

Not Just Cute: Teaching with Intention

WWW.NOTJUSTCUTE.COM * AMANDA@NOTJUSTCUTE.COM

Recognize --> Emphasize --> Maximize

RECOGNIZE

- Know your **WHY** and it will change **WHAT** you do and **HOW** you do it.
- When you're aware and intentional, you'll start to see the "**invisible gorilla**" everywhere.
- Recognize the developmental objectives, the needs of your children, and the opportunities as they arise.
- Recognize the **power of PLAY** and the importance of **building the FOUNDATION**.

EMPHASIZE

- When you begin to **SEE** things differently, you begin to **DO** things differently.
- Emphasize your intention through your:

Invitations -

Implementation -

Interactions -

- Make interactions **RESPONSIVE** not **PRESCRIPTIVE**. Remember to really look at your "quarter".

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“If I had to characterize the key difference between a high-quality and a low quality preschool environment, **it is this:**

in a **high-quality program**, adults are building **relationships** with children and paying a lot of attention to children’s **thinking processes** and, by extension their **communication**.

They attend carefully to children’s language and find ways to make them **think out loud.**”

- Erika Christakis, *The Importance of Being Little*

MAXIMIZE

- Maximize long-term developmental and learning outcomes through intentional, supported play.
- Balance **free play and guided play**. Children need BOTH. (Parable of the Swing)
- Play is the method. Learning is the outcome. **It isn't either/or.**
- Quality, responsive, play-based early education shows **benefits that reach into adulthood (even rippling through generations)** and is estimated to give our society a 7-13% return on investment every year.
- **Benefits across early childhood studies include:** Improved long-term academic performance, reduced need for special services, staying in school/going to college, earning more, social/emotional health, being employed, avoiding substance abuse, staying out of jail.
- The impact of quality care and teaching has a ripple effect through generations. **Your work makes a difference!**

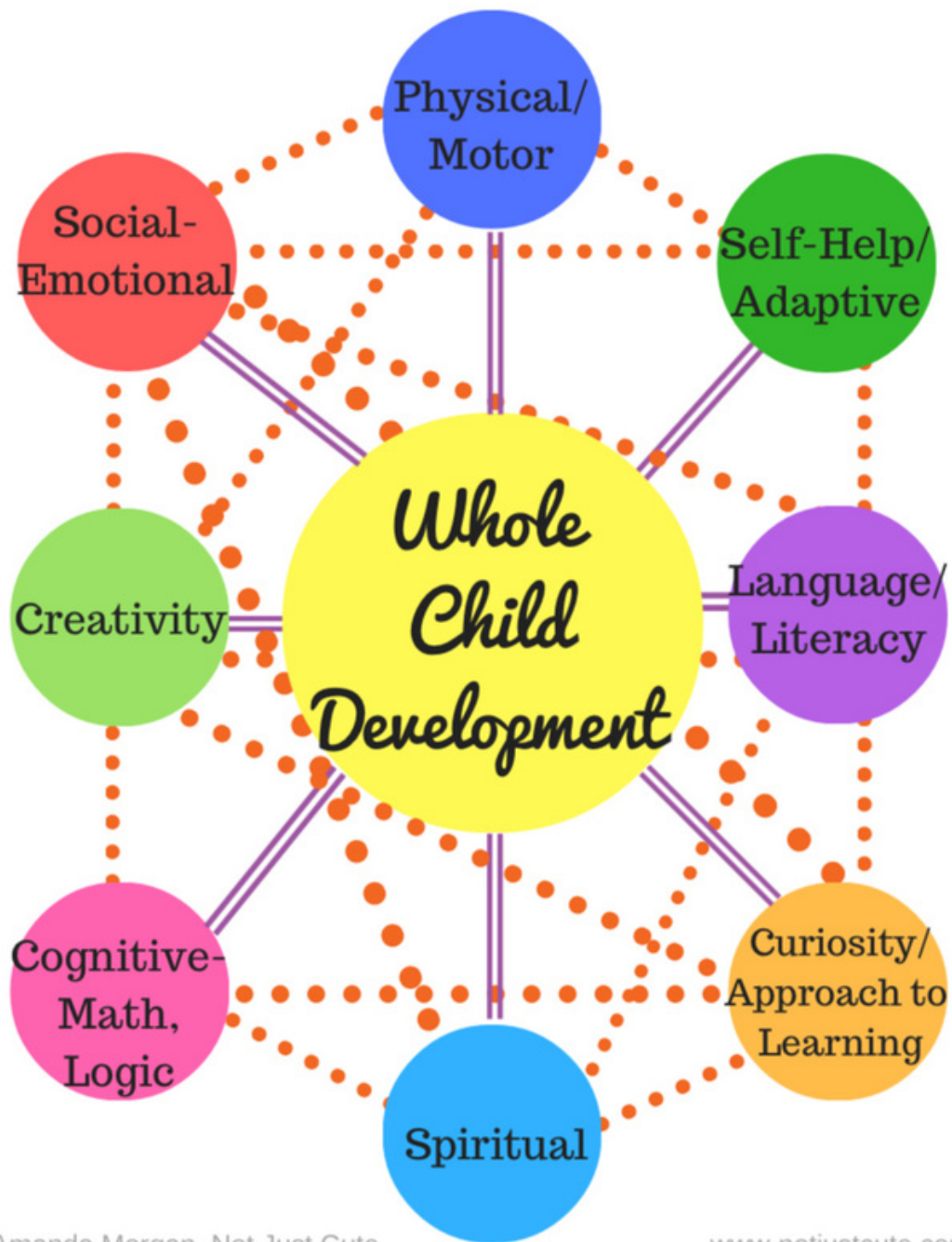
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Select some of your upcoming activities OR peruse Pinterest and discuss some potential activities that catch your eye.

- Examine the WHAT-WHY-HOW for each activity for YOUR classroom. (This will likely be different for another classroom.)
- What are the developmental objectives supported by this activity? (Language/Literacy, Math/Number Concepts, Social/Emotional, Large/Small Motor, Sci/Sensory, Creativity, Curiosity/Cognitive)
- How can you adapt or enhance the way you **invite, implement, and interact** in order to emphasize these objectives and outcomes?
- How does this activity connect specifically to your children -- their interests and/or their experiences?
- What are some possible extensions/spin-offs/tweaks/different directions for this activity?
- ***BONUS*** Revisit these questions **after** implementing these activities to discuss how they went and how the experience matched or differed from your expectations. How did the children respond? What changes did you make on the fly? What did you learn?



Not Just Cute: Powerful Play

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"Why do we need play?"

Play is necessary for mental health.

- Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues are on the rise for children. Dr. Peter Gray asserts that he observed decrease in play and increase in psychopathology is not coincidental. To put it most simply, "Play makes children happy, and its absence makes them unhappy."

Play enhances brain development and learning.

- "Neuroimaging research reveals the disturbances in the brain's learning circuits and neurotransmitters that accompanies stressful learning environments...Joy and enthusiasm are absolutely essential for learning to happen --- literally, scientifically, as a matter of fact and research." -- Dr. Judy Willis, MD
- "Play isn't the enemy of learning, it's learning's partner. Play is like fertilizer for brain growth. It's crazy not to use it." -- Dr. Stuart Brown

Play gives golden opportunities for social skill practice.

- Longitudinal studies have shown that in early childhood, social skills outweigh academic skills in predicting successful outcomes long-term (HS grad, college, job, no jail, etc.). Measured social skills include peer problem solving, understanding feelings, sharing materials, cooperating with peers, helpful to others, listen to others' perspectives, can share own ideas respectfully, is friendly. <- All aspects of social play.

"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn." - Ignacio Estrada

Not Just Cute: Powerful Play

**"Play and learning are not either/or propositions.
They are method and outcome."**

How do we intentionally encourage play in our classroom?

Consider one area of your classroom. (Dramatic Play, Sensory Table, Book Area, Block Area, etc.)

- What does play look like in YOUR classroom in this area?
- List some of the variations on activities you implement in this area:
 - What are some of the developmental benefits?/ "What is my kid learning?"
 - How can you better support this type of play and emphasize developmental objectives?
- Repeat with other areas.

"Play is often talked about as though it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood." - Fred Rogers