



Seeing the Learning in Play: Using Performance-based Assessment to Document and Enhance Learning in Play

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Agenda

- Background: If the children play when do I assess?
- Instrument: Why an instrument assessing play development and learning through play?
- Observing Play: What to look for?
- Using the Instrument: What does the data show us about the children?



If the Children Play When Do I Assess: A False Dilemma

- define play,
- review some research on its value for child learning, and
- introduce some ideas about the teacher's role in play



INAPPROPRIATE GOALS OF LEARNING

- Too often completing the task is the goal communicated
- Focus is on discrete academics, instructions and completion not on understanding, learning or constructing knowledge.



WORK vs LEARNING vs PLAY

Hermione Marshall's research in kindergarten classrooms

<u>Class Type</u>	<u>Child's View</u>
1. worksheets and basic skills	1. only recess was play all else was work
2. integrated, problem-solving and creative tasks	2. "workplace of the mind not the factory (Spodek)" Both learning and work.



Play in Preschool

- In some classrooms and curriculum models, play is ostensibly central BUT teachers pull children out of play to “teach”
 - What is the message to children about their choices?
 - What is the message to teachers about their role in play?
- Play and child choice in teacher directed activities (beware of “work disguised as play” – DeVries and Zan)



What is play?

- Socio-dramatic or make believe play
- Constructive play (action vs. “hard fun”)
- Cooperative play
- Games with rules but play is inconsistent

What characterizes these activities:

Creating; problem solving; accomplishing with materials, thoughts, play themes, friends, and muscles



Value of Play

Children develop

- self- regulation skills
- more cooperative and longer lasting interactions
- memory development
- storytelling and story memory
- complex language and vocabulary
- imaginative and flexible thinking
- many scientific, mathematical, and social discoveries
- persistence



The Teacher's Role in Play

- Two objectives
 - Getting children engaged in more sophisticated play and problem solving
 - Getting out of it as soon as possible
- Provide open-ended materials and adequate space
- Go on field trips
- Model sophisticated play routines
- Introduce games with rules



Why the ELS?

- A pre-emptive strike against state-wide testing
- Need for focused, manageable instrument based on state standards
- Research derived and validated



The Early Learning Scale

- Systematic assessment for preschool children
- Performance-based assessment scale
- Across domains
- Informs instruction with data



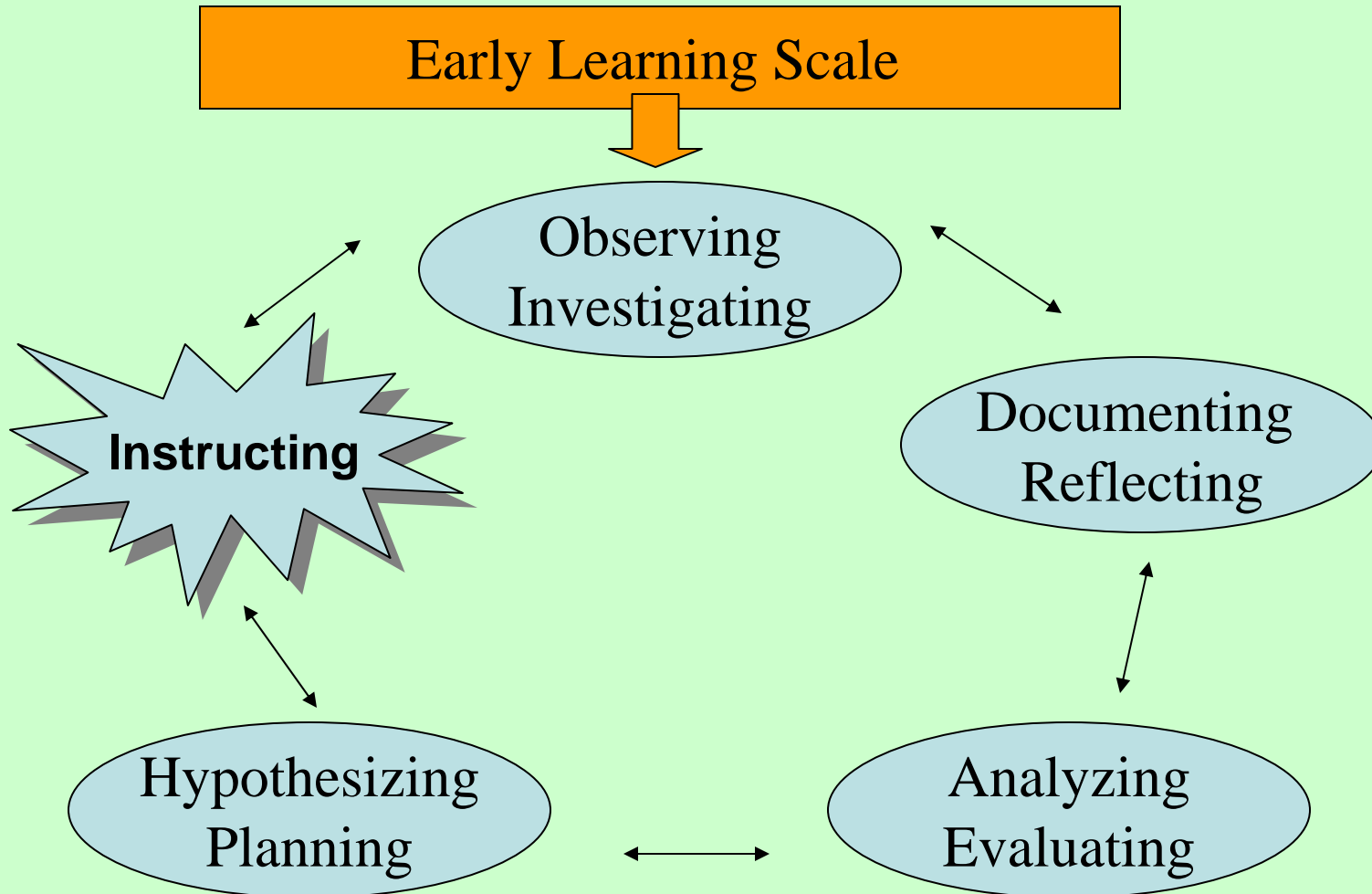
What's Included in the ELS

- Must be measurable, develop on a continuum, and critical to present and future learning
- Math- Not just counting
- Science- Content Vs. Process
- Social Studies/Social Emotional Development
- Language Arts Literacy

Creative Arts

Health, Safety, and Physical
Education

The Assessment Process





Play Strands

- Quality and Attributes of Constructive Play
- Quality and Attributes of Cooperative Play
- Quality and Attributes of Sociodramatic Play



Quality and Attributes of Constructive Play

- Purposeful engagement is necessary to reap the benefits of play
- Relates to independence
- Initiative and exploration with materials

<u>(6) Play</u>	1	2	3	4	5
Quality and Attributes of Constructive Play	Does not engage with materials independently; Is not engaged during free play	Chooses materials, but needs support to engage and extend their use; Is engaged in activities during choice time, but may become off task in transition	Explores and experiments with a wide variety of materials; Engages in purposeful activity for most of the time while moving independently from one activity to another		



Quality and Attributes of Cooperative Play

- Non-social activity is cause for concern at preschool level
- Parallel play- limited social participation
 - Children play near each other with similar materials, but do not influence each other's behavior
- Associative play- a form of social participation
 - Children are engaged in separate activities, but they interact by exchanging toys and commenting on the other's behavior
- Cooperative play- true social participation
 - Children orient toward a common goal during play such as acting out a make-believe theme or working on the same product
- Games with rules

<u>(6) Play</u>	1	2	3	4	5
Quality and Attributes of Cooperative Play	Usually plays alone; May engage in parallel play- plays near another child with similar materials, but not influencing the other's play	Engages in associative play- engages in separate activities, but interacts by sharing toys or commenting on each other's play	Successfully enters into play when a group of children are already involved; Expresses ideas for activities and acknowledges actions and accomplishments; Negotiates roles and sets up events		



Quality and Attributes of Sociodramatic Play

- **Mature play** (Bodrova & Leong, 2007)
 - create scenarios
 - defined roles
 - invent props to fit roles
 - language use
 - immersed in play

<u>(6) Play</u>	1	2	3	4	5
Quality and Attributes of Sociodramatic Play	Exclusively uses actual objects for intended purpose in pretend play	Pretend play is simplistic; Uses objects to stand for other objects in pretend play	Play has defined roles and story lines such as familiar story books, family life and community roles		



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