

Pre-service Teacher Perspectives on Classroom Play in Field-based Experiences

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Abstract

Working from the premise that children learn through play, two professors conducted a study to determine how perspectives of play influence current practices in the elementary classroom. The data consisted of responses to a survey that was distributed to their students after they had implemented a play-based lesson with elementary children. Findings from the study illuminate the students' perspectives of play, as well as those from their field-based experiences.

Keywords: Play, Pre-service Teacher, Mentor Teacher, Field-based

In order for teacher preparation programs to expand future teacher knowledge on the importance of play, it is important to determine a baseline of student-knowledge about play. In this article, two researchers investigated pre-service practitioners' general attitudes about play as well as their responses to play-based lessons in field-based experiences. The purpose of our study was to gain knowledge about perspectives on play from the experiences of the pre-service teacher while in the field. By drawing from the responses provided by our students, we gained knowledge about the value of play from the perspective of a pre-service teacher.

Play in today's early childhood classrooms differs from what early scholars of play had envisioned. Fromberg (2006) described two possible settings in the kindergarten classroom of today: Intellectual /Experiential or Academic / Formal (pp. 65-66). In the first model, the Intellectual / Experiential classroom included areas for imaginative play, props for symbolic play, comfortable seating for a home-like atmosphere and samples of the students' creations were displayed on every wall. Vygotsky, Piaget and Bruner would have given their stamp of approval on this classroom (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2011).

In contrast, the Academic/Formal model included areas for play, but open-ended materials were sparse (Fromberg, 2006). Fewer child-initiated activities were available to the students and, as a result, fewer examples of child art were on display. Individual tasks were more prevalent, taking precedence over cooperative learning projects.

Fromberg (2006) described these two classroom examples as the extremes within the philosophical spectrum. Unfortunately, Fromberg's portrayal of the kindergarten experience

continuum in the United States illustrated vast differences in the value of such a significant component. The contrast between the two opposing models portrayed the chasm between practitioners' beliefs about the importance of play.

Statement of the Problem

As pre-service teachers enter the system, they bring a fresh perspective to the educational milieu, and new hot-off-the-research-press ideas, which have the potential to influence the status quo of current practice. Two primary areas affect the development of successful teachers: their belief system and application of those beliefs in the classroom. Years of research illustrate the necessity for exemplary models during field-based experiences (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Glickman & Bey, 1990; Goodlad, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd, & Fox, 1996). Correspondingly, the beliefs that pre-service teachers embody affect the transfer of knowledge about the teaching profession and the eventual application of successful teacher practices in the classroom (Anderson, 2007; Calderhead, 1996; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002; Richardson, 2003). Additionally, the individual beliefs about cross-cultural competence, bilingualism, diversity and content area knowledge influence the emerging educator's ability to implement efficacious practices (Hancock & Gallard, 2004; Isikoglu, 2008; Levin & He, 2008; Valentin, 2006; Ward & Ward, 2003). However, there is limited research on teacher beliefs about play as a pedagogic method in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge about perspectives of play in the elementary school field-based setting for the sake of promoting play as pedagogy. Specifically, the researchers investigated the perceptions of play of their students who are pre-service teachers. By gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges that pre-service teachers faced when they attempted to incorporate dramatic play and / or movement into the academic setting, the researchers will be able to address the issues that impede the implementation of play-based lessons. Specifically, the researchers asked the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that pre-service teachers face when they attempt to integrate playful components into their field based lessons?
2. How do mentor teachers respond to the play based lessons that are taught by the pre-service teachers?
3. Describe the frequency of dramatic play and / or movement activities that occurred during your field-based experiences.

Scholarly Support for Play in the Classroom

Many scholars have supported the theory of play as pedagogy through the years, and the prevalence of studies that validated this concept continues to grow as researchers from a variety of professions share their findings (Brown & Vaughn, 2009; Bruner, 1983; Piaget, 1962,

Vygotsky, 1976). Lev Vygotsky (1976), whose ideas were the genesis of the social constructivist movement in education, strongly promoted play. He emphasized the significance of play as a contributing factor in intellectual development. He believed that, “through play, children appear a head taller” as they negotiate, communicate, and analyze situations (Vygotsky, 1976, p. 552). During play, children comprehended how “meaning has been severed from objects” (Vygotsky, 1976, p.547) and abstract thought emerged as children begin to imagine “a wish fulfilled” (Vygotsky, 1976, p. 540).

Correspondingly, the cognitive theorist Jean Piaget (1962) observed changes in the cognitive structure of children during play. Piaget’s philosophy focused on the cognitive conflict that occurs while children are playing. According to Piaget, the child’s cognitive structure evolved through a three-step progression of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium. Resolutions to the cognitive conflict occurred as children hypothesized possible solutions and further enhanced their understanding. Piaget posited that through the vehicle of symbolic play, solving problems and acquiring knowledge resulted in the child’s emerging cognitive structure.

Psychologist Jerome Bruner (1983) described play as “serious” (p. 61) and acknowledged that a child at play expresses “sheer jubilation” (p.61). He noticed that, at times, play embodied a specific result while, alternately, play could be compared to chameleon that changed color with the situation. Through this process, play became “therapeutic” (p.62) for the child. A primary tenet of Bruner’s philosophy of play was the role of play in the development of language. When a child was engaged in playful activities, he or she expanded the complexity of his or her language expression, and engaged in increasingly complex sentence structures and descriptive vocabulary. Bruner encouraged educators to “cultivate the spontaneity of the individual” (p. 69) and to furnish the child with models and techniques for learning how to operate autonomously. According to Bruner optimal development occurred through opportunities for negotiation in dialogue.

More recently, the esteemed psychiatrist, Dr. Stuart Brown, devoted the latter part of his career in mental health to the promotion of play. His interest in play began with a study of murderers, whom he discovered all had play deficits. From that point, he conducted a project to analyze the play profiles of over 6,000 people for the sake of understanding the role of play in mental health. As a result of these efforts, Brown concluded that ample time for play is essential for the healthy growth and intellectual development of humans. He stated that “the genius of play is that, in playing, we create imaginative, new cognitive combinations. And in creating these novel combinations, we find what works” (Brown & Vaughn, 2009, p. 37).

In 2006, Dr. Brown collaborated with educators, scientists, theoreticians, mental health professionals, medical doctors, scholars, and the primatologist, Jane Goodall, to form The National Institute of Play, a non-profit organization based in California. The mission statement for the National Institute for Play states that, “As play is woven into the fabric of social practices, we will dramatically transform our personal health, our relationships, the education we provide our children and the capacity of our corporations to innovate” (National Institute of Play, 2010, p.1). Through Brown’s extensive research, scholars from diverse disciplines recognized the importance of play in developing well-rounded individuals.

The ideas espoused by these scholars comprised the content of the essential handbook for educators, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)* (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The DAP handbook included principles to guide teachers when implementing appropriate practices for young children. The tenth principle featured in the position statement described play as a

“vehicle” for encouraging the development of “language, cognition, and social competence” (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 14). In this text, the authors provided specific examples of play as it might be observed in the classroom, and of practice that reflected the theoretical foundations of the DAP philosophy. Just as each theorist recognized a relationship between play and maturation, the DAP handbook provided descriptions of a wide range of play materials, examples of teacher-child interactions, and strategies to support play behaviors for children from birth through age eight.

Along with the significance of play as a strategy to further all domains of development, the implementation of play varied with the amount of teacher participation. Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scale, and Alward (2007) defined play strategies as occurring along a “continuum of play orchestration” (p. 114). The range of play extended from spontaneous play to directed play. During spontaneous play, the child chose his or her actions, and the teacher was characterized as “invisible” (p. 113). On the other hand, the child engaging in directed play was interacting with the teacher who served alternately as either a “player” a “tutor” or “participant” (p.114). In this range between spontaneous and directed play, the teacher advanced play through his / her role as a facilitator, or a guide, according to the situation. These various roles of the mentor teacher would differ according to the grade level. Therefore, experiences for pre-service teachers in the field would fluctuate according to the type of play situation and the grade level.

The “Realities” of Play as Pedagogy

As with other aspects of societal changes over time, the nature of play has evolved through the years. Studies of children that investigate play behaviors at home, in the neighborhood, and at school have revealed a fundamental shift in the nature of play. Children spend more time involved in passive play such as computer games and less time in interactive play with other children. Transformations occurred in neighborhood playgrounds as they became empty and devoid of children, while the unmistakable flicker of computer screens lights up the windows of nearby homes. Children in school are expected to focus on academics, to the detriment of a time honored tradition; free play at recess (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2011; Brown, 2009). Each of these components has contributed to a pervasive effect on the unspoken attitudes of the general population.

In a quest for understanding how play has evolved in recent times, the early childhood scholar Elena Bodrova (2008) conducted research about the history of play since the 1940s. Bodrova articulated the contrast between toys from the mid-twentieth century and current options. Advances in manufacturing materials, as well as a cultural shift towards realism characterized the toys of today who accurately represent characters in the media. Bodrova hypothesized that, in the absence to impose their own fantasy upon a toy, the children of today demonstrated fewer scenarios using their own imaginations. The child holding an action figure whose behavior is scripted by writers in Hollywood has instructed his toy to act out the drama, often quite accurately, yet may not develop the capacity for creating his own original scenario. Bodrova suggested that teachers of young children should scaffold symbolic play to support the cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development. Bodrova recommended that teachers use props for socio-dramatic play, and model play behaviors for children to emulate.

Along with her observations about the evolution of toys for young children, Bodrova (2008) illuminated changes in the social structure of children. In the past, children usually

engaged in multiage groups, which meant that young children were able to learn from their older counterparts. However, with the prevalence of age segregation in the classroom environments and after-school settings of today's population, play has become more regimented and less spontaneous. Children have less time to construct pretend scenarios; to dream of new possibilities, and to imagine new worlds.

Bodrova (2008) suggested that teachers assume the responsibility to be agents of change for children, by scheduling time for children to play. By allocating ample time for children to engage in play, their play behaviors will emerge as more complex and expansive. Thus, a "reality" for play as pedagogy involves adjusting the role of the teacher on the continuum of play.

Along with understanding the society's influence on play in schools, it is also important to understand the challenges faced by proponents of play in today's classrooms. Ranz-Smith (2007) conducted interviews and reviewed documents to understand teacher beliefs about play and the subsequent applications in a first grade classroom. One conclusion drawn suggested revising the role of the teacher because of strains that affect the implementation of play in the curriculum. Another finding revealed similar beliefs occurring from both past play theorists and these first grade teachers. The first grade teachers valued play, however, the challenges of time, space and schedules affected the transfer of those values to classroom practice. Ranz-Smith determined that, even though play was esteemed among the research participants, the pressures of standards, testing and schedules became the unfortunate "reality" of their professional lives.

In the current educational environment, with its emphasis on standards-based curriculum and high stakes testing, the concept of play has been relegated to a minor status. Despite numerous research findings that validated the importance of play for the healthy growth and development of children, incorporating play was deemed less important than academic achievement, which is measured by the scores of the annual standardized tests (Brown & Vaughn, 2009). Nagle Jackson from the National Institute of Play (2010) understood the significance of play in the classroom. "The truly great advances of this generation will be made by those who can make outrageous connections and only a mind which knows how to play can do that" (National Institute of Play, 2010, p. 1). Making connections while playing will ultimately assist these "realities" of the classroom.

Methods and Procedures

Research Design

With respect for the nature of reality, in that our beliefs form our understanding of the world, the research design for this study was framed by the interpretivist paradigm, a basic qualitative method. Research that adheres to this method acknowledged that reality was socially constructed so, from this perspective, validity cannot be grounded in an objective reality. Perceptions of experiences between the researchers and the research participants were constructed intersubjectively during multiple interactions, and through shared meanings and understandings. According to Angen, (2000), truth was described as fluid, and was negotiated within cultures, social settings, and relationships with other people. The researchers chose this methodology to understand the voice of the pre-service teacher. From the data in the surveys, the study avoided assumptions and allowed an understanding to emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Analysis of Data

The data from this qualitative study was analyzed according to content analysis (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Initially, the content was reviewed to identify trends and categories. Scoring rules were established as each question was evaluated. Alternative meanings were discussed and reanalyzed as the content was further reviewed. To fully understand the content of each survey the context of when the surveys were completed was taken into account (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Sample

The sample used for this study consisted of students who were recruited from a two-year upper division university in an urban area of the southwestern United States. The students who participated in this study ranged in age from 21 to 50. The sample included 50 participants with 48 females and 2 males. All were pursuing EC-6 grade teaching certification. They were enrolled in the same course, but in different sections. Each student was required to present a field-based lesson within an EC-6 classroom. Although it was designated as an early childhood course, the students' grade-level field-based placements ranged from preschool through sixth grade. The two professors who taught the classes serve as professors in early childhood. The textbook, materials, expectations, and syllabus were consistent for all individuals who participated in the survey.

Field-based Course

In this field-based course, the professors emphasized the importance of teaching lessons that contain playful components. We modeled playful lessons, and students participated in playful activities during class time. As part of the requirements for the course, students created, implemented, and reflected on a lesson that integrated a playful activity into a content area. The lesson was completed during their field base experience.

This early childhood class focused on enhancing early childhood curriculum. Specifically, this class enhanced the pre-service teachers' knowledge about implementation of play within the context of an early childhood classroom. Topics of study for this class included pedagogy for incorporating play within the academic disciplines (math, science, social studies, language arts, music, art, etc.) as well as understanding the importance of the social and emotional components of interactions for successful implementation of play. The theoretical foundations of Piaget (1962), Vygotsky (1976) and Bruner (1966) prepared the students with the depth of understanding about the significance of play in the classroom.

During the first weeks of class, students were assigned classrooms for field-based observations and subsequent lesson plan presentations. The students in the EC-6 certification plan were placed where openings existed in the local districts that collaborate with the University. Students who had previously completed the field-based observation commitment identified an EC-6 classroom to conduct their lesson plan.

Additionally, all the participants were given the same assignment to be completed in their field-based classroom. Students chose from either a Direct (Hunter Model) or Indirect (5E) model lesson to present in their field-based classroom. We expected the students to follow the

guidelines for age appropriate activities. Students were required to incorporate either dramatic play and/or movement in each lesson. Movement was defined as either creative drama or kinesthetic movement that included space, time or shape (Griss, 1998). To clarify, we communicated that the requirement for movement did not include cutting, pasting, completing worksheets or walking to their desk.

At the conclusion of the semester, we requested responses through a survey in which students reflected on their observations and implementation of the lessons that involved dramatic play and/or movement. The survey consisted of twelve questions that pertained to their lesson. Eight of those questions were analyzed to identify the students' reactions to incorporating play, the mentor teachers' use of play and concerns with implementing play in an EC-6 classroom. A table of the survey and data analysis is located in Figure 1.

Results

As the researchers analyzed the data, trends emerged. One major concern expressed by the pre-service teachers was classroom management, which was the topic of Question 6. The students worried that they would have a difficult time maintaining control of the children during the implementation of a play-based lesson. The majority of the students, twenty-eight out of fifty, identified classroom management as a concern when asked to implement play into a lesson. Specifically, one student expressed unease about the children's "voice levels" and another discussed "children would get competitive and push or shove one another." Less explicit, though no less worrisome, was the comment from a pre-service teacher who stated, "I was concerned that students would get carried away." Additionally, the pre-service teachers expressed apprehension about the potential responses from the mentor teachers who were evaluating them. Three of those pre-service teachers within the twenty-eight identified space as a concern.

Question 4 explored how the mentor teacher reacted when the pre-service teacher discussed the use of dramatic play and/or movement. Thirty-three out of fifty responded that the mentor teacher reacted positively to incorporating dramatic play and/or movement into the lesson plan. One commented "I really should start providing games for my students. I am so surprised to at their participation."

However, there were also nine negative responses. One student who identified her mentor teacher as "surprised" added "She didn't understand the point of involving movement and seemed hesitant because she was afraid the kids would get too wild." An additional mentor teacher expressed a reaction of "surprise" because "it [play] can be construed as a reward." Another response stated "She wishes she could do it, but it is too difficult because she has to follow a strict curriculum." One of these responses stated they were "not sure how they (students) would handle the activity. One mentor teacher that responded unfavorably to incorporating dramatic play and/or movement expressed to the pre-service teacher that they "were putting forth too much time and effort" when preparing the lesson. Another was told by their mentor teacher that they "did not really want me to do it."

Question 5 probed the mentor teacher's reaction after the lesson was competed. Thirty-two out of fifty were positive, sixteen neutral and two negative. In eight of the positive responses, mentor teachers wanted to use the pre-service teachers' lesson again in the classroom. One said, "She was amazed how the game helped some students arrange three digits in order."

Another said, “She enjoyed it! “She actually continued doing it in the classroom.” Two of the neutral pre-services teachers’ responses said their mentor teacher was “relieved” while one was “surprised.” One negative response was “She had a little trouble bringing the students back to reality. They wanted to keep going with the movement lesson plan.” Another negative response stated “She liked the movement but was displeased with how excited and noisy everyone got.”

Question 8 and 12 explored how often play was included in the regular classroom activities. In question eight, students were to describe the dramatic play and/or movement activities in the classroom. Twenty-four out of fifty students described their mentor’s classroom as lacking opportunities for play in the curriculum. One student responded “It was a fifth grade reading class; students sat at their desk the whole time.” Another explained that her teacher did not incorporate movement because of her class size. A pre-service teacher responded that her mentor teacher had students move around to turn in papers. Nine classrooms included play and eleven classrooms demonstrated some play opportunities. On the positive side, one pre-service teacher explained “when the students were sluggish, my teacher would put on music to dance.”

On the other hand, in question 12, students identified a numeric descriptor to define the amount of play in the classroom. On question 12, students chose to describe the play in the mentor teachers’ room as often, 1-2 times a week, seldom or never. Only fourteen classrooms out of fifty incorporated play often. Twenty-six classrooms designated play to occur as either seldom or never, while nine included play one-two times a week.

One surprise for the researchers was the lack of positive responses to how play enhances the social and emotional development. In question seven, students were asked to identify how using dramatic play and / or movement enhances the social emotional development. Twenty-four responses were recorded as positive while twenty-five were recorded as neutral and one negative response. One problem with this question may be the lack of play normally included in the curriculum. Viewing only one or a few playful activities may not lead pre-service teachers to observe how play can encourage social and emotional development in the classroom. These findings corresponded to the data on the lack of play in the classroom.

Additionally, in question ten the pre-service teachers were asked to rate how the students in the classroom responded to having a lesson that incorporated dramatic play and/or movement. Forty out of fifty pre-service teachers had positive responses from their students when play was incorporated as a pedagogic method. A pre-service teacher wrote how “one child told me ‘thanks for making reading and writing fun.’ “They were used to being seated all the time, doing handouts.” Another said, “They were exited. The first lesson they were interested. The second time I got up to teach the first thing they asked was ‘Are we going to play again? We like the way you teach!” One pre-service teacher described the students’ reactions as “stunned” when she introduced a playful activity while another reported the students were “confused that I had them up out of their chairs.”

Question nine identified how the students modified the lesson for children with special needs. The students identified a variety of strategies, but the most common method was either one on one instruction or pairing students with a buddy for the activity. Two students modified the space, another modified with a visual and one adjusted the lesson with special equipment. Some students did write that special needs children were not in the room when they presented the lesson.

Discussion

Research question one inquired about challenges pre-service teachers faced when implementing their lesson with dramatic play and / or movement. A primary finding in this study reflected the concern of pre-service teachers about managing play in the classroom. Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) described classroom management as the most significant skill a teacher acquires to effectively develop classrooms for diverse students. Ranz-Smith (2007) detailed a similar finding from interviewing first grade teachers. Ranz-Smith noted that first grade teachers who value play also listed administrative concerns over classroom management as a deterrent for including play and movement within the curriculum.

In addition, pre-service teachers mentioned space, time and curriculum as challenges for the field-based assignment. Specifically, this study identified stressors involved in choices teachers make each day. The lack of space, increased time constraints and heightened pressure of the curriculum were some of the difficulties pre-service teachers faced in this study. Similarly, pre-service teachers reported their mentor teachers expressed concerns over using dramatic play and / or movement activities. Ranz-Smith (2007) found similar results from teachers who valued play yet did not implement it due to these stressors. Solutions for future teachers to resolve these problems must be discussed in college classrooms since many of these issues will continue to exist.

Fromberg (2006) reviewed kindergarten programs across the country and found a variety of programs. However, because of the national emphasis on testing and standards, kindergarten programs across the country have narrowed the curriculum to include less dramatic play and instead have an academic focus. This “reality” should be analyzed with pre-service teachers to infer solutions before they enter the teaching force. The significance of play as a pertinent pedagogy should guide the decisions of pre-service teachers on how to meet the growing demands on children.

Research question two investigated responses of the mentor teacher after the lesson was taught. Although the researchers were disappointed with many of the comments made by pre-service teachers, this study illustrated some positive outcomes. Some of the pre-service teachers reintroduced their mentor teachers to the idea of play as an effective strategy to motivate and engage children. The surprise and excitement some mentor teachers experienced to use play and kinesthetic movement in classrooms became a favorable outcome from this assignment. Although the number of teachers affected in this manner was small in number, one teacher will hopefully influence others.

The last research question analyzed the frequency of play activities the pre-service teacher was exposed during his / her field-experience. Unfortunately, many of the pre-service teachers lacked appropriate models of dramatic play and / or movement. Many of their teachers do not provide that for their students. Additionally, the benefits of play, social and emotional development, were absent as well. These findings corresponded to the previous research about the challenges related to including dramatic play and / or movement. Without appropriate models, the pre-service teachers became apprehensive about presenting and managing a play-based lesson.

Limitations

Although this study provided the researchers with significant assessment data regarding this course and field-based assignments, the findings represent only a snapshot of the larger picture regarding the how play is viewed by pre-service teachers in elementary classrooms and are not intended to represent a broader population. However, while these findings are limited to the population studied, there were important phenomena that emerged to inform future research and pedagogy for investigators.

Implications

This study revealed a lack of effective models in the field-based placement program. Jacob (2007) described the need for better preparation at the university level for pre-service teachers. Ferrier-Kerr (2009) and Beck and Kosnik (2002) determined that the classroom teacher yielded a significant impact on the pre-service teacher. Further, future studies should explore the effect on the pre-service teachers' attitudes about play when mentored both by faculty and effective classroom teachers. Also, since the class content reflected early childhood, field-based placement in an early childhood to 3rd grade classroom would have a better chance to observe play-based activities.

The results seem to suggest that mentor teachers espoused the values of play, but had succumbed to the pressures or the 'reality' of schooling which eschews play in favor of rigor and time-on-task. To accurately understand the stressors in the classroom and appropriately prepare pre-service teachers for classrooms where they will be teaching, future studies should explore the beliefs and practices of exemplary teachers with regard to play in the curriculum. To do so would inform an understanding of how they balance the "realities" of schooling with what is known about the benefits of play for children in the classroom. Learning the strategies of experienced exemplary teachers to achieve this balance would be an enormous asset for future teachers.

Along with understanding the dispositions of mentor teachers, future studies should focus on developing dispositions of pre-service teachers. Specifically, it will be imperative to develop leadership, confidence and courage to implement play-based strategies in the classroom at a time when play in the elementary classroom seems endangered. Pre-service teachers should be grounded in research-based rationale on play in the classroom to inform their vision and their commitment to using various forms of play for the EC-6 student.

Conclusion

The researchers concluded from this study that EC-6 pre-service teachers need more content in this class on pro-social guidance techniques and managing transitions. Miller (2007) described positive guidance as the foundation for developing the emotional and social domains of young children. Specifically, the researchers believed that information regarding transitions would assist students with incorporating play and movement into their lessons. According to Good and Brophy (2003), when transitions are managed poorly, children disengage from the content and behavioral problems become likely outcomes. Niles (2005) described the importance of developing a plan called F. E. A. R. (Focus, Engage, Arrange and Reflect) to assist

teachers in managing a classroom. The following semesters, the professors added transition assignments and literature to augment pre-service teachers' understanding of managing play effectively.

Analysis of this study provided literature about the pressures affecting elementary and early childhood teachers of today. Teacher preparation programs must understand the constraints classroom teachers face to effectively prepare teachers for implementation of appropriate practices. Developing the dispositions of time management, organization, social sensitivity and reflectivity become paramount when faced with choosing whether to implement dramatic play or choose an academic approach (Fromberg, 2006).

By sharing the findings from our study with local administrators, we aspire to make a case to increase time for free play during the school day, as well as a greater emphasis on playful activities in the elementary classrooms in our region. We strive to communicate our platform by demonstrating the successful integration of research and practice with the results from our research project. By demonstrating that play can be implemented into the curriculum without compromising academic achievement goals, we can support the inclusion of play in the school setting. Goodlad (1990) specified "that education and training of teachers and principals must be closely tied to both the realities of schools and the conditions necessary to their substantial improvement" (p. 27). As we move forward with this research, including the school community is necessary to effect change at the classroom level.

Further, this study has validated the importance of including assignments on play for pre-service teachers. The majority of pre-service candidates experienced positive outcomes from incorporating play in their field-based classrooms. From these favorable experiences it is hoped that pre-service teachers recall the value of playful interactions when they begin their teaching career. The ultimate expectation from this study is that as for future teachers, their collective 'reality' will be a classroom where learning and play are deemed synonymous.

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Addendum

Responses to Surveys Completed by Pre-Service Teachers

(#4) How did the mentor teacher react when you discussed the movement and/or play component of this lesson?

Totals	Positive Reaction	Neutral Reaction	Negative Reaction
50	33	8	9

(#5) How did the mentor teacher react after the lesson was completed?

Totals	Positive	Neutral	Negative
50	32	16	2

Eight of the positive responses wanted to use the pre-service teachers' lesson again in the classroom.

Two of the neutral pre-service teachers' responses said their mentor teacher were 'relieved' while one was "surprised."

(#6) Describe any concerns you had with incorporating movement and/or play into instructional activities.

Totals	Classroom Mgmt of the student	Classroom Mgmt of the mentor teacher	Curriculum Concerns	Fear	Motivation	Grade Level Concerns	No concern	Did not answer
50	28	1	6	1	1	1	5	7

(#7) Describe how using movement and/or play affected the social and emotional development of the students in the classroom.

Total	Positive	Neutral	Negative
50	24	25	1

(# 8) Describe movement and/or play activities in the classroom prior to your lesson.

(# 9) Describe how you modified or extended the movement and/or play activities for students with special needs.

Total	Did not answer	Adapted the space	1:1 time	No special needs	Alternative activity	Used a buddy	Not necessary	Visuals
	3	1	7	3	1	6	3	1

(#10) Describe student reactions to using movement and/or play within instructional strategies.

Totals	Positive	Neutral	Negative
50	40	9	1

(#11) What type of movement and/or play did you include in your lesson?

Totals	Kinesthetic	Dramatic/Role play	Tactile	Group work/ Centers
**	30	16	18	22

**Participants identified more than one type of activity in their lesson.

(#12) How often did the students interact in movement and/or play activities in the classroom?

Totals	Often	1-2 times a week	Seldom	Never	Un-answered
50	14	9	16	10	1