



## **The Importance of Early Experiences: How playing IS school readiness.**

Shared with you by Lisa Murphy, M.Ed.

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A foundation of **play** supports the house of higher learning.  
What happens when you build with no foundation?

### **SEVEN THINGS WE MUST DO WITH CHILDREN EACH DAY:**



**CREATE**



**MOVE**



**SING**



**DISCUSS**



**OBSERVE**

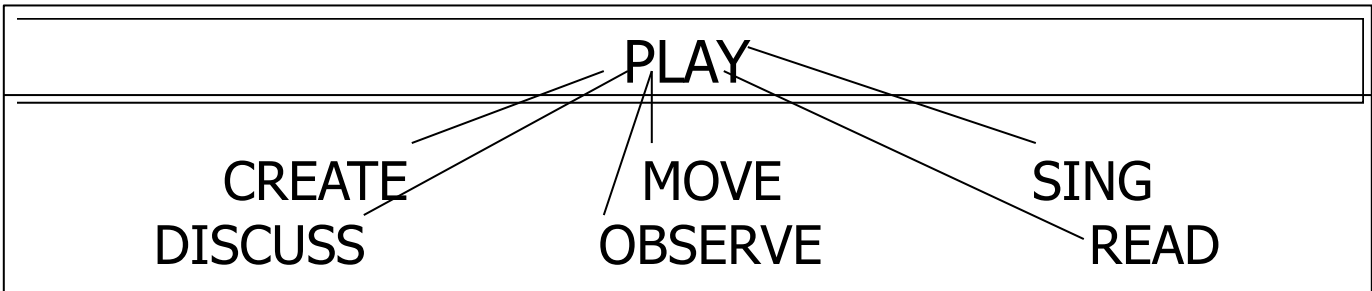
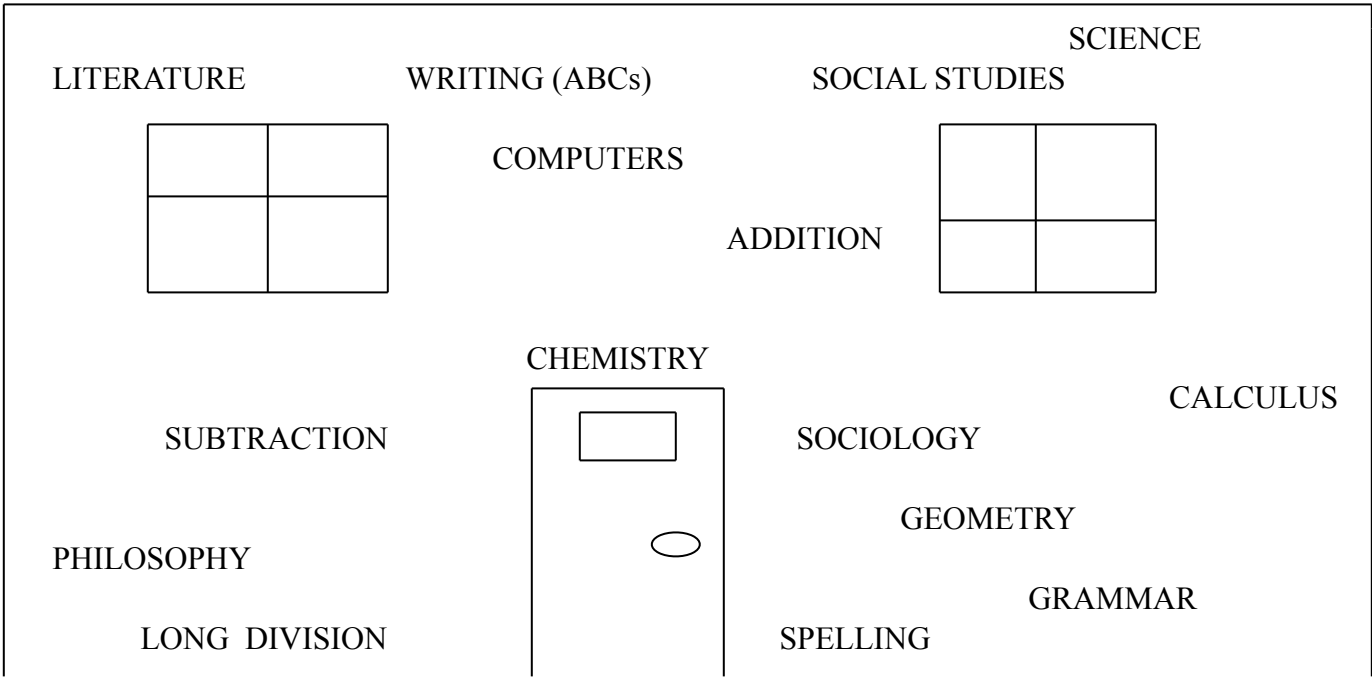
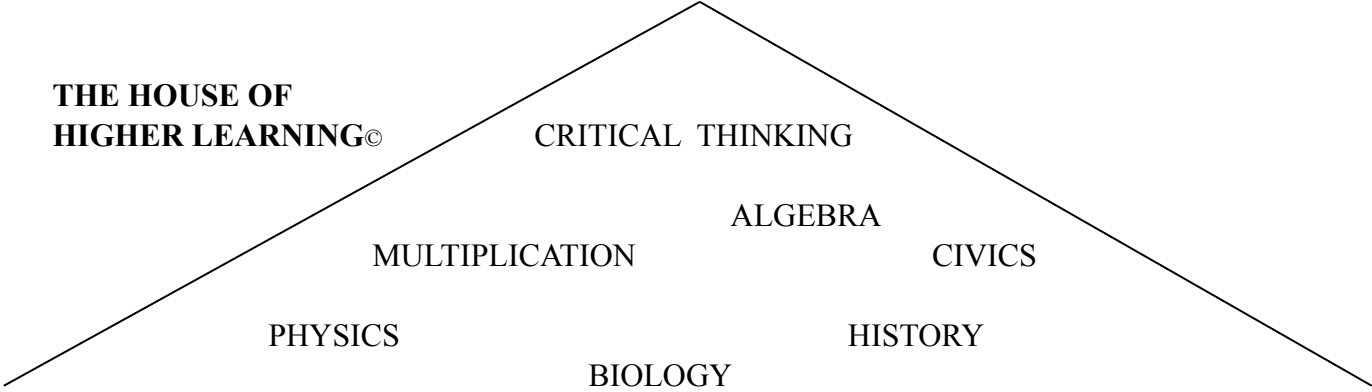


**READ**



**PLAY**

**THE HOUSE OF  
HIGHER LEARNING©**

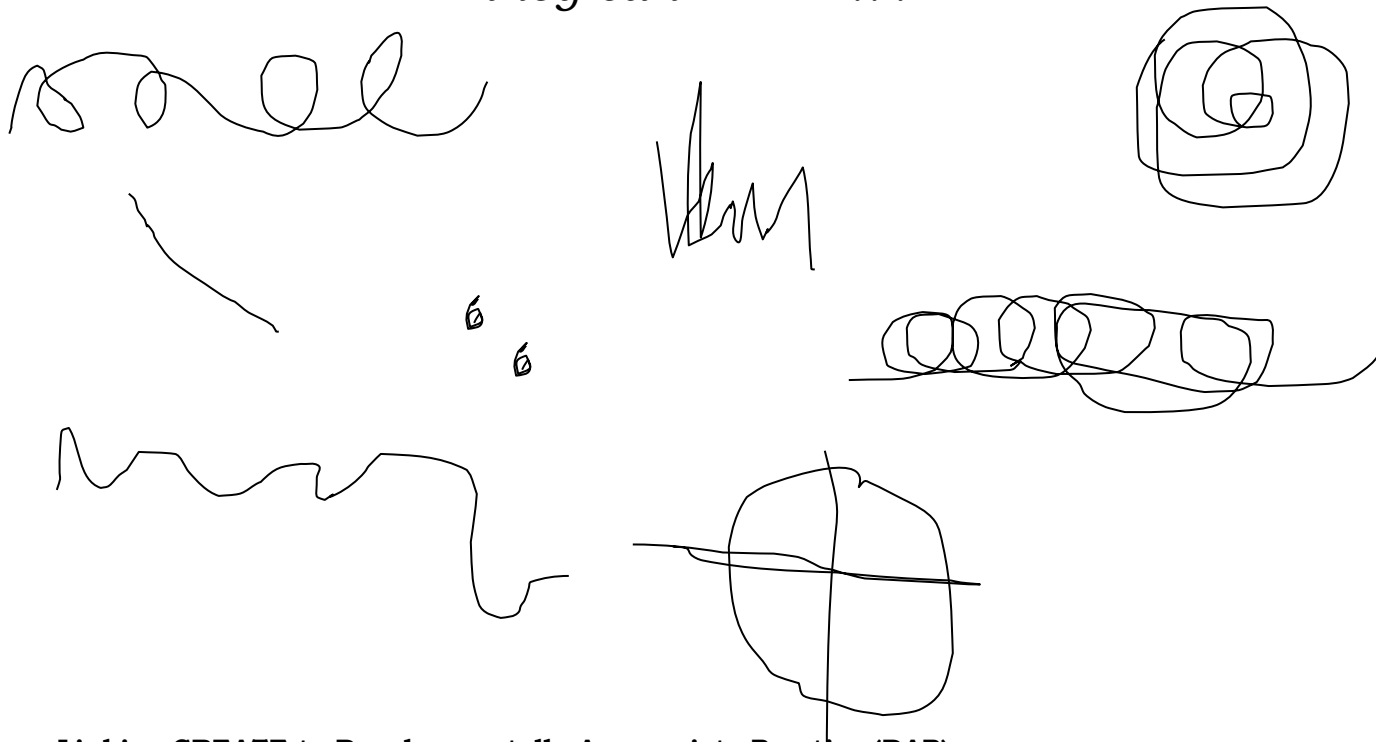


*The house of higher learning is supported by  
a foundation of PLAY!*

## **CREATE**

*Creating does NOT always = ART! Some children express their creativity in other ways: blocks, legos, dance, dress-up, music... are you making time for all these things? or just the ones that go home?*

*Did you know there are 80 Stages of Scribbling before they can WRITE!??*



### **Linking CREATE to Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP):**

Physical Development: Letter reversal is because they have not yet learned that print is not flexible. Writing, drawing, cutting = creative expression that is not fine-tuned yet. Clay, playdough, puzzles, collage & legos all contribute to fine motor development

Cognitive Development: Make believe pretend play leads to self-regulation skills

Language/Literacy: Self expression, communication with others, oral language (dress up), and early writing = scribbles

### **Resources**

You can “google” Rhoda Kellogg to get more information about her.

*The Colors of Learning* by Rosemary Althouse, Margaret Johnson & Sharon Mitchell

Also, any art activity/idea book by MaryAnn Kohl are excellent resources: *Scribble Cookies*, *Mudworks* and *Big Messy Art* are three of my favorites.



## How to get free paper!

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Call a local architect and ask for a donation of recycled **blueprints**.

Call your local newspaper or community paper and ask, “When is **end-roll** pick up day?” The end roll of newspaper paper is too small for the large machines but is still a lot of paper for your class!

Call a local printer and ask about **poster board or/and cardstock end-rolls**, again, like the newspaper rolls, it’s too small for the machines but lots of paper for you!

While on the phone with the printer, ask if they generate **scrap cardstock or poster board** from custom projects. If so, ask if you can haul that away too for them.

Every December we haunt the local office supply stores, stationery stores, Staples, Office Max and Office Depots for **desk calendars** that are about to expire.

**Recycled newspaper** is an excellent form of art paper! As grown ups we might want new clean crisp white paper but the children will paint and create on any surface... offer newspaper at the easels to vary the kind of paper used for art projects.

Know a photographer? They often use long sheets of bulletin board style **colored butcher paper** on photo shoots. The paper gets wrinkled and then they can’t use it again. But you can!

Brown **paper bags** from the grocery store.

## **MOVE**

*Children need to move in order to take in new information. The outside environment is more conducive to their active learning style. It is estimated that 40% of the elementary schools in the USA have eliminated recess. How do we make sure your school does not become one of them?*

*Remember the Learning Styles...*

VISUAL (eyes)  
AUDITORY (ears)  
KINESTHETIC (body)

*... and how preferences (including yours!) influence the environment!*

### **Linking MOVE to DAP:**

Physical Development is one of the domains within DAP. Children should spend at least a quarter of their day in motion! Learning is transmitted through the large muscles – from the hands to the head, not the other way around. The YARD is seen as an ideal environment to be developing large motor skills. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of NAEYC's DAP book specifically lists experiences that develop both FINE and LARGE motor muscles on pages 117-119.

### **A small list of resources:**

*Boys: changing the classroom not the child* by Dan Hodgins

*Big Body Play* by Frances Carlson

*Brain Gym* by Paul and Gail Dennison [www.braingym.org](http://www.braingym.org)

Heather Gudmundson in Washington State offers an "Education in Motion" DVD (a great intro to Brain Gym movements) for only \$15. Order by emailing her at [educate88@centurytel.net](mailto:educate88@centurytel.net)

*Smart Moves: Why learning is not all in your head* by Carla Hannaford

*The Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv

*S'Cool Moves* [www.schoolmoves.com](http://www.schoolmoves.com) Debra Em Wilson

*The Myth of the ADD Child* by Thomas Armstrong

*The Hand: How its use shapes the brain, language and human culture* by Frank Wilson

*Brain Rules* by John Medina

*Balanced and Barefoot* by Angela Hanscom

## **SING**

*Bev Bos used to say that songs are the hooks to hang memories on...*

*Sing to the air! The only thing you will remember with word for word accuracy are the songs you learned when you were little... what songs are you teaching the children? What songs will they remember?*

### **Linking SING to DAP:**

Social & Emotional Development: Rituals, welcoming songs, routines, reflection of home culture

Cognitive Development: Memory and recall, patterns and sequence

Language/Literacy Development: Songs and chants, finger plays, clapping out names (syllables)

### **A short list of musical resources:**

Vincent [www.lighthouserecords.com](http://www.lighthouserecords.com)

Ellen Allard [www.ellenallard.com](http://www.ellenallard.com)

Jim Gill [www.jimgill.com](http://www.jimgill.com)

Bev Bos & Michael Leeman [www.turnthepage.com](http://www.turnthepage.com)

Hugh Hanley [www.hughhanley.com](http://www.hughhanley.com)

## **DISCUSS**

*Communication skills are the KEY to school readiness!  
Do the children know how to get their shovels back?  
Social and emotional competence is just as important as the ABCs and 123s! Many children can “do” lots of things – but if they are lacking social skills it doesn’t matter a hill o’beans if they can read, write, use a computer, know their shapes and colors or whatever – they need to be able to interact with others!*

### **Linking DISCUSS to DAP:**

Social & Emotional Development: Positive social and emotional development provides an essential foundation for cognitive and academic competence. Social & Emotional Development must be seen as just as important as the other domains.

Social & Emotional Development: Friends/being with others and managing own emotions

Language/Literacy: Strengthening oral language and communication, offering new words

In 2000 a report was published entitled: *A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children to School With the Social and Emotional Competence They Need to Succeed*. On September 6, 2000 Ronald Kotulak, a writer for *The Chicago Tribune*, had this to say about it:

### ***People Skills, not ABCs, Aid Kindergartners, Experts Say***

For years, educators have been encouraging parents and child-care workers to teach children letters, numbers, and colors before sending them off to school.

**But new research to be released this week suggests that being ready for school really means being friendly, attentive, and curious, and failing to instill these qualities sets up children for failure.**

It sets out to establish new priorities for parents and to call for an overhaul of the federal programs designed to prepare children for school. Evidence continues to mount that despite these programs, children are increasingly showing up for the first day of kindergarten unprepared to learn.

**The report finds that parents can improve a child's chances of success in kindergarten by fostering a strong relationship that enhances confidence, independence, curiosity, motivation, persistence, self-control, cooperation, empathy, and the ability to communicate.**

The report recommends that child-care centers and government policies on early childhood development **refocus to promote emotional and social development.**

New brain research shows that how children learn to get along with others and control their feelings is greatly influenced by their earliest experiences, and that **social and emotional competence are more important for school success than learning the ABCs and 1-2-3s.**

**“What the basic science is telling us is that simple counting, colors, and the alphabet are really not how kids get ready for school,”** said Dr. Peter Jensen, and expert consultant for the report and director of Columbia University's Center for the Advancement of Children's Mental Health.

The report points out that children who do not begin kindergarten socially and emotionally competent are often not successful in the early years of school and **can be plagued by behavioral, emotional, academic, and social development problem that follow them into adulthood.**

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**SOME NOTES FROM LISA:** NOTE 1) Copies of the full report used to be available from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Bethesda, MD, give a call to see if they'll still send you one! Phone: (301) 443-4513. NOTE 2) NAEYC made a comment on it here > <http://www.naeyc.org/resources/research/aGoodBeginning> NOTE 3) ERIC has the whole document here > <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED445810.pdf> and, NOTE 4) I am a scientist and researcher at heart, therefore must admit that I am well aware of the “dated-ness” of this article. And while I realize I could provide more recent articles that make the same point, I appreciate the directness of Mr. Kotulak, and that is why I continue to use this particular resource.

## **OBSERVE**

*Use your senses: touch, taste, smell, see & hear. Go back to your program and do an audit of how often the senses are organically incorporated into your daily routine.... What is overused? What is under represented? What's your preference?*

### **Linking OBSERVE to DAP:**

Sensation and perceptions are under the Physical Development domain of DAP

TOUCH: All the sensory activities (ooblick, playdough, flubber, etc.)

TASTE: Children have more taste buds than adults! She might not necessarily be a "picky" eater, but rather super aware!

SEE: Children often have trouble switching between close and distant, still developing binocular vision (eyes working together)

HEAR: Hear patterns, rhyming, letter sounds, conversations, etc.

### **Resource:**

*A Natural History of the Senses* by Diane Ackerman

## **READ**

*Watch how easy this is: Read read read until you think your lips are going to fall off, and then, read one more.*

*Read well. Read good books. Avoid books lined to TV shows, movies and other commercialized images.*

*Would you read it to me?*

### **Linking READ to DAP:**

Language/Literacy: Kind of a no brainer! It has an entire domain dedicated to it!

### **A small list of resources:**

*Children's Play – the roots of reading* Eds: Edward Zigler, Dorothy Singer & Sandra Bishop-Josef

*Heavy Words Lightly Thrown – the reason behind the rhyme* by Chris Roberts

*Reading Magic* by Mem Fox

*A is for Ox* by Barry Sanders

*Misreading Masculinity – boys, literacy and popular culture* by Thomas Newkirk



# **PLAY**

*Playing is not a separate seventh thing – but rather, the cement that is holding our foundation together.*

*When was the last time you played? How do you keep your passion and playfulness topped off? Make sure you aren't subscribing to the false dichotomy of play & learning; it is not one or the other but rather a healthy blend of both!*

*You do not stop playing when you get old, you get old because we stop playing.*

*One more for the road: Paraphrased from Dr. Chilton Pearce in Evolutions End: Claiming the potential of our intelligence (c)1992*

*“So, a good learning environment for children must be safe, free of reprimands, free of fear and free of pain and one in which **experiences** to initiate cycles of learning are provided and children are given enough **time** to complete those cycles. Little learning takes place from willful forced attempts to make a child learn. Provide an appropriate **environment**, and appropriate **experiences** and you can't prevent the brain from learning, because learning is what it is designed to do.*

## **A small list of resources:**

*The Importance of Being Little* by Erika Christakis

*Experience and Education* by John Dewey

*Hothouse Kids* by Alissa Quart

*The Genius of Play* by Sally Jenkinson

*Play = Learning* Eds: Dorothy Singer, Roberta Golinkoff, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek

*Einstein Never Used Flashcards* by Roberta Golinkoff, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek

*The Power of Play* by David Elkind

*Perfect Madness* by Judith Warner

*All work and no play - How educational reforms are harming our preschoolers* Sharna Olfman, Ed.

*Children at Play: An American History* by Howard Chudacoff

*Childhood Lost* Edited by Sharna Olfman

*To Play or Not to Play, is it really a question?* Eds: Christine Ferguson & Ernest Dettore

*Playing to Get Smart* by Elizabeth Jones and Renatta Cooper



## **STALKERS WELCOME!**

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**Instagram:** @OoeyGooleyLady

**Twitter:** @OoeyGooleyLady

**YouTube:** OoeyGooleyLady

**Podcast:** “Child Care Bar and Grill” (free wherever you like to listen) I pod with Jeff Johnson of Explorations Early Learning & we also collaborate on this wiki: <https://playrevolutionhq.com/ecwiki/>

**eBooks: All of Lisa’s books are now available on your favorite eBook platforms. Questions? Call REDLEAF PRESS (800) 423-8309**



## Identifying and Creating Child-Centered Environments

Shared with you by Lisa Murphy, M.Ed.

Lisa Murphy believes in developmentally sound, play-based, child-centered, hands-on early childhood environments that are grounded in best practice. Early childhood is defined as birth through age 8. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) published a 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)* in 2009. High quality early childhood environments are grounded in best practice and that means that their programs target all four developmental domains: PHYSICAL, SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL, COGNITIVE and LANGUAGE & LITERACY.

Quotes from NAEYC's DAP book:

"good early childhood educators are purposeful in the decisions they make about their practices."

There is a "commitment to the whole child, recognition of the value of play, respect and responsiveness to individual and cultural diversity, and partnerships with families."

Our profession must be "more precise and clear when advocating or criticizing practices."

"healthy development cannot occur without attention to children's interest."

**WHAT IS DAP??** DAP is the commonly used abbreviation for *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*. "Being DAP" requires meeting children where they are (which means you have to know them well) and enabling them to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable = ZPD

All practices should be appropriate to their ages and stages and their cultural and social contexts

DAP does NOT mean making things easier for kids. It means that experiences are suited to their learning and development and challenging enough to promote progress and interest

DAP is best practice based on knowledge and evidence, not assumptions, and leads to the following 12 principles of DAP:

1. The four domains are interrelated
2. There are sequences of development
3. Development occurs at varying rates
4. Development and learning result from a dynamic and continuous interaction between biology and experience
5. Early experiences have profound effects on a child's development and learning
6. Development proceeds towards greater complexity, self-regulation, and symbolic (this can stand for that) and representational (left/right) capacities
7. Children develop best when they have secure, consistent, responsive relationships
8. Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social/cultural contexts
9. Children learn in a wide variety of ways
10. Play is an important vehicle for development
11. Development and learning progress when children are challenged within their ZPD and when they have ample time to practice and repeat new skills
12. Children's experiences shape their motivation, initiative, persistence and flexibility and these dispositions shape their learning and development

### Principle 1: TIME

Children are provided with long periods of uninterrupted free time for exploration and interaction within the environment. Schedules are predictable, realistic, and flexible. Posted schedules do not unintentionally under-mind the role of playful learning within the space.

**Questions to ponder: If you could change one thing about your schedule, what would it be? Can you think of an example of a “fake” question you find yourself asking children?**

### Principle 2: OUTDOORS

There is lots of outdoor play time. The outdoor environment is not considered a separate space, but instead is seen as an extension of the indoor space, and just as credible! Everything that is IN should and could be OUT. What would happen if you stayed outside all day? Be mindful of “I’m cold we’re going in” syndrome!

**Questions to ponder: Do you have recess? If yes, how long do you have? If not, how has the elimination of recess impacted YOUR particular program?**

### Principle 3: RULES

Children have the freedom to explore this environment with few restrictions. Examine your RULE SHEET. Consider the fact that all of the no-no’s are developmentally appropriate, yet socially unacceptable. We have one overarching rule: “People are not for hurting.” We are able to provide this level of freedom because...

**Question to ponder: Who makes the rules in your room? How do the kids know what the rules are? Are there any that might be unnecessary as I shift my focus to controlling the SPACE?**

### Principle 4: THE SECRET

The secret to good teaching is **controlling the environment**. If you don’t want them touching, smelling, tasting, putting it in their pocket, fiddling with it – GET RID OF IT! What are the invitations within the space? Are there invitations you didn’t realize you were sending? Get rid of the no-no’s!

**A pondering: Please share an example of YOUR understanding of this concept of controlling the space vs. controlling the child.**

### Principle 5: FACILITATING

Consider the difference between being a facilitator vs. an instigator. How do we provide rich, deep, meaningful opportunities for investigation? We use observation, scaffolding, and provocations. This allows us to be more than, “the keeper of the keys.”

**Question to ponder: How comfortable am I with the thought of children directing their own learning?**

Principle 6: ARTICULATION/BEING INTENTIONAL

Teachers must be able to articulate the intention behind the choices they make in the classroom. They ask (and can answer!) three questions: WHAT am I doing? WHY am I doing it? And WHO am I doing it for? Their answers go beyond, “that’s how we’ve just always done it,” and deeper than, “because it’s so cute”.

**A pondering: Think about an example of one of your personal “HAMS”.**

Principle 7: THEORISTS

Teachers understand child development theory & know the history of their profession. They are aware of those who “paved the way” in our continual support of child-centered environments.

**Question to ponder: Have you had an experience where a strategic name-drop assisted in a discussion with a colleague? Administrator? Parent?**

Principle 8: KEEPING IT REAL

If you want it in the HEAD it must first be in the HAND! No one is learning anything about anything that is not in the room! We celebrate where children are, *developmentally*, right now. Therefore, rooms are filled with relevant, meaningful experiences that engage all the senses. You will see children investigating real objects. Not coloring dittos of them. The activities provided will engage all the senses!

**A pondering: Please share a success or challenge in regard to “keeping it real” in your classroom.**

Principle 9: THE SEVEN THINGS

Children are provided time each day to: create, move, sing, discuss, observe, read and play. ***It is important to note that PLAY is not a separate 7<sup>th</sup> thing, but rather the cement holding the foundation together!*** Playful learning is the foundation that supports the *house* of academics.

**As an ELEMENTARY teacher – what would you say is the strongest? weakest? part of the foundation of the majority of children who transition to you?**

**As a PRESCHOOL teacher, what are the parts you feel pressure to skip over or hurry through to get to the building of the house?**



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