

# *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**



Traditional P1 teaching is..... Do you agree?



# An ideal Early Level class?



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





# 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.

# Building the Curriculum 2 (2007)

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

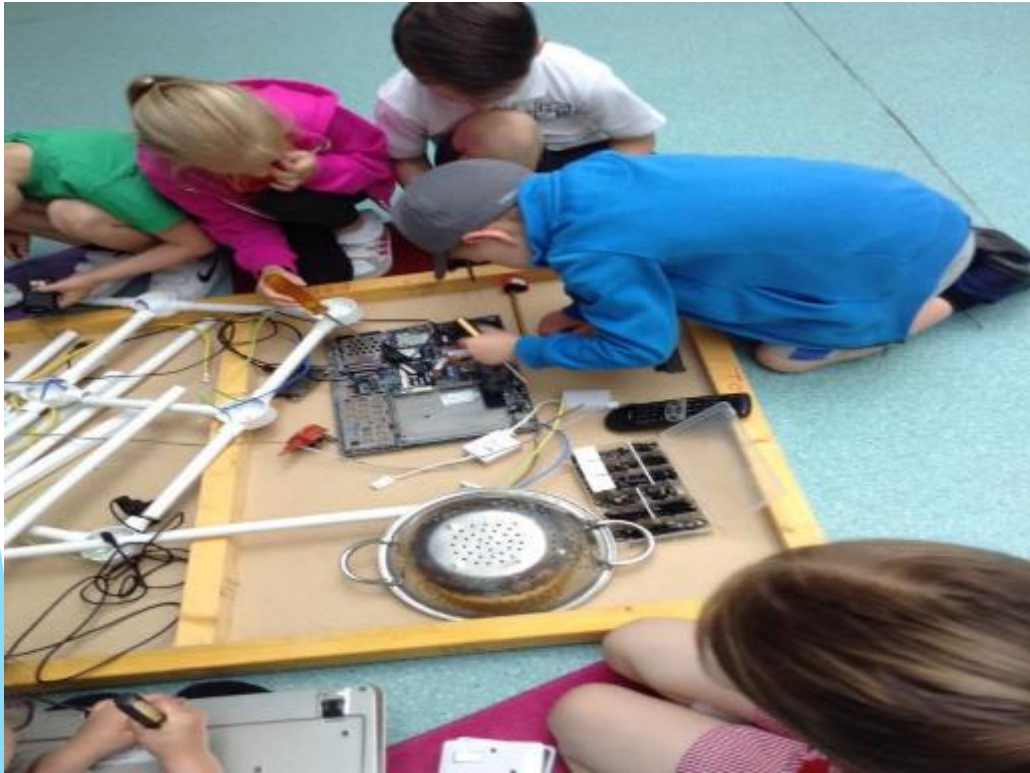
- ▶ Spontaneous play
- ▶ Planned and purposeful play
- ▶ Investigating and exploring
- ▶ Events and life experiences
- ▶ Focused learning and teaching

# What forces are holding back play based learning in Scotland's schools?

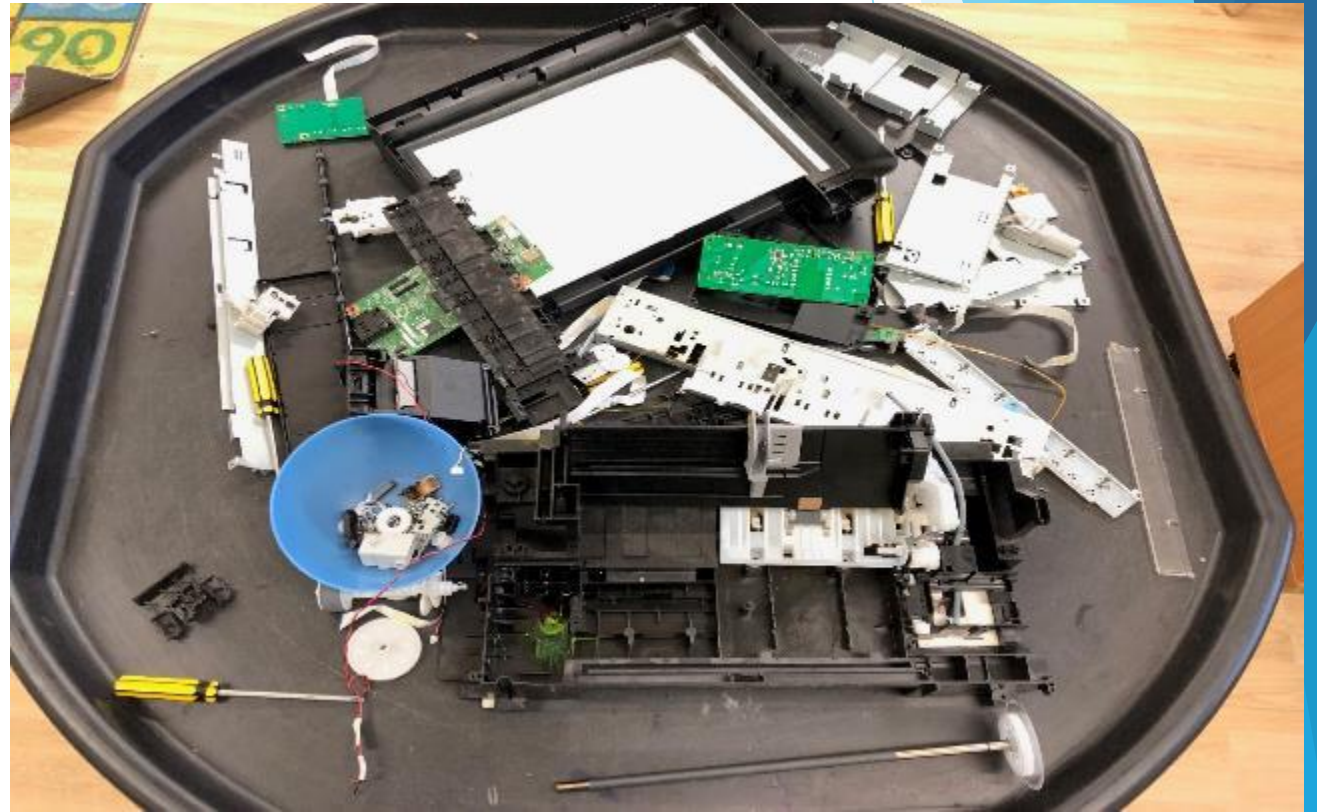
- ▶ Our Scottish culture – the underlying belief that adults should be 'in control' of children
- ▶ Our Scottish curriculum and its delivery - which has elements of being child-centred and elements which are contrary to a play based approach
- ▶ Teacher training – focus on pedagogy?
- ▶ Values and opinions 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?



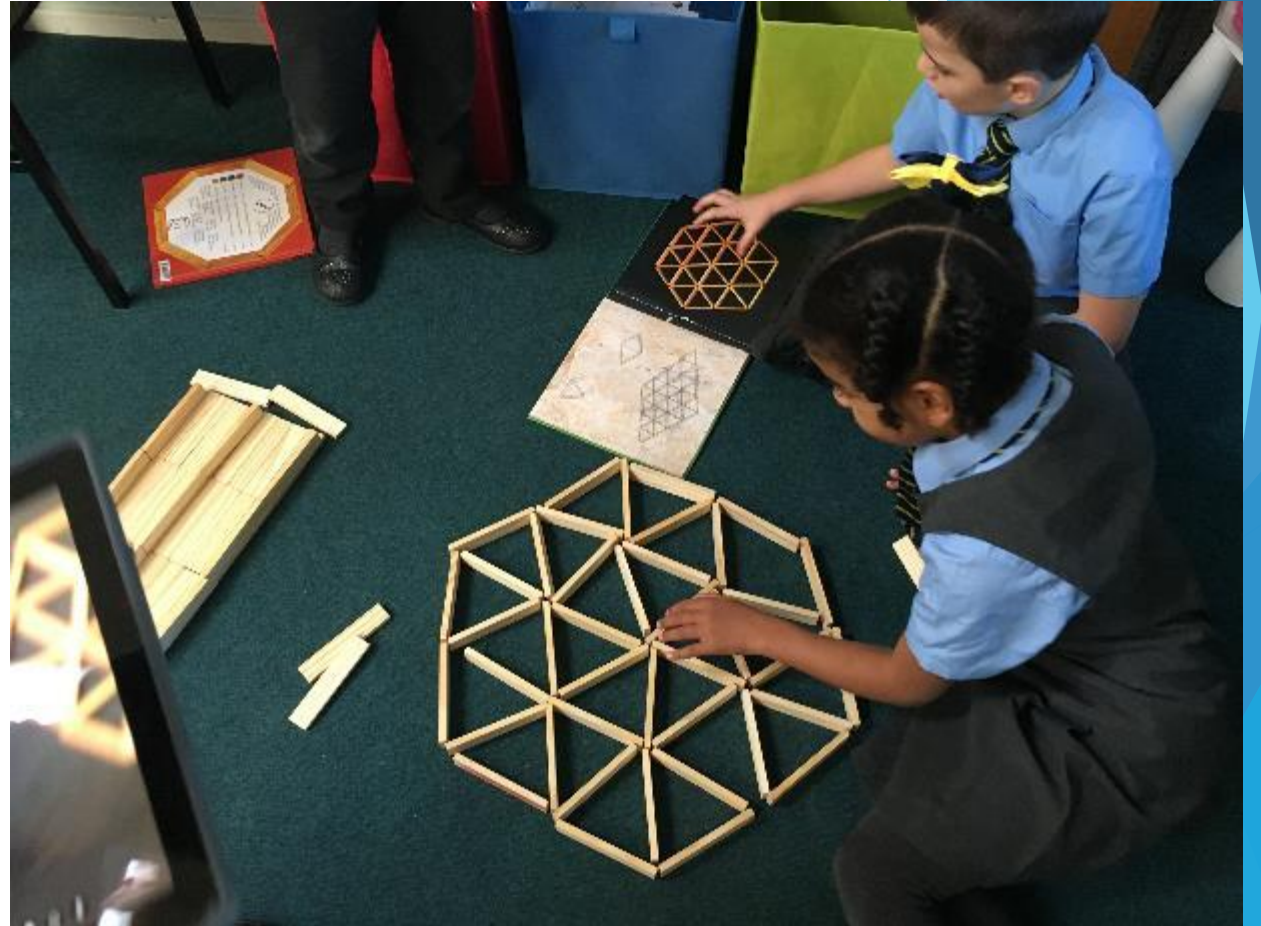
# Separate Literacy and Numeracy areas or embedded throughout the environment?



Self directed



# What do you think the children are learning?



If play is so powerful, is adult led direct teaching needed?







Source: Casey, T. & Scott-McKie, L. (2017) Play Types Toolkit. Edinburgh: Play Scotland

# 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'*

Evidence base (Scotland, England, Northern Ireland)  
3 features of successful play based pedagogy

- ▶ **Child led play**
- ▶ **Adult led learning**
- ▶ **Adult initiated learning**

# Key texts



Bottrill, G. (2018). *Can I go and play now? Rethinking the early years*. London: Sage Publications.

Ephgrave, A. (2017). *Year One in Action: A month by month guide to taking early years pedagogy into KS1*. London: Routledge.

Fisher, J. (2012). *Starting from the child: teaching and learning in the foundation stage*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Fisher, J. (2016). *Interacting or interfering: improving interactions in the early years*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Scottish Executive. (2007). *A curriculum for excellence, building the curriculum (2): Active learning in the early years*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/publications/Buildingthecurriculum2/index.asp>

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