Play Pedagogy:

Is it the way forward for Early Level within primary schools in Scotland?

East Dunbartonshire Council
Educationalists have long supported play

- **Play is a very misused adult word. To a child it is a way of life. To an adult it often means the unimportant recreational things we do when we are not working. Because this is the way we think of it for ourselves, we often dismiss it in children with the remark: 'Oh, he's just playing.' But the variety and function of play in a child's life is worthy of much more serious attention than this remark implies’**
  
  Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Franco-Swiss Philosopher, 1762

- **Play is a child's work**
  
  Friedrich Froebel, German Pedagogue, 1887

- **If you want to be creative, stay in part a child, with the creativity and invention that characterizes children before they are deformed by adult society.**
  
  Jean Piaget, Swiss philosopher, 1896–1980
In play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself’
Lev Vygotsky, Russian Psychologist, 1978

Do not keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play
Plato - Greek philosopher, 427–347 BC

Almost all creativity involves purposeful play.
Abraham Maslow, American psychologist, 1908–1970

The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct. The debt we owe to the play of the imagination is incalculable.
Carl Jung, Swiss psychoanalyst, 1875–1961
Play pedagogy is.......... Do you agree?
Traditional P1 teaching is........ Do you agree?
An ideal Early Level class?

Teacher talks, children listen

Tables everywhere: no room for play
Or is this an ideal Early Level Classroom - can you see the differences?

Calm neutral colours

Limited number of tables
Is this play or learning, or both?

Collaboration, problem solving, pattern, creativity

STEM, enquiry
Developing symmetry, pattern, fine motor skills, perseverance, concentration and creativity
Is teacher-centred pedagogy an issue in Scotland?

- Primary 1 children show many more signs of disengagement during ‘traditional’ whole-class sessions compared to during more active, play based sessions.

- More time spent in transitions during whole class sessions compared to small group or free play sessions.

- Teachers provide much higher levels of scaffolding during small-group experiences compared to whole class lessons.

- Teacher understanding of play pedagogy is key to success.

Martlewe et al.’s (2011)
Building the Curriculum 2 (2007)

Building the Curriculum 2 talks about active learning in the early years in terms of

- Spontaneous play
- Planned and purposeful play
- Investigating and exploring
- Events and life experiences
- Focused learning and teaching
What forces are holding back play based learning in Scotland’s schools?

- Our Scottish culture – the underlying belief that adults should be ‘in control’ of children

- Our Scottish curriculum and its delivery - which has elements of being child-centred and elements which are contrary to a play based approach

- Teacher training – focus on pedagogy?

- Values and opinions of some leaders, teachers, other staff, parents and pupils!
Tinker Table: what skills are the children using?

Curiosity, collaboration, courage, self reliance?

What can children learn by taking apart this old printer?
Separate Literacy and Numeracy areas or embedded throughout the environment?

Self directed
What do you think the children are learning?
If play is so powerful, is adult led direct teaching needed?
Successful learners

Nurtured
- Having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting

Achieving
- Being supported and enabled in their learning and in the development of their skills, at home, at school and in the community

Healthy
- Having the highest standards of health and care
- Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community

Responsible citizens

Effective contributors

Confident individuals

Active
- Having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community

Respected
- Having the opportunities and support to learn and be included and involved in decisions which affect them

Included
- Having opportunities and support to be included and involved in all aspects of sport, recreation and play, and to experience success and achievement

Language development
- Having opportunities to speak, read and write, and to listen, and be listened to

Self-regulation
- Having the opportunities to learn and develop self-regulation and social skills

Risk, challenge & resilience
- Having the opportunities to take risks and challenge themselves

Physical health
- Having the opportunities to be physically active and to develop a healthy and active lifestyle

Cognitive development
- Having the highest of expectations, so that all children are challenged to achieve their potential

Best start in life: Ready to succeed

Play
- Having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn

The challenges are both psychological and practical....

*In play the players lose their sense of time; schools are governed by timetables.*

*Play can be chaotic, messy, and loud; schools aspire to be places of order.*

*In play, children take risks (physical and psychological); schools are places where children should be safe.*

*Play is unpredictable and full of surprises; school has a clear agenda.*

*Play emerges from children’s desires and vitality—the child is in charge; at school, the adults set the agenda often based on standards created by authorities distant from individual children and their teachers’*

Baker et al, 2016
Evidence base (Scotland, England, Northern Ireland)

3 features of successful play based pedagogy

- Child led play
- Adult led learning
- Adult initiated learning


The work of Alistair Bryce-Clegg https://abcdoes.com/