Let’s Pretend: Teaching and Supporting Pretend Play with Young Children in Inclusive Classrooms

Erin E. Barton, PhD, BCBA-D
erin.e.barton@vanderbilt.edu
Vanderbilt University

Agenda
1. What is play?
2. Why pretend play is important
3. How to assess children’s play
4. How to teach pretend play
5. How to embed instruction into play-based contexts

What is PLAY?
• Operationalize play in 2 – 3 sentences.
• Provide 3 – 4 examples
• Share with the person next to you
• Discuss

What is PLAY?
• No specific form
• Contextually relevant
• Flexible
• Voluntary
• Symbolic
• Influenced by environmental variables
• A functional goal
What is play???

Play is active engagement with objects, activities, or persons that appears to be motivating, can be spontaneously performed, flexible.

Play is complex

- Play with toys
  - Frequency
  - Duration
  - Conditions
  - Complexity
  - Related behavior

- Play with Others
  - Adults
  - Peers

Play Taxonomies

- Provide general definitions about the types of play
- Provides examples of types
- Social and Cognitive
Social Play

Parten (1932)
1. Unoccupied
2. Solitary
3. Onlooker
4. Parallel
5. Associative
6. Cooperative

Cognitive Play

Sherrat & Peter (2002)
- Sensorimotor
- Relational
- Functional
- Symbolic
- Themed Fantasy

Chance (1979)
- Physical
- Manipulative
- Symbolic
- Games
Defining Pretend Play

Inconsistencies in definitions of pretend play:
1. Functional play was literal or non-literal
2. Symbolic play sometimes measured separately
3. Pretend play behaviors sometimes required confirmatory verbalizations
4. The definitions of spontaneous or unprompted pretense behaviors varied
5. The definitions of sequences varied
6. Definitions of play complexity varied

(Barton, 2010; Barton & Wolery, 2010; Barton & Wolery, 2008)

What is pretend play?

1. Functional use of objects while pretending

2. Symbolic play – clearly pretending something is something else, not there, etc…

What is pretend play?

1. Functional play with pretense
   - Non-literal use of actual or miniature objects in the manner in which they were intended without the reality based outcome
What is pretend play?

2. Symbolic Play
   i. Object substitution
      • Using one objects as if it was a different object
   ii. Imagining Absent Objects
      • Performing an action as if an object was present in the object’s absence
   iii. Assigning Absent Attributes
      • Assigning roles or emotions to the self, others or inanimate objects

Functional Play with Pretense

Object Substitution

Imagining Absent Objects
Assigning Absent Attributes

What type of pretend play?

With the person next to you list 5 examples of each

1. Functional Play with Pretense
2. Symbolic Play
   i. Object substitution
   ii. Imagining Absent Objects
   iii. Assigning Absent Attributes

Why is play important?

1. Successful inclusion
2. Context
3. Practical
4. Predictive
Why is play important?

**Promotes successful inclusion**

- Play increases the likelihood of learning in inclusive settings (Buysse, Wesley, Keyes, & Bailey, 1996)
- Play sets the occasion for interactions with peers (McConnell, 2002)

Why is play important?

**Context**

- Play is flexible
  - Multiple settings, people, toys, domains
- Play offers contextually relevant instructional opportunities for acquiring, maintaining, and generalizing skills (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004)
- Play in general has reinforcing properties for other skills (Fewell & Kaminski, 1988)
- Play offers a context for assessing and practicing skills (Fewell & Kaminski, 1988)

Why is play important?

**Promotes successful inclusion**

- Appropriate IEP / IFSP objectives for children with disabilities are behaviors that occupy the time of their peers
- A primary level of engagement for preschool children in classroom environments is differentiated play with objects (McWilliam, 1998; McWilliam & Bailey, 1992)
  - Synonymous with engagement in preschool

Why is play important?

**Context**

- Play offers a context for implementing evidence-based practices across skill domains
  - Peer-mediated strategies (Strain, McGee, & Köhler, 2001)
  - Enhanced Milieu Teaching (Herrenkohl & Kaser, 2006)
  - Embedded learning opportunities (Sandall & Schwarz, 2002)
  - High-probability procedures (Bentos, 2001)
  - Time delay procedures (Wolery, 2005)
  - Activity-based interventions (Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004)
Why is play important?  
**Practical**

- *Frees up time* for caregivers  
  - Allows families to do other things
- Promotes *meaningful interactions* across contexts and people  
  - At home with parents, siblings
- *Precursor* to leisure skills
- *Alternative* to maladaptive behavior

Why is pretend play important?  
**Pretend play and children with disabilities**

★ Children with disabilities play *less often* and demonstrate *fewer varied pretend play behaviors* (Beckman & Kohl, 1988; Malone & Stoneman, 1995; Malone, 1997)
  - Stable over time despite improvements in other areas

Why is pretend play important?  
**Predictive**

- Play parallels language  
  - Both are *symbolic*
- Highly correlated to language and cognition in young children with disabilities  
  - (Thiemann-Bourque, Brady, & Fleming, 2012)
- Pretend play skills are predictors for later language and social skills in children with autism  
  - (e.g., Charman et al., 2003; Toth et al., 2006)

★ Children with autism play with *less variety, complexity, and demonstrate fewer social interactions* (Lewis & Boucher, 1988; Jarrolf et al., 1996)
What are appropriate play goals?

- Goal 1: to increase frequency or duration of play
- Goal 2: to engage in progressively more complex types of play
- Goal 3: to increase frequency or duration of play with others

What might a goal be?

Goal 1: to increase **frequency or duration** of play

What might a goal be?

Goal 2: increase **complexity**
Types of Toys to Consider

- Contingency toys
- Gross motor toys
- Closure toys
- Construction and building
- Duplicates of reality
- Creative expression on toys / materials
- Books, computer etc.

Complexity of Play Types

- Sensori Motor
- Relational
- Functional
- Functional Play with Pretense
- Symbolic Play
  - Object substitution
  - ImaginingAbsent Object
  - Assignment Absent Attributes

Conditions

- Home versus School
- During free play
- Outside time
- Classroom versus after care
- Sensory table versus carpet
- Table versus floor

Consider Related Behaviors

- Adding *vocalizations*
  - Vocalizations related to the play
  - May indicate pretense

- **Sequential** play behaviors
  - Themes, routines
  - Two or more consecutive, related behaviors
Summary of Cognitive Play Goals

1. Frequency/Rate
2. Number of toys
3. Duration of play
4. Types of toys
5. Complexity of play
6. Conditions
7. Vocalizations
8. Sequences

Pair Activity: Possible Goal?

Cammie
Cammie (3 years) plays with the puzzles every day. She puts them together, dumps them out, then repeats. She plays with any puzzle her teacher Anna puts out. She rarely engages with other toys in the classroom.

• What might be an appropriate goal for Cammie?

Tristan
Tristan (4 years) plays with cars and trucks most of the time. He will play with any toys with wheels and mostly moves them back and forth, up and down.

• What might be an appropriate goal for Tristan?

Assessing Play Considerations:

• Context
  – Size and arrangement of space
  – Types of materials
  – Amount of materials
  – Availability of peers
  – Duration of sessions
  – Serial versus single session

• Assessor
  – Directive
  – Modeling
  – Responsive
  – Passive

• Measurement type
Assessing Play

• Parental or caregiver interviews
• Semi structured
• Routine based
• Anecdotal notes

Assessing Play

• Direct observation
  – Duration of instances of play (average and range)
  – Momentary time sample, recording toys used serially
    • Toy Inventory (Garfinkle & Neitzel, 2000)
    • Estimated duration of play
  – Event sampling
    • Social interactions
    • Frequency of types, toys, toy types
  – Category Sampling
    • Use taxonomies

---

**Estimated Duration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity &amp; Time</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival free play / dolls</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center time: water table</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor play</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon free play</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center time: trains</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprompted Symbolic play with peers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity &amp; Time</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival free play / dolls</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center time: water table</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor play</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon free play</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center time: trains</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprompted Symbolic play with peers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency / Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>9:03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unprompted Pretense Behaviors</td>
<td>✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Time</td>
<td>9:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Time</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Behaviors</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>1.24 / min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Toy Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Different Toys Touched: Start Time: End Time: Date:

## Diversity of Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Different Unprompted Play Behaviors: Start Time: End Time: Date:

## Toy Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Different Toys Touched: Start Time: End Time: Date:

## Diversity of Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Different Unprompted Pretense Behaviors: Start Time: End Time: Date:

## Toy Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Different Toys Touched: Start Time: End Time: Date:

## Diversity of Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Different Unprompted Pretense Behaviors: Start Time: End Time: Date:
### Play Category & Frequency

**Start time:** 10:35  
**End Time:** 10:50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Onlooker</th>
<th>Parallel</th>
<th>Associative</th>
<th>Cooperative</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FPP</strong></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>11111</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OS</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1111</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IAO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

---

**Play Level**

- **FPP:** Functional play
- **OS:** Ordinary play
- **IAO:** Individual play
- **AAA:** Active play

**Support Levels:**

- **Level 1:** No prompting
- **Level 2:** Minimal prompting
- **Level 3:** Moderate prompting
- **Level 4:** High prompting

**Percent Present:**

- **40%:** Typical
- **50%:** Mild disabilities
- **60%:** Moderate disabilities
- **70%:** Severe disabilities
- **80%:** Extreme disabilities

**Observation Notes:**

- Direct observation
- Indirect observation

**Comments:**

---

**Figure 3.4:** Data sheet for tracking the different levels of play and prompt levels.
### Highest Level of Play

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Play Level</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Peer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>MO</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>FP</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Partial Interval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Social Play?</th>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Social Play?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-0:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:30 - 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:31-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 - 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:30 - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 - 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8:30 - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 - 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 - 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Intervals:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-5:30</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Partial Interval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Social Play?</th>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Social Play?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-0:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:30 - 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:31-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 - 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:30 - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 - 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8:30 - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 - 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 - 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Intervals:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-5:30</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Partial Interval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Social Play?</th>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Social Play?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-0:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:30 - 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:31-1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:30 - 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7:30 - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 - 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8:30 - 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 - 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 - 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 - 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Intervals:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30-5:30</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Whole Interval**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Peer Proximity</th>
<th>Interval 30 s</th>
<th>Peer Proximity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-0:30</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:30 - 6</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:31-1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6-6:30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1:30</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>6:30 - 7</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>7:30 - 8</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2:30</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>8-8:30</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30 - 3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>8:30 - 9</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 - 4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>9 – 9:30</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4:30</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>9:30 - 10</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 - 5</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Total Intervals: 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-5:30</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pair Activity: Assessing Play?**

**Cammie**
Cammie (3 years) plays with the puzzles every day. She puts them together, dumps them out, then repeats. She plays with any puzzle her teacher Anna puts out. She rarely engages with other toys in the classroom. Teachers want to assess her diversity of play (with toys and her play behaviors).

**Tristan**
Tristan (4 years) plays with cars and trucks most of the time. He will play with any toys with wheels and mostly moves them back and forth, up and down. Teachers want to assess his diversity of play (with toys, behaviors, and peers).

How might you assess her/his play?
Pair Activity: Assessing Play?

Cammie
Cammie’s teachers are teaching her pretense behaviors. Create a data collection tool to measure her frequency of pretense behaviors and level of assistance.

Tristan
Tristan’s teachers are teaching him to play with a variety of toys with peers. Create a data collection tool to measure his frequency of pretense behaviors, social interactions during play, and level of assistance.

How to teach pretend play?

Play goals can be embedded into many activities, themes, routines

★When planning to teach think about how to arrange the classroom (including peers, adult prompts) to elicit goals
Embedding Activity

• With your partner chose a classroom “theme.”
• List examples of each type of play behavior (consider cognitive and social aspects of play) related to the theme?
• How might you arrange the classroom to embed instruction targeting each play type?
  – (i.e., what toys / objects will you include?)

Pair Activity: Embedded Instruction

Cammie
Cammie (3 years) plays with the puzzles every day. She puts them together, dumps them out, then repeats. She plays with any puzzle her teacher Anna puts out. She rarely engages with other toys in the classroom.

• When might you embed instruction?

Tristan
Tristan (4 years) plays with cars and trucks most of the time. He will play with any toys with wheels and mostly moves them back and forth, up and down.

• When might you embed instruction?
System of least prompts

1. Initially the child is given an opportunity to respond without prompts, and the subsequent prompts are rated from least to most intrusive.

2. In this manner, the child chooses the level of prompt they need.

3. This strategy was chosen because it allows the children an opportunity to “learn how to learn” (Doyle et al., 1990).

4. The goal of the intervention is to transfer stimulus control from the prompts to the objects.

Components of a system of least prompts

1. Secure attention
   – Contingent imitation
2. Individually based prompts
   – Presentation of materials
   – Respond to play or expand play
   – No verbal alone
3. Contextually relevant targets
   – Different per child
4. Naturally occurring reinforcement
   – Respond to play behaviors
5. Monitor to ensure fading over time

Teaching Strategy

System of least prompts

★ Transfer stimulus control to the specific toy sets
★ Antecedent based strategy
★ Child-focused
★ Individualized
★ Expands, rather than interrupts the play interaction

(Barton & Wolery, 2010)
Prompt | Child Behavior | Reinforce.
---|---|---

Toys + Model | Play | Adult Playing and Talking

http://www.embeddedinstruction.net/node/20
Copyright 2009 © Embedded Instruction for Early Learning.
“My doll is hungry! Yumm!” Child picks up doll and bottle; feeds doll.

“Your doll is hungry too!”

“Your doll is hungry too!” Child picks up doll and bottle; feeds doll.

“My doll is hungry! Yumm!” Child picks up doll and bottle; feeds doll.

“Nice playing!”

Toys + Choice Pretend Play Adult Playing and Talking
Child takes block and pushes on floor.

"Your car is fast!" while pushing block.

Child takes block and pushes on floor.

"Your car is fast!" while pushing block.

Presence of toys

Child takes block and pushes on floor.

"Your car is fast!" while pushing block.

Presence of toys

Child takes block and pushes on floor.

Pushes block back and forth.

Fading Prompts

Thinning Rein.
Instructional Package

Contingent Imitation
System of Least Prompts

What do you notice?

Generalization

Pair Activity: Embedded Instruction

Cammie
Cammie (3 years) plays with the puzzles every day. She puts them together, dumps them out, then repeats. She plays with any puzzle her teacher Anna puts out. She rarely engages with other toys in the classroom.
- How will you teach her play skills?

Tristan
Tristan (4 years) plays with cars and trucks most of the time. He will play with any toys with wheels and mostly moves them back and forth, up and down.
- How will you teach him play skills?
How to embed instruction into play-based contexts?

Naturalistic Teaching Strategies

- **Enhanced motivation** by using child preferences
- **Functional** behaviors to ask for **reinforcers** are targeted
- Program for **generalization** by embedding into daily activities and routines
- **Securing the child’s attention**
- Following the child’s lead to maintain engagement

**In View But Out of Reach**
- Place a desirable object where your child can see it but cannot reach it, so your child needs to ask for it

**Silliness**
- Do something that goes against your child’s expectations, so they react to it

**Add Something New**
- Add something new to a child’s routine or activity so you can talk about it

**Piece By Piece**
- Give small portions of preferred objects so that your child needs to ask for more

**Give Your Child a Choice**
- Let your child choose what and how to play

**Follow her interest**
- Let your child choose what and how to play
- Follow your child’s attention
- Imitate your child’s actions and gestures

**Follow her interest**
- Let your child choose what and how to play

**Answer instead of asking**
- Give a choice
- Model
- Avoid test questions
- Real questions are ok

**Wait and respond**
- Wait for our child to do or say something and then respond
- Your child might communicate verbally or nonverbally

**Repeat and add**
- If your child does or says something, repeat or imitate it and then say a word
- If your child says 1 word, repeat it and add a second word
- If your child does something over and over, imitate it and add something to it, once you have her attention

**Say what your child would say**
- Talk about what your child is doing using developmentally appropriate language
- Talk about what you are doing
- When your child communicates nonverbally, say what she would have said
Embedding learning into play

What other goals might you embed into a play context?
List:
•
•
•
•

Pair Activity: Embedding goals into play contexts

What other goals might you embed into a play context?
List:
•
•
•
•
•
Pair Activity: Embedding goals into play contexts

Cammie
Cammie is learning to play with other toys, but her parents and teachers are concerned about her communication skills. She primarily uses one word phrases to communicate wants and needs.

- How might you teach Cammie to use two or three word phrases to communicate requests during play?

Tristan
Tristan is learning to engage with different toys in new ways. His parents want to start playing with him but do not always know what he is doing. They want him to start talking about his play while he is playing.

- How might you teach Tristan to talk about what he is doing when he is playing?

Summary

- Play is a necessary, functional goal and developmental domain for young children
- Intentional teachers systematically teach play skills
  - Evidence-based practices exist
- Play affords natural, contextually relevant opportunities for developing social emotional competence

QUESTIONS???
erin.e.barton@vanderbilt.edu