

Theoretical Approaches

used in

Foundation Phase Learning

Constructivism

"LEARNING THROUGH PLAY"

In School A's Foundation Phase, Constructivism is a key part to the schools day to day planning. Its achieved by "Learning through Play". Nursery and reception classrooms especially, with ages ranging from three to five years old, this approach plays a common role in teachers weekly planning. Weekly, different areas of the classroom will be changed to incorporate topics and themes, with exploration and children's curiosity at highest priority. These activities although planned by a Teacher, they are done independently by the pupils, with an adult around when needed. Usually planned with previous lessons in mind, so children have some previous knowledge, but can further their experiences and learning whilst they believe to be playing with peers.

"Learning theory of constructivism incorporates a learning process wherein the student gains their own conclusions through the creative aid of the teacher as a facilitator. "

(Teachnology, 2019)



Constructivism apposes the Plowden Reports way of children sitting in rows, all being taught the same by the teacher at the front of the class. Instead after exploring Piaget's work, the new recommendations were:

- ◆ Teachers need to be aware of the different rates of development and adapt accordingly.
- ◆ Children need individual attention, not all can be treated the same way.
- ◆ Children should not be taught things , until intellectually developed enough to cope with them.

(Jarvis and Chandler, 2001: P.142)

This also links to an Estyn recommendation given to School A , and priority two of their School Development Plan (SDP) - Development of independent learning challenges in the Foundation Phase. (Reference withheld, 2019)

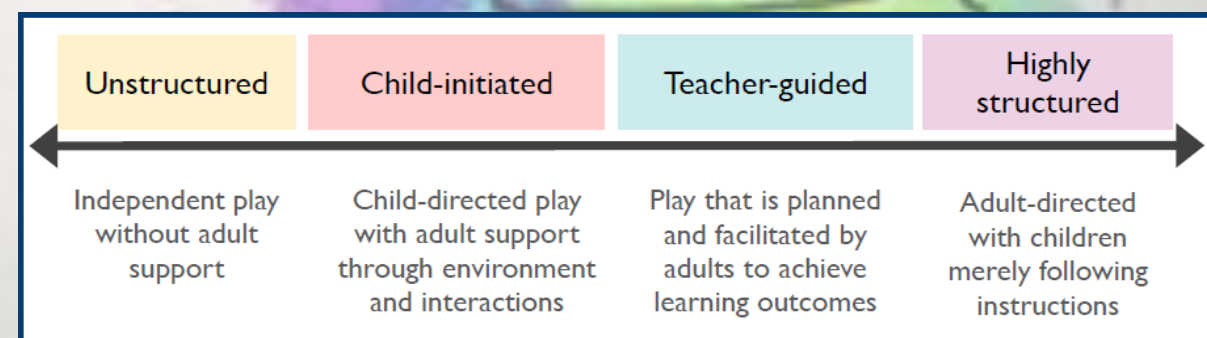


As constructivism is about learning through experiences and play, School A, when planning themes and topics for the year ahead, will also try and incorporate real-life experiences some pupils may never normally see or experiences they wouldn't usually encounter at a young age. These can vary from cooking activities, independent rolling snack tables to taking part in different religious festivals.

This can also relate to Donaldson's Successful Futures with what his purposes are for the new curriculum,

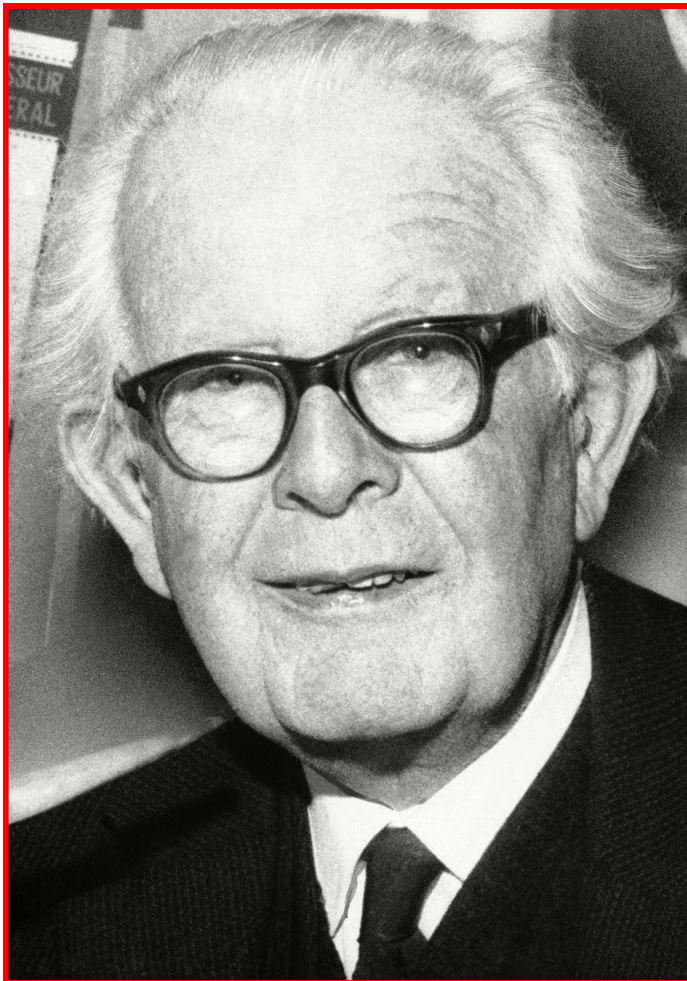
- *challenging children and young people to be the best they can be.*
- *giving opportunities for problem solving, creativity and critical thinking.*
- *setting tasks and resources that build on knowledge and skills.*
- *creating real-life opportunities for learning.*
- *encouraging children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning."*

(Welsh Assembly Government, 2015, P.8)



Constructivism

"LEARNING THROUGH PLAY"



Jean Piaget

- Born 1896 - Died 1980.
- Swiss National.
- Best known for his work on Cognitive Development.
- Influenced by Maria Montessori.
- Theory used in classrooms following Plowden Report.

(Aubrey and Riley, 2019,P.39-47)

Jean Piaget was one of the first theorists to study how children think and learn, differently to an adult. His theories focused on three specific areas: how children acquire knowledge, how their thinking differs from adults and how cognitive development can be classified into stages. (Aubrey and Riley, 2019,P.42)

Piaget classes the stages as:

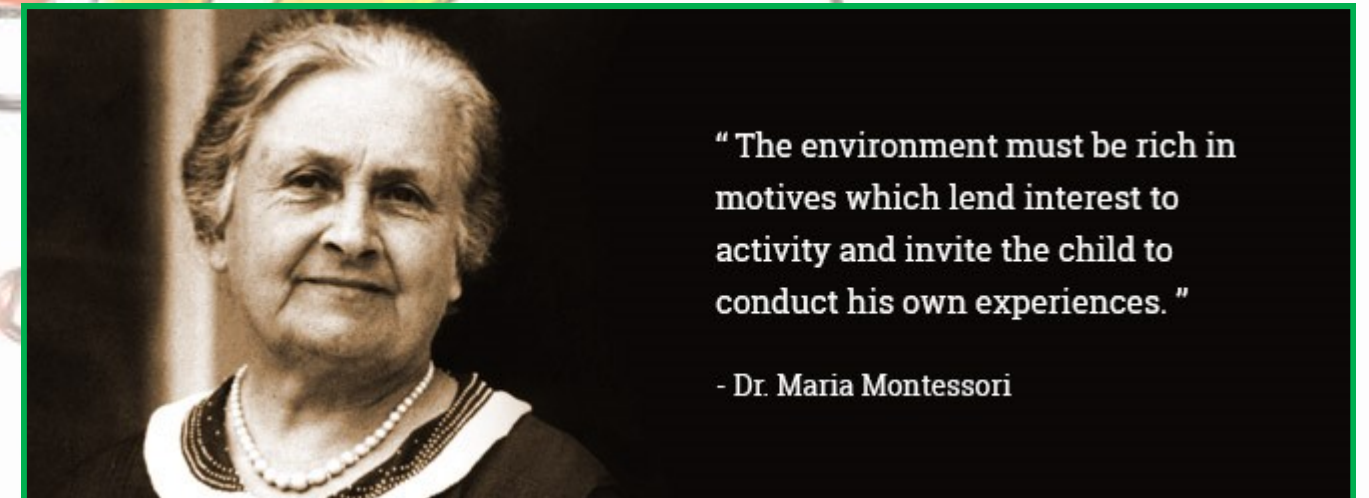
"(1) The sensorimotor stage: The first stage of development lasts from birth to approximately age two. At this point in development, children know the world primarily through their senses and motor movements.

(2) The preoperational stage: The second stage of development lasts from the ages of two to seven and is characterized by the development of language and the emergence of symbolic play.

(3) The concrete operational stage: The third stage of cognitive development lasts from the ages of seven to approximately age 11. At this point, logical thought emerges but children still struggle with abstract and theoretical thinking.

(4) The formal operation stage: In the fourth and final stage of cognitive development, lasting from age 12 and into adulthood, children become much more adept and abstract thought and deductive reasoning."

(Cherry, 2019.)



"The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences."

- Dr. Maria Montessori

School A's Foundation Phase is very much developed with this quote from Montessori in mind. To help further pupils knowledge and experience, staff need to make sure the resources are constantly rotated to keep children engaged and intrigued.

Montessori developed her theories by always placing the child at the centre of her work. She saw the child as unique and individual, so developed activities in classrooms designed to meet the needs based on her observations.

(Aubrey and Riley, 2019,P.27)

Montessori rejected the behaviourist approach, teaching skills through repetition and instead focused on developing new skills by first educating children's senses.

(Bates, 2019, P.236)

Behaviourism

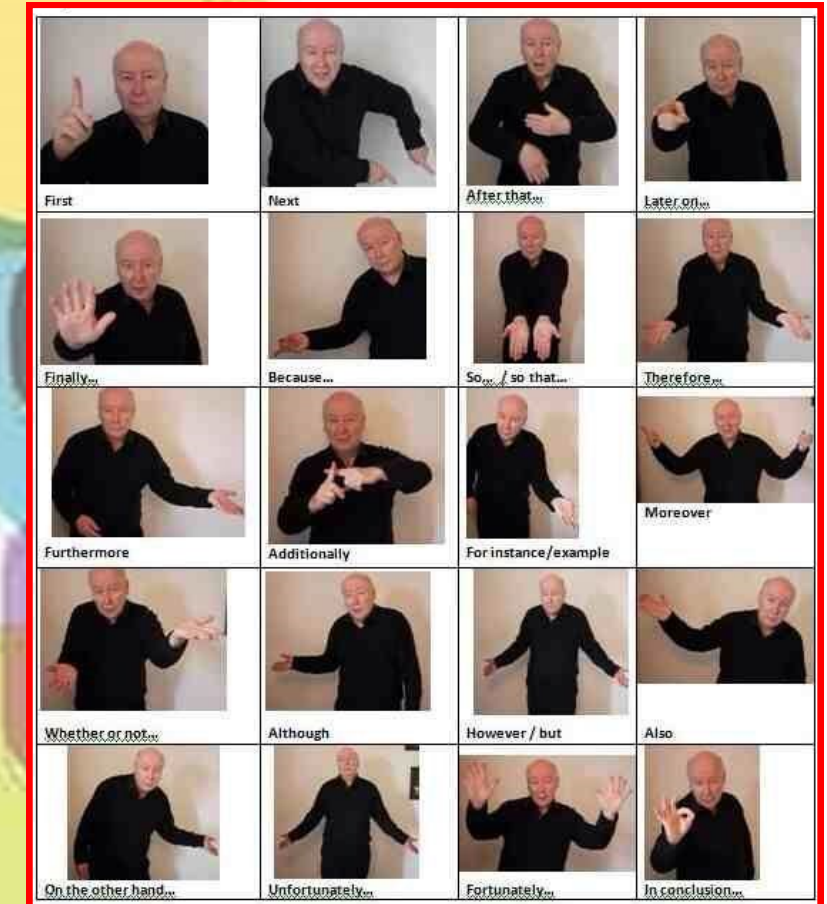
“REPETITION AND REINFORCEMENTS”



Positive reinforcements and repetition are very highly prioritised within School A's Foundation Phase.

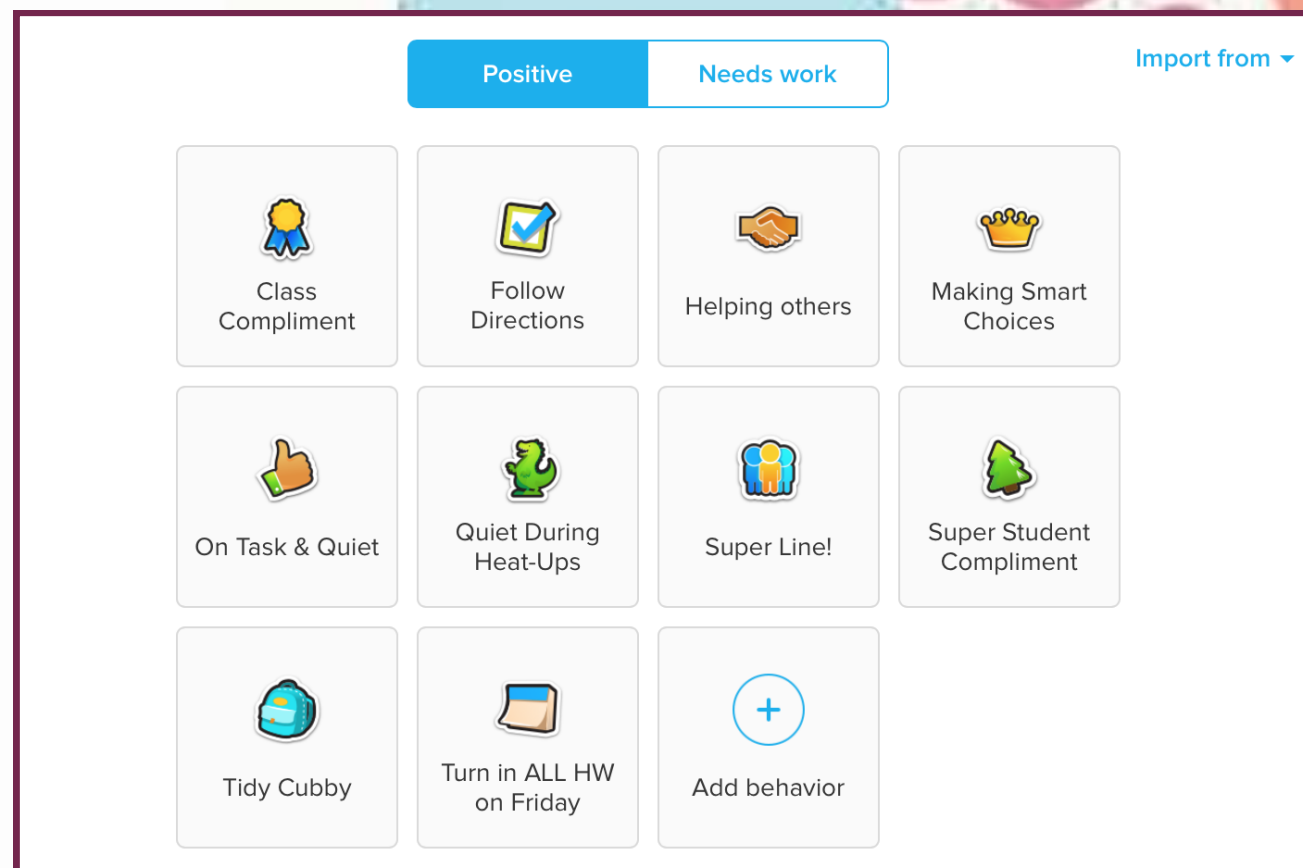
Class Dojo is one way of showing praise and positivity within the classroom setting. When starting the class, every pupil has created a 'Dojo Monster' for them, and can be rewarded with points when he/she has done something positive, either in class or outside with peers. Class Dojo was created by Sam Chaudhary and Liam Don, two education technology entrepreneurs with experience as teachers in 2011. (Mead, 2013.)

ClassDojo helps parents, teachers, and students build positive behaviour at school and at home. Once a pupil has received ten or more Dojo Points, they receive a small prize given by their teacher, these range from small toys to notebooks or colouring pencils. The small incentives can help pupils remember to make good and/or right choices throughout their school day, helping them gain the needed points. Eventually most children will then start to carry out these choices and actions, in normal day to day activities, after being 'conditioned' with the reward system, similar to Pavlov's classical conditioning experiment.



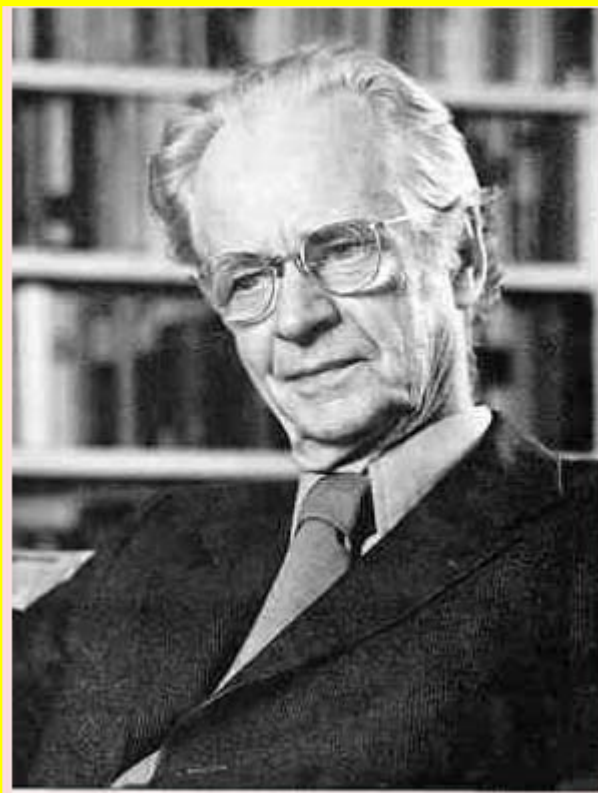
Read Write Inc (RWI) is used daily within School A's timetable to help with teaching phonics and literacy. Nearly all staff members have undertaken the necessary training courses to be able to confidently teach new phonics, words and reading skills to pupils of all ages throughout the school. Within the programme, there are praises and hand signals taught for attention and appraisal which once 'conditioned', children will recognise throughout their school day, not just during timetabled RWI lessons. Examples include, the stop or quiet signal, a hand, palm facing towards the children will signalise, they are to stop the current activity or to stop talking and regain attention and eye contact with the teacher. This is also used during assemblies to regain focus and also when children line up after playtimes outdoors, symbolising all children should face the adults in an appropriate manner. Another, is to point both hands together, which indicates the adult would like children to turn and discuss with their partners, this can be used numerous ways throughout the curriculum, not just during RWI or literacy based lessons.

Another repetitive programme used within School A's Foundation Phase is Pie Corbetts "Talk 4 Writing". This consists of actions linked to words to help encourage story writing and re-telling amongst children. A story would be read aloud, and then discussed with children, using actions to re-tell. This would be repeated throughout the week allowing children to remember story independently, and then being able to re-write story using their own characters and/or settings.



Behaviourism

“REPETITION AND REINFORCEMENTS”



The way positive reinforcement is carried out is more important than the amount.

- B. F. Skinner

Teaching is the arrangement of contingencies to facilitate learning--
B.F. Skinner

B. F. Skinner

- Born 1904 - Died 1990.
- American National.
- The ‘Father’ of Operant Conditioning.
- Developed from Pavlov’s Classical Conditioning.
- One of the most influential Theorists of the twentieth century, although many saw his theories as being too radical.
- Skinner referred to himself as a ‘Radical Behaviourist’.

(Aubrey and Riley, 2019,P.70)

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT



Skinner’s idea of Operant Conditioning, or Radical Behaviourism, is about positive rewards and reinforcements. In the classroom Skinner recommends to offer positive rewards for good behaviours if the rewards are what the learner desires or cherishes, and to only threaten bad behaviours with punishments that the learner will fear. Teachers are to remember that positive reinforcements will have a longer lasting effect than negative.

Skinner also goes on to say that behaviours can be shaped in gradual steps by offering rewards for simple behaviour modifications, then increasing the complexity. All of these are to be repeated throughout classrooms and school activities to help reinforce the positive behaviours lasting in pupils.

(Bates, 2019, P.36)

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