Child’s Play: A Catalyst for Literacy and Numeracy Learning

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Background:
Using our knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices is recommended by numerous researches when we aim for effective work with young children. When this lens is used in planning classroom experiences, play evidently plays a central role in the picture. However, orchestrating meaningful play experiences for young children still proves to be a constant challenge to teachers.

Problem:
What play-oriented activities can be designed to develop literacy and numeracy skills among primary school learners?

Methodology:
Play-oriented lessons were planned and delivered to kindergarten and primary classes during the supervised internship of undergraduate education students enrolled in a Play course at the UP College of Education. One of the important guidelines in planning and creating the literacy and numeracy activities was to observe children in their natural and spontaneous experiences, including play episodes. Being sensitive and sharp as to how they go about their daily routines gave insights on how classroom activities may be transformed into “fun learning moments”. A continuum of teacher-directed to child-initiated play in varied forms were documented: teacher-directed play to guided play to spontaneous play.

Sample Play Activities/ Resources:

• Teacher-Directed Play
  ✓ Pass the Message Relay: Note the story character based on the description given in the message. (Comprehension)
  ✓ Banana Peel: Creating Character Profiles (Comprehension)

• Guided Play
  Teacher Directed Play: Catch a Star & Read: Match with the Picture
  Guided Play: Throw the Cube & Match with the Phrase
  Picture/ Word Puzzles and Roulettes (Vocabulary Building)

• Spontaneous Play
  Open the Filing Cabinet & Read
  Match and Hang the Clothes (Antonyms)
  Open the Egg: Create a Sentence

Conclusion:
Play is the main avenue through which children explore and discover their environment. When developmentally appropriate activities were designed with this in mind, their appeal to young children became a catalyst, which extended to an understanding and development of literacy and numeracy concepts.