Play as the Leading Activity of the Preschool Period.

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Abstract - The preschool years are an exciting time for young children. When they were infants, they developed a trust of their caregivers. As toddlers, they began to establish some independence. Now, as preschoolers, they use this trust and independence to actively explore new forms of play (e.g., pretend play) and new environments (e.g., school).

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Play is the main activity of children 5-6 years old. Therefore, they are always interested in our lessons and they are involved in the educational process, "says Oksana Gulyas, Academic Director for Children at the Grade Education Center. Preschoolers need to learn how to make choices for themselves and how to feel good about the choices they make. It is their job to "learn to take initiative in socially acceptable ways.

Preschool-aged children's style of thinking and learning can best be described as "what you see is what you get," or reasoning based on the way things look. Preschoolers rely heavily on the literal appearance of things as a means of understanding the world around them. For example, if a child breaks her graham cracker into four pieces while her brother breaks his in half, she thinks that she has more graham cracker than her brother because she has four pieces and he only has two pieces. Similarly, a child may begin a friendship with another child because of something appealing that the other child has, such as a pretty dress or a new toy.

Adults play an important role in helping children take initiative and explore their environments. Adults' behaviors, attitudes and styles of thinking contribute to preschoolers' development. Talking with children and including them in conversations helps to develop their language skills. It is important to give children opportunities for make-believe play. This helps them to understand themselves and others, and encourages their imaginations.

Preschool children love to play, especially when their play activities involve make-believe. This special type of play, known as pretend play, is particularly important for young children's development. As children's thinking skills improve during the preschool years, they can remember and tell stories that follow a sequence of events and make sense to others. Pretend play is a great way for children to learn and develop skills such as:

Planning, including organizing the type of pretend play (such as "the beach"), roles (lifeguard, scuba diver, fisherman), and items/objects needed for the activity (whistle, goggles, flippers, fishing pole, beach towels) How to solve problems and compromise (for example, "This time I'll be the lifeguard who rescues you and next time you can rescue me.")

How to communicate through words and actions

How to express emotions (for example, fear in the face of a child pretending to be a scary animal; delight or jealousy when a new baby comes home from the hospital)

Creativity and imagination; pretend experiences get more complicated and fantastic as children get older (for example, instead of simply being fishermen, they become deep sea explorers, searching for lost treasures on a sunken ship)

Memory skills, as favorite experiences are acted out over and over again (such as getting a new pet, eating at a restaurant, taking a trip to the zoo)

You can promote children's development by creating an environment that supports pretend play. For example:

Establish an area for children's pretend play and provide a variety of items, including purses, hats, shoes, clothing, telephones, kitchen materials, office supplies, junk mail, etc. Be sure to offer a storage area for



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pretend play items. For example, children can hang their "dress up" clothes on an old coat rack and store their other pretend play items in a laundry basket.

Encourage children to talk about their pretend play. Ask them to describe their pretend play to you: Who were they pretending to be? Why did they want to pretend they were that person? What did they get to do? However, don't interrupt children with questions about their play when they are deep into a pretend play experience. Their fantasy experience can easily be disrupted if they have to shift gears and talk to someone outside of their make-believe experience.

Engage in pretend play with children. You can enhance children's pretend play by offering suggestions for activities and introducing new words into children's vocabulary. Be sure to follow the child's lead. Let the child direct the fantasy play experience. Research shows that children are more agreeable and can express their developing independence when adults follow the child's plan for the play. Examples of adult-child pretend play activities include having tea parties, bathing baby dolls, setting up a restaurant or beauty parlor, and being a librarian or mail carrier.

Attend to the theme of children's pretend play. Research shows that, compared to children who engage in little or no violent fantasy play, children who engage in noticeably more violent fantasy play tend to be angrier and less cooperative. Examples of violent pretend play activities include aggressive monsters who hurt people or cops and robbers who kill each other.

What adults can do

Be a model of literate behavior for your children: write notes, keep a calendar and daily planner, post lists of food and household needs and children's responsibilities, introduce new vocabulary words during routine conversation and bookreading, and subscribe to a local newspaper and magazines the entire family will enjoy.

Sing songs, make up silly rhymes, read books, and play with words and sounds every day. Discuss printed text, words, and sounds as "objects" that can be thought about, manipulated, altered and explored. Help children build and use their ever-growing vocabulary.

Provide children with the tools of literate behavior (pens, pencils, markers, paper, envelopes, a stapler, paperclips, stamps, a dictionary, an atlas, telephone books, magazines, catalogues, newspapers, junk mail) and engage in daily literacy activities with your children (write thank-you notes, mail birthday cards, look up phone numbers, find exotic destinations in an atlas, write lists, read books, visit the library)

Conclusion

The teacher must clearly remember that the level of development of the child's play activity corresponds to the level of development of mental activity, if the child experiences difficulties in play communication, difficulties in verbal communication, he needs more attention. The main task of the teacher at this stage is to encourage children who have reached the level of "playing next to" to play together, form and establish friendly contacts, seek agreement in game situations, obey certain rules of the game, expand the active vocabulary, enrich younger students with knowledge ... In the end, the moment comes when systematized and generalized knowledge becomes necessary for the full-fledged mental development of the baby. The formation of play activity in young children is carried out as follows: a) teaching children in a playful way to reproduce reality, to reproduce familiar actions; b) proposing the plot of the game, guiding the game, which arises at the suggestion of the teacher and at the initiative of the children. Any compulsion is categorically excluded from all methods. Play should promote positive emotional experiences, bring joy and satisfaction; in play, the child asserts himself and develops.

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