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TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENTAL PLAY

Let Them Be Little: Teacher Perspectives on Developmental Play in Kindergarten Classrooms

By:

Amy M. Towne

A Dissertation in Practice

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctorate in Education

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Lynn University

Ross College of Education

2021

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENTAL PLAY

Abstract

Kindergarten is a German term meaning children's garden. In 1837, Fredrich Froebel founded kindergarten and stated, "Children are like tiny flowers; they are varied and need care, but each is beautiful alone and glorious when seen in the community of peers." Froebel believed that children needed to be nurtured and tended to like flowers in a garden. Kindergarten classes, at this time, encouraged children to develop and blossom freely through play under the guidance, not direct instruction, of the teacher. Through the years, kindergarten has changed drastically. Recent legislation has transformed the kindergarten curriculum even more.

Currently, many kindergarten teachers are challenged to teach rigorous state standards to prepare students for academic success. It has been said that kindergarten is the new first grade and the term children's garden is a concept of the past. However, research indicates that kindergarten children gain self-confidence, develop individuality, and enhance social skills while learning through play. Developmental playtime encourages children to explore, investigate, and develop ideas. Teachers need support on how to immerse academic content with developmental play to meet diverse learners' needs.

This qualitative research sought to support kindergarten teachers in adding developmental play back in the curriculum. The researcher provided a pre-survey to ascertain teachers' perception of developmental play and determine what is needed to provide kindergarten students with meaningful developmental play. After analyzing the survey results, the researcher created and facilitated professional development based on the teachers' needs. The data from the post-survey revealed that teachers do believe developmental play is essential. This research found that kindergarten teachers agree developmental play can increase critical social and emotional learning. Additionally, according to the data, providing professional development that

demonstrates integrating the current standards with developmental play is beneficial for teachers while planning curriculum. Based on the research results, the researcher concludes that developmental play is a fundamental part of early childhood and vital to a young child's social and emotional growth and development.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my committee members: Dr. Susan Saint John, Dr. Richard Jones, and Dr. Sarah Hough. Each of you has provided me with support and wisdom throughout this process, and I am incredibly grateful! To my chair, Dr. Saint John, your dedication, nurturing demeanor, and professional guidance have been incommensurable. I am so thankful to have had the privilege of having you as my mentor and cheerleader.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Donald E. and Helen L. Ross College of Education at Lynn University. Each professor inspired and encouraged me to be curious and ask more questions, which ignited my passion to continue learning! Additionally, I am beyond thankful for Cohort 16. We each come from different walks of life, and it has been incredible to learn from each of you. Being with this group has been one of the most positive professional environments that I have had the pleasure of being a part of.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and love over the last three years. I could not have achieved this goal without your patience and encouragement.

Finally, I wish to thank my students. You are my passion and the reason I continue to learn and grow. I only hope to make the difference in each of your lives, as you all have done for mine!

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my past, present, and future students, whom I affectionately refer to as "my kids." Kindergarten children are truly unique. They have an intense desire to learn and soak in everything you tell them, the good and the bad! They are wholesome and honest yet nonjudgmental. They are hilarious without even trying to be funny. They love to a fault. My students have taught me repeatedly that you may not have all good days, but there is good in each day. I am grateful to all of them for providing me with the strength and inspiration to push through this process.

My prayer is that this Dissertation in Practice will inspire other educators to give their students the gift of play. After all, as Albert Einstein has stated, "Play is the highest form of research!" I am not sure where my path will lead after this journey. However, I know for sure that I want to continue to make a difference in the lives of children!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Problem

Upon entering a kindergarten classroom, for the first time, a five-year-old may develop a fear of the unknown and cling to mom, dad, or older sibling during drop-off. Other children will run into the classroom full of excitement and vigor. It is the kindergarten teacher's job to ease the nerves of anxious children and engage enthusiastic students. How do the teachers do this? Simple, the teacher engages the students in developmental play. Developmental play is the process through which children create positive interactions with other children (or adults), which fosters social and emotional growth and supports academic skills acquisition (Cin Ng & Bull, 2018). Play is a fundamental part of early childhood and vital to a young child's social and emotional growth and development. During developmental playtime, children explore, investigate and develop ideas and hypotheses. Research indicates that children will become more self-confident, develop individuality, and enhance social skills through developmental play (Siderio, 2015).

Currently, kindergarten teachers have felt the need to increase curriculum and the amount of time spent on instruction, hoping to produce higher acquisition of academic skills, which has hindered the students' conceptual understanding and social development (Harper, 2019). Unfortunately, due to policies and mandated standards, kindergarten teachers are pressured to focus on standard mastery by incorporating rigorous teacher-directed academic lessons (Cavanaugh, Clemence, Teale, Rule, & Montgomery, 2017). Kindergarten teachers support the use of developmental play but lack time to prepare developmental play activities that are purposeful and meet the mandated standards' needs (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016).

Significance of the Study

The average kindergarten student's school day has changed drastically over the last twenty years (Siderio, 2015). Kindergarten programs have become more academically focused due to accountability pressures from state and federal mandates (Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016). The majority of parents of kindergarten-aged students are unfamiliar with the current kindergarten curriculum and how vastly different it is from when they went to school. Twenty years ago, students were given time to create, experiment, explore, manipulate, imagine, and communicate more with peers. In the article *Benefits of Play-based Learning in the Kindergarten Classroom*, Erica Pang and Lisa Simoncelli-Bulak (2017), compared kindergarten classrooms from 1998 and 2010. The authors found that in 1998, 87% of kindergarten classes learned through play-based learning incorporating dramatic play, guided play, blocks, puppets, and sand tables. In 2010, only 50% of classes integrated play-based learning into their curriculum (Pang & Simoncelli, 2017). Kindergarten classes now have teachers who are often told to follow curriculum scripts to cover challenging state standards. Teaching in this way disregards well-founded research that encourages social and emotional development and cognitive growth through active play (Docken, 2017).

Research conducted by Karen Stagnitti et al. (2017) acknowledged that learning through play is an essential part of young learners' cognitive, social, and emotional growth. The research found that children enrolled in kindergarten with a play-based curriculum showed considerable improvements in both imaginative play and oral language skills compared to children enrolled in a school where kindergarten students are instructed through teacher-directed activities (Stagnitti et al., 2017). Additionally, students learning through developmental play will take ownership in their play experiences. They will become more motivated to learn social skills while exercising

their imagination and communicating their feelings without fear of being judged (Siderio, 2015). However, recent research reveals that children spend between four to six times as much time in direct instruction and preparing for assessments than in developmental playtime (Leech, 2016). A curriculum that focuses predominantly on teacher-directed academic content neglects students' opportunity to apply the skills and strategies learned during developmental playtime. Educators are concerned that students are being pressured to learn "too much, too soon and too fast," which may cause adverse long-term social-emotional consequences (Gallant, 2009). The pressure to meet developmentally unrealistic standards has ruined the traditional kindergarten experience (Docken, 2017).

How do kindergarten teachers overcome these challenges? Educators continually struggle to balance academic expectations and social and emotional development (Christianakis 2018). Teachers are provided curriculum standards to accomplish but are missing the skills and strategies needed to incorporate this curriculum during developmental play. It is equally essential for kindergarteners to learn through exploration, manipulation, and imagination during developmental playtime (Harper, 2019). For teachers to accomplish the requirements mentioned above, professional development workshops must be created to integrate play with the demanding kindergarten benchmarks. Teachers need to be taught how to teach through play. This research study aims to provide kindergarten teachers with strategies and tools needed to incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum, strengthening a young child's social and emotional development.

Statement of the Problem

Beginning formal schooling is an essential time for cognitive and social, and emotional development in children, a period when the most fundamental skills are discovered (Cook &

Coley 2017). Currently, kindergarten educators are challenged to teach rigorous state standards to prepare students for academic success while attempting to maintain the active playtime that students need to grow, mature, and develop. Due to students' stress needing to master the demanding curriculum at a very young age, teachers often discard a developmental play and remove it off the schedule altogether (Leech, 2016). According to Siderio (2015), developmental play must be incorporated into the kindergarten curriculum. This study will be focused on the importance of immersing kindergarten students in a curriculum that is created around developmental play and how this developmental play supports social and emotional growth as perceived by kindergarten teachers.

Developmental play is the process through which children create positive interactions with other children (or adults) that ultimately promote academic and social, and emotional skills (Siderio 2015). Play is a fundamental part of the social and emotional stages of growth and cognitive development. Developmental play activities encourage children to learn, develop, and grow all while having fun. During developmental playtime, children can explore, investigate, design ideas and hypotheses (Kotsopoulos, Makosz, Zambrzycka & Mccarthy, 2015). To effectively facilitate developmental playtime in kindergarten classrooms, teachers need professional development to integrate rigorous standards and appropriate, purposeful, developmental guided, and free play activities. This study will develop professional development workshops that will focus on a series of developmental play skills kindergarten students need to enhance social and emotional development while incorporating kindergarten standards. Strategy suggestions will introduce a skill, provide a piggyback song (a song that involves taking a song everyone knows and changing the words to fit the relative content), a social story (includes prompting, support, and oral language skills), or a hands-on activity that will encourage

interaction with peers through verbal discussion. The skills and strategies of developmental play will be integrated into the mandated curriculum. Teachers will be the facilitator to support extending the students' social and emotional development.

Rationale of the Study

This qualitative action research study intends to discover the relationship between developmental play and social and emotional learning, as perceived by kindergarten teachers, and determine what is needed for kindergarten teachers to incorporate developmental free and guided play into the kindergarten curriculum.

Early childhood education has seen extreme changes over the last twenty years. Two decades ago, only 30% of teachers believed students in kindergarten should learn to read. As of 2016, 80% of teachers believe students need to learn to read in kindergarten (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016). Politicians and policy-makers continue to enforce additional testing, while exploration and hands-on learning have been deferred (Miller & Almon, 2018). Despite the research that expresses the significance of kindergarten students learning through play, teachers feel forced to teach through drill and practice techniques to ensure the curriculum is accomplished (Ting Tan, 2017). However, young students yearn to become avid learners and learn through relevant rich experiences. Teachers must recognize that developmental play blended with student-focused learning will be much more advantageous than teaching from scripts to prepare for assessments (Miller & Almon, 2018).

The professional development workshops developed in this research propose that state and national standards are not the "how to teach children." However, the standards are "what needs to be mastered" from a thoughtful and purposeful delivery. This study intends to show the method utilized to teach these standards is developmental play. The researcher intends to

disclose the data and information gathered from this study to support kindergarten teachers struggling to bridge the gap between state mandates and developmental appropriateness.

Conceptual Framework

Child developmental theorists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky promote play as one of the most authentic learning methods (Mooney, 2013). Children enrolled in a kindergarten program with a play-based curriculum have advantages over those children who are denied play: these children are as good or better at reading and social skills, and they are more likely to become well-balanced and physically fit as they mature (Miller & Almon, 2009). This qualitative action research aims to determine how developmental play supports students' social and emotional growth, as perceived by kindergarten teachers, and to identify the strategies and tools kindergarten teachers need to incorporate developmental play in their curriculum. Qualitative action research studies have examined and reported that developmental play is beneficial for academic and social, and emotional growth (Siderio, 2015). However, the No Child Left Behind legislation dramatically changed kindergarten expectations (Cavanaugh, Clemence, Teale, Rule, & Montgomery, 2017). A kindergarten classroom that used to be full of imaginative play and hands-on learning has transformed into a scripted curriculum, mandated assessments, and teacher-directed activities (Anon, 2016). Due to the pressure put on kindergarten teachers to comply with rigorous mandates, professional development is needed to help teachers incorporate developmental play while still meeting high standards. This qualitative action research study design will create professional development workshops that will provide teachers with the strategies needed to comply with mandated policies and integrate developmental play.

Purpose of the Study

This study will focus on the importance of developmental play in kindergarten classrooms, how it correlates to social and emotional learning as perceived by the teacher and enabling the teacher with the tools and strategies needed to incorporate meaningful developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum. Currently, educators challenge themselves by striving to teach rigorous state standards to prepare students for academic success while maintaining the current playtime that students need to grow, mature, and develop.

Due to students' stress needing to master the demanding curriculum at a very young age, teachers prioritize academic growth, and developmental play is omitted. Play is a fundamental part of early childhood development. Developmental play is the process through which children create positive interactions with other children (or adults) that ultimately promote social and emotional skills and academic learning (Cin Ng & Bull, 2018). During developmental playtime, children explore, investigate, develop ideas and hypotheses, learn skills, and ultimately increase social and emotional growth. Identifying the need and value of developmental play related to social and emotional growth and the mandated academic curriculum is the focus of this research.

Research is abundant regarding play and its relationship to social and emotional learning and cognitive development. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky are recognized theorists that made significant contributions to the study of childhood development and the processes of learning through play. Piaget and Vygotsky have two renowned yet contrasting theories on early childhood education and the role that play has on intellectual growth. Piaget defined play as assimilation, or the child's efforts to make environmental stimuli match their concepts. This theory states that development does not necessarily derive from children playing. Piaget supposed that play allows children to practice concepts previously learned. Vygotsky's theory

states that development is facilitated by play. Therefore, students practice ideas that they know and are also able to learn new things through play. Both theories can be observed during developmental playtime depending on the nature of the activity.

The researcher hypothesizes that children will become more confident, develop a stronger sense of identity, and enhance character traits through meaningful developmental play while also meeting developmental and academic objectives. Kindergarten students should graduate from kindergarten with social and emotional skills such as knowledge of being a good citizen, treating others with equality, how to share, how to be kind, and how to be an empathetic friend. Developmental play will support students in learning these social and emotional skills.

Research Questions

This study is focused on examining the importance of social emotional learning through developmental play and providing professional development workshops for kindergarten teachers that will teach the strategies needed to include developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum. The research questions that will guide this study are:

- Q1. What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions of developmental play and its relationship to a child's social and emotional growth and development?
- Q2. What strategies and tools do kindergarten teachers need to promote developmental play in their classrooms?
- Q3. How can professional development support kindergarten teachers with incorporating developmental play within their daily curriculum?

This study will employ a qualitative action research methodology that will include a pre and post-survey seeking the teacher's perception on the significance developmental play has in

relation to social and emotional learning and what is needed to establish and infuse developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum.

Assumptions

The researcher intends to study teacher perception of developmental play, how it relates to social and emotional learning, and determine the tools and strategies needed to provide meaningful developmental playtime in kindergarten classrooms. The researcher assumes that kindergarten teachers struggle to add developmental play to their curriculum. The researcher also assumes that developmental play, facilitated in a meaningful way, will positively affect kindergarten students' social and emotional growth.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to help the reader understand the context of each term in this study.

Cognitive Development: Cognitive development in kindergarten-aged children is the mental aptitude that the child has in reference to problem-solving, language development, and knowledge of cause and effect (ADAM & Mila, 2019).

Developmental Play: Developmental play is an approach to teaching that supports the essential needs for students to progress in their cognitive, physical, and social-emotional growth. During developmental playtime, students are working together and negotiating; they are thinking abstractly, they are entirely engaged, and they are learning (Essame, 2018).

Social and Emotional Development: Social and emotional development in kindergarten-aged children is the experiences, expressions, and emotion management that a child has as well as the capability the child has to create positive relationships with adults and peers (Jones, 2015).

Organization of the Study

The following outlines the organization of the study:

- Chapter 1:

Chapter 1 introduces the research problem. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, significance of the study, rationale of the study, conceptual framework, purpose of the study, research questions, definitions of key terms and assumptions.

- Chapter 2:

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature that supports the work of the researcher as it relates to: the definition of play, a review of various play theories, defining the stages of play, identifying the role of developmental play, exploring current day kindergarten, advantages to playing and disadvantages to not playing, describing the impact of play deprivation and listing suggestions for change.

- Chapter 3:

Chapter 3 provides the methodology that will be used in this research. It includes The introduction, the research questions, the setting of the study, description of the population, the research design, survey instrumentation, procedures, data collection, ethical considerations- risks and benefits and confidentiality and anonymity, quality of data, data analysis, limitations and delimitations, and the summary.

- Chapter 4:

Chapter 4 includes the findings of the pre-survey and post-survey. Chapter 4 also includes the results for the research questions and data analyses for the pre- and post-survey.

- Chapter 5:

The final chapter in this study, Chapter 5, presents the summary of this qualitative research study, implications for practice and, recommendations for future research.

Summary

Developmental play is meaningful and enhances a kindergarten student's growth and development through learning opportunities and social and emotional progress. Implementation of developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum will enrich students' learning environment as they are provided more opportunities for social and emotional learning through developmental play. This research will provide kindergarten teachers with professional development workshop opportunities that will include developmental play-based strategies. The strategies taught will support kindergarten teachers in facilitating academic standards and social and emotional skills infused into developmental play. Teachers that incorporate the developmental play-based learning strategies into the curriculum will observe students engaging in more social and emotional learning experiences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The start of elementary school is a vital time for cognitive and social development in children when the most fundamental skills evolve (Cook & Coley, 2017). Presently, kindergarten teachers strive to teach rigorous state standards to prepare students for academic success while struggling to maintain the current playtime that children need to grow, mature and develop social skills. Due to the stress of students needing to master demanding curriculum at a very young age, teachers are forced to push developmental play to the side, or they are told to remove it from the schedule altogether (Leech, 2016). It is essential to include developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum (Cook & Coley, 2017). This literature review focuses on the importance of adding developmental play-based strategies into kindergarten classrooms and how this developmental play can support social-emotional growth and academic achievement.

What is Play?

The term play is used frequently, seen often, and performed by most. However, defining the term play is challenging. Dr. Stuart Brown (2010), a founder of The National Institute of Play, describes the act of playing as "all-consuming and fun. However, it is anything but trivial. Play is a biological drive as vital to our health as sleep or nutrition." Brown's belief is that it is human nature to play, and people will thrive through play. The research shows that play is not just enjoyable and stimulating; it is essential for human development and intelligence (Brown, 2010). Play is necessary for the growth of the imagination and gross and fine motor development in young children (Frost, 1992). Play enhances language development, social competence, creativity, problem-solving, and thinking skills (Fromberg, 1992).

Developmental play is when students interact, socialize, and learn through child-led, teacher-facilitated, or coached play-based strategies at the students' developmental level. Essentially, developmental play is to learn while at play. Research has indicated that free and guided play is beneficial for cognitive growth and acquisition of social and emotional skills (Danniels & Pyle, 2016). Unfortunately, teachers are more focused on developing academic, rigorous lessons than lessons that will encourage and engage students in developmental play activities as a part of the curriculum. However, the standards are an endpoint and not the curriculum itself. Developmental play, embedded into the curriculum, will grant the students the ability to have multiple opportunities to make notable progress on the state-mandated standards (Mraz, Porcelli & Tyler 2016). In Vivian Gussin Paley's book, *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (2005), the author argues that developmental play is a complex learning activity. It involves creating, collaborating, debating, and negotiating. In kindergarten, developmental play is how a child learns, adapts, and makes sense of the world around them (Avery, 2011). For the purpose of this research, the researcher will focus on developmental play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms.

Child Development Theories

Two influential child development theorists are Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Both Piaget and Vygotsky have theories regarding play and cognitive development. However, they see the relationship between development and play through different lenses.

Jean Piaget (1962) defines play as a child's efforts to make environmental stimuli match his schema. His thought is that play allows a child to practice what he has already learned (Mooney, 2013). Piaget developed the Cognitive Stage Theory, one of the most known cognitive development perspectives in children. Piaget studied how children grow and how they begin to

understand and make sense of the world around them (Elkonin, 2005). Piaget's theory is that each stage is built upon the preceding stage. The act of play during each of the four stages supports a child's cognitive development. These stages have guided educational professionals and parents to construct suitable play activities to help a child move into the next stage of development (Elkonin, 2005).

Piaget's Cognitive Stage Theory :

- Sensorimotor: Sensorimotor ranges from birth until the age of two. During this stage, children use their five senses as well as movement to begin to learn about the world around them. This stage is divided into six sub-groups:
 - Simple reflexes – During the first month of a baby's life, the feeding reflex is acquired.
 - Habits and primary circular reactions – The baby begins to build patterns and form habits for what they have experienced until a baby is about four months old.
 - Secondary circular reactions – During this stage, the baby identifies sounds that it likes and repeats movement patterns to continue to hear that sound. This stage lasts up until the baby is approximately eight months old.
 - Coordination of secondary circular reactions – This stage continues to a baby's first birthday. The baby will utilize its schema to take on new tasks. Additionally, babies learn object performance. The baby begins to realize that things they know still exist even if these objects are not in their view.
 - Tertiary circular reactions – During this stage, a baby develops curiosity. The baby will begin to explore objects in its world.

- Internalization of schemata – Through the last six months of this stage, the baby will begin to internalize the knowledge, and experiences it has acquired and it can be easily remembered if necessary.
- Preoperational Stage: This stage begins when a baby begins to talk and lasts until the child is approximately seven years old. During this stage, a child begins to demonstrate pretend play. However, the play is restricted to experiences in the child's schema. Piaget divides this stage into two substages:
 - Symbolic function sub-stage – This substage ranges from two to four years. During this time, a child will engage in pretend activities with objects even though the object is not real and, at times, not even present.
 - Intuitive thought sub-stage – This substage ranges from four to seven years old. Children become very inquisitive and verbalize many questions. These question and answer sessions help build the child's schema which helps the child learn more about the world around them.
- Concrete Operational Stage: This stage begins at age seven continues through preadolescence. The child becomes less egocentric and recognizes the thoughts and feelings of others.
- Formal Operational Stage: The last stage starts around the age of eleven and continues to adulthood. During this stage, a child acquires metacognition. The child also uses its schema to increase its logical thinking.

Lev Vygotsky (1978) believed children are not just practicing what they know during play; they learn and gain new knowledge through others. This type of learning usually occurs in social settings and from more experienced peers or adults (Mooney, 2013). According to

Vygotsky, cognitive development relies on social interaction and play. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory is explained in three key concepts of continued development:

- **Role of Social Interaction in Cognitive Development:** This theory proclaims that social interaction has a significant role in the cognitive development of children. Vygotsky claims that social development comes before cognitive development.
- **The More Knowledgeable Other (MKO):** The more knowledgeable others can be any person who has a higher level of proficiency than the child at a given task. Typically, the more knowledgeable other is an adult, teacher, or older peer.
- **The Zone of Proximal Development(ZPD):** Learning occurs in the child's ZPD as they perform and learn a skill with assistance; however, it is not about to complete the same skills independently without getting frustrated.

Vygotsky suggests that a primary school curriculum should be an environment where the students learn through meaningful playtime. His theory originates in imaginative play and how children using their imagination will build new concepts and use critical thinking. Play should remain an integral part of kindergarten for more significant child-centered cognitive outcomes that are developmentally appropriate. Developmental play-based programs that develop the child's imagination through play exemplify Vygotsky's theory (Fleer, 2011).

Piaget and Vygotsky have two well-known, yet dissimilar theories on early childhood education and the role that developmental play has on early childhood growth. Piaget defined play as the integration of the child's environmental stimuli and his concepts. This theory states that development does not stem from the children playing. Piaget supports that play allows children to practice, apply and engage in concepts previously learned. This theory is observable when children are involved in free play. Vygotsky's opinion concludes that child development

facilitates play. Therefore, students practice concepts that they know, and they are also able to learn new things through playing with others. This theory is observable while children are engaged in guided playtime. Both arguments can be observed during developmental play-based learning, depending on the nature of the activity.

Developmental Stages of Play

Dr. Mildred Parten (1970), a sociologist, and researcher of child development, believes that as a child grows and matures, so does the child's way of playing. Parten studied and analyzed the social participation of 40 pre-school children during spontaneous playgroups. She identifies six stages of developmental play.

Unoccupied Play

Unoccupied play begins at birth and is observable through childhood. Newborn babies start to observe and make random movements.

Solitary Play

The stage of solitary play can be observed as early as in infancy and toddlers and will remain a way of playing throughout a child's life. During this stage, children begin to play on their own. Children, in this stage, play by themselves without the awareness of others around them.

Onlooker Play

Onlooker play primarily is observed during the toddler years but can also happen at any age. Children that are in the onlooker stage will watch others as they are playing. These children do not make any attempt to join the play. However, they may ask questions. Children at this stage can be seen as hesitant or shy if in an unfamiliar environment.

Parallel Play

Parallel play is also observed in the toddlers and throughout childhood. During parallel play, children are playing side-by-side with each other. However, there is no interaction between them demonstrating parallel play. This stage is the foundation for children that are ready for more complex stages of developmental play.

Associative Play

Typically, around the ages of three to four, children become more aware of others rather than their toys. In associative play, children interact with each other. They ask each other questions and begin the understanding of how to get along with other children. They will share toys. However, during associative play, there are no formal goals or rules set by the children.

Social Play

Social play usually begins around the age of three or four. During this stage, they are sharing toys, asking each other questions, and are establishing goals and rules for the play. During this stage, children start to learn how to cooperate with others, to be flexible while playing and how to solve problems.

A child requires time in each stage of play before they are mature enough to move to the next stage. However, children often revert to other stages in various environments depending on the comfort level that the child has (DeLaigle, 2016). Social play is acquired from a child practicing and developing a solid foundation in each stage. As communication skills are developed, and peer relationships occur, social play becomes more frequent (Fox, 2019). Developmental play-based learning time is best established by a teacher when a child is in the social play stage.

Developmental Play-based Learning in Kindergarten

Play is the most natural and genuine way of learning for young children (Doken, 2017). Play is the work of young children. Numerous countries have begun to shift the kindergarten curriculum to a more developmental play-based learning curriculum, including New Zealand, China, Sweden, and Canada (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). However, in American schools, kindergarten students spend approximately 30 minutes a day on test preparation (Docken, 2017). Children also spend six times as much time on reading and math direct instruction as they do in developmental play (Graue, 2010). Developmental play in kindergarten categorizes into two groups, free play and guided play (Danniels & Pyle, 2018).

During direct free playtime, the students are engaged in playfulness. Play is fun, pleasurable, and internally motivated by the children themselves. Students participating in free play in a kindergarten classroom have the opportunity to act out imaginative roles, design their own social rules, and are learning problem-solving skills (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Free play usually takes place during sociodramatic playtime or outside recess.

Guided play in a kindergarten classroom usually has some adult involvement. The purpose of guided play is to extend the learning opportunities of previously taught skills (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). The guided play could be a board game or teacher-led activity that includes movement, arts, or imagination that relates to academic standards.

Both free play and guided play are vital in a developmental play-based learning environment. Free play with other children is significant for children to develop social and emotional skills, for example, designing and following rules, conflict resolution, and acquiring empathy (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Additionally, Erica Danniels, MEd, and Angela Pyle, Ph.D. (2018) conducted research focused on guided play and discovered that play-based learning

activities positively influence student achievement in subject areas such as mathematics and reading. Therefore, encouraging the use of guided play activities to support academics produces more successful students (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). A study conducted by Bert Van Oers and Debbie Duijkers (2013) investigated a kindergarten classroom that follows a developmental play-based curriculum, where both guided and free play took place. The teachers included vocabulary words into the students' play and facilitated learning games around the vocabulary. The students in these classrooms were observed to apply the new vocabulary more often than the children in the control classroom taught using direct instruction methods.

Present-day Kindergarten

Kindergarten has changed substantially over the last few decades (Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016). Kindergarten classrooms were formerly environments that promoted and encouraged play and where children were engaged in learning through play. However, current kindergarten classrooms are focused on a rigorous curriculum to meet local, state, and national standards, policies, and mandated assessment expectations (Docken, 2017).

Kindergarten has increasingly become a target for educational reform and is now a tool for narrowing the achievement gap. In 2001, President George Bush signed The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. This law aimed to close the achievement gaps and provide students with the opportunity to obtain a fair and high-quality education (US Department of Education, 2020). NCLB mandated standardized testing starting in third grade, which led to significant changes in the primary grades curriculum, including kindergarten (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016). In an article entitled, *Is Kindergarten the New First Grade? The Effects of No Child Left Behind on Kindergarten*, Daphna Bassok (2012) found that 64% of kindergarten teachers "strongly agreed" with students' importance to reading in kindergarten. Prior to NCLB, Before of teachers

"strongly agreed." Additionally, Bassok discovered that teachers' expectations of incoming kindergarteners significantly increased as a result of NCLB.

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB and shifted policy decisions from the federal to the state level. ESSA maintains standardized testing to begin in third grade and expands the objective of high-quality preschool education (US Department of Education, 2020). In 2018, Florida's ESSA plan met national requirements and was approved. The plan mandates preschool learning standards, incoming kindergarten assessments, and funding for preschool teacher salaries (Florida Department of Education, 2020). However, academic pressure remains on primary teachers to prepare students for the subsequent grade level testing. The impact of Florida's ESSA plan on kindergarten students, early childhood curriculum, and student expectations has yet to be analyzed.

According to the Association for Childhood Education International, eliminating play from kindergarten has been brought about by the following changes: societal pressures, misunderstanding about how children learn, aggressive marketing of commercial materials that are truly inappropriate for kindergarten children, a shortage of teachers who understand how to work with young children and the reassignment of untrained primary teachers in kindergarten in areas of declining enrollment (Moyer, 2011). Research conducted in 2016, found the kindergarten curriculum is now including more challenging literacy and math skills. The study emphasized a significant decline in time spent on art, music, science, and student selected activities, and more time spent on standardized testing (Bassok et al., 2016).

Jennifer Russell (2011) conducted a research study to evaluate how kindergarten has transformed since the 1950s. She concluded that currently, kindergarten is a place where academics prefer the development of that child's cognitive growth. The research states that

kindergarten is an "academic press" rather than a "garden" of learning where children grow and develop at their own pace. Russel collected data from articles, policies and documents, and professional association activities. She discovered that in 1950, three percent of kindergarten was based exclusively on academics and 97% on the child's developmental level. In 2011, she found that 17% of kindergarten is based on developmental levels, and 83% was academically driven. Russell states that developmental kindergarten permits children to learn and explore activities at a child's developmental level. Developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms, using a play-based learning model, allow students to manipulate objects, confront and solve problems through investigation, foster their social skills, and learn how to behave to be successful in school and the outside world.

Conversely, in an academic-based kindergarten classroom, all academic skills are taught explicitly through whole-class instruction or small group guided practice. The children are taught to take in information from the teacher and repeat the material in a skill and drill format. Formal assessments often take place, and kindergarten students must master mandated standards to move on to first grade (Russell, 2011).

Kindergarten teachers feel pressured to get children "ready" for the next grade and the subsequent standardized tests in the subsequent grade levels (Docken, 2017). According to Pyle and Bigelow (2015), in order to perform on these accountability assessments, kindergarteners in public schools spend an average of 30 minutes a day on test prep and six times as much time on reading and math direct instruction as they do in guided or free play.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) researched and established Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP). DAP is a framework intended to

encourage optimal learning and development in young children (NAEYC, 2020). NAYEC recognizes play as one of the 12 Principles of Child Development and Learning. Principle 10 of Child Development and Learning states, “Play is an important vehicle for developing self-regulation and promoting language, cognition, and social competence.” The Position Statement from NAYEC states that play facilitates school success by supporting learning instead of detracting from it.

Advantages to Play-based Learning

In a developmentally appropriate play-based learning environment, the focus is on cooperative learning and often directed by the students. A balance is created between academics and social-emotional growth (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016). According to Docken (2017), a research study found:

- Students that enroll in developmental play setting are equally as good or better at reading and other cognitive skills, and they are more likely to become well-adjusted, healthy people.
- The role of free-play helps to foster conceptual mathematical understanding, develop literacy skills and strategies, and support the growth of social and emotional learning.
- The act of play in kindergarten increases oral language development in young children.
- Play allows teachers to have more personal teacher-student communication in the classroom, which leads to the formation of deeper relationships.

Disadvantages to Not Playing

In the article *Reading Between the Play Lines, a Play-based Research Study: Children at Play Acquiring Literacy Skills Socially and Through Self-discovery*, Brianne Siderio (2015) states that kindergarten students that are not instructed through a developmental play-based

learning environment are at a disadvantage because play is essential. Play is the work of a five-year-old and the way children develop cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Due to the academic mandates and inappropriate curriculum, children are becoming burnt out instead of learning through play to explore one's imagination, develop fine and gross motor skills, social skills, and boost self-esteem (Siderio, 2015).

Play Deprivation

In the book, *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul* Dr. Stuart Brown (2009) reports that children that endure moderate to severe play deprivation may result in poor early childhood development, feelings of depression, problems adapting to change, poor ability to show self-control, are more likely to show addictive personality traits and have difficulties developing deep interpersonal relationships. Dr. Brown has conducted over 6,000 individual interviews on play histories from incarcerated juveniles from 1968 through 2013. While researching, Brown found that none of the individuals could remember a time of childhood developmentally appropriate play. The subjects' idea of play was usually related to aggression and bullying. This research is significant because it shows a connection between appropriate developmental play and developing social skills and process aggression properly (Brown, 2014). According to Whitebread, Basilio, Kusalja, and Verma (2012), children deprived of play will lack cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Suggestions for Change

In the article, *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School*, Edward Miller and Joan Almon (2009), state that developmental play-based learning is no longer the foundation of the kindergarten curriculum and kindergarten students are now expected to meet standards that were originally meant for first graders. However, the research to support play in

the kindergarten curriculum is abundant. Research directly connects classroom play to a student's capability to master academic content such as reading and mathematics (Cook & Coley 2017). In order for play to be successful in a kindergarten classroom, the teacher, administration, parents, and policymakers must understand the significance that play has on a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Miller and Almon (2009) recommend educating kindergarten teachers to develop effective play-based programs. Teachers will require workshops and mentoring. The teacher needs to establish rules and boundaries as well as being an active member of play-based learning. Additionally, at the school site, administration and principals need to allow kindergarten teachers the autonomy, power, and innovation they need to create and maintain a kindergarten classroom engrained in developmental play (Harper, 2019).

In *Support for Play in Public School Classrooms*, Elizabeth Doken (2017) states that meaningful, learning experiences are derived from the power of play. The author suggests four components in building a developmentally appropriate environment:

- Provide equal opportunities for play.
- Balance free play and guided play experiences.
- Provide teacher training on integrating meaningful play.
- Observe and collaborate with teachers that support play.

In order to restore this developmentally playful kindergarten, policymakers need to reevaluate kindergarten standards to confirm that they encourage developmentally appropriate practices, and remove those standards that do not. Moreover, the use of developmentally inappropriate standardized testing must be eliminated. Kindergarten children should be assessed by their work products and teacher observation while the students are playing and interacting (Sidero, 2015).

Conclusion

Developmental play-based learning is purposeful and enhances a kindergarten student's learning opportunities. Implementation of developmental play-based learning benefits the whole child. This research will further explore and provide kindergarten teachers with guided, meaningful, developmental play-based strategies learned through professional development workshop opportunities that will support them in facilitating reliable content and social and emotional skills through the use of guided and free developmental play. Five and six-year-old children acquire knowledge in various ways and not the same as their older counterparts. They make sense of the world around them by engaging, manipulating, and exploring. Therefore, teachers that modify their approaches to include developmental play-based learning strategies will observe students absorbing knowledge, and these students will be able to relate it to academic content. Additionally, these students will be able to apply their learning to real-world situations and develop their social and cognitive growth.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Kindergarten classrooms have gone through a significant transformation as the stress of academic pressure has increased. Researchers have documented that the amount of time for play has decreased, and teacher-directed lessons have increased (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016). However, research has proven that it is essential for play to be a part of the early childhood curriculum (Broadhead, 2018). Due to the disparity between the research supporting play and kindergarten teachers' current practices of meeting academic demands, the purpose of this research is to support play as a primary way of learning in kindergarten. The researcher intends to obtain kindergarten teachers' perspectives regarding developmental play and how it impacts social and emotional learning. Additionally, the researcher will create three, one-hour professional development workshops for kindergarten teachers to provide them with the tools and strategies needed to incorporate developmental play into their curriculum. A qualitative action research design will investigate multiple kindergarten teachers within a public Title I elementary school in southeast Florida.

This chapter will describe the research study and methodology. It includes descriptions of the research, the research questions, the setting of the study, description of the population, the research design, survey instrumentation, procedures, data collection, ethical considerations- risks and benefits and confidentiality and anonymity, quality of data, data analysis, limitations and delimitations, and the summary.

Research Questions

The research questions driving this study are:

- Q1. What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions of developmental play and its relationship to a child's social and emotional growth and development?
- Q2. What strategies and tools do kindergarten teachers need to promote developmental play in their classrooms?
- Q3. How can professional development support kindergarten teachers with incorporating developmental play within their daily curriculum?

Description of the Sample

The population that the researcher plans to target is kindergarten teachers. The researcher will create a social media page for individuals interested in learning more about developmental play. Once the page is established, the researcher will send a private message to the group members requesting their study participation (Appendix A). Participants who agree to be a part of the study will then consent to participate in this study by reading and agreeing to the informed consent document (Appendix B).

Research Design

Qualitative research discusses the meanings, concepts, descriptions, comparisons, and representations of things and ideas (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study intends to answer how developmental play is perceived concerning social and emotional learning and to identify the tools and strategies needed to incorporate developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum. The researcher will utilize a pre and post-survey to collect non-numerical data. A qualitative research design will be applied in this study's methodology to explore the role of developmental play and how developmental play can be established and applied in the kindergarten curriculum.

Kindergarten teachers will be invited to attend three one-hour professional development workshops focused on the tools and strategies needed to facilitate developmental play within their curriculum. After the participants implement the developmental play strategies in their classrooms, participants will be given a post-survey to determine if their perception of developmental play has changed and if their view has been altered on the social and emotional progress that students acquired during developmental play. The independent variable that guides this action research is the professional development workshops on developmental play-based learning. The participants' perceptions on developmental play impacting social and emotional growth in students is the dependent variable.

Qualitative research has been used to investigate the role of developmental play in kindergarten classrooms. Elizabeth Docken (2017), investigated the support for play in public kindergarten classrooms utilizing a case study design. During observations in kindergarten classrooms, Docken found that teachers did not interact with students during developmental play or interacted minimally to ensure safety. Docken recommended that professional development would be beneficial to educate teachers on the strategies needed and the various roles teachers may take on during developmental playtime to make playtime purposeful and meaningful. Therefore, this research intends to provide kindergarten teachers with the necessary professional development workshops to incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum.

Survey Instrumentation

The instrumentation tool that will guide this research is an electronic pre-and post-survey. The researcher will create the pre and post-survey on the digital platform SurveyMonkey™. Participants will be given the pre-survey at the start of the study to identify their perception of developmental play related to social and emotional learning and determine what is needed to

provide kindergarten students with meaningful developmental play within the participants' classrooms. The post-survey will be conducted two weeks after the participants receive the last of a series of three professional development workshops and have had the opportunity to facilitate the strategies learned within their classroom. The researcher will collect the data from the pre and post-surveys and examine and analyze it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The pre and post-survey questions will be a combination of semi-structured questions and utilize the Likert scale, question response frequency data.

The Likert scale will utilize a five-point response to determine the participants' level of agreement on a statement. The Likert scale will contain five answer choices, which will consist of two extreme poles (Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree), a neutral option (Neither Agree Nor Disagree), and intermediate answer choices (Agree and Disagree).

The initial survey the participants complete will inform the researcher of the participants' current knowledge of, and willingness to implement, developmental play, the participants' perceptions of developmental play in relation to the student's social and emotional growth, and the tools and strategies the participant believes he/she needs to incorporate developmental play into their curriculum. The complete pre and post-survey can be found in Appendix C and Appendix E. The surveys will be distributed and completed in an electronic format on the Survey Monkey™ website. Examples of the statements and possible responses included are:

- Statement: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.
Possible Responses: Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree
Strongly Disagree
- Statement: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.

Possible Responses: Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree
Strongly Disagree

- Statement: I feel it is important to make time to play each day.

Possible Responses: Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree or Disagree Disagree
Strongly Disagree

The semi-structured questions, utilized during the pre-survey, will give the participants the ability to communicate freely and not feel controlled by scales or measurements. These questions will assist the researcher with developing themes within the study. Examples of the semi-structured pre-survey questions include:

- How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum?
- How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?
- How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?

The post-survey will be used to obtain the participants' perspectives after the developmental play professional development strategies have been taught and implemented in the participants' classrooms. The post-survey will be composed of identical semi-structured questions and Likert Scale question responses, except for one semi-structured question:

- What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?

This question will help the researcher determine the effectiveness of the developmental play professional development workshops.

The researcher's goal is to create patterns and themes in the research by working inductively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Ultimately, the researcher may discover a comprehensive set of themes to authenticate the research.

Procedures

The researcher will complete the following steps:

1. The researcher will seek approval for the study from the Institutional Review Board at Lynn University.
2. The researcher will create the developmental play social media page.
3. The researcher will recruit kindergarten teachers through social media.
4. The researcher will provide participants with informed consent.
5. The kindergarten teachers will be invited to complete an initial pre-survey regarding their knowledge on developmental play and their willingness to facilitate the developmental play strategies into their curriculum.
6. The researcher will review the pre-surveys . Teachers that do not have three years teaching experience will be automatically withdrawn from the survey.
7. The researcher will analyze data and themes from the pre-surveys.
8. The researcher will create the developmental play professional development workshops based on the findings from the pre-survey.
9. The three professional development workshops will be facilitated over a six-week period.
10. Participants will utilize the skills and strategies learned in the professional development workshops to design curriculum and implement within their classrooms.
11. The researcher will conduct a post-survey to obtain the participants' viewpoints on the developmental play skills and strategies learned during the professional development

workshops and whether or not the students gained adequate progress socially and emotionally.

12. The researcher will analyze the pre and post-survey data to determine if the participants' perspectives on developmental play changed over the course of the study.

Data Collection

This qualitative action research will use an electronic pre and post-survey as an instrumentation tool. The researcher will create the pre and post-survey on the digital platform SurveyMonkey™. Both surveys will consist of Likert scale answer choices and semi-structured questions. The pre-survey will seek information on the participants' knowledge of developmental play, its relation to social and emotional learning, and the teachers' perception of what is needed to incorporate meaningful development play in their classrooms. The post-survey will be given two weeks after the last professional development workshop. It will seek information on participants' knowledge of developmental play, how it supports social and emotional learning, and if the strategies learned were beneficial when incorporating developmental play into their curriculum. Utilizing a pre and post-survey will allow the researcher to compare the participants' perspectives and knowledge level before the professional development workshops and after the professional development workshops. The pre and post-survey data will be collected and analyzed to determine if the developmental play professional development workshops were beneficial. After the research is complete, all surveys will be stored in a password-protected computer for 36 months. At the end of the three years, pre and post-survey data will be deleted.

Ethical Considerations- Risks and Benefits

The researcher will attain approval from the Lynn University Internal Review Board before launching the research. The researcher will thoroughly review the informed consent with each participant. Participation in the study will be voluntary, and participants will be exposed to minimal risks throughout the study. All informed consent forms and surveys will be stored on a password-protected computer for 36 months. At the end of the three years, informed consent forms, pre and post-surveys will be deleted.

The benefits of this study may be advantageous for the participants and their students. Providing teachers with professional development workshops that offer valuable tools and strategies on how to incorporate developmental play into their curriculum may benefit the students in social and emotional learning. Additionally, the professional development workshops may guide the participants in creating a curriculum that supports developmental play and incorporates social and emotional learning.

Ethical Considerations- Confidentiality

All participants' information, including names, sex, and experience level, will be kept confidential. Participants will be given pseudonyms. Informed consent forms, pre, and post-surveys will be kept on a password-protected computer. All data will be kept for 36 months after the study concludes. After 36 months, all of the data will be deleted.

Quality of Data

The researcher believes the quality of the data will be accurate. The participants will have the ability to participate or decline participation. The researcher believes the participants will answer the pre and post-survey questions honestly and accurately because participation is optional.

Confidentiality will be assured for all participants. All participants will be given a pseudonym in the research. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data Analysis

The research instrumentation tool that will be used in this study is a pre-and post-survey. The pre and post-survey will be composed of Likert Scale questions and semi-structured questions. The pre-survey will be given at the start of the research to identify the participants' perception of developmental play, how it correlates to social and emotional learning, and determine what the participants think is needed to create meaningful developmental play in their classroom. The post-survey will be given two weeks after the developmental play professional development. The post-survey will reveal the participants' perception of the professional development workshops and how it impacted their students' social and emotional growth during developmental playtime. Analysis of the Likert questions on the pre and post-survey will be measured using the reliability method, Cronbach Alpha (Quansah, 2019).

The researcher will utilize the following steps to analyze the semi-structured questions, as identified by Creswell and Creswell, 2018.

- *Step One: Organize and prepare the data for analysis.* This step will include sorting the data into various types.
- *Step Two: Read or look at the data.* During this step the researcher will look at, read and reflect on the data in relation to the overall meaning of the research. The researcher will determine the general ideas that the participants are expressing.
- *Step Three: Start coding all of the data.* The researcher will chunk the data into categories identified by specific labels.

- Step Four: *Generate a description and themes*. The coding process will help the researcher to identify themes for the research. These themes will lead to the major findings of the research.
- Step Five: *Representing the description and themes*. The researcher will transcribe a narrative in sequential order to describe the findings and analysis of the research.

(Creswell & Creswell, 2019)

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations refer to extremal conditions that the researcher does not have control over. Limitations to this research study include the researcher is an experienced kindergarten teacher, which may produce bias and limit the research. Due to the uncertainty of the current COVID19 pandemic, it may be challenging to obtain participants. Additionally, participants may not be able to continue in the research because of unforeseen circumstances.

Delimitations address internal situations that the researcher intentionally set to restrict the study. Delimitations to this research include sampling only kindergarten teachers. Utilizing a small population supports this researcher's intention for in-depth analysis and a deeper understanding of the data. The researcher established this population to make the research design manageable and focus on how developmental play impacts the learning environment.

Summary

A qualitative action research design will be executed in this study that will provide valuable data on teachers' perceptions regarding developmental play and incorporating developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum. Based on a pre-survey questionnaire, the researcher will develop in-depth professional development workshops to help teachers learn various skills and strategies to facilitate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum. A

post-survey will be provided two weeks after the professional development workshops to determine if the teachers' perceptions of developmental play have changed and how each participant incorporated developmental play into their classrooms. Analysis of the pre and post-survey will provide the researcher with data needed to determine the efficacy of the developmental play professional development. Ultimately, the researcher will determine if the developmental play strategies learned through the professional development workshops positively impact the participants' ability to incorporate a meaningful developmental play into their daily schedule.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This research study addressed kindergarten teachers' perceptions of the role developmental play has on social and emotional growth and the strategies needed to incorporate play in the kindergarten curriculum. Additionally, this research examined the impact of professional development in developmental play and the participants' abilities to include developmental play in activities and lessons.

After obtaining approval from Lynn University's Internal Review Board, recruitment for participants took place through a social media website. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher was unable to gather participants in a school setting. The target population of this qualitative study was current kindergarten teachers. Participation was requested, via private message (Appendix A), on a developmental play group page created by the researcher. The researcher sent 65 messages, and 11 participants consented to partake in the research study. During the research, one participant had to withdraw due to personal reasons. Data collection and analysis occurred in two phases: pre-survey data and post-survey data. The pre and post-surveys were distributed through the Survey Monkey™ website. Both surveys included demographic information, Likert scale questions, and semi-structured questions. The pre-survey data collected focused on the participants' views of developmental play in their classrooms. This information was collected and analyzed to create three virtual professional development sessions based on the participants' needs.

As noted in the literature review of this research, the participants agreed with Emily Harper's work, *Play Time Should Not Be Over*; educators continually struggle to balance academic expectations and social and emotional development. Professional development

workshops must be created and offered to educators to increase social and emotional development awareness and tie in the demanding academic standards. Teachers need to be taught how to teach through play (Harper, 2019). The pre-survey themes emerged from this research: a lack of time, demanding academic standards, administrative support due to lack of training, and guidance in developing lessons beyond a free-play time. The researcher facilitated the professional development over the course of four weeks. Post-survey data was then collected to determine if the participants' pre-conceived notions changed as a result of their participation in the professional development experience.

This chapter details the results of this study, including an analysis of pre and post-surveys, as well as other data linked to the research study. Identifying information, such as participant names, locations and personal information has been changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Summary of Analyses

An analysis of the survey data is recorded in the following data analysis tables. The analysis reflects data collected from a pre-survey, given two weeks before the first professional development workshop on developmental play. A post-survey was provided after the last professional development workshop on developmental play. Questions 1-6 in the pre-survey asked for participant demographic information. The researcher collected demographic information that was believed to be relevant to the study and acquired the necessary data to determine eligibility. Eleven participants completed the pre-survey.

- Question 1: Participant's Informed Consent (Appendix B)
- Question 2: Participant Identification

The summary analysis of question 3: *What is your highest level of education?*, indicated that the majority, 63.64%, of the participants obtained a Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Science (MS) degree, and 36.36% have a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in the field of education.

TABLE 1

Question 3: What is your highest level of education?

Degree Earned	Response Percent	Number of Participants
BA/BS	36.36%	4
MS/MA	63.64%	7
MS+	0%	0
Edd/PhD	0%	0

An analysis of the research question 4 asked the participants to indicate how long they have been teaching. Of the eleven (11) initial participants, one (1) participant, 9.09%, has been teaching for four to six years, and ten (10), 90.01%, of the participants have ten or more years of teaching experience.

TABLE 2***Question 4: How long have you been teaching?***

Number of Years	Response Percent	Number of Participants
Less than one year	0%	0
1-3 years	0%	0
4-6 years	9.09%	1
7-9 years	0%	0
10+ years	90.91%	10

An analysis of the research question 5 asked the participants to indicate how long they have been teaching kindergarten. All of the participants are currently teaching kindergarten. One (1) participant, 9.09%, has been teaching kindergarten for less than a year, two (2), 18.18%, participants have taught kindergarten between four and six years and, six (6) participants, 54.55%, have ten, or more years, of kindergarten teaching experience.

TABLE 3***Question 5: How long have you been teaching kindergarten?***

Number of Years	Response Percent	Number of Participants
Less than one year	9.09%	1
1-3 years	0%	0
4-6 years	18.18%	2
7-9 years	18.18%	2
10+ years	54.55%	6

Demographic data regarding the participants' gender, question 6, was analyzed in Table 4. All of the participants in the study were female.

TABLE 4

Question 6: What is your gender?

Gender	Response Percent	Number of Participants
Female	100%	11
Male	0%	0
Prefer not to say	0%	0

The researcher's purpose of this study was to obtain the perspectives of kindergarten teachers regarding developmental play, how play impacts social and emotional learning, and what types of play kindergarten teachers include in the curriculum. Additionally, this research examined how professional development and collaboration can impact the participants' ability to include developmental play.

Additional analysis of the survey data used Likert scale responses and semi-structured questions focused on the participants' perceptions of developmental play. These questions are based on the factors gathered from the literature review completed before the research study. In *Support for Play in Public School Classrooms*, work completed by Elizabeth Doken (2017), four components are needed to support a developmentally appropriate environment:

- Provide equal opportunities for play.
- Balance free play and guided play experiences.
- Provide teacher training on integrating meaningful play.
- Observe and collaborate with teachers that support play.

The pre-survey data collected was used to create the professional development workshops on developmental play (Appendix C). The researcher emailed the pre-survey Survey Monkey™ link to the participants two weeks before the first professional development session. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and anonymity while analyzing each individuals' survey responses. Cronbach's alpha was computed for the pre-survey.

The pre-survey results revealed that the majority of the participants strongly agree, six (54.54%) or agree, four (36.36%), with the survey item: *Q.6 Kindergarten students learn best by playing*. One (9.09%) participant neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Likewise, the participants strongly agreed, three (27.27%), or agreed, seven (63.63%), with the survey item: *Q.7 Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum*. One (9.09%) participant disagreed with the statement. The survey item: *Q. 8 I use play as an instructional modality*, revealed that two (18.18%) participants strongly agreed, seven (63.63%) participants agreed, one (9.09%) neither agreed or disagreed, and one (9.09%) participant disagreed. The survey item: *Q. 9 I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth*, revealed that all of the participants strongly agree, seven (63.63%) or agree, four (36.36%). Additionally, seven (63.63%), strongly agree or agree, four (36.36%), with the statement: *Q. 10 I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom*. The survey item: *Q. 11 I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom* had five (45.45%) strongly agree, five (45.45%) agree, and one (9.09%) neither agree nor disagree. Survey item: *Q. 12 Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school*, reflected that six (54.54%) disagreed, four (36.36%) strongly disagreed, and one (9.09%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Finally, the survey item: *Q. 13 My administration supports learning through developmental*

play, found that seven participants agreed, two neither agreed nor disagreed, and two disagreed with the statement. Table 5 illustrates the pre-survey results.

TABLE 5***Pre-Survey Results***

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	6	4	1	0	0
Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	3	7	0	1	0
Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	2	7	1	1	0
Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	7	4	0	0	0
Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	7	4	0	0	0
Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	5	5	1	0	0
Q. 12: Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	0	0	1	6	4
Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play.	0	7	2	2	0

The reliability of the instrument was tested with Cronbach's alpha. For the pre-survey items, the internal consistency was "acceptable" ($\alpha = .740$). An inter-item analysis was conducted on the survey items. Item statistics are presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6*Item Statistics for Pre-Survey Questions*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	1.55	0.69	11
Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	1.91	0.83	11
Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	2.09	0.83	11
Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	1.36	0.51	11
Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	1.36	0.51	11
Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	1.73	0.65	11
Q. 12: Children have plenty of time to play at home, so they do not need to play at school.	3.91	1.14	11
Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play	2.55	0.82	11

The inter-item analysis revealed that the reliability can be improved from "acceptable" to "good" ($\alpha = .884$) if the following survey item was dropped from the pre-survey, *Q. 12 Children have plenty of time to play at home, so they do not need to play at school*. Item-total statistics for the pre-survey are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7*Item-Total Statistics for Pre-Survey*

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	14.91	9.29	.88	.630
Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	14.55	9.07	.74	.645
Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	14.36	9.05	.75	.644
Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	15.09	10.89	.70	.686
Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	15.09	11.29	.57	.703
Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	14.73	10.02	.74	.663
Q. 12: Children have plenty of time to play at home, so they do not need to play at school.	12.55	14.27	-.24	.884
Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play	13.91	11.69	.20	.760

When analyzing the responses of the semi-structured questions, a range of answers with various themes developed. The pre-survey semi-structured questions were utilized to determine

the participants' current developmental play practices and to guide the researcher in creating the developmental play professional development sessions. Chart 1 illustrates the themes that developed from the pre-survey semi-structured questions.

CHART 1

Pre- survey Semi-structured Questions

The semi-structured questions analysis resulted in several common themes and responses and has been noted as such. These questions and results are:

Q. 14: How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?

- Extremely important
- Play is an essential part of kindergarten
- Use their imaginations
- Learn problem solving skills
- Develop language
- Improve social skills
- Allows for exploration and discovery
- Learn to love school and learning

Q. 15: How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?

- Center time
- Free choice centers.
- End of the day
- Recess
- Daily 5 activities
- Housekeeping, puzzles, technology, Play dough.

Q. 16: How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?

- Play benefits all aspects of social-emotional learning
- Students learn socialization, coping skills, oral language, and life skills
- Opportunities to interact with others
- Students can make lifelong friends
- Reinforces instructional material

Q. 17: How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?

- Center rotations
- Board games for all levels, blocks, manipulatives, Legos,
- We use blocks, manipulatives, learning games
- Play dough for students to build high frequency words

Q. 18: What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?

- Time
- Engaging activities
- Academic standards are too demanding
- Play materials
- Encouragement of administration.
- A curriculum with a teacher guide for guided play
- Professional development

The post-survey data collected was used to determine if the participants' perception of developmental play changed, if the professional development impacted their curriculum planning and if the participants' view had been altered on the social and emotional progress that students acquired during developmental play. The researcher emailed the post-survey Survey Monkey™ link to the participants after the last professional development session. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and anonymity while analyzing each individuals' survey responses. Ten participants completed the post-survey. Cronbach's alpha was computed for the post-survey.

An analysis of the post-survey results revealed that the participants strongly agreed, eight (80%), or agreed two (20%) with the following survey items: *Q. 6 Kindergarten children learn best by playing, Q. 7 Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum, Q. 8 I use developmental play as an instructional modality, Q. 9 I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth, Q. 10 I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom, and Q. 11 I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.* In the survey item: *Q. 12 Children have plenty of time to play at home so, they do not need to play at school,* four (40%) participants disagreed, and six (60%) participants strongly disagreed. In the last survey item: *Q. 13 My administration supports learning through developmental play,* one (10%)

strongly agreed, six (60%) agreed, one (10%) neither agreed or disagreed, and two (20%) disagreed. Table 8 illustrates the post-survey results.

TABLE 8*Post-Survey Results*

Survey Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	8	2	0	0	0
Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	8	2	0	0	0
Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	8	2	0	0	0
Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	8	2	0	0	0
Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	8	2	0	0	0
Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	8	2	0	0	0
Q. 12: Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	0	0	0	4	6
Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play.	1	6	1	2	0

For the post-survey items, the internal consistency was also “acceptable” ($\alpha = .721$). An inter-item analysis was conducted on the items. Item statistics are presented in Table 9.

TABLE 9*Item Statistics for Post-Survey Questions*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	1.20	0.42	10
Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	1.20	0.42	10
Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	1.20	0.42	10
Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student’s social and emotional growth.	1.20	0.42	10
Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	1.20	0.42	10
Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	1.20	0.42	10
Q. 12: Children have plenty of time to play at home, so they do not need to play at school.	4.60	0.52	10
Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play.	2.50	0.85	10

The inter-item analysis revealed that the reliability can be improved from “acceptable” to “excellent” ($\alpha = .924$) if the following survey item was dropped from the post-survey, *My*

administration supports learning through developmental play. Item-total statistics for the post-survey are presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10***Item-Total Statistics for Post-Survey***

Item	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	13.10	3.88	0.91	.602
Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	13.10	3.88	0.91	.602
Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	13.10	3.88	0.91	.602
Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	13.10	3.88	0.91	.602
Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	13.10	3.88	0.91	.602
Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	13.10	3.88	0.91	.602
Q. 12: Children have plenty of time to play at home, so they do not need to play at school.	9.70	5.79	-0.20	.806

Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play.	11.80	6.40	-0.36	.924
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The post-survey semi-structured questions aimed to gain the participants' developmental play perspective after the professional development sessions concluded and if the professional development impacted their practices. Various themes emerged from the post-survey. Chart 2 illustrates the responses from the post-survey semi-structured questions.

CHART 2

Post- survey Semi-structured Questions

The semi-structured questions analysis resulted in several common themes and responses and has been noted as such. These questions and results are:

Q. 14: How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?

- Extremely important
- Teaches socialization, language skills, compromise, life lessons, vocabulary development
- Play is essential
- Just as important as any other academic subject areas
- Students apply academic lessons while playing
- Children learn best by being hands on
- Develop skills to be successful students
- Play can enhance curriculum

Q. 15: How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?

- Help the students master lessons.
- Free choice centers, morning meetings, recess
- Play dough, manipulatives and blocks for language and math skills
- Guided play and free play.
- Guided reading, Daily 5, science activities, math lessons and free center time
- All areas in the day can incorporate play

Q. 16: How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?

- Socialize appropriately with their peers
- Helps students learn how to share, empathize, take turns, and work together
- Students benefit from play time because they are able to socialize, communicate, solve problems and learn independence

- Students learn from each other
- Students explore, discover and learn as they interact with others
- Students develop coping skills
- Students get along better and empathize with each other

Q. 17: How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?

- All-inclusive toys throughout the day
- Engage students
- Guided and independent play
- Reinforce academic lessons
- Students can explore choice
- Games, blocks, Legos, paint and art material, and puzzles
- Play materials increased my children's engagement level

Q. 18: What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?

- Time and space
- Support from administration
- Students to be able to share and work closer together

Q. 19: What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?

- Play is necessary for social-emotional growth
- Play can enhance academic standards
- Incorporate play rather than paper pencil activities
- Students are happier, more engaged and behave better
- Stretched my thinking
- Think outside of the box to include more play opportunities beyond free play
- Increase playtime and still teach the academic standards
- Gained the ability to include play when planning for standards

Research Question #1

What are kindergarten teachers' perceptions of developmental play and its relationship to a child's social and emotional growth and development?

This question examined the participating kindergarten teachers' perceptions of developmental play within their classrooms. Additionally, this question investigated how a child's social and emotional growth and development are impacted by developmental play, according to the participants. The results indicate that the participating teachers perceive

developmental play as a significant component of a child's social and emotional growth and development. The inter-item analysis of the post-survey data indicated an “excellent” ($\alpha = .924$) reliability rating. Furthermore, the semi-structured questions' analysis identified themes such as: essential part of kindergarten, develops socialization, builds communication skills, teaches empathy, and builds confidence.

Research Question #2

What strategies and tools do kindergarten teachers need to promote developmental play in their classrooms?

This question explored the strategies and tools needed for the participants to incorporate developmental play in their classrooms. The pre-survey's semi-structured questions indicated that the participants lack administrative support, time to plan and prepare, and guidance in facilitating developmental play. The semi-structured questions in the post-survey indicated that time and administrative support are still essential needs. However, the analysis of the semi-structured question *Q. 18: What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?*, demonstrated that the participants' perception of what is necessary changed between the pre and post-survey. After the professional development, participants did not reference that guidance was needed to incorporate developmental play in the curriculum.

Research Question #3

How can professional development support kindergarten teachers with incorporating developmental play within their daily curriculum?

This question examined how developmental play professional development effects teachers' ability to integrate developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum. The results indicated that professional development focused on developmental play positively impacted the

participants' ability to include developmental play. *Q.19 What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?* identified themes from the post survey. These themes for this question include: gained the ability to include play when planning for standards, can see opportunities to incorporate play beyond free play, made me to think out of the box, and helped me to build engaging activities and lessons.

Summary of Results

The summary of the analyses of the pre-survey concluded that 55.54% of the participants *strongly agree*, 36.36% *agree*, and 9.09% *neither agree nor disagree* with the statement:

Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.

Seven out of eleven participants (27.27%) *strongly agree*, 63.63% *agree* and 9.09% *disagree* with the statement:

Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.

Two out of eleven participants (18.18%) of the participants *strongly agree*, 63.63% *agree*, 9.09% *neither agree nor disagree*, and 9.09% *disagree* with the statement:

Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.

Seven out of eleven participants (63.63%) *strongly agree* and 36.36% *agree* with the statements:

Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.

Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.

Five out of eleven participants (45.45%) *strongly agree*, 45.45% *agree*, and 9.09% *neither agree nor disagree* with the statement:

Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.

One participant out of eleven (9.09%) neither *agree nor disagree*, 54.54% participants *disagree*, and 36.36% *strongly disagree* with the statement:

Q.12: Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.

Seven out of eleven (63.63%) participants *agree*, 18.18% neither *agree nor disagree*, and 18.18% *disagree* with the statement:

Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play.

Additionally, the pre-survey suggest that the participants agreed that developmental play (Q. 14) is “extremely important” and “allows for exploration and discovery.” Participants responded that developmental play usually occurs (Q.15) “at the end of the day” or “during free choice center time. When asked *How developmental play impacts a child’s social and emotional growth?* (Q. 16), the participants stated “play benefits all aspects of social-emotional learning.” When asked, *How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?* (Q. 17), the participants stated they use “board games,” “blocks and Legos,” and “manipulatives.” When asked *What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental playtime in your classroom?* (Q. 18), the participants responded “time and,” “support from administration,” “engaging activities,” and “professional development.”

The summary of the analyses of the post-survey concluded that 80% of the participants *strongly agree* and 20% *agree* with the statements:

Q. 6: Kindergarten children learn best by playing.

Q. 7: Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.

Q. 8: I use developmental play as an instructional modality.

Q. 9: I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.

Q. 10: I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.

Q. 11: I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.

Forty percent (40%) of the participants *disagree* and 60% *strongly disagree* with the statement:

Q.12: Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.

Ten percent (10%) of the participants *strongly agreed*, 60% *agreed*, 10% neither *agreed nor disagreed*, and 20% *disagreed* with the statement:

Q. 13: My administration supports learning through developmental play.

Furthermore, the post-survey revealed the participants agreed that developmental play (Q. 14) is “essential” and “teach socialization, language skills, compromise, life lessons, and vocabulary development.” When asked *How developmental play impacts a child's social and emotional growth?* (Q. 16), the participants shared children learn to “socialize appropriately, communicate, solve problems and gain independence.” When asked, *How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?* (Q. 17), the participants stated they “incorporate free and guided play,” “engage students in new lessons,” and “reinforce standards taught.” When asked *What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental playtime in your classroom?* (Q. 18), the participants responded “time and space,” “support from the administration,” and “students need to share and work closer together.” Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and social distancing guidelines, working in close proximity is a challenge (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). The participants concurred that the (Q. 19) facilitation of the professional development on developmental play helped them incorporate play

in different curriculum areas. Themes identified concerning the professional development: play can enhance academic standards, play rather than paper-pencil activities, students are happier and more engaged, and stretched their thinking beyond free play.

The pre and post-survey data revealed that kindergarten teachers recognize the importance of developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum. Participants agreed that children learn best through play and that play is essential for social and emotional growth. However, the pre-survey data suggested that teachers lack time to prepare and approval from the administration team at their school. Additionally, the pre-survey data implied that the participants were only utilizing developmental play at the end of the school day, recess, or during a free-choice center time. The researcher designed the professional development as a result of this data. The professional development had a strong emphasis on including developmental play in all aspects of the curriculum. The post-survey data revealed that the participants became more comfortable incorporating developmental play to engage students in new lessons, help students master skills during morning meeting at the beginning of the day, and integrate play during Daily 5, math, and science lessons. The data collected and analyzed from this qualitative study supports that developmental play professional development impacts a teachers' ability to include more play activities and thus benefit the students' social and emotional growth.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

Social and emotional development is fundamental as children begin formal schooling. It is challenging for kindergarten teachers to incorporate social and emotional skills with demanding academic standards. This research provided a qualitative study that focused on the impact of professional development in developmental play and the participants' adeptness to include developmental play in activities and lessons. Additionally, this study examined the participants' perception of developmental play with students' social and emotional growth before and after the professional development sessions.

Summary of Results

At the start of this research study, eleven (11) kindergarten teachers consented to virtually, via Zoom, participate in three professional development workshops on developmental play. Teachers that are cognizant of the strategies to incorporate developmental play in the curriculum assist the students in building strong social and emotional skills (Pech, 2010). The data collected and analyzed in this research suggest that implementing developmental play strategies in kindergarten classrooms does have a positive impact on the students' social and emotional growth. Of the ten (10) participants that completed the professional development sessions and the post-survey, 100% either *strongly agreed or agreed* that developmental play is essential to a student's social and emotional growth and that guided and free play are crucial components in their curriculum. Additionally, themes discovered in this research revealed that the participants perceived developmental play supported their students' ability to socialize appropriately, share, empathize, work cooperatively, communicate, solve problems and learn independence.

Review of Methods and Variables

A qualitative research design was used to determine the impact that developmental play has on kindergarten students' social and emotional growth. Eleven (11) participants were recruited via a social media website. Eleven (11) participants completed a pre-survey on developmental play, its impact on students' social and emotional growth, and what is needed to provide purposeful developmental play in kindergarten classrooms. All of the participants attended the first developmental play professional development session via Zoom. One participant withdrew after the first professional development workshop due to personal reasons. Ten (10) participants attended the second and third professional development sessions via Zoom and completed the post-survey. The post-survey assessed the participants' perception of developmental play and its impact on their students' social and emotional growth. The surveys consisted of Likert scale and semi-structured type questions. Data collected from the pre and post-surveys were presented in tables and charts with a summary of overall results.

Discussion of Results

The pre-survey and post-survey results imply that the participants believe developmental play should be included throughout the kindergarten curriculum. Also, 100% of the participants agreed that developmental play could positively impact students' social and emotional development. The post-survey results indicate that the developmental play professional development sessions supported the participants in incorporating developmental play during the school day and positively impacted the students' social and emotional growth. As a kindergarten teacher, this researcher agrees with the participants in this study that developmental play encourages students to develop social and emotional skills to become successful students.

Kindergarten teachers must include developmental play in their curriculum to support this social and emotional growth.

The data collected and analyzed from this research study suggests that providing teachers with the tools and strategies required to incorporate developmental play supports teachers' ability to include purposeful developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum. The data collected also indicates that developmental play professional development workshops can impact students' social and emotional growth, according to the participants' perceptions. Creating a kindergarten curriculum that includes purposeful developmental play is critical in building the foundational skills needed to develop students' social and emotional growth.

Implications for Practice

Kindergarten is a critical year for cognitive and social development, a period when the most fundamental skills develop (Cook & Coley, 2017). Teachers are currently challenged to teach rigorous state standards and maintain the current playtime that children need to grow, mature, and develop social skills. Due to students' stress needing to master demanding curriculum at a very young age, teachers are forced to eliminate developmental play (Leech, 2016). However, research indicates that it is essential to include developmental play in the kindergarten curriculum (Cook & Coley, 2017). Based on this qualitative research study results, teachers perceive developmental play to be essential in supporting a child's social and emotional growth, and professional development can assist teachers in facilitating developmental play throughout the school day. This research study can help kindergarten teachers and school administrators develop a kindergarten curriculum that incorporates developmental play.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on this research study results, a developmental play reference guide for teachers to utilize while planning may be beneficial. Professional development might not be ideal for participants due to time and other obligations. Therefore, developing a reference guide may be advantageous.

Technology is continuously evolving, and teachers are relatively active on social media and blog sites. Establishing blogs, newsletters, or social media pages that share and demonstrate developmental play strategies may benefit teachers and parents.

The researcher also recommends further research on the impact developmental play has on kindergarten-aged students academically. Analyzing the effect that developmental play has on academic success may encourage school administrators to be more supportive in including it in the daily curriculum.

Summary

In summary, it is evident from this research that kindergarten teachers do value the impact that developmental play has on a students' social and emotional growth. Current research conducted by Emily Harper, and in consensus with this researcher's study, kindergarten children learn best through exploration, manipulation, and imagination during developmental playtime (Harper, 2019). The struggle teachers have in incorporating developmental play is integrating developmental play with demanding standards and support for developmental play from administrators. As noted in the literature review of this study, research is abundant in the relationship between developmental play and its impact on children's social and emotional growth. However, research also suggests that kindergarten classrooms have become increasingly similar in structure and focus to first-grade classrooms (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016).

Additionally, this researcher's work emphasized a significant decline in time spent on art, music, science, student-selected activities, and more time spent on standardized testing.

The data collected and analyzed in this study suggest that providing kindergarten teachers with professional development in developmental play can help plan and implement developmental play in the curriculum. Kindergarten teachers that participate in the training will see an increase in social and emotional development. Chart 2 (Question 16) reported that students immersed in play explore, discover, and learn as they interact with others. Professional development can also impact teachers' comfortability level in including developmental play. In Chart 2 (Question 19), participants remarked that professional development helped them think out of the box on including more play activities beyond free play. Additionally, participants observed that their students were happier and more engaged with integrating developmental play (Chart 2 Question 19).

This research study establishes that children need developmental play to develop critical 21st-century skills, such as problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity. This research corroborates that teachers who incorporate developmental play foster growth in their students' social and emotional skills. Developmental play exploration and facilitation must continue with current teachers, administrators, curriculum and district leaders, parents, and society as a whole. Play is more than just fun. Play is the gift of time for young learners- time to learn, time to help one another, time to listen, and above all, time to live in the moment as a kindergarten child.

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Appendix A: Email to Recruit Kindergarten Teachers

Dear Kindergarten Teacher,

I am currently working on my doctorate degree and I am very excited to share what I am working on with you! The purpose of my study is to explore incorporating developmental play in the current curriculum and how that can impact students' social and emotional growth. I will be creating professional development opportunities based on what you feel your needs are in the area of developmental play.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please feel free to reply to this message and I will give you more details. I look forward to working with you if you choose to participate! We will have a great time learning together!

Regards,

Amy Towne

Appendix B: Teacher Consent Form Consent to Participate

Study Title: Let Them Be Little: Teacher Perspectives on Developmental Play in Kindergarten

Researcher: Amy M Towne

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Susan Saint John

Researcher's Statement

I am inviting your voluntary participation in my dissertation study regarding developmental play in kindergarten classrooms. Please read the following information below, and if you choose to participate in this study, please sign on the appropriate line below.

The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide if you will participate in this study. You may ask questions about the purpose of the study, risks and benefits, expectations, and duration of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the importance of developmental play in kindergarten classrooms, how it correlates to social and emotional learning, as perceived by teachers, and to provide teachers with the tools and strategies needed to incorporate a meaningful developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum.

Study Procedures

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to attend a series of three professional development workshops. The professional development workshop will be bi-weekly over a period of six weeks. We will meet every other week for six consecutive weeks. Each professional development workshop will last for an hour. You will also be asked to complete a pre and post-survey that should take roughly 20 minutes to complete. The pre and post-survey will be distributed and completed in an electronic format on the Survey Monkey™ website.

All surveys will be confidential.

Duration of Participation and Compensation

The total duration of your participation will last for eight weeks, meeting once every other week for six weeks and then allowing two weeks for implementation of skills and strategies learned. There is no compensation for your participation.

Risks, Stress, or Discomfort

Minimal: The risks are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits of the Study

You will acquire knowledge about developmental play that may be useful when planning for your kindergarten curriculum.

Confidentiality

Any data collected during this research will not be associated with any of your personal information. Your personal data will only be accessible to the researcher, kept on a password protected computer, and will be deleted after 36 months. Your answers to survey questions will be stored for three years on a password protected computer and after that time will also be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the research study, you may contact Amy Towne phone: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] – email: atowne@email.lynn.edu. For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Jennifer Lesh, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects at jlesh@lynn.edu.

Participant's Statement

This study has been explained to me and I volunteer to participate in this study. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, or I wish to no longer participate, I can contact the researcher listed on the first page of this consent form. I can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

By signing this consent form I am attesting that I have read the information provided above and freely give my consent to participate.

Consent Agreement

Participant

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Researcher

Printed Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C: Pre-Survey**Part 1 Demographics:**

1. How would you describe your highest level of education?

BS/BA

MS/MA

MS+

PhD/EdD

2. How long have you been teaching?

Less than one year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10+ years

3. How long have you been teaching kindergarten?

Less than one year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10+ years

4. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Part 2

Please respond to the following statements by indicating your agreement in the appropriate box.

Response Answers:

Strongly Agree- 1

Agree- 2

Neither Agree or Disagree- 3

Disagree- 4

Strongly Disagree- 5

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
5. Kindergarten children learn best by playing.					
6. Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.					
7. I use developmental play as an instructional modality.					
8. I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.					
9. I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.					
10. I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.					
11. Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.					
12. My administration supports learning through developmental play.					

Part 3

Please answer the following questions.

13. How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?
14. How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?
15. How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?
16. How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?
17. What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?

Adapted from: An Investigation of How Kindergarten Teachers' Philosophy and Perceptions are Interrelated to the Actual Practice of Play in their Classrooms

Appendix D: Description of the Developmental Play Professional Development Workshops

The researcher created and facilitated three professional development workshops on developmental play in kindergarten classrooms. The professional development workshops were facilitated via Zoom. Each of the sessions lasted approximately one hour. The first professional development was conducted two weeks after the participants completed the pre-survey. The pre-survey was the driving force in creating the developmental play professional development workshops. Based on the needs of the participants, according to the pre-survey analysis, the three professional development workshops were:

- **What is Play?**

This session included: define play, define developmentally appropriate, define developmental play, describe the benefits of play, and explanation of essential needs. The session concluded with group discussions about what play current looks like in the participants' classrooms.

- **What Does Play Look Like?**

This session included: define free play and guided play, explanation of developmental play beyond free play, linking developmental play to the current kindergarten curriculum and standards, and what materials can be used that are already in the participants classrooms. The session ended with group discussions about one small thing that can be changed prior to the next professional development.

- **What is the Teacher's Role?**

This session included: participants sharing about how they are incorporating developmental play, planning for developmental play, various teacher roles during free

and guided play. This session ended with group discussions on the “ah-ha” each participant had during the professional development workshops.

Appendix E: Post-Survey**Part 1 Demographics:**

1. How would you describe your highest level of education?

BS/BA

MS/MA

MS+

PhD/EdD

2. How long have you been teaching?

Less than one year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10+ years

3. How long have you been teaching kindergarten?

Less than one year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-9 years

10+ years

4. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Part 2

Please respond to the following statements by indicating your agreement in the appropriate box.

Response Answers:

Strongly Agree- 1

Agree- 2

Neither Agree or Disagree- 3

Disagree- 4

Strongly Disagree- 5

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
5. Kindergarten children learn best by playing.					
6. Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.					
7. I use developmental play as an instructional modality.					
8. I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.					
9. I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.					
10. I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.					
11. Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.					
12. My administration supports learning through developmental play.					

Part 3

Please answer the following questions.

13. How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?
14. How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?
15. How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?
16. How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?
17. What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?

Adapted from: An Investigation of How Kindergarten Teachers' Philosophy and Perceptions are Interrelated to the Actual Practice of Play in their Classrooms

Appendix F: Individual Participant Data*Participant 1*

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Neither Agree or Disagree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Disagree	Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Disagree	Disagree

Participant 2

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Disagree	Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Agree

Participant 3

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Strongly Agree	Withdrew from Study
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Withdrew from Study
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Withdrew from Study
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Withdrew from Study
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Withdrew from Study
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Agree	Withdrew from Study
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Strongly Disagree	Withdrew from Study
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Withdrew from Study

Participant 4

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Agree

Participant 5

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Disagree	Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Disagree	Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Agree	Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Agree	Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree

Participant 6

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Agree	Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Agree	Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Agree	Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Agree	Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Agree

Participant 7

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Agree

Participant 8

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Agree

Participant 9

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Disagree	Disagree

Participant 10

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Disagree	Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Neither Agree or Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree

Participant 11

Survey Item	Pre-Survey Response	Post-Survey Response
Kindergarten children learn best by playing.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Developmental play is an important component in my curriculum.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I use developmental play as an instructional modality.	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel developmental play is important to a student's social and emotional growth.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have free play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel it is important to have guided play in my classroom.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Children have plenty of time to play at home so they do not need to play at school.	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My administration supports learning through developmental play.	Agree	Agree

Participant 1

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Extremely important . Many kids don't get to play as much as home as you think. They also learn a lot from their peers. They are also able to learn how to communicate and solve problems through play.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Center time
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	It is able to teach them how to socialize appropriately.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Center rotations
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Time and more engaging ideas

Participant 1

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Extremely important. It teaches kids how to socialize together, converse and it gives the ability to learn from each other.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Throughout the day. Opening lessons, guided game play, center time and free play
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	It helps them socialize appropriately with their peers.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I use play materials while teaching to help the kids master lessons.

What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	More time to lesson plan and more support from administration
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	I knew that play was important for social-emotional growth but the professional development helped me to understand why it is so important also academically.

Participant 2

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Play is an essential part of kindergarten play. They are learning life skills.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Last part of the day has free choice centers.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Students learn coping skills, conversational skills, cooperation, sharing, etc.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Variety of toys such as board games for all levels, ethnic dolls, legos, etc.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Time!

Participant 2

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Play is the most important part of the kindergarten curriculum. Play teaches the children valuable life lessons such as sharing, compromising, building imagination, etc.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Free choice centers, morning meetings, various lessons, recess

How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Developmental play helps students learn how to share, empathize, take turns, work together, treat others nicely, etc.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I incorporate all-inclusive toys throughout the day.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	More time!
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	I want to include more developmental play especially once I have in person learners again.

Participant 3

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Students need opportunity to play to learn
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	End of the day playtime like housekeeping
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	I believe it helps develop social and emotional skills
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Participant skipped this question.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	I need ideas to incorporate more play.

Participant 3

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Withdrew from study.

How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Withdrew from study.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Withdrew from study.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Withdrew from study.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Withdrew from study.
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	Withdrew from study.

Participant 4

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Very important. Children need to use their imaginations, learn problem solving skills, and develop language. This all happens through play.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I always have recess and inside play at the end of the day.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Play time benefits student's social and emotional growth.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Participant skipped this question.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Materials and time

Participant 4

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Children primarily learn through play activities. It is essential.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I have incorporated play with community helper toys and act out jobs we have discussed. We use play dough and blocks for letters, numbers, measuring. We use guided play and free play.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	I have seen the kids benefit from play time because they are able to socialize, communicate, solve problems and learn independence without asking for adult help.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I incorporate play materials to get the kids excited to learn new things, for guided and independent play.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Time and space
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	I enjoyed the pd because it made me think of more ways to incorporate play when I might have used worksheets before.

Participant 5

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Play is important but it usually takes a back seat to the academic curriculum. Kindergarten is very demanding now. Children need to learn how to read, write, add, subtract. The pressure is on to make sure students meet academic standards.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Recess

How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	It would benefit it if they had more time to interact with others through play.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I usually don't use play materials for instructional needs.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	I would need a model. I need to see how it works in a classroom and how I can have a balance of play and academics.

Participant 5

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	I am learning that play is just as important as any other academic subject area in a K curriculum. It gives the students real life opportunities to learn.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I first incorporated it into my social studies curriculum. I noticed how when they would play and pretend to be community workers, they learned how a community truly relies on each other.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Students learn from each other and have the chance to bring their own background into the situations. Emotionally, students learn how about others' cultures, learn how to better communicate and to be sympathetic
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I use play materials for free play and educational materials that are used during teacher facilitated guided play.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	I needed to learn from another teacher, like Amy, who had a system in place and the passion to make it work. I then realized I could incorporate the content area academic curriculum into play. After I realized that, I saw that I never really needed more time. I needed to just change the way I asked students to present their knowledge

What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	My students are quite happier and behave better having play incorporated into their daily routine. And when they are happy, they really learn so much more.
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Participant 6

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	I feel it is extremely important for children to play in Kindergarten.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	My students have free play at recess where they can interact with each other in and out of the classroom and have choice of the activities they wish to participate in.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Play benefits all aspects of SEL.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	We use blocks, manipulatives, learning games
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	I need time to develop models and activities

Participant 6

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Very important! This is where they learn social skills and how to interact appropriately with peers. They apply academic lessons while playing.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I incorporate developmental play in guided and free play each day.

How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Developmental play benefits my students' social and emotional growth in that they are able to explore and learn as they interact with others. They develop coping skills as well as communication skills.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I incorporate a lot of games in my center activities as well as free play so kids can explore choice and learn to love learning.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	In order to incorporate purposeful developmental play time in the classroom, I feel it is important to have a plethora of hands on materials such as blocks, cubes, dolls, play do, and many other toys for the students to choose from.
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	The professional development made an effect on the way I plan for standards and made me see opportunities to incorporate more play.

Participant 7

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Kindergarten children learn best through play.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I have a free choice time and the Daily 5 activities are like play in many regards.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Students can make lifelong friends.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Solving problems through play with Legos, blocks...
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	The encouragement of administration.

Participant 7

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	I feel play is very important. Kindergarten children learn best by being hands on and playing.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I incorporate developmental play during my guided reading Daily 5, science activities, math lessons and free choice time.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Children learn social emotional skills while working cooperatively and playing.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Games, blocks, Legos, paint and art material, puzzles..
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Administration to see and understand the benefit of developmental play.
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	I have always used play time in my class. However, as the years go on we seem to use it less and less. The training helped me to remember ways to bring it back in to the curriculum.

Participant 8

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	It is extremely important for Kinders to get that time to play. It allows for exploration and discovery.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	This is my first year in kindergarten, but I am aware of the lack thereof.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Developmental play benefits social and emotional growth. Not only is it an outlet or a time of discovery and exploration, but it allows educators to see how students interact with others.

How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I am currently using the pool noodle desk drumming and students really enjoy it.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	A curriculum with a teacher guide and some professional development would be useful.

Participant 8

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	I feel that play is an essential part of a kindergarten students curriculum.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	This is my first year in kindergarten. I felt unsure of it in the beginning. However, now I can see that areas in my day can incorporate play easily. I think I need more time to be completely comfortable with it.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Over the last few weeks, while letting the students have open-ended free play, I have noticed they are solving each other's problems, getting along well and empathizing with each other.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I have been incorporating play materials during my math block. We have had several opportunities to include materials (legos, buttons, blocks) while learning math standards.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Time! I am currently teaching in a hybrid model and I look forward to my students coming back face to face.
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	The professional development really helped me to stretch my thinking. I know that I need more time to develop lessons. However, I have been including play during math and I also make sure that I have a free play time each day. Now when the students are at free

play, I observe more and I have learned more about my students.

Participant 9

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Very important. Children learn through play and fun. In kindergarten they should learn to love school and learning - And if they aren't having fun they will learn to dislike it
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Afternoons are for free choice play.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Learning language during free play helps them become more confident. Social skills learned will help them as well.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	Play dough can be used for letters and numbers. Many toys can be used for sorting, size and shape. Science with physical properties etc.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Organized play materials and more time allowed for it.

Participant 9

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Very important. It is how children learn and develop skills to be successful students.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I have started utilizing more play materials during my math time. I hope to include it more as I feel more comfortable. I also do free choice play in the afternoons.

How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Social-emotional growth is improved during play. Language skills, social skills and listening skills.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I have started using play materials to introduce new lessons. Using them has increased my children's engagement level.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	A supportive administrator
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	I enjoyed the PDs. It made me think outside of the box to include more play opportunities.

Participant 10

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	I feel that developmental play is very important. Not only can students improve their social skills, they can also improve their academics.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I have time set aside in the afternoon, usually about 15-20 minutes, for them to select a free choice play center. Examples are housekeeping, puzzles, technology, using play dough.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Developmental play benefits my students' social and emotional growth because they are learning essential life skills while they are pretending and playing.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	One example is that I use play dough for them to build high frequency words so they will put the words to memorization.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	A supportive administrator

Participant 10

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	I think it essential for all students to engage in developmental play. It is important for their social/emotional well-being and help develop their social skills with their peers- their ability to take turns, share, engage in conversations to develop their vocabulary academics, and language skills.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I still do include free choice centers. Over the last several weeks I have been including different play activities during my reading and math block.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Developmental play definitely benefits my students' social and emotional growth. They will be able to enhance and develop their social skills with their peers by learning how to take turns, share materials, and develop patience and increase their confidence in themselves.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I have been using play dough, colored beads, magnetic letters, blocks, etc. during my math and reading block. I look forward to the students being able to collaborate more after COVID.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	I currently have 17 kindergarten students in my class that are social distancing. I have set up small buckets with individual play materials. It will be easier to incorporate developmental play in my activities when students can share and work together. Also, time to plan meaningful lessons.
What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation?	The developmental play professional developments helped me to think of different ways to keep students engaged while learning rather than using paper pencil activities.

Participant 11

Pre-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Extremely Many children do not get the opportunity to play at home or do they have the right guidance to do so. I believe children also learn more by doing.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	Centers, Math manipulatives, free play
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	It helps them develop social skills And helps reinforce instructional material.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I use lots of math manipulatives to enforce lessons taught. I also use different materials in centers for reinforcement and development of skills.
What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom?	Manipulatives, toys, letter activities, puppets

Participant 11

Post-Survey Semi-structured Question	Answer
How important do you feel play is in a kindergarten curriculum? Why?	Very important. Many of my students have other students they play with at home. Play can enhance our curriculum.
How do you incorporate developmental play into the kindergarten curriculum?	I have added guided play during my Daily 5.
How does developmental play benefit or hinder your students' social and emotional growth?	Play increases students awareness of others and teaches them how to socialize appropriately.
How do you utilize play materials to meet the instructional needs of your students?	I continue to use play materials to reinforce and I am beginning to use play materials when introducing new activities.

What do you need to incorporate a purposeful developmental play time in your classroom? More play materials!

What impact did the developmental play professional development have on your planning and implementation? The trainings helped me to see how I can increase playtime and still teach the skills I need to teach.

Appendix G: IRB Approval

**Institutional Review Board**

3601 North Military Trail
Boca Raton, FL 33433
T: 561-237-7082
561-237-7000 | lynn.edu
Jennifer J. Lesh, PhD, Chair

DATE: 10/16/2020

TO: Amy M. Towne
FROM: Jennifer Lesh
PROJECT NUMBER: 20.03

PROTOCOL TITLE: Let Them Be Little: Teacher Perspectives on Developmental Play in Kindergarten
PROJECT TYPE: New Project

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: 10/16/2020
EXPIRATION DATE: 10/16/2021

Thank you for your submission for this research study. The Lynn University IRB has APPROVED your New Project. This approval is in accordance with 45 CFR §46.111 Criteria for IRB approval of research. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

It is important that you retain this letter for your records and present upon request to necessary parties.

- This approval is valid for one year. **IRB Form 4: Application to Continue (Renew) a Previously Approved Project** will be required prior to the expiration date if this project will continue beyond one year.
- Please note that any revision to previously approved materials or procedures must be approved by the IRB before it is initiated. Please submit **IRB Form 5 Application for Procedural Revisions of or Changes in Research Protocol and/or Informed Consent Form 1 of a Previously Approved Project** for this procedure.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events must be reported to the IRB. Please use **IRB Form 6 Report of Unexpected Adverse Event, Serious Injury or Death** for this procedure.
- At the completion of your data collection, please submit **IRB Form 8 IRB Report of Termination of Project**.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact the chair of the Lynn University IRB, Jennifer Lesh (jlesh@lynn.edu).

Institutional Review Board
Lynn University
3601 North Military Trail
Boca Raton, FL 33433
T: 561-237-7407
561-237-7000 | lynn.edu