
- Select ways to promote problem-solving through play
- Define passive entertainment
- Identify ways in which play can improve academic achievement
- Differentiate between structured and unstructured play
- Identify characteristics of the early (infant) stages of play
- Identify characteristics of Parten's Six Stages of Play
- Identify and/or define different types of play (e.g., fantasy or constructive play)
- Identify ways in which child care professionals can promote play in multiple environments

References:


Use the space provided to record important information from the following sections of the course.

The Importance of Play
Write a 1–2 sentence summary explaining why play is important for young children: 

**How Playing Benefits the Brain and Body**

- **Memory:**

- **Visual and spatial awareness:**

- **Language:**

- **Communication and social skills:**

- **Attention span:**

- **Fine and gross motor skills:**

**Cognitive Flexibility**

**Theory of Mind**

**Anticipation**

**Problem-Solving**
Decision making

Working Memory

Additional executive brain functions promoted through play:
  • Emotional self-regulation:
  • Sequencing:
  • Inhibition:
  • Verbal Reasoning:

Play and Physical Development

Various forms of play can promote all sorts of motor skills, including:

  Gross motor skills,
  Fine motor skills,

The Perils of Passive Entertainment

What is passive entertainment and how does it compare with various forms of play in terms of mental and physical stimulation?

Play and Relationships

How does play help build stronger relationships between children and caregivers, and why is this important?

How can play improve a child’s communication skills?
Play and Academics

In what ways can play promote better academic performance?

Explain the relevance of the following statement with regard to play in the school environment: “cognitive capacity is enhanced by a clear-cut and significant change in activity.”

Play Is Natural

All Kinds of Play

*Structured play,* or *directed play:*

*Unstructured play,* also called *free play,* *self-directed play,* or *undirected play:*

*Young children should have opportunities for both*

Infant Play
Birth to 1 Month

2 to 3 Months

4 to 6 Months

6 to 9 Months

9 to 12 Months

Parten’s Six Stages of Play

Unoccupied Play

Solitary (Independent) Play
Onlooker Play

Parallel Play

Associative Play

Cooperative Play

A Note about Parten’s Stages of Play Theory

Different Types of Play

Social Play
Motor (Physical) Play

Dramatic/Fantasy play

Constructive Play

Constructive play teaches children

Competitive Play

There are valuable lessons in competitive play, but also serious potential pitfalls.
Expressive Play

Reading and Storytelling

You don’t need to physically act out the story, but in order for the read-aloud to be truly “playful,” a few things need to take place.

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Making Room for Play

Know Your Community

Family Play
Ways to promote play at home:

Try This!
Class Mascot
If you're having trouble getting parents to play with their children, you may be able to “force” some play into the home using a class mascot. Choose a doll or stuffed animal (or give the class some options and let them vote). Each child takes turns keeping the mascot at home for one week. The mascot should be considered “part of the family,” joining them at meals, on errands, and all other daily activities. Children also need to make sure the mascot has a nice place to sleep and, of course, some toys and a good place to play. (The mascot does not come back to the school until the end of the week.)

At the end of the week, children use photos and pictures and stories to share the things they did with the mascot. The basic rules are that the mascot must be well cared for and the child must have at least one or two artifacts or stories from each day of the week to share with the class. Other than that, each child and family gets to decide what the mascot gets to do for the week.

Most children will enjoy it, especially after they see how much fun other children are having with it. As a teacher, you can set the standard by keeping the mascot for the first week and presenting all the fun, zany things you do with it. It may sound silly or frivolous, but this idea can promote a great deal of imaginative play and sharing in the home.

In the Classroom

The Center-Based Classroom
Center areas:

The primary purpose of centers is to

Think of New Ways to Play

The Power of Spontaneity
Be Your (Childish) Self

Don’t Interrupt a Good Thing

Have Fun!