Pretend Play at Home: Creating An Educationally Enriched Environment for Emergent Literacy Among Preschool-Aged Children

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Abstract
This thesis will illustrate how pretend play can be used in the home for educational purposes. The major emphasis of the work will be emergent literacy, however, application principles can be applied in all subject areas. Parents who desire to expand their child's literacy skills while exposing the child to an arts enriched home environment need ideas and tools developed with supportive research to strengthen and focus their efforts. These tools will greatly expand parental resources by offering several principles as a guide for adapting existing classroom materials for home use. The following Seven Components form the core foundation for adapting pretend play materials to aid the home learning environment curricula: (1) Child as Active Participant (Vygotsky; Piaget). (2) Parent as Role Model for Dramatic Play and Literacy, serves as Facilitator, and Co-player (Haight and Miller; Vygotsky). (3) Physical environment could be anywhere: car, office, or bedroom. (4) Resource material: should be able to use common found objects in home, with limited preparations or expense. (5) Play Content needed to provide elements of literacy: cognitive learning, symbol representation, oral language, self-expression, listening and comprehension (Goodman). (6) Promote creative and fun learning experience with a relaxed, informal atmosphere. (7) Play should be process and discovery oriented, and not for performance (Brown and Pleydell; Tuge). This thesis will also examine the preliminary results of a study for parents and children who applied a curriculum developed with the core components and explored the participants' interest level in such activities. Recommendations for further research will also be made.

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Children's pretend play, for example, shows both individual variation and transformation at some level, and both adjustment to the world and the intrinsic nature of the child. Yet the research on developmental changes does not always remind us of this basic state of affairs, simply because agendas and purposes of individual studies and research studies tend to be relatively specific. As teachers and parents know, preschool children engage in a lot of pretend play, at least in middle-class modern societies. The variations among children suggest a need to give special assistance to those who are "behind," perhaps by offering greater opportunities to play or by scaffolding and supporting initial play for children unused to sustaining it on their own.