

Play and Development



Ministère de l'Éducation
Direction de la formation générale des jeunes
Preschool Education Team
2022

Québec 

This presentation is based on the French training session that was developed by our colleagues below and took place in October 2022.



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Québec 

Intentions of this meeting:

Discover the potential of free play

- to promote child development
- to reinforce adult support

Decode and support

- learning in the different areas
- children's behaviours in free play

Encourage reflection



All children need time to

PLAY.

Children's freedom to play and explore on their own has declined drastically in recent decades.

Let them play and they will

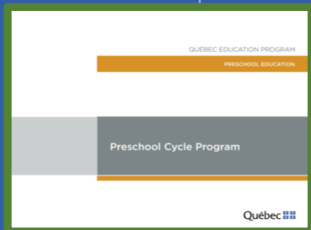
LEARN!

Teachingmama.org

First orientation of the Preschool Cycle Program: Learning through play

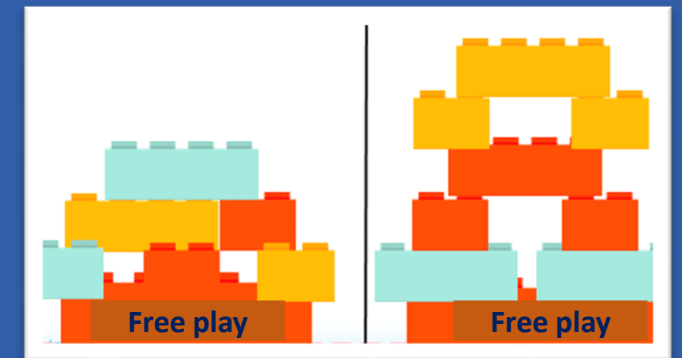


“Children have different strategies they can apply in order to learn, including imitating, observing, experimenting and questioning. However, play is the ideal way for children to learn and develop their full potential.”



(Preschool Cycle Program, p. 9)

*“Therefore, children should have **two** periods of between 45 and 60 minutes of **free play** every day and should be permitted to choose with whom and what they will play.”*



Helpful videos



<https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/videos/play-helps-development>



« Pourquoi le jeu est-il si important? »
Francine Ferland.

<https://youtu.be/W0m2-4 GI6Q>

Time for reflection

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1M61Dtt0vQC FwQ8luNBMMcu7Pj2Anv SmQHTdUQh7MFY/edit?usp=sharing>



Myth

Play is a source of pleasure but not of learning. It gives the impression that the teacher is not assuming their role.



A new perspective

“Play . . . fosters brain integration and creates a networked system that will be used in problem-solving and creativity. When a child is at play, they are leaping ahead developmentally and forming a sense of identity and self-agency.”



(Deborah MacNamara, 2017)

Myth (cont.)

Play is a source of pleasure but not of learning. It gives the impression that the teacher is not assuming their role.



More perspective...

“When children play, they are selectively focused on the current situation; they eliminate distractions and retain information. This allows children to develop the ability to think, look, listen and feel before acting.”

(Eva De Gosztonyi, 2021)

Play provides fertile soil for the children’s plans which extend and complicate play: the two complete each other.

(Madeleine Baillargeon, 2006) [Translation]

Myth

Play is frivolous and used as a diversionary activity. It will occur after the completion of tasks, which are considered significant or important.



A new perspective

... Play modifies the zone of proximal development. Learning in this zone is, in effect, oriented toward a level of cognitive development that the child has not yet acquired, but which becomes accessible to them with the support of peers or the teacher.



(Krasimira Marinova, 2011) [Translation]

Myth (cont.)

Play is frivolous and used as a diversionary activity. It will occur after the completion of tasks, which are considered significant or important.



More perspective . . .

Play offers multiple benefits

- **Educational:** it helps children develop skills that are the basis for learning.
- **Social:** it provides opportunities to socialize with peers, learn to understand others, communicate and negotiate.
- **Cognitive:** it encourages children to learn, imagine, categorize and solve problems.
- **Therapeutic:** it allows children to express themselves about troubling aspects of their lives such as stressors, trauma, family conflicts and other dilemmas.

Play is our brain's favorite way of learning.

(Diane Ackerman)

Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.

(Fred Rogers)



Myth

Children must choose what to play with and pursue it for a specific amount of time.



A new perspective

Remember that the essential components of “free” play are: fun, spontaneity; free choice of materials, partners, direction (we don't know where it will go, no predetermined result expected) and duration (we stop playing when we want).

(Madeleine Baillargeon, 2006) [Translation]

There is no predetermined goal by the teacher...; [play is:] child-initiated; child-controlled; multi-sensory; active; enjoyable; self-directed, enjoyed alone or with peers. Reality is suspended; motivation is intrinsic. [...] It can change direction during the course of play, the rules can be modified. It can also be interrupted at the players' discretion.

(Anne Gillain Mauffette, 2019) [Translation]



Myth

When a group is challenging, it is best to reduce or avoid free play.



A new perspective

“One of the most important functions play serves is in the development of a child's emotional system and preserving psychological well-being. . . . The beautiful thing about true play is that it provides the brain with the rest it needs to forward development.”



(Deborah MacNamara, 2017)

Rough-and-tumble play where children “play fight” builds the capacity to read social signals and manage one’s behavior and urges.

(Eva De Gosztonyi, 2021)

Myth (cont.)

When a group is challenging, it is best to reduce or avoid free play.

More perspective...

“When children are “stirred up” emotionally, their play can reflect themes they are struggling with. It is how they can make sense of all the emotions they are experiencing.

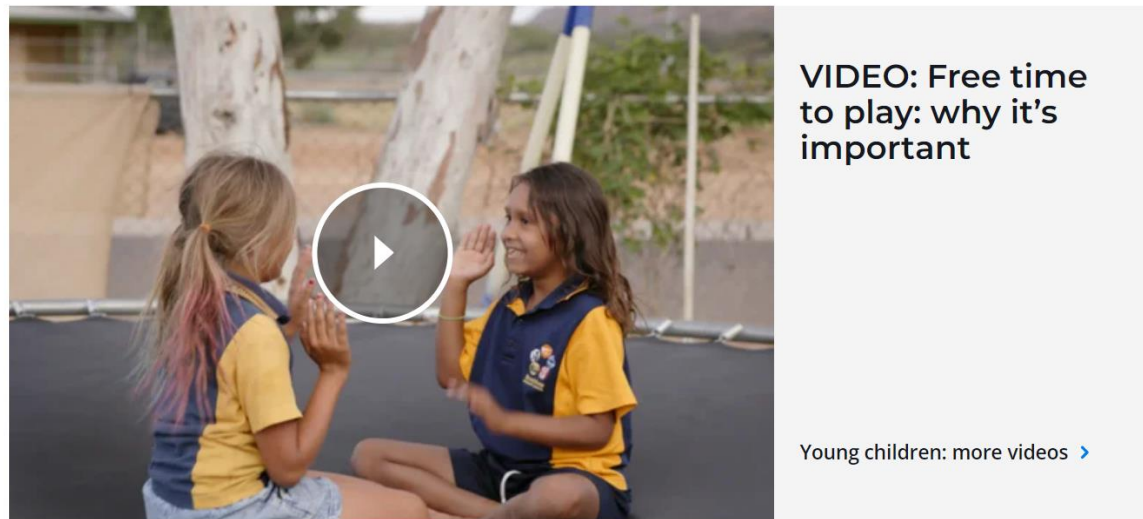
In Play, pictures are drawn, structures are made, and games are engaged in to allow EMOTIONS TO COME OUT in a way that feels ‘safer.’”

(Eva De Gosztonyi, 2021)



Permitting or not?

Permitting a child to play freely, guarantees access to the development of a child's full potential.



[Importance of play for babies & children | Raising Children Network](#)

*Children learn as they **Play**. Most importantly, in **Play**, children **Learn** how to **Learn**.*



(O. Fred Donaldson)

Myth

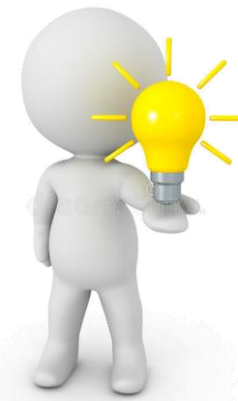
The choice of materials and their arrangement are of little importance.



New perspective

The materials play a big role in whether or not certain skills are acquired through play.

- If they are insufficient, there may be more conflict, less cooperative play and fewer complex scenarios.*
- If they do not evolve with the child's development, the child will not play at their highest level.*
- If the materials are inadequate, the children could miss valuable learning opportunities.*



Myth (cont.)

The choice of materials and their arrangement are of little importance.

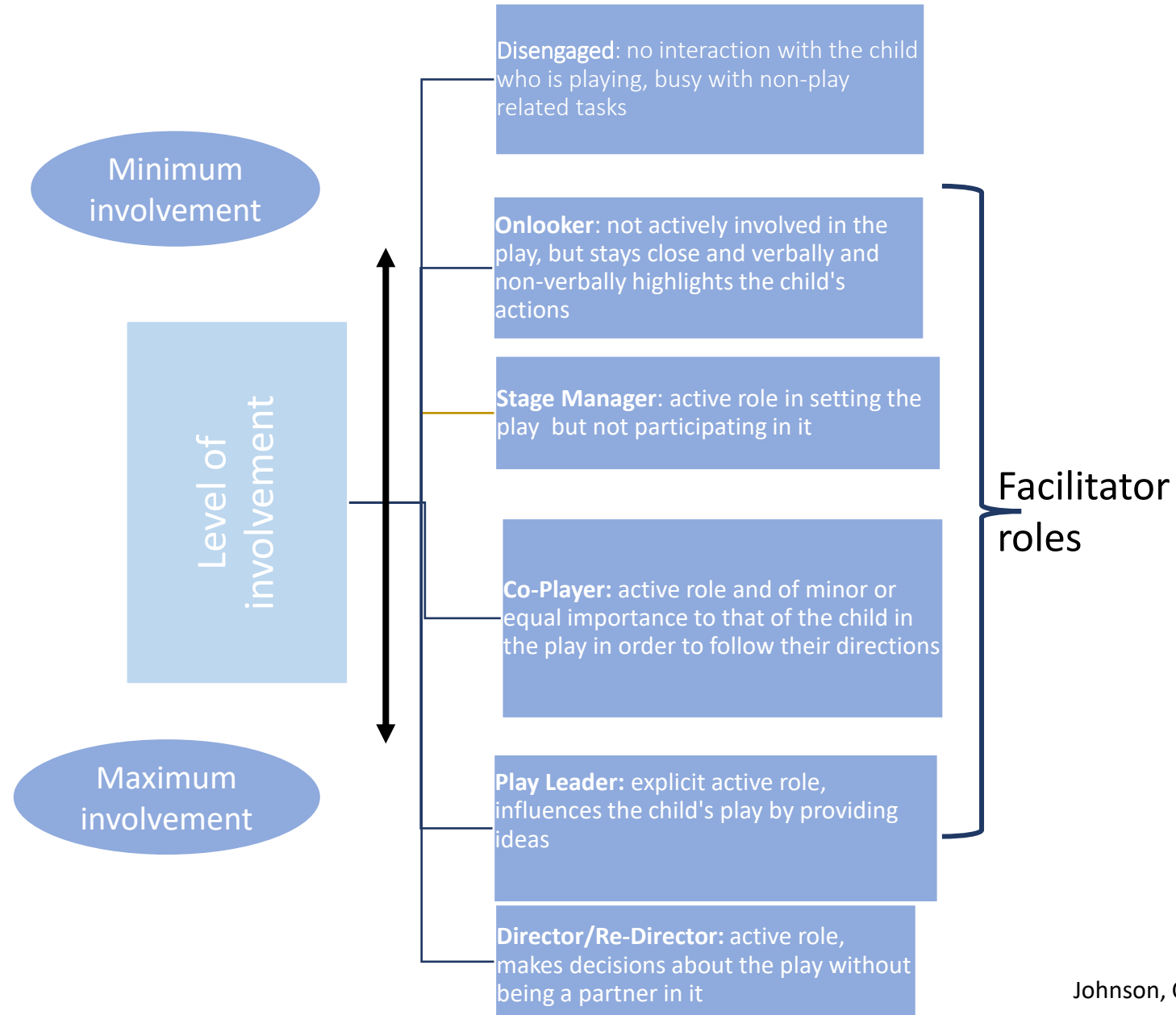


More perspective...

“The role of teachers and other adults in the room/environment is to enable and scaffold playful experiences and learning – this requires thoughtful planning (for example, setting out materials to pique children’s curiosity) and spontaneous interactions building on natural curiosities and ideas. . . . Providing children with active and playful hands-on experiences help foster and enrich learning.”

(Unicef, 2018)

The role of the adult during play



Myth

Free play leaves no clues of the children's progress.



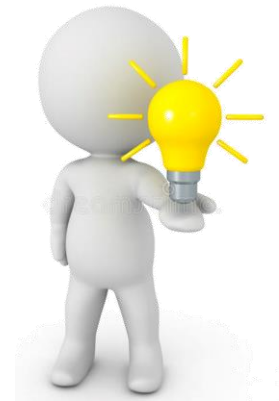
A new perspective

“Free play provides favourable opportunities to observe children and their interactions in a natural context.”

Preschool Cycle Program, p. 9

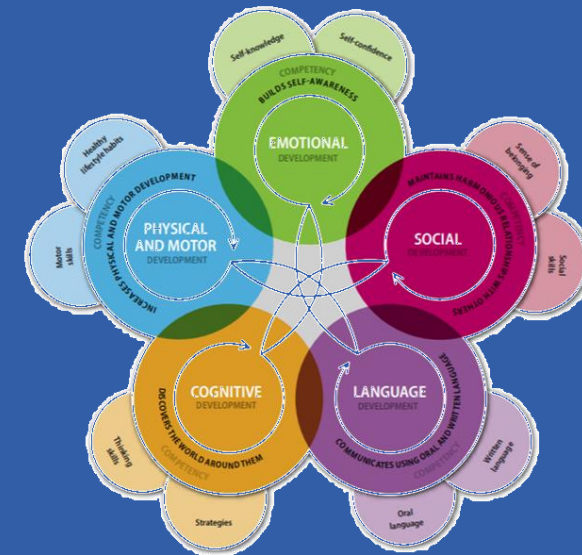
Free play provides guidance in the physical and motor, emotional, social, language and cognitive domains.

It provides opportunities to guide play to a higher level of maturity in order to support the child's learning and development in an appropriate way.



The Preschool Cycle Program covers five areas of development which are of equal importance and which must be dealt with in synergy.

Areas of development and competencies	Focuses of development	Key features
Physical and Motor Development Increases physical and motor development	Motor skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explores sensory perceptions Develops body awareness Uses gross motor skills Uses fine motor skills Explores the concept of space Explores the concept of time Discovers lateral dominance Explores different ways of moving
	Healthy lifestyle habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explores the world of food Explores different ways of relaxing Adopts practices associated with good personal hygiene Learns about safety
Emotional Development Builds self-awareness	Self-knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes own needs Recognizes own characteristics Expresses own emotions Regulates own emotions
	Self-confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explores own autonomy Responds with confidence
Social Development Maintains harmonious relationships with others	Sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows openness to others Participates in group activities Collaborates with others
	Social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gradually complies with rules of conduct Creates connections with others Regulates own behaviour Resolves conflicts
Language Development Communicates using oral and written language	Oral language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacts verbally and non-verbally Demonstrates understanding Expands own vocabulary Explores different kinds of statements Develops phonological awareness
	Written language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacts with written language Recognizes some reading and writing conventions Discovers some functions of writing Knows the letters of the alphabet¹
Cognitive Development Discovers the world around them	Thinking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquires new knowledge relating to the subject areas (mathematics, arts education, social sciences, science and technology) Uses reasoning skills Uses imagination
	Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes action Explores different actions Explains the actions taken



Preschool Cycle Program, pages 15 and 16

1. End-of-preschool outcome: The child knows know the names and sounds of most of the letters of the alphabet (upper and lower case).

Myth

Free play means leaving the children to their own devices without worrying about classroom management.

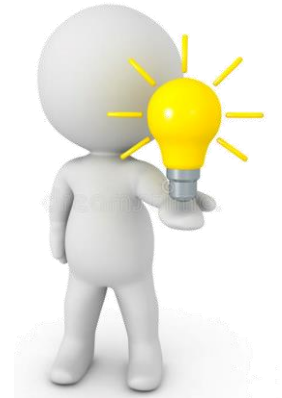


A new perspective

In free play, the supportive and accompanying role of the adult, as well as their reassuring and caring presence, allows the child to dare to explore at ease.

(AQCPPE, 2018) [Translation]

- The adult must provide a stable and predictable environment for the children in a warm, secure and stimulating setting.
- The adult must establish with the children the way things work.
- Children have the opportunity to express their views.



Myth (cont.)

Free play means leaving the children to their own devices without worrying about classroom management.



More perspective...



The issue is therefore no longer whether or not to intervene in the child's play, but to know “how” to intervene, without altering it (Bouchard et al., 2020; Marinova et al., 2020).

Indeed, the teacher's intervention in the child's play is based on a precarious balance between the child's leadership and the support of the adult.

[\(Revue Préscolaire, N°601, 2022\)](#) [Translation]



Myth

The children in my class do not know how to play.



A new perspective

*Play is a child's innate desire to explore the world.
We can therefore say that from their first months, babies play.*

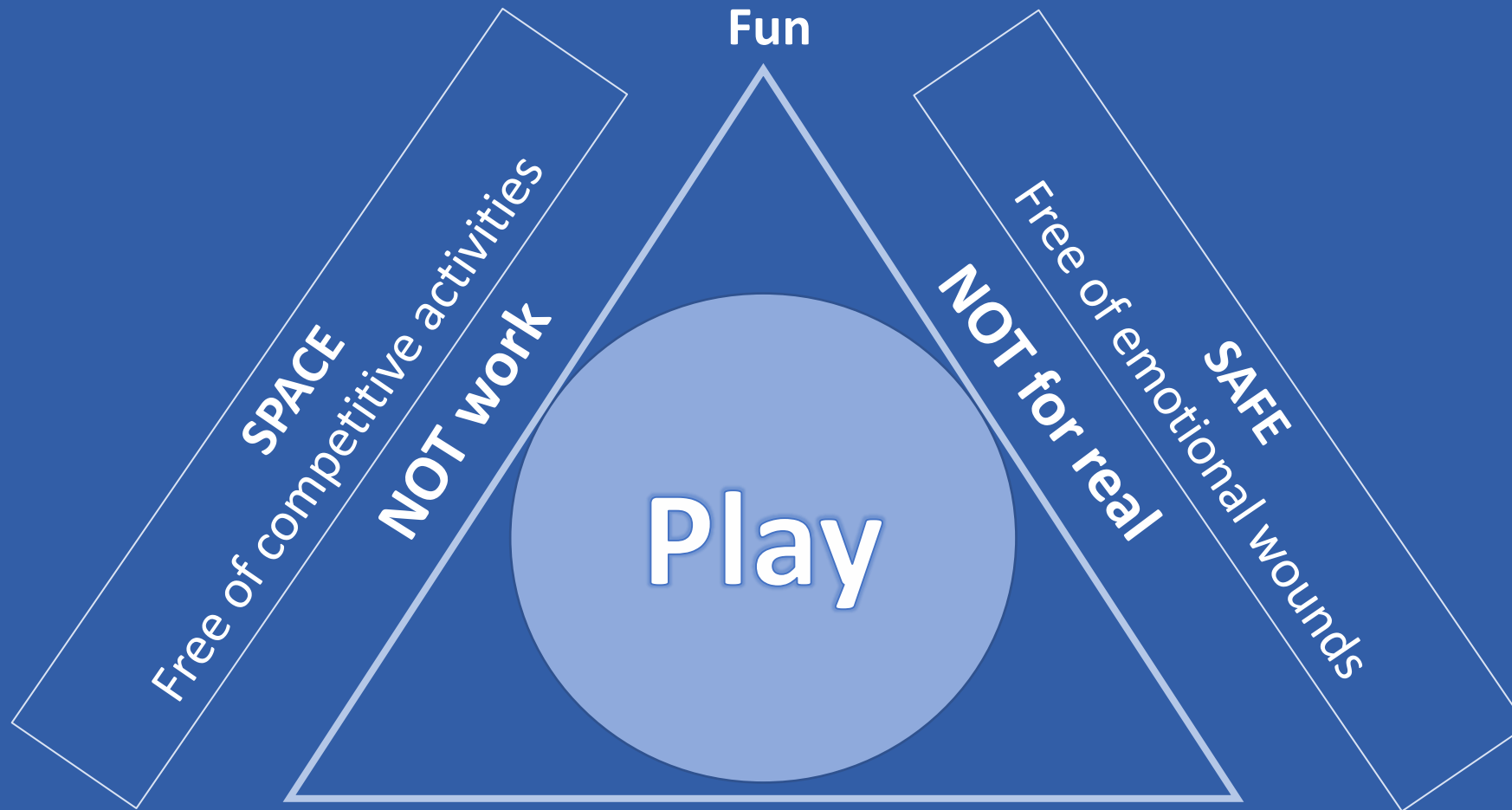
([Hania Chakali, 2018](#)) [Translation]



“From an early age, it is by playing that a young child learns most.”

([Naître et grandir, 2021](#))

Play is characterized by a sense of freedom and enjoyment.



- Expressive and/or exploratory



- Do I permit the children to be active and to engage?
- Is the free play period positive for everyone?
- Are there any conflicts between the children? How are they resolved?
- How could I prevent some conflict situations?
- Do I see play as the hub of developmental and learning activities?
- To what extent does my attitude, presence and actions influence the classroom climate?

This Is Me : Article 31 and a Child's Right to Play

ON 1 FEBRUARY 2013
THE GENERAL COMMENT ON ARTICLE 31
OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION
ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
WAS ADOPTED

<https://youtu.be/5tjRPWPhlFA>

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

Plato



*Play is the work of children.
It's very serious stuff.*

Bob Keeshan

Play is the work
of the child.

Maria Montessori

For further reflection

WHY PLAY MATTERS

CHILDREN WHO PLAY GROW UP TO BE PEOPLE WHO ...

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR PLAY

Play is where the spirit that underlies growth is revealed and vitality is expressed.

Facebook: Dr Deborah Miskamers Instagram: @didemskamers Twitter: @didemskamers www.miskamers.com

Resources PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN CORNER

CEBM

Preschooler presentation
CLICK HERE to play recording

Preschooler handout
CLICK HERE to download slides

Making Sense of the Preschooler
by Martine Demers and Catherine Korah
Behavior Consultants, RSB, CEBM
February 21, 2022.

Rough & Tumble Play presentation
CLICK HERE to play recording

Preschooler handout
CLICK HERE to download slides

Promouvoir le jeu libre au Québec

Outils pour préserver une place de choix aux jeux libres dans le développement global des enfants d'âge préscolaire au Québec

Free play: Is it natural? (in French)

Teaching and Learning From the Field Technologies for Learning

Play is the Heart and Soul of All Child Development

Chris Colley | June 2, 2021

Importance of Playtime for Kids

Did You Know?

The United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognizes play as a right of every child because of its importance to optimal child development. Despite this:

- Public schools throughout the United States continue to reduce the amount of time allocated to free play.
- Children are given less time for free play and more time for structured activities as they age.
- There has been a significant increase in depression and anxiety over the last 10 years and more reports before this can be linked to the decline of free play time.

Top 10 Benefits of Play

- Boosts Your Child's Brain Power
- Improves Creativity & Imagination
- Builds Vocabulary and Language
- Increases Happiness
- Helps Children Cope With Stress
- Leads To Better Physical Health
- Helps Children Be More Sociable
- Builds Self-Confidence
- Allows Children to Express Their Emotions
- Lets Them Explore Their Passions

The Stages of Play

- Unoccupied Play (0-3 Months)**: Unintentional or purposeless play, involving little more than fiddling with their feet or shaking their fist.
- Solitary Play (0-3 Years)**: Play a child does by white noise and being alone, but can have a companion (toy).
- Parallel/Onlooker Behavior (2+ Years)**: When a child watches other children play without participating or just stands nearby watching.
- Associative Play (3-4 Years)**: When children play together but not necessarily with each other. They are involved with each other and working together on a common goal.
- Cooperative Play (4+ years)**: This is where everything truly begins from this point children play together regularly and they are up with each other for their enjoyment.

Tips For Choosing Toys

Some research shows that when toys do the talking and the singing, babies are quieter and work less on their language development.

When it comes to toys, often less is more. Try to buy toys with the following properties:

- Can Be Used In Multiple Ways
- Requires Problem-Solving & Exploration
- Can Be Used By Multiple Ages
- Challenge Your Child's Imagination
- Will Get Your Child Moving
- Allows Parents or Grandparents to Join

Learn More at
MomLovesBest.com/Playtime

Your feedback

Thank you for taking the time to complete this feedback form.

Please click on the following link:



<https://forms.gle/jLQMpuwvj2QmT2bG9>

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