

Play Continuum of Complexity

COOPERATIVE PLAY

- Cooperative play involves a high degree of complexity.
- Children share materials.
- Work together to create a theme and storyline for the play.
- Pretend and adopt roles to carry out the play and assign roles to others.
- For example, children in the cooperative stage might bring all the trucks together to play mechanic shop. Children assign each other trucks to play and work together to designate trucks as “the fast one” or “the flying one”.
- Children are often represented at a preoperational cognitive stage in which they represent things with words and images, they are egocentric.

ASSOCIATIVE PLAY

- During associative play, children interact frequently and share materials.
- Children display interest in the play of others but maintain distinctly different storylines and themes.
- Manipulate objects to construct or create.
- For example: children demonstrating associative play might work on individual writing projects side-by-side. The children share materials but create individual products and narrate different stories about their artwork.

PARALLEL PLAY

- Children exhibiting parallel play sit near each other and use the same types of toys.
- The focus of each child remains on their own individual play.
- Children talk aloud to each other, though not about the same topic.
- For example, one child dressing a baby doll might sit near another child feeding a doll pretend food. The first child might announce the baby wears a pink hat, while the second child might reply that the grapes are all gone.
- New children to the classroom might play side by side but not know how to initiate talk or have the language to initiate play with other child.

SOLITARY PLAY

- The child plays with toys alone and with some degree of focus.
- The child pays little attention to the play of other children, although they may occasionally interact by taking a toy.
- For example a child demonstrating solitary play might repeatedly fill and empty a bucket with wooden blocks.
- A child new to the classroom or multilingual learner may find a defined space to play alone with a high degree of focus.
- This may include infants and toddlers at the sensorimotor stage: experience play through sensory stimulation through repetitive muscular movements.

ONLOOKER BEHAVIOR

- Watches the play of others but does not enter into the activity with others.
- May offer comments or laugh with other children but does not join in play with others.
- For example, the child follows an adult, talks to other children or simply sits and listens. A child in the onlooker stage might turn their head to follow another child playing with a ball. The child does not play with or reach toward the ball and remains.

PRE-PLAY BEHAVIORS

- Aggression includes territorial and/or dominance behavior with another child. It includes; hitting, kicking, grabbing, threatening.
- Rough and tumble involves playful or mock fighting, running around in a non-organized fashion or playful physical contact.
- Anxious behaviors include crying and whining.