

Pillar 2. Enjoying playful interactions

For example through:
(i) props (e.g. puppets when reading), (ii) a playful tone of voice, (iii) making deliberate mistakes so that children can catch you out, (iv) miming, (vi) clowning, etc.

Key points

- A playful interaction is one which is
 - light in tone,
 - engaging for both parties and
 - carefreebut it may also
 - have serious learning intentions and
 - be structured and meaningful for children.
- Remember that there are many ways of introducing playfulness into structured teaching.
- Be aware of the roles you can adopt during interactions; co-player, co-learner, facilitator, listener/decoder, co-planner, commentator.
- Strike a balance between adult-led and child-led interactions — both are equally important.
- As far as possible, make the adult-directed activities truly interactive and fun.
- Encourage child-child interactions. Remember that pairs and groups for activities should be as varied in nature as possible.
- Keep a record of which children you have meaningful interactions with so that you can see if any are left out.
- Be aware of the value of young children giving a running commentary on what they are doing.
- Keep in mind that it is sometimes wise to choose not to interact.

The co-player role is especially important for children whose play is more typical of a younger child.

Do this by

- striving to make these capture the children's attention as much as play does;
- as far as possible allowing them to influence how the activity develops;
- being engaging for the adult too; and
- sustaining interactions with individual children and keeping them fluid, so that progress can be made through sustained shared thinking.

Pairs may be free choice; pairing stronger students with weaker; or pairing children of equal ability.

Talking to themselves helps young children's self-management and their thinking processes. It is a recognised stage in the development of the inner speech we all use as adults.

QLI indicators of success

- *Motivation*: Children demonstrate engagement and even excitement at times when addressing all kinds of activities, including task time.
- *Social interaction*: Children show a willingness to initiate and maintain interactions with the teacher, with other adults and with one another.
- *Confidence*: Children show confidence in their work and in speaking out, whether in a dyad, in a group or before the whole class.

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Cameo 1. Play-based learning: extended teacher-child interaction

Year 2 child in Y1/2 composite class

Peter has drawn a very detailed and competent picture of the three main characters in the Harry Potter series of books. The teacher, Miss O'Flynn, identifies Ron Weasley in the picture and then asks Peter to guess how she knew it was Ron. He cannot guess and Miss O'Flynn has to tell him it is because of the red hair. Neither Peter nor the Miss O'Flynn can remember what the girl in the Harry Potter trio is called. Miss O'Flynn asks if other children in the vicinity can help out. Calum's answer is not understood at first (his diction is poor), but both she and he persevere until he is finally understood ("Hermione Granger"). She congratulates him because they "won't have to ask the P7 class now". The teacher then discusses the novelty of the name Hermione with another boy and wonders playfully if she might be Jacob Granger's cousin [a boy in another class]. The teacher then asks Peter if he would like to label the characters. He agrees and writes Harry and Ron with very little help. Miss O'Flynn supports him in writing Hermione, breaking it into syllables and pointing out that he knows how to spell some of these. She asks Peter if he would like to tell the class about the picture in Show and Tell. He nods happily.

Children love guessing but it is difficult for a child this age to take the adult's point of view.

This is a shared joke. Most of the children appear to understand that Hermione is a fictional character because they smile or laugh.

The teacher finishes this extended interaction with good scaffolding to help him think about how to write the name (instead of just telling him how to spell this difficult word).

The teacher is familiar with the culture of the children.

The children learn that it's good to get help from friends when you need information.

If your friends can't help, you may have to ask someone with greater knowledge, in P7 for example.

The teacher has gently steered George towards doing some writing.

Peter knows that his work is valued because he is asked to tell the class about it.

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Cameo 2. Mathematics task time: Partitioning sets

Year 1 class

The teacher models what she wants the children to do.

The girl probably did not understand fully but this is a big step in basic mathematics and the teacher expects to return to it many times.

The choice allows some children the slightly easier representation option with Arabic numerals and a Carroll diagram, thus providing differentiation. Using several forms of representation is very important in early mathematics.

The teacher, Miss Peterson, is giving a first lesson on partitioning sets. The six children have all been given a set circle and a set of five objects. The teacher employs a 'magic wand' wooden spill to demonstrate partitioning the set. She says, "Here's my magic wand. Watch carefully!" The children appear highly engaged. Miss Peterson brings the spill back over her head and moves it forward saying dramatically, "Magic wand, magic wand, split the set", as she splits the objects into two sets. She demonstrates this twice more, including "splitting the set a different way". The children are encouraged to use their own magic wands to split the set for themselves. After explaining and demonstrating with her own split set, Miss Peterson asks them all to repeat in turn, "Five is the same as 'a' and 'b'," with the value of a and b depending on which way they have chosen to split the set. When a child called Rosemary falters, Miss Peterson asks her to look at what she has done with the set and when this doesn't help, asks someone with a similar split to repeat what they have said. Rosemary then repeats it too but looks a little uncertain. Finally, the children have a choice of describing in words what they have done or representing it in informal numerical style, thus having the chance to do one and observe a peer doing the other.

This teacher understands the value of drama and mystery in fostering children's engagement and giving the session a playful tone.

Repetition is important with such a difficult new concept.

The teacher tries a scaffold — to remind the child to use the concrete objects as the source of information — and when this doesn't work, she gets another child to model the answer.