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# Portfolio

## Section 1

What is play?

Play is a significant section in a child's growth. When children play, they are developing and improving their skills, such as their cognitive, social, physical and fine motor skills. Children enjoy playing as it allows them to be able to do what they want as a sense of freedom and are able to express their feelings through playing. Play for children is natural, some children don't need help at all from adult but other children may need that extra bit of help. Children can play indoors and outdoors so they can explore different environments. (Early years matters, 2021) Frobel and Montessori state that when a child is playing, is when they are learning the most. (Frobel and Montessori,2003)

In the early childhood there is 6 stages of play which all help with the child's development. The 6 stages are:

- Unoccupied play- This play is from birth to 3 months old this is the stage when the child is making arm and leg movements and discovering their hands, feet arms and legs.
- Solitary play- This play is from birth to 2 years and it is when the child is playing independently.
- Spectator play- From 2 years the child will just be observing other children and watching them play instead of playing with them.
- Parallel play- 2 years and over, when the child is playing side by side with another child but still continues to play independently.
- Associate play- This play is between the ages of 3 and 4, this is when the child starts playing with other children.
- Cooperative play- For 4 years and over. The child will start playing with other children and doing the same activities as the other children and be involved with them. (Pathways, 2020)

Benefits of play

When children are playing it enables them to develop their skills and holistic development such as their imagination, physical development, cognitive development and emotional well-being. Play is very crucial and helps the development of a healthy brain. Play gives children the opportunity to explore and learn new things and also gives the parent/practitioner to engross with the child. (Ginsbury, K, 2007)

What is self-directed play?

Self-directed play is when a child is playing freely without an adult telling them what to do or what to play with. It gives the child some independence, but the adult will always be there to observe and keep a close eye in case of any emergencies. (Ledendecker, M, 2020)

Self-directed play is quite important in a child's life as it has many benefits such as:

- Builds a child's self confidence
- Improves independence
- Arouses Imagination
- Develops and expands their problem-solving skills

When the children are doing self-directed play, it is important that the adult ensures that the environment is safe. (Ledendecker, M, 2020)

Self-directed play also allows children to work thinks out by themselves that is how their problem-solving skills develop. They also learn how to express their feelings, communicate better, learn how to take good risks and children also love using their own creative imagination and using their own ideas to play which gives them satisfaction and achievement. Self-directed play is important as it helps and improves a child's everyday skills such as:

- Cognitive
- Social
- Emotional
- Physical

And many more skills as well. (Juster, H, Ph, D, 2015)

The first section of my portfolio is going to be focused on 3 types of play which are:

- Creative play
- Fantasy play
- Sensory play

**Creative play**- Creative play is vital in a child's life as it develops the child's physical, social, cognitive and emotional skills. Creative play is how children express themselves and their feelings, it also helps the child with their speech and communication skills which also then helps the child intellectually and will also help with their education through their school years and later life. Playdale playgrounds, (2018)

Playdale playgrounds, (2018) also state that cognitive skills are a crucial skill to have in human development as it provokes children to make their own decisions and solve their own problems.

Social development in creative play- Children's social skills develop when doing creative play as they are able to interact with other children. The little gym, (2021)

Physical development in creative play- Children's physical development in creative play is important as it also supports and improves the development of fine and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills enhance hand eye coordination. The little gym, (2021)

**Fantasy play**- Fantasy play is made up play which children are able to use their imagination to play and act. Daou, N (2011)

There are many reasons why we promote fantasy play, however these are just a few reasons why:

- Supporting creativity and imagination. By this it means a child is able to expand their imagination and play and use their brain effectively. A child using their imagination is developing their cognitive skills. Homan, A (2016)
- Social and emotional development: Children are building their social and emotional skills when playing fantasy play but are also learning about themselves too and get to interact with other children when playing. They also develop compassion and learn how to share and switch roles. Homan, A (2016)
- Language and communication- When children are playing with other children, they are engaging with them and improving their communication skills but also will be expanding their language skills as they are learning new words and sentences. Homan, A (2016)

Fantasy play is where children can use their imagination and re-act what they see in real life, and copy what adults do also. Homan, A (2016)

Homan, A (2016) also state that children will be able to develop their problem-solving skills during fantasy play as the children will need to decide what roles they are playing, if there is any rules, or if anything goes wrong the children will need to figure out how to fix it. Children will also be using their physical development, fine and gross motor skills as they will be active and running around.

**Sensory play**- Sensory play are measures that encourages children senses such as:

- Sight
- Sound
- Smell
- Taste
- Touch

This type of play helps the brain development by refreshing the neurons to make connections which also helps all departments of learning. Children use their fine and gross motor skills by touching and feeling objects. EYR team, (2019)

EYR team, (2019) also point out that when children are able to talk more, when their language skill develops, children will be able to describe the differences in the activities and objects that they touch, see, smell and hear.

How is sensory play beneficial?

According to Educational PlayCare, (2016) studies show that sensory play forms nerve connections in the brain's routes, which help the child finish more difficult work.

Educational PlayCare, (2016) also state that sensory play helps the following:

- Language development
- Cognitive skills
- Fine and gross motor skills
- Problem solving
- Social development

Sensory play also helps children's emotional development.

## Section 2

What is risky play?

Rodgers, A (2018) states that risky play is a play type that allows children to take risks and push themselves to new challenges, but in a safe environment.

Why Is risky play good for children?

Rodgers, A (2018) also points out that risky play is able to let children push themselves physically, emotionally and mentally. Children will be able to face and get over their fears emotionally during risky play, physically they will be climbing, running and jumping and mentally they will be learning about their own limits, getting themselves out of hard situations and learning about the environment that they are in.

Children need to be given chances to solve problems and set themselves new challenges to develop their physical development and this will also help them mentally. Rodgers, A (2018)

Rodgers, A (2018) also goes on to say that it is important that the adult ensures that the environment is safe for the children to play. Even though it is called risky play it is important that the adult is still there observing.

Risk play is broken down into a few sections such as:

- Height
- Speed
- Rough and tumble
- Elements
- Impact

Zeni, M (no date)

Height- Height is where the physical involvement happens as it involves climbing, jumping, balancing, hanging and dangling from heights.

Speed- Risky play with speed is running, swinging, sliding and spinning but can also include equipment such as:

- Bikes
- Sleds
- Skis
- Scooters

When the children are using the equipment, it is very important that they wear a helmet. Zeni, M (no date)

Rough and tumble play- This type of play includes fighting, hitting, fighting with sticks, wrestling and games that children have made up themselves. Zeni, M (no date)

Elements- This type of risk play is quite a dangerous type of play as it includes fire, water or snow and ice. It is vital that the adult is there and has full knowledge of what they are doing. Zeni, M (no date)

Impact- Play with impact is children having a thrill out of dropping, smashing or hitting objects. Zeni, M (no date)

**How can parents/practitioners balance risky play but also keeping them safe?**

McKay, B and McKay, K (2017) State that to be able to balance the children's safety but also allow them to be exposed to risk play, the adult/practitioner will need to ensure that the children are in a monitored area but don't need to be too over protective.

McKay, B and McKay, K (2018) also go on to say that there are many points on how to balance both safety and risk, such as:

Ensure that the area around where the children are playing is being supervised by an adult but also let them play unless there is a potential hazard.

Instead of letting the children rely on you for everything, prepare and get them ready to be able to control risk themselves.

## Section 3

In this section, the chosen observation will be the foundation phase profile observation tool.

Welsh Government, (no date) state that the foundation phase profile is an influential analysis to create a holistic view of a child's progress on their skills and development. Observation has a big part in the foundation phase profile. The principle of observing children is to be able to see how well they are progressing and to see if the children need any extra support in any aspect of their development.

Welsh Government, (no date) also go on to say that when practitioners are observing they are capable of collecting all of the information that they need to be able to move the child further along with their development. It is also important as the practitioner will be able to identify if the child needs any extra support.

To be able to gather information on the child's development through observing, it is crucial that the practitioner observes the children in different environments such as inside and outside. This is important because children learn different things in different environments and their behaviour may change depending on where they are. Welsh Government, (no date)

According to Early years Wales, (2020) The foundation phase profile helps the assessments of children's skills and development. If any extra support is needed the foundation phase will also support that.

Early years Wales, (2020) also go on to say that the foundation phase profile has four specific sections that need to be observed, these are the following:

- Personal and social development
- Language and communication skills
- Math development
- Physical development

<u>Advantages of the foundation phase profile</u>

- Supports the child's development and progress
- Covers all areas of the child's development
- Picks up on if the child needs and extra support
- Get to know the child. (WJEC, 2019)

<u>Disadvantages of the foundation phase profile</u>

- Only covers children from ages 3 to 7 (WJEC, 2019)

<u>Section 4</u>

As Welsh assembly, (2000) point out when observing children, it is important that the practitioners have knowledge on what the need to observe and what part of the child's development needs to be covered.

When observing children while they are playing, practitioners will be able to see how the child is developing and what skills they are capable of doing/using. Practitioners will need to ensure that they write down what stage the child is at with their development. It is important for the practitioner to make sure that they are observing the correct information that they need to cover. (Welsh assembly, 2000)

By observing the children this allows the practitioner to get to know the child and to be able to identify their needs, strengths and interests. Practitioners will also be able to do the following:

- They will be able to plan the next stage for the child's development
- Point out the development in all aspects of the child's learning when the observations were taken
- Tell the children what they have accomplished
- Tell the parents of the child what their child has accomplished and what the plan is for the next stage of development.

Observation is a main part for practitioners when caring for children. When practitioners are observing the children, there is many different ways to do it to ensure that they cover what development areas they need to observe. (Welsh assembly, 2000)

Here are some of the methods:

- Plan the right amount of time and length of observation
- Plan the right evaluation on the right area of development
- Natural observation
- Chose a child to observe

When the practitioners have chosen to do a planned observation, it is important that the practitioner thinks about what procedure that they are going to chose to carry out the observation. Welsh assembly, (2000) also state that practitioners need to have knowledge on what they are looking for when observing and they also need to work out where they are going to be observing the child. When observations are taking place, it is important that the practitioner stands back out of the way to observe and don't make it obvious as the child's behaviour may change as a child could act different when they know somebody is watching. When children are focused on their work, they will not be taking much notice of what is going on around them so it will make it easier for the practitioner to carry out the observations. (Welsh assembly, 2000)

Welsh assembly, (2000) point out that the children can also be observed by the practitioner getting involved with the children. While the practitioner is getting involved, they can collect as much evidence on the child's ability and skills to see which part of the development needs more progress. Practitioners can observe the children by sitting or standing near by to see how the child is working and what the child is capable of doing.

Welsh assembly, (2000) go on to say to observe a child the practitioner will need to ask the child questions. However, they will need to know when it is the right time to ask the questions as the practitioner shouldn't interrupt when the child is focused. The way the practitioner asks the questions is very important as it supports the children's way of learning and allows them to think on their own.

The two types of questions that are focused on more are closed questions and open questions. Closed questions- Closed questions are mainly only questions that have one right answer. Open questions- Open questions are normally short questions which allows children to have a chance to think about the answer. (Welsh assembly, 2000)

Practitioners should only disturb the children if any of the children need help, health and safety matter, if they cannot come to an agreement with another child or if the child wants the practitioner to be involved. (Welsh assembly, 2000)

In the Howard and Mclnn paper article they state, an essential view of the health and development of the children, many departments across the education, health and social care are intended to rise the welfare and emotional care of children. Children's emotional health has been connected to play through evidence. When children are playing studies show that children appear to display their emotions more when playing to when they are doing a work-based activity. A lot of children took park in a study to show how their emotional health was shown a lot more while they were playing to when they were doing the same activity but in a work manner instead. The end result of the study shown a lot more to when they were doing a play exercise. However, when the child was doing a work-based activity the study shown that the children did not show as much emotional well-being. To children, play is very important as it helps their development. (J, Howard and K, Mclnn)

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