

Promoting Playful Parenting

Exploration 5
2017-2019



Communication Guidelines

// It is a happy talent to know how to play.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Introduction

Parents want their children to be happy, to learn useful skills, and to be prepared for life. Play can help parents help their children get there. Some parents might not be aware (or might have forgotten) about the power of play to provide children with rich, joyful learning experiences in which they gain valuable skills for life. How do we remind them? How do we spread the message?

Why use these guidelines?

Parents often have trouble in finding ways in which they can engage with their children in playful activities. For example they might have difficulties knowing what their role (as parents and adults) in play is, especially if they do not know that play can take many forms, such as free play, guided play, and games. When communicating with parents about the benefits of joining playful activities with their children, it is not only important to consider what to say, but also how to say it. Our objective during the explorations was to provide guidelines for those working with parents and other caregivers about how to communicate with parents about learning through play.

Caregivers and especially parents have a great role to play in their children's well-being and brain development. This makes it more important to communicate with parents about the benefits of their role, for the sake of the child's development.

How were the guidelines developed?

From co-authoring white papers to attending conferences, the core team used their knowledge and expertise to research best practices in communicating with parents and caregivers.



Exploration core teams members enjoying their workshop at the LEGO Idea Conference 2018

Initial conversations around the need to produce the guidelines started with the work at Sesame Workshop on Esme & Roy, a new television series and Play Every Day research funded by the LEGO Foundation. The team worked on individual projects surrounding topics such as principles of play and play facilitation, background research for the Esme & Roy series driven by a learning through play curriculum and parenting training workshops for Play Every Day. They would then come together via Skype meetings or in-person at conferences to share their learnings. By collating the contributions from the team members, each then provided various revisions to the set of guidelines and partners also provided feedback before finalising.

As part of the Exploration activities, the core team also organised and co-hosted a PlayFutures webinar focusing on 'Empowering parents as learning through play facilitators'. The webinar hosts were two leading thinkers in this field, Dr. Vivienne Ming and Dr. Daphne Metland (pictured below) who are using technology at scale to empower parents to engage in playful activities with their children.



PlayFutures Webinar: Parents as playful learning experience facilitators

<https://www.legofoundation.com/en/what-we-do/playfutures/webinars/empowering-parents-as-learning-through-play-facilitators-sept-2017/>

Further resources



White paper: Play facilitation: the science behind the art of engaging young children

https://www.legofoundation.com/media/1681/play-facilitation_the-science-behind-the-art-of-engaging-young-children.pdf

Findings from an Evaluation of Sesame Workshop's Play Every Day

https://www.sesameworkshop.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/ped_evaluation_findings_may_2019.pdf

What did we learn?

The co-created outcomes from this Exploration are the following guidelines for communicating with parents and caregivers about their role in engaging children in playful activities.

Play is the highest form of research.

- Albert Einstein

Guidelines

When communicating with parents, remember to be...



Supportive:

Empower parents and caregivers to facilitate learning through play. Focus on asset-based- building on the strengths of what parents and caregivers are doing well.



Holistic:

Take a breadth-of-skills approach to support learning across domains, instead of focusing on one or some skills.



Social:

Include parents and caregivers to support full family engagement and peer-to-peer impact, recognising learning throughout the life course through a multi-generational approach.



Sensitive:

Recognise the full scope of responsibilities of parents and caregivers. Facilitating the child's right to play and thrive is one of many other responsibilities. Be sensitive to constraints with regards to time and access to materials.



Positive:

Instill confidence in parents and caregivers about their ability to trust in their child's innate learning. No need to replicate the school environment. Home is a unique place for learning through play. If they fail in the first attempt, encourage parents to try again and have fun in the process.



Responsive:

Tailor messages and conversations to the needs and realities (circumstances, social and cultural norms, and environment) of parents and caregivers. Meet families where they are at. Be responsive to what parents need, including the need to not feel under pressure.

Authors



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Alejandra Zaragoza Scherman, PhD., is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the Center on Autobiographical Memory Research (CON AMORE), Aarhus University. She investigates autobiographical memory and culture in the lifespan and is interested in developing interventions to promote play using autobiographical memories. She also recently co-authored a white paper on Play Facilitation.



Eszter Salamon

Eszter Salamon is the Director of Parents International. Originally trained as a teacher and an economist, started dealing with rights of the child issues in 1989 and has specialized in students' rights and parents' rights, with focus on education in the past 22 years. As a devoted lifelong (playful) learner she has been involved in international education and social projects and initiatives focusing mostly on parents, and lately school leaders.



Rosemarie Truglio

Rosemarie T. Truglio, Ph.D. is the Senior Vice President of Curriculum and Content at Sesame Workshop. She oversees the curriculum development and content implementation for Sesame Street and for all new show productions, including *Esme & Roy*, airing on HBO, which was designed to promote learning through play. Author of *Ready For School: A Parent's Guide to Playful Learning for Children ages 2 to 5*.



Tim Jay

Tim Jay is a Professor of Psychology of Education at Sheffield Hallam University. He researches children's mathematics learning in and out of the classroom, with a focus on early years and primary phases of education. His work takes an interdisciplinary design-oriented approach, giving rise to new tools and technologies to support learning.



What is PlayFutures?

A global research and innovation community launched in 2016, PlayFutures is convened and funded by the LEGO Foundation. It brings together 1,600+ researchers and practitioners to advance and advocate for the knowledge and practice of Learning through Play.

Contact:

For questions and comments in regard to this material: Learn@PlayFutures.net