

## Purposeful Play at Greytown School 2020

### Philosophy

At Greytown School, we believe in the power of PURPOSEFUL PLAY which is based on research into Play-based Learning, the Power of Provocations, Inquiry learning, Big Concept and Design Thinking.

Play is important as it is the natural platform for children's learning. It allows children to engage with activities, materials and others to make sense of themselves and the world around them at their own developmentally appropriate stage.

Play lowers children's anxiety and opens children up to learn and practice important life skills: Decision making, problem-solving, taking risks, collaborating, innovating, curiosity, creativity, dexterity, imagination, perseverance, cognitive and emotional strength and confidence....



*Free play "is critical for becoming socially adept, coping with stress and building cognitive skills such as problem-solving" (The Serious Need for Play, 2009).*

Teachers provide provocations alongside children's "free" or "self-directed" play that are purposeful. These relate to real-life contexts, imaginative contexts and/or our schoolwide inquiry learning themes. Many of these provocations are also inspired by children's thinking and curiosity.



The provocations are designed to inspire children to learn and explore the world around them, while also giving teachers the chance to provide some frontloading for future learning in other areas (ie: Teachers set up a variety of local community areas for a Big Concept Learning unit - Provocations are set up around 'What does a town need to have in order to be a town? Can you design your own town...what would you include? ...Needs versus Wants...etc)

*"When we create provocations for learners, we "provoke" and inspire the beginning of exploration...children can explore more deeply what they think they know, expand their knowledge ....and unlock completely new interests or curiosities"*

(□ Learning)

### Our Approach

In our Kōwhai Syndicate, our purposeful play and targeted teaching approach are based on the core elements of the Walker Learning Approach (WLA). This philosophy and evidence-based pedagogy has been tested using an 'action research model' for over 15 years in a variety of schools with active research underpinning it.

## Integration into our Kōwhai school day.

We integrate purposeful play in two ways.

The first way is we deliberately start each day with our Purposeful Play session. Here children move around the indoor and outdoor learning spaces until morning tea time. During this time we have a focus group of children which teachers work more intensely with, however, they still interact and scaffold other children's learning.



The other way is once children have finished more structured learning throughout the day they have the option of going back and continuing their purposeful play.

## Implementation Core elements

The Purposeful Play session is structured around the following non-negotiables and core elements. These are

- A **Tuning In** phase where
  - Teachers assign roles to a Reporter and a Photographer
  - 3 focus children daily whom the teachers engage with during the child's choice of play
- **Investigation** phase - the heart of Purposeful Play
- A **Reflection** phase where the Reporter, Photographer and focus children report back on their learning to the class.

*The majority of this information is taken directly from Play Matters (1) pp 26-29*

Each school day will start with Purposeful Play Investigations.

- ★ **Investigations** are active, hands-on experiences that have been planned intentionally by the teacher(s), building on the emergent (children's interests) and the core (school/community/NZ) curriculum. Investigations use the [GTS Inquiry model IDEAS](#)



- ★ **Tuning In** takes place during the first 20 minutes of the day. There are 4 parts to Tuning-In:
  - welcome and admin (include karakia and school song)
  - reflection and revision of literacy and numeracy learning intentions
  - focus children, reporter and recorder are scaffolded in front of the class
  - intentional dispersal of other students.



- ★ **Investigation** (45+ minutes) Teacher works with the focus children, reporter and recorder and scaffolds children who need support or extension.
- ★ **Reflection** occurs in the final 15 - 20 minutes at the end of the session. There are 4 parts to Reflection:
  - focus children, reporter and recorder are scaffolded in front of the class - children may ask questions
  - The teacher models particular skills from investigations
  - Freebies (2-3 children chosen to share with the class to demonstrate a skill or learning they have used during the investigation time).
  - Re-set packing away ready for the next session of learning.

### Focus children

Each child will be a focus child for the whole day every two weeks. A roster is displayed so teachers, students and whānau know who the focus children are each day. This roster will be displayed beside the SOI (Statement of Intent).



There are also focus student roles: **Reporter and Photographer**. These are **teacher-directed** roles. The teacher introduces the task/s and requirements at Tuning-In.

**Reporter:** The purpose is for the child to look on, talk with, listen and respond to classmates and then to report back to the class. They initially use pen and clipboard to record their findings, and then as they become confident they will share orally with no notes. The reporter's task is set by the teacher, personalised for their current learning needs. The reporter only needs to carry out this task for part of the Investigation time.

**Photographer:** This role is also similar to the reporter, to look on, talk with, listen and respond to classmates and then to report back to the class. The task is set by the teacher personalised for their current learning needs. The photographer also reports back to the class via photos taken.

The reporter and the photographer stand in front of the class during Tuning-In so they can share their learning, observations etc as well as giving the teacher time to scaffold what they are currently learning/working on for the next investigation phase.

The teacher will scaffold and model learning that follows the **authentic interest** of the child. Other children may ask questions or offer suggestions.

Focus children spend time with the teacher during the Investigation phase. This ensures relationship building, personalised scaffolding and time for the teacher to get to know more about the child.

### References

1. Play Matters 2nd Ed, Investigating learning for preschool to Grade 2. Walker K. ACER Press 2018