

create!

Developmental Pathways for Kids



The Power of Play at DPK

“How can we nurture development through play?”

Renowned author, David Elkind in his book, *The Power of Play*, states, “learning is the product of play-generated experiences limited only by the child’s level of intellectual development.”

What does this mean? The genius of play is that, in playing, we create imaginative new cognitive combinations. And while creating these novel combinations, we find out how things work. It is critical to provide play opportunities for each child - to help them reach their full potential. The way to encourage brain development and promote success and creativity is through playful interactions.

Many times parents who want to stimulate their child’s brain development focus on things like early reading, flashcards and computer applications. But a growing body of research suggests that playing games in childhood may be the best way to increase a child’s ability to

do well in school. Playing a game requires high level functions for a preschooler, from focusing attention, sustained engagement, working memory, self control and flexibility.

“Play is one of the most cognitively stimulating things a child can do,” says Megan McClelland, an early childhood development researcher at Oregon State University. And Dr. Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play, adds, “Play is the single most factor in determining our success and happiness.”

According to clinical researchers, in order to encourage intellectual growth parents should get rid of the flashcards and interact with their children through simple games like Simon Says, I Spy and Red Light- Green Light. The key to an educational game is to begin with something simple and add increasingly complicated rules. For example, you can play an imitation game where initially the child copies what you do. But later, the child may have to do the opposite of what you do. In this way the variations of the game tap into executive function, testing a child’s ability to pay attention, remember rules,

exhibit self-control and mental flexibility – which are all predictors of academic success.

An Oregon State study reported on 430 children who were followed from preschool until age 25. The study, published in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, looked at several factors, including early reading and math skills, along with other cognitive skills, to see which were ultimately most influential in college success. The results showed that a child’s ability at age 4 to pay attention and complete a task, the very skills learned in game play, were the greatest predictors of whether he or she finished college by age 25.

So, throw out the flashcards, turn off the computer and make up a game! Playing together can shape the brain, open imagination and will joyously change your child.

Becky is the Director at DPK and has had the opportunity to facilitate more than 6,000 playgroups.



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Play becomes a balanced partnership when Sensory Integration and Integrated Play Groups are combined!

Come and join the fun

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WHAT IS PRAXIS?

Praxis is the ability to generate an idea and the organization of a plan of action for executing a motor act.

It is a process of action performance and it is composed of four components: (a) ideation, (b) planning, (c) execution, and (d) sequencing. Ideation represents the first step in praxis and involves identifying a movement goal, a gestalt motor image of possible means of achieving the desired action.

Motor planning refers to the ability to order, plan and sequence a series of intentional motor actions.

Motor execution requires balance and coordination and motor control. Projected action sequences involve actions that require timing and movement through space. Examples of these are ball skills, running, and sports-related skills.



The defining characteristic of praxis is the ability to produce an adaptive response to environmental demands.

In therapy we are centrally concerned with the child's ability to organize and participate in play and self-care activities. Referral for OT and PT may indicate presenting problems suggestive of poorly developed praxis. Examples of such problems include: "unable to organize playing by himself", "doesn't know what to do with toys and often breaks them", "wants to join other kids on the playground but can't do the activities without help from adults", "loves to ride her rocking horse but repeatedly has to be helped step by step to get on and off", "has difficulty putting on clothes and is now beginning to have tantrums habitually". In many cases, language delay is also present.

Some of these children are overly active and seem oblivious to danger and others are unusually fearful and shy away from gross and fine motor activities.

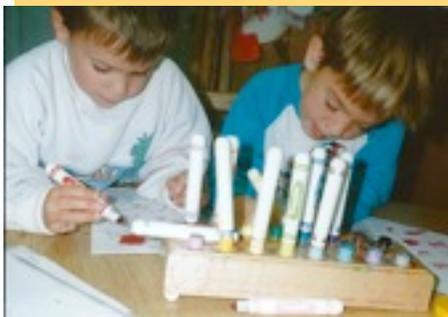
Many of these referred children will be evaluated for Developmental Dyspraxia.

Developmental Dyspraxia is a type of coordination disorder where the child is unable to mentally visualize and "figure out", or plan, new or skilled movements. These movements might involve large muscle actions, like learning how to roller skate or do a cartwheel; or fine hand/finger skills for handwriting or using tools like scissors, or eating utensils.

Children with milder impairment have a "mental picture" of what they wish to do (called ideation), but cannot execute the body positions and action sequences to accomplish it. More severely impaired children do not have a mental image of the possibilities of a given object. Object cues of what-to-do-with-this-object, are called "affordances." Children with severe dyspraxia do not recognize affordances.

Even more significantly, Jean Ayres, PhD (who was the originator of sensory integration practice) found that dyspraxic children showed an underlying pattern of impairment in the detection, organization, and discrimination of sensory information from the skin (tactile), joints and muscles (proprioception), and/or vestibular system (inner ear "equilibrium"). Her hypothesis for successful intervention was to treat the underlying sensory processing issues—not an educational process to teach the child how to execute specific movements.

This approach is the underlying theme in all of the work we do at DPK. For children who have problems with praxis we address the underlying sensory processing difficulties using a sensory integration treatment approach. This entails the use of vestibular, proprioceptive, and tactile-based therapeutic activities that are combined in a playful context to motivate the child to make meaningful adaptive responses to "just-right" therapeutic challenges presented by the therapist. Therapeutic goals are disguised by the artful therapist as play, thus obtaining the child's optimal engagement.



"Throughout the therapy process, **PLAY** is recognized as not only a vehicle to learning and development, but as a most meaningful part of childhood that enables children to simply have fun and make friends." – Becky