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Message from the MD

Play is definitely in the news again. The Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Hsien Loong announced at the recent National Day rally speech that children should play more. He added that bringing the Primary 1 curriculum into the kindergarten classroom is not ideal for children and their learning journey. A recent report by Alison Gopnik, a leading thinker in early childhood further validates the significance of play in early childhood. In her article Gopnik suggests that babies and toddlers learn in some of the same ways as scientists.

"The way we determine how they're learning is that we give them, say, a pattern of data, a pattern of probabilities or statistics about the world and then we see what they do," Gopnik said in a summary released by the National Science Foundation. "We found that like scientists, they tested hypotheses ... and determined which one was more likely."

This finding is indeed significant. It reinforces what we have always believed in, that children construct their own knowledge through a process of active engagement with the world around them. Play is therefore the only natural way in which they learn. Why therefore do we hear skeptics ask "Play is fine. But when do they learn?" In 1995, when the first EtonHouse campus commenced operation, we offered a curriculum based on play and respect for children's thinking and their scientific process of learning. We had plenty of people who could not fathom how this form of learning was effective. But we stuck to our conviction and understanding of early childhood research and have over the years used that understanding to develop exemplary programmes for our children. This is proven by the outstanding achievements of our graduates, no matter where they are in their learning journey. Be it taking up leadership positions in their respective schools or being accepted into prestigious universities around the world such as Princeton, Oxford and Yale,

we are proud of what our children have achieved. But most importantly, our graduates are happy and confident individuals with a strong sense of social responsibility and a deeply rooted love for learning.

It has been our mission over the past eighteen years to strive for leadership and excellence in educational practice. I am very happy to note that the recent developments have proven just that. For the second year in a row, our educators received the 'Outstanding Leader and Teacher' awards at the MCYS Childcare Awards, the highest honours in the profession. EtonHouse Pre-School at 764 Mountbatten Road

also won an innovation grant for their magnificent efforts in social and environmental responsibility. We are very proud of our teaching and learning team for continuously striving towards excellence in whatever they do.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the children who graduated from our pre-schools this year. I wish them a lifetime of happiness and success and hope that they will stay connected to EtonHouse through the alumni.



This newsletter has a wonderful mix of articles that highlight our philosophy on learning through play, learning through exploration in an environment that is safe, warm and full of possibilities. I hope you enjoy this last edition of the 2012 corporate newsletter. I thank you for your support during this year and wish you a wonderful start to the New Year. I would like to end with a quote from Carla Rinaldi that gives me great hope and pride in our work with young children.

"Children teach us to wonder, to be surprised, to accept possibility; to continue to believe that we can be better, that democracy is possible, that peace is possible."

Ng Gim Choo
Group Managing Director
EtonHouse International Education Group

To be a member of the EtonHouse alumni, e-mail friends@etonhouse.edu.sg or find us on www.facebook.com/EtonHouseInternational

MCYS Child Care Awards 2012

Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award 2012

Ms Emelia Prayogo, Pre-School Director at EtonHouse Pre-School, Vanda and Director of Pedagogy was awarded the Outstanding Early Childhood Leader Award. Emelia started her career in EtonHouse in 2006 as a class teacher. She went on to become a Pre-School Director shortly after that and now has taken on the role of Director of Pedagogy. Emelia is also the recipient of the MCYS 2012 Early Childhood Research Fund (ECRF) for the research project title *The significance of reading aloud with young children in supporting their early years literacy skills*.

The Early Childhood Innovation Award 2012

The Green Team, also known as Xu Yu'E, Lim Seh Lee, Samantha Morier, Meghana Bhaya, Shoba Renganathan and Li Qingyu, teachers at EtonHouse Pre-School, 764 Mountbatten was awarded the Early Childhood Innovation Award (Silver) for their project 'Educating for a Green Mindset'. This award aims to recognise individuals and teams who have endeavoured to innovate and improve the existing programmes and services or processes to benefit children in the centres.

Healthy Eating in Child Care Centre Award 2012

EtonHouse Outram, EtonHouse Broadrick and EtonHouse 764 Mountbatten have achieved the 'Healthy Eating In Child Care Centre Award 2012' as they have successfully created a healthy environment with nutritious food available for the children while cultivating good eating habits from a young age. The Healthy Eating in Child Care Centres Programme (HECCP) was introduced by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) in 2005 to encourage and acknowledge child care centres for providing healthier food and promoting healthy eating in their centres.

Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Award 2012

Samantha Morier, a kindergarten 2 teacher started her career in early childhood with a certificate in pre-school teaching. Her passion and dedication to this profession motivated her to pursue a Diploma in Teaching and Leadership at the EtonHouse Education Centre (EEC) and thereafter a Degree in Early Childhood from Roehampton University, offered in collaboration with the EEC. She started her career as an assistant teacher at EtonHouse Mountbatten 764 and now teaches there as class teacher.

The Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports (MCYS) Child Care Awards recognises outstanding and exemplary contributions by early childhood professionals and practitioners towards enhancing and making a difference to the lives of children and their families.

The awards are also the highest national award for the child care sector. Held in conjunction with the annual Child Care Seminar on 5 October 2012, the event was a celebration of excellence in early years practice within the Singaporean context.



L to R: Ms. Emelia Prayogo (Senior Pre-School Director, EtonHouse Vanda), Mdm. Halimah Jacob (Minister of State, MCYS), Mrs. Ng Gim Choo (Founder, EtonHouse), Mr. Chan Chun Sing (Acting Minister, MCYS) and Ms. Samantha Anne Morier (Educator, EtonHouse 764) at the awards ceremony.

EduTrust Certification



EtonHouse International School, Broadrick has been granted the EduTrust Provisional status

for achieving the required level of performance.

The conferring of this award reinforces the school's commitment towards making greater improvements in service provision and management practice to achieve the higher levels of EduTrust certification in the future.

EtonHouse Staff Day

EtonHouse Singapore celebrated its Staff Day at a party organised at the Concorde Hotel on the 14th September 2012. There was about 400 staff from all campuses across Singapore who attended the event and revelled in the success of EtonHouse over the last 17 years. It was also an occasion where the organisation congratulated a total of 44 staff members who had been with EtonHouse for 5, 10 and 15 years and recognised their contributions to the success of the Group.



L to R: Mr. Chao Tse Ann (Director, EtonHouse), Mr. Jimmy Oh (Chairman, EtonHouse), Mrs. Betty Oh (Associate Director, EtonHouse), Mrs. Ng Gim Choo (Founder and MD), Mr. Phua Hua Seng (Director, EtonHouse), Mr. Ben Neu (Director, EtonHouse)

Hampton receives SPARK Certification

Hampton, a PCF campus managed by EtonHouse is now a SPARK (Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework) certified centre. SPARK is a quality assurance framework introduced by the Ministry of Education to raise the quality of pre-schools in Singapore. We are very proud of the Hampton team under the leadership of Ms Chia Bee Yong for this wonderful reinforcement of its high standards of practice.

Glimpses

Scrolls for our graduates



A time to celebrate the completion of the wonderful pre-school years at EtonHouse Newton

EtonHouse Graduates in their cap and gowns at EtonHouse Newton



EtonHouse Outram's graduates and their teachers



The children with their pianicas at the graduation event at EtonHouse Outram



Diwali celebrations - the graceful Indian dance by Jodie, Kiera, Naoko, Barabara Li, Shenaz, Pritika, Catherine, Vinita, Niru, priyanka, Vibha and Atima at EtonHouse Broadrick



Diwali Celebrations at Broadrick - The ten-headed Raavan took the princess Sita to his kingdom of Lanka. (Year 3 students)



Mrs. Ng with the dancers in Indian finery- The Year 2 students of the Hindi class-Diwali Celebrations at Broadrick



The beautiful and innovative outdoor learning space at EtonHouse 764 - an initiative of the Green Team



EtonHouse Staff Day 2012 - Chinese traditional dance performance by the very talented EtonHouse Mandarin staff

“Play” throughout the School Years

by John Cooley, Advisor, EtonHouse Group

This edition of the EtonHouse Corporate Newsletter provides essential reading for parents on the subject of “play” as a critical denominator within contemporary early childhood settings. EtonHouse educators have provided a considered variety of perspectives into the value of play and its educational/developmental importance for children in their pre-school classrooms. The examples given and research cited reinforce the message of “play” as empirically sensible and entirely logical – indisputable wisdom.



What is a natural extension to the logic of “play” within the early years learning/developmental process is the inclusion of a similar appreciation in later years’ educational environments. These environments include primary, secondary and tertiary. While the changes in these subsequent learning settings will be major, predominantly through the emphasis upon delivery of an established national/international curriculum content - and its moderation through an examination system – does that necessitate throwing out all that was treasured from early childhood “play-centred” understanding?

Unfortunately, the answer too frequently is “yes”.

The International Baccalaureate seeks to address these questions through its Learner Profile. One of the ten profile attributes is that of being “balanced” – an attribute that questions the learner’s approach to his/her focus upon the academic, social, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions within daily life. However, as valuable

as this focus may be, it still falls well short of any systemic emphasis upon extended periods of play so valued in the early years.

Arguably, a continuing focus upon play could be reinforced through



certain subject areas traditionally recognised as non-academic such as drama, music, the visual arts and physical education. However, these are also the first set of subjects squeezed from choice once students are seen to be reaching the

“serious” end of their studies – or are relegated to the minor league of courses taken.

Therefore, with the acknowledgement that schooling emphases will naturally evolve into



a more narrow academic focus as the student moves through the education system, what distilled essence from early years’ play should still be part of the classroom formula?

One conclusion possible is that with the elimination of what could be termed “play”, the spotlight should fall upon classroom “playfulness”. In other words, while the constructivist curriculum model may not be attainable, the relationship between educator and student, curriculum delivery and curriculum reception, occurs within a learning environment that has maximised the heartland features of a play-centred setting.

These features should include a sensitivity to each student’s learning style, a personalisation of the curriculum

so that time is given for individual understanding of new/challenging concepts and the teacher’s student-centric reflection upon content delivery and its take-up. What will also be of importance will be classroom tone. Students need to feel that the classroom belongs to them, is their safe haven for learning, and presents an atmosphere that is engaging, respectful and supportive. As is all too obvious, many of these attributes can be severely lacking in post pre-school learning environments. Also essential within a playful learning setting is the teacher’s ability to provide subject material in a manner that is richly diverse, interactive, absorbing and creative.

The features already listed then have need of the addition of one final essential ingredient - a sense of humour. Playfulness is starved of oxygen if the

lightness of tone that a readiness to laugh at the idiosyncrasies of school life cannot be part of each and every classroom. With the addition of humour the teaching environment begins to resemble many of the factors taken as given in an early childhood setting.

The challenges are not insurmountable for such advances

within learning environments throughout the education system. They simply require all teachers/administrators in the education system to recognise what invaluable lessons can be learnt from the observation of “play” in the early childhood sector.



Children's Work is Their Play

EtonHouse @ Mountbatten 717

by Charlotte Choy-Pre-School Director and Chan Siuwen, Fish Kok, June Loo & Renee Sim-Class Teachers



Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory states that young children enlist play as a mode of constructing and testing their own theories about the world around them (Vygotsky, 2002). However, play is only beneficial to children's learning when educators plan for 'purposeful play'.

Creating a well-ordered environment communicates a sense of order and structure. The provision of open ended materials helps to encourage children's imaginative use of materials

in multiple ways to develop their creativity and problem-solving skills.

For example, the makeshift tent in the garden can become a spaceship or a cave. Children use their prior experiences and competencies in consolidating their knowledge of the world. Children's play reflects what they know and can do.

Play provides opportunities for children to learn social rules and behaviour as they form meaningful relationships with the people around them. It helps children manage and regulate their emotions in a safe environment.

Adults support and extend children's play experiences by interacting meaningfully with the children, observing their interest,

knowledge and providing exposure to ample learning opportunities.

We can enhance the children's play experience and make it a meaningful one by asking questions that challenge the child's theory or help facilitate them in their thinking through prompts and guidance. It is through such interactions that we find out more about what the children are thinking and the meaning of what they are doing. When children play, they are learning.



Pretending to be on a rocking ship.



Perspectives on Play

EtonHouse @ Mountbatten 718

by Victoria Newman, Pre-School Director

Recently Channel News Asia came to Etonhouse Mountbatten 718 to find out more about our approach to teaching and learning. In light of the recent Government initiatives to improve Early Childhood Education in Singapore, we were delighted to be asked to participate in 'Talking Point'. The footage showed children playing, exploring water, moving rocks to create dams and rivers, children holding hands and walking together, talking and laughing.

An exploration inside one of the K1 classrooms showed imagination, creativity and insight. Planning, research and collaboration had taken place in order for the structures to have been created. Children explained the data that they had collected and graphs that they had created. What the filming didn't show were the



connections to language in the room, the children's labelling and naming of different plants they had identified in the garden, the books they had been exploring and the writing that had taken place around what they had discovered. Connected to their inquiry throughout the room was visible evidence of mathematics, number, data handling, and exploration of measurement. Science was embedded in the growing of plants, their growth over time had been recorded by the children and their wonderings and theories about plants had been documented on the wall by their teachers.

These inquiries are taking

place throughout the school-rich learning, where children's connections are strong and meaningful. Teacher learning proposals are intentional and are constructed planning so that learning can move forward in context with the current inquiries.

A play based curriculum works with the children's interests and moves them to new depths, with teachers supporting this learning. As facilitators of learning it is our role to pose good questions, to explore with children how they can find the answers, to ensure that we stay true to the schools pedagogical beliefs and to curriculum expectations.

"The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences"

Loris Malaguzzi "The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivations and the richer their experiences"



Mathematical Understandings through Play

EtonHouse @ Mountbatten 764

by Samantha Morier, Class Teacher

Stegelin in the Hampshire Play Policy Forum stated that,

Play is an essential part of every child's life and vital to his/her development. It is the way children explore the world around them and develop practice skills. It is essential for physical, emotional, and spiritual growth; for intellectual and educational development and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.

(2002:1 cited in Stegelin, 2005:76-77)

At EtonHouse 764, our K2 Dandelions were inquiring about healthy eating. We visited our very own school garden to extend our learning. We picked limes from our lime tree and set



off to make fresh lime juice. As part of the process, we invited the children to use a measuring cup to measure the ingredients needed. The children observed the measuring cup and shared their discovery of two different units of measurement - ml and cups. We then invited

the children to estimate how much water they needed to fill up the beaker. The children shared their predictions and recorded them. Using their estimations, the children filled the beaker and calculated the total amount of water they used. The



experience of making our own lime juice aimed at exposing the children to units of measurements that can be used. Through follow up discussions with peers and support materials, the children demonstrated their

mathematical understandings.

Reference: Stegeline, D. A. (2005, March). Making the case for play policy: Research-based reasons to support play-based environments. Young children, 76-85.

Discoveries

EtonHouse @ Outram

by Yvonne Yu, Pre-School Director and Fadhlina & JiaNi, Class Teachers

Inquiry based teaching encourages children to question and be curious about the world around them. This curiosity then drives the curriculum, encourages research and discoveries by the children. This practice transforms the teacher into a learner with children and the children become teachers with us.

N1 Bright Starters journeyed on their inquiry to find out if beans are living things or non-living things. They were given the opportunity to explore with four different types of beans, namely red beans, green beans, black beans and black eye beans.

Here are the voices of the children.



Yuma : 'No! They are not moving!'

Carrie : 'Yes! Living things!'

Ellie : 'I don't know.. Not living.'

With their curiosity spurred on, the children decided to plant them. The beans sprouted and the children were able to observe and document the changes. To extend their knowledge, the children explored plants growing outdoors and found a plant with a brinjal.

This is a process of exploration, or generating hypotheses, predicting, observing and confirming their findings. Here are

the voices of the children while they concluded their observations.

Carrie : 'The leaf has lots of lines (veins). The rain water goes into the lines.'

Ryan : 'Plants is living things ... because can grow.'

Ellie : 'The leaf comes from trees. When the wind blew, then the leaf drop. There is line here...and line here... The leaf that I pick up on the floor is now non-living thing because it can't move anymore... or drink water... or put the water up.'

Through the process of inquiry, individuals construct much of their understanding of the natural and the human world. It is not so much

about finding the right answer but rather seeking appropriate resolutions to questions and issues. This disposition will enable our children to continue their quest for knowledge throughout life.





The Learning Journey at Broadrick

EtonHouse @ Broadrick

by Atima Joshi, Vice-Principal/PYP Coordinator

A group of K-1 students are busy playing with materials of their choice in an outdoor area with the teacher, when a tiny voice exclaims "OH NO!"

"What is the matter?" asks the teacher, sitting next to the child, talking to him at his eye level.

"My chalk has fallen down the drain and I can't see them. I need to take them out- NOW." says the adamant voice.

The child peers down the drain to see if the chalk can be spotted. Two of his classmates leave their water-play and join in the search.

"I wonder if you have any idea to get the chalk out of the drain!" challenges the teacher.

Little bright eyes ponder for a moment.... and then sparkle. "I think we should make a fishing rod to take the chalk out of the drain!"

"I like the way you are using your thinking skills. Do you want to try making that rod to take out the chalk?"

"Yes." says the decisive voice. The little one walks back purposefully to the classroom with the assistant teacher to gather materials to make the fishing rod. The classmates join in to help.

Play is engaging. Play is motivating. Play is serious business. Play poses serious problems that need children to explore options in order to solve them. By connecting prior knowledge to the new experiences, children construct new knowledge that helps them make sense of the world around them. Play-based learning helps children explore their environment at a comfortable, non-threatening, individual pace. It helps children develop their social skills as they cooperate in their search for solutions.

When the K-1 students make a choice of play materials, they develop their confidence and independent decision-making skills. As the children engage in 'playing' with chalk on the ground, they develop their fine motor skills. The child sees the chalk falling in the drain and using her/his thinking skills, decides to make a fishing rod. S/he has made connections using her/his prior knowledge that a fishing rod can be used to pull

things out from water. A child will explore and extend their thinking and self-management skills as they gather materials, make the fishing rod and experiment with it.

Children develop the foundations for 'academic learning', and hone their emergent language and early mathematical and scientific understandings through play. The curriculum outcomes are addressed as the child describes his situation and explores solutions. The child learns to:

- explore and describe position (above, under, below, etc.)
- display the ability to use specific facts, ideas, and vocabulary
- display confidence in investigating and experimenting to test own theories
- describe observations about events and objects in real-life situations
- display ability in planning/designing and organising objects and processes
- develop a range of fine motor skills

'The Primary Years Programme (PYP): Making it Happen' document states that: "The PYP curriculum model is dependent on our commitment to a particular belief about how children learn, encapsulated most clearly in the constructivist

approach. It is acknowledged that learners have beliefs about how the world works based on their experiences and prior learning. Those beliefs, models or constructs are revisited and revised in the light of new experiences and further learning. As we strive to make

meaning of our lives and the world around us we travel continually on the cyclic path of constructing, testing, and confirming or revising our personal models of how the world works."

At Broadrick, teachers strive to scaffold each child's learning journey not only in the Pre-School but also in the Primary. An interesting conversation ensued with the senior primary students during



Do not...keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play.

Plato
Greek philosopher
427-347 BC

the IBPYP self-study process at Broadrick last year. As the children worked on IB Standards on Assessments, Year 4 student Sean Inglin commented that the school did not have any 'real' assessments as they were more of "fun tasks that actually had some practical value"! What better evidence could reflect the meaningful and relevant Assessment practices at school?

The Year 1 children have designed their futuristic transport as a part of their summative assessment. They are busy "vroooming" their cars testing their hypothesis on the use of water as a fuel. The Year 2's have completed their inquiry on 'Air' and have made machines to carry eggs safely to the ground as they're launched from the second floor! There is enthusiasm, laughter, a sense of play and a sense of inquiry as the machines are tested and scored for each child. A few broken eggs are more a source of amusement than disappointment. Some children have reflected on their machine blueprints and tried some more designs at home.

The Year 3 children, in groups of five, have designed edible biscuit buildings using chocolate syrup glue to test their inquiry on building structures. Each structure is unique and has given an insight into the students' perspectives and knowledge. Each building is evidence of cooperation and commitment along with social, communication and thinking skills. The learning engagement has required the students to use their knowledge of mathematics as they have worked on the concepts of area and volume along with height, weight and balance. The buildings have been fun to construct and even more fun to eat!

The school views each child as a competent learner who is able to construct new knowledge within an educationally rich environment with teacher-scaffolded learning. The task to scaffold each learning journey is certainly not "child's play" but the child's play indeed provides meaning to each one of the learning journeys at Broadrick.



Why do Children value Play-based Learning Experiences?

EtonHouse @ Vanda

Emelia Prayogo, Pre-School Director

This notion of "more play and less homework" is always one of resonance. As educators, we work closely with parents, their children's first teachers, to better advocate the significance of children's learning through play. Without a strong partnership between home and pre-school, the efficacy of our programme would be minimal.

Reciprocal communication between home and pre-school allows us to build a shared understanding of how play-based learning experiences enable



children to make meaning through the natural process of learning and development. The interdisciplinary nature of play fosters children's ability to holistically express identities, communicate needs, validate feelings, and construct thinking interchangeably. A four-year-old stacked up a few rectangular-sized blocks as a tower as he was constructing his knowledge of dimension, balance, trial and error, and problem solving.

However, despite the benefits of

learning derived from play, we also understand that there are times when play-based learning experiences have been markedly reduced. A hurried lifestyle, changes in family structure, and increased attention to academics and enrichment activities at the expense of play-based learning experiences are some of the reasons. I would

like to conclude our dialogue with this point of reflection – *how should we advocate this significance into the wider context of children's lives?*



Play is the Doorway to Learning

EtonHouse @ Newton

by Tracey Boyle, Pre-School Director



Young children's play allows them to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning. The intellectual and cognitive benefits of playing have been well documented. Children who engage in quality play experiences are more likely to have well-developed memory skills, language development, and are able to regulate their behaviour, leading to enhanced school adjustment and academic learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2005).

One of the greatest benefits of play is to assist with the development of social competence. Children can build relationships, learn to resolve

conflicts, negotiate and regulate their behaviour. In play, children usually have increased feelings of success and optimism as they act as their own agents and make their own choices. Playing is a known stress release; it is often linked to child wellbeing. Playing is linked to the development of

resilience and the beginnings of empathy as children begin to understand other points of view.

Play is simultaneously a source of relaxation and stimulation for the brain and body. Play is often described as a time when we feel most alive, yet we often take it for granted and may completely forget about it. But play isn't a luxury - it's a necessity. Play is as important to

our physical and mental health as getting enough sleep, eating well, and exercising

Play connects us to others. It helps us to share the joy, laughter, and fun with others. Play promotes bonding and strengthens a sense of community. We develop empathy, compassion, trust, and the capacity for intimacy through regular play.

Play stimulates our imaginations, helping us adapt and solve problems. Play arouses curiosity, which leads to discovery and creativity. Many components of play - curiosity, discovery, novelty, risk-taking, trial and error, pretence, games, social

etiquette, and other increasingly complex adaptive activities - are the same as the components of learning.

Beyond all of these wonderful reasons for playing, there is simply the sheer joy and happiness of play. Play makes us happy and should be celebrated from birth through to our adult lives.



Play is a Child's Work

EtonHouse @ Claymore

Lisa Hughes, Pre-School Director



Play invites children to interact with materials, places and things. Children are constantly thinking and discovering in these encounters.

Play supports our image of the child as a social being. We see children developing theories and building knowledge, skills and dispositions as they explore with others.

Play honours children learning in a holistic way. Children do not divide their thoughts into subjects and so our curriculum needs to be fluid and open to integrated learning opportunities. For example an experience with paint may support independence, fine motor skills, awareness of colours and communication skills as children paint to express an idea.

Play in early childhood is the best foundation for success in school. Frobose. J. 2008.

Teachers ignite, extend and record the learning through play as accountable and intentional educators. They plan for experiences and encounters considering open ended questions, social groupings and learning goals from EtonHouse Inquire-Think-Learn framework.



They Play but do they Learn?

EtonHouse @ Orchard

by Leanne Sunarya, Senior Pre-School Director



This question is often asked of us by our parents when we share about our play based inquiry programme. I believe the question stems from the adult perception of "play" - the thing we do in

our spare time when we are not working. At Orchard, we strongly believe that this definition needs to be redefined. We recognise that play is the work of childhood and are inspired in our practice by the current data being explored by researchers throughout the world. Dr Stuart Brown, a pioneer in the field of play, is finding through his research that play is more than a joyful and

energising experience. In fact it is deeply involved with human development and intelligence, and not just in children! He attests that;

"We are built to play and built through play."

"When we play we are engaged in the purest expression of our humanity, the truest expression of our individuality".

At our recent Sundowners Curriculum Evening we explored this idea with our parents and together discussed the power of play in the development of the child's understanding of the world and the development of their relationships with people, places and materials.

Learning is the result of making connections between prior experiences and new experiences and a child explores these connections when they play. We are certain a lot of learning is taking place at Orchard because of the depth of play the children are engaging in every day.



Play to Learn, Learn to Play

EtonHouse @ Zhuhai, China

by Tim Pearson, English Language Teacher



Here at EtonHouse Zhuhai, play is as important a part of any English learning experience as the English itself. Learning a new, foreign language, is a daunting prospect for even the most gifted of children, but introduce the element of play into the experiences and it becomes a most exciting and anticipated part of any child's day. Play encourages young children to feel more relaxed and allows them to become more easily submerged in their new language environment and, when done correctly, allows the children to learn their new language without even



realising it, just as a native speaker does.

Some of the games, role-plays and activities that we employ may stray from the traditional and even look out of place in a classroom to the untrained eye, but here at EtonHouse Zhuhai we are proud of our programme and the results that we achieve. Removing the element of play from early childhood education takes away the very notion of

what it is to be a child, but encourage it and use it skillfully and the results are magical and rewarding for both children and teacher alike!

Early Years Learning through Play Philosophies

EtonHouse @ Chengdu, China

by Carol Hutchinson, Principal

Research tells us that young children learn through their experiences, through their play and interactions with each other and the environment. From these experiences and interactions they construct meaning and make sense of the world around them. In the Early Years, play is essential in supporting children's learning and development. A range of studies has provided empirical support for Vygotsky's argument regarding the link between pretend play and the development of symbolic representational abilities in children. Dyachenko (1980; reported in Karpov, 2005) showed that the



ability of a five to six year old to retell a story was significantly enhanced by the use of representational objects such as sticks, paper cut-outs and their consequent ability to retell a story, without the use of these objects, was subsequently enhanced. Berk (2006) and her colleagues found high levels of private speech and verbal self-regulation among two-six year old children during open-ended or make believe or pretend play.

Play occurs in both indoor and outdoor environments. It provides a context for children to feel comfortable, express themselves and satisfy their natural curiosity. In play children can learn in a variety of ways as they engage

socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually with each other, adults and the environment. Play in a safe and secure environment allows children to try new things, take risks, solve problems and master learning situations. Teachers use these opportunities to reinforce social aspects such as caring for others, fairness, and personal responsibility.

Learning is all about building on prior experiences. For young children many of these experiences have taken place at home or within the family; therefore, the link between home and school is essential and communication is vital. At EtonHouse our caring and highly trained professional staff inform parents of their child's progress and development on a regular basis as well as providing information regarding play-based programmes.

Play at the Forefront of Learning

EtonHouse @ Nanjing, China

by Michel Tingley, Acting Principal

Emerson spoke of it over a century ago and the United Nations has called it the 'right' of every child but today many educators are still having to defend their students' playtime during school.



Indeed, kindergarten has certainly evolved over the last 20 years. For many adults, kindergarten may bring back scenes of building blocks, dressing up and plenty of time when the teacher was reading stories to the class. In an article by Lina Winerman (American Psychology Association, September 2009, Vol 40, No. 8) plenty of reasons are given as to why we may need to re-think how we structure our daily school schedules to keep 'play' at the forefront:

Kindergarten children in New York and Los Angeles spend nearly three hours per day on reading and math instruction and test prep, and

less than half an hour each day on "choice time," or play, finds the report, *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need Play in School*.

Dr. Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek, Director of the Infant Language Laboratory in the Department of Psychology at Temple

University states that disappearing playtime at home and in schools, stems from a common root: fear. "As a society and as parents, we believe we're at risk of falling behind," and that fear manifests itself in schools via a push for content to be taught at ever-earlier grade levels--expecting children to learn to read in kindergarten, for example, rather than waiting until first grade. "We want to make sure that our kids are ready for a globalized society. So what do we do about

it? We keep shoving more factoids at them," says Hirsh-Pasek. Research by Hirsh-Pasek and others backs up the claim that children learn best, in their early years, through play. In one study, she found no differences in academic achievement by first grade between children who had gone to "academic" pre-schools versus those who'd gone to more play-oriented pre-schools. She did, however, find that the children from academic pre-schools were more anxious.

EtonHouse, however, maintains their philosophy based on research and internationally accredited best practice in education. Children at the International Kindergarten in Nanjing are given solid blocks of time, daily, to devote to exploring, experimenting and learning through play. Studies show that these extended periods of play will aid in the development of children's fine and gross motor skills, language, socialization, personal awareness, emotional well-being, creativity, problem solving and learning ability. Those are huge benefits that will result from allowing our children to just be children.

Sensory Play

EtonHouse @ Yiwu, China

by Jenny Wong, Principal

It is very easy for us as teachers to talk about providing our young children with sensory play experiences, yet these experiences, in reality are often limited to water and sand experiences only. We need to enrich the lives of our children by providing them with a never-ending variety of sensory opportunities and thus experiences.

We are all very aware that children from the moment of birth are immersed in a variety of sensory experiences. These experiences are the most fundamental way in which children learn about their world. Through their senses they manipulate, explore, test, and understand their world. We also know that sensory play is not only fun and very satisfying for children but it contributes to brain development.

Experiences, using an extensive range of materials, indoors and outdoors, natural and man-



made, can be used to meet learning outcomes that are linked to the child's Cognitive, Language, Physical, Social and Emotional and Creative Development.

In sensory play each child has a way of interacting with the materials and as such there is no right or wrong way to experiment and explore with

the materials. Each child comes to a sensory play opportunity with his/her own unique experiences, likes and dislikes and behaviours. It therefore allows the child to open himself/herself up to all kinds of learning experiences. The child thus has a free rein on his/her imagination and creativity. He/she is able to better develop problem-solving skills and develop an understanding of the properties of the materials being manipulated when interacting with them.

For some children involving them in sensory play experiences can have a significant calming effect on them. Think about the effect a warm bath can have on a child. Finally, get down, get messy, get dirty and have fun exploring the world with children, through the wonderful exploration of senses through play.

Learning through Play

EtonHouse @ Jinan, China

by Lucy Qu, Vice Principal and Aurelio Gonzalas, International Teacher



As early years pioneer Susan Isaacs once said, "Play is indeed the child's work", as children seek to make sense of what they see and experience and gain a greater understanding of the world in which they live.

Play helps children to develop social skills, promotes spatial understanding, critical thinking skills and enriches children's sensory and aesthetic appreciation. Play also has an important role with children's attention span, persistence, and sense of mastery.

More and more people in China are beginning to understand the importance of play for children. At EtonHouse Pre-school Jinan, teachers are encouraged to be facilitators of children's play. They recognize that play should be supported by sensitive interaction- this means knowing when to intervene and recognizing when to



stand back and facilitate play from a distance.

Teachers provide children with the resources and materials to ignite their curiosity and engage their thinking skills. Several weeks ago, children of the Pre-K Tiger class showed interest in water. They obtained recycled materials from the school garden to design an irrigation system with the teachers' support. The children drew up the plan and worked together to set up the system. They also thoughtfully considered ways to use water responsibly.

The children of the international division started an investigation on 'autumn'. They went on an excursion to Yuanboyuan. They picked up leaves from the

ground, observed the change of trees and other plants and tasted fruit. They had an opportunity to learn about autumn through a range of sensory experiences.



At EtonHouse Jinan, we are constantly seeking opportunities to collaborate with parents. We invite parents to attend our workshops on play. Parents are encouraged to engage in experiences such as making playdough and interact with materials in the different learning spaces. The more parents

appreciate the significance of play, the richer will be the learning at home and school for our children.





Raise Your Flag!

EtonHouse @ Wuxi, China

by Betty Brown, Vice Principal

"When I get older, I will be stronger, They'll call me freedom, just like a waving flag"

National dress worn with pride, ethnical music drifting throughout the halls and a buzz of excitement as students prepared for a day of sharing, appreciation and fun.



Back in the classroom students reflected on their new understandings and decided on ways they could capture and report their experiences.

The displays of work were kept in the foyer over the next few weeks to enable members of our community to come and

and remember the dead. Prior to 1948, the autumnal equinox was an imperial ancestor worship festival called Shūkikōrei-sai. Thank you Ms. Emi Koshiba and her students for this informative acknowledgement and display.



This year's International Day was a culmination of organization that included, students, teachers, parents and friends of our school. Students used their passports to gain entry into a large number of exhibitions set up on the day including: Brazil, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, Canada, United States of America, Greece, China, Malaysia and Australia. Students shared in learning experiences that included: Tasting traditional foods, learning dances, watching information videos, playing games and learning about factual information of the countries.

share in a snippet of what was shared on this day.

We would like to thank our EtonHouse community: Teachers, parents and support staff for facilitating such a memorable day for our students.

The celebrations continued through the regular display of celebrations around the world in the foyer. One of the displays will be a Japanese Celebration: Autumnal Equinox Day (秋分の日 Shūbun no Hi?) This national holiday was established in 1948 as a day on which to honour one's ancestors



Play in our Learning Community

EtonHouse @ Korea

by Kathryn Morris – K2 Penguins Class Teacher

At EtonHouse Dongtan, we foster connections between students as well as other members of our learning community. Strong connections that develop through play help students feel more connected to their school, friends and learning, particularly in early childhood. Play also holds an important role within our inquiry-based curriculum where the opportunity to interact with materials and others, allows children to construct their own knowledge, as social constructivist principles explain.



"... not only do children need to approach materials, but they need one and other as part of the exploration to construct meaning." (J. Wurm 2005)

In K2, we invited other classes into our classroom to take part in our 'Hide and Seek

Camouflage' learning experience. As part of our inquiry into Animal Adaptations, our students were interested in the concept of camouflage and made the connection between this phenomenon and playing the common game, 'Hide and Seek'. We

challenged our students to colour a paper insect so that it could 'hide' in our classroom. Children from other classes then came into our room to search for our hidden insects with help from our class members. This game allowed our class to build knowledge about camouflage through a memorable experience. As importantly, this interaction through play helped create bonds between classes, which has been strengthened in further subsequent interclass activities.



Play - a Process of Socialisation and Development of Thinking

EtonHouse @ Tokyo

by Peter Ackerman, Director



When we first begin our studies of education at university we are told, "Children learn through play." I recall one of my professors explaining that many animals play, but primates play more, and humans play most of all.

The amount and complexity of play increases as the animal becomes more dependent on learning rather than only the basic instinct of survival. Play is an essential element in the development of humans.

Play reflects the process of socialization and the development of thinking. Young children

learn best through 'hands on' experiences. Pre-school children, unlike older children, are unable to learn through abstract or passive methods. Given our understanding of the critical importance of play in human development, an important part of the educator's role is to provide the environment, materials, time, and child support in order to enhance play at school. At EtonHouse International Pre-school Tokyo we make every effort to prioritize open ended, self-initiated free play. As we are located in the world's most populous metropolis an important part of this prioritization

are the opportunities for outdoor play in natural environments. Fortunately, we are located next to a large park that has grass, trees, gardens, animals, and a large pond. Our kindergarten class uses this park on a daily basis. These visits have provided a multitude of varied activities and they have also provided the stimulus for a number of inquiry based projects.



Learning during Play

EtonHouse @ India



A child picks up a block, pretending it's a telephone, holds it to her ear and talks to her teacher.

Pretend play allows children use their imaginations to represent objects.

At Vivero International Pre-school India, play is significant, as it contributes to the child's learning and development. It allows the child to build the skills necessary for critical thinking and problem solving.

At Vivero Pune, playtime is a riot of imagination and creativity. In pretend play sessions, children imitate adults and peers that they have observed or interacted with. As the children slip into these roles, they weave intricate stories, often imitating and imbibing their own experiences.

During pretend play sessions children experiment with language and emotions. They assume various roles and learn to think in an abstract manner.



Play is a wonderful way to collaborate and develop self-confidence. As children play together they learn to think critically, interact and provide solutions to

Kanon and Sarah work on the puzzle board together.

They learn to count, sort and use logic to solve problems



Children acting out a kitchen scene in the role play corner.

Pretend play allows children develop language and social emotional skills.

to fit in the apt shapes in the puzzle sorter. After facing much difficulty in doing this, they decided to give it a firm base, by laying it on the floor. They took turns helping each other fit in the puzzle shapes, supporting and encouraging each other in the endeavour to solve the puzzle.

Children learn best when they experiment and discover for themselves.

situations or setbacks.

During an integrated indoor playtime session at Vivero Mumbai two children, Kanon and Sarah, decide to work on a puzzle board. They initially held the puzzle board in their hands, as they attempted

The Importance of ‘Open-ended’ Play

EtonHouse @ Malaysia

by Claire Blake, Pre-School Director

Loris Malaguzzi of Reggio Emilia said, ‘Creativity should not be considered a separate mental faculty but a characteristic of our way of thinking, knowing, and making choices.’ Such creativity is at the heart of open-ended play. It brings about deep-down learning that cannot be measured. Simple materials support open-ended play because they can be used however children’s



said, ‘Children’s play is never trivial; it is deeply significant and should be encouraged.’

imagination suggest. Friedrich Froebel said, ‘Play gives children joy, freedom, contentment, and peace with the world. A child, who plays with motivation until physically tired, will develop as an efficient, d e t e r m i n e d individual.’ He also

Open-ended play is play in which the children themselves – not adults – determine what to do, how to do it, and what to use. The term ‘open-ended’ means ‘unrestricted; not having a fixed answer; allowing for future change’. While involved in open-ended play, children need not fear doing it wrong, since there is no ‘correct’ method or outcome. For observant adults, such play offers valuable insights into children’s development and thinking. Children learn through first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of “play” providing the vehicle. Albert Einstein said, ‘Imagination is more important than knowledge’, so if children are to grow up as creative thinkers, they need an abundant opportunity to immerse themselves in imaginative, open-ended play.

The Significance of Play

EtonHouse @ Jakarta

By Natalia Ellys Susanti, Nursery One teacher



Discoveries in the garden

“The wider the range of possibilities we offer children the more intense will be their motivation and the richer their experiences” - Loris Malaguzzi

Play holds a significant part in children’s lives. It is the way for children to learn to understand the world around them. Through play, children gain general knowledge. They learn to think, remember, solve problems and most importantly socialize. For example, children increase their problem-solving abilities

through puzzles. Another example, children learn to socialize by sharing and taking turns in play.

At EtonHouse Indonesia we believe that as teachers, we have an important role in providing the children with plenty of opportunities for play. We encourage learning through play by providing



Climbing up the frame at the playground



Creative play: painting with our hands

appropriate materials that promote exploration and learning. Our lovely garden gives opportunity for children to explore nature. Our massive playground has a wide range of equipment to develop children’s motor skills. Last but not least, our classes are filled with books, toys and art materials to support learning through play.