

# Q&A

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING THROUGH CHILD-CENTRIC, PLAY-BASED PRACTICES.

FOR PARENTS



### Q My child's teacher says children learn through play. How can I support this at home?

A stress-free play environment can support young children's holistic development. Through play, they can come up with a mental play script and imagine what they want to say and do. It allows them to see different perspectives and express their feelings. By playing with peers, they develop language and communication skills, and practise turn-taking, negotiation and cooperation.

To support children's play:

- **Provide space, time and materials.** For example, set up a kitchen play corner with toy utensils. To bring in the real world, give children leftover dough or materials such as leaves and twigs gathered from outside. Allow for one to two hours of uninterrupted playtime.
- **Do not dominate their play.** Join in only when invited. When you do play, paraphrase children's comments to extend their language development. For instance, if your child says, "Drink slow", you can respond with, "Oh, the tomato soup is hot. I have to drink it slowly."
- **Read stories to them.** This enriches children's imagination, which in turn triggers executive functioning. Acting out the story requires them to recall and retrieve information from their working memory. As they use the materials at hand in their play, they exercise flexible thinking and creativity.

### Q What are some key considerations for designing a meaningful curriculum for young children?

A well-designed curriculum involves plans with clear intended learning goals that include the knowledge and understanding children need to acquire, skills and competencies, as well as the values and dispositions they need to develop. It should outline scaffolding strategies, including well-thought-out resources and materials to be used. It should also include plans for how ongoing assessment will be conducted.

Here are some tips for designing an effective curriculum:

- 1. Think about the pedagogy, not just content.** Focusing too much on *what* to teach (as opposed to *how*) may lead to a "drill and grill", teaching-to-the-task method of instruction, where children are led to produce expected answers. Instead, use conversations and questions to motivate children to think, reason and ask their own questions. Encourage children to seek the answers themselves or in collaboration with their peers and teachers.
- 2. Design or adapt the preschool curriculum** so that the activities you expect children to do are relevant to them, to enable meaningful engagement. Observe children's interests to guide activity planning. You can also generate and pique children's interests through discussions and stories.
- 3. Reflect on the effectiveness of implementation.** Reflections should not be about whether children achieved the expected outcomes. Rather, critically consider what worked well, what did not, and what was done that could have led to the observed outcome(s). Use this self-evaluation to decide what you will do next to engage children. Engage in reflections with colleagues by initiating and inviting peer feedback.

FOR EDUCATORS



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