



PRACTICE

Play-based learning and intentionality

Play-based learning is a fundamental and essential process for young children's learning in which educators play an intentional role. It is an effective, age-appropriate pedagogy that ensures every child is known, valued and cared for, and experiences a sense of belonging and agency. The practice of play-based learning expands on a range of strategies educators may use to engage, support, consolidate and extend children's thinking and learning in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways. In play, educators and children are engaged in sustained, extended, challenging and deeper interactions which build on children's knowledge, ideas and skills. Play, play-based learning and intentionality are defined in the *Early Years Learning Framework* as follows:

Play is fundamental to the healthy development and wellbeing of individuals and communities. It is often defined by a range of characteristics, including freely chosen, self-directed, pleasurable, meaningful, symbolic and intrinsically motivating.

Play-based learning is a context and a process for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

Intentionality is being thoughtful and purposeful in actions and making decisions and is something that both children and educators can do. Children are intentional in their thinking, ways of communication and learning, and at times lead their own learning and the learning of others. Educators are intentional in the roles they take in children's play and the way they intentionally plan the environment and curriculum experiences.

Reflective Question 1

How do you intentionally, deliberately, thoughtfully and purposefully incorporate play-based learning approaches (scheduling, routines and rituals, provocations, environment)?

Reflective Question 2

How do you create a culture of intentional play, where adults (families, educators and the wider community) play an active role in sustaining, extending and challenging children's ideas and skills through play?

Reflective Question 3

How do you build your knowledge about contemporary early childhood, evidence-based research and approaches to act intentionally within play-based learning?

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