

Importance of play school in child development

Mamta Maheshwari

Ph.D Scholer

Introduction: - play school

A play school is a place where around 10-20 children spend 1-2 hours each day under the supervision of a couple of teachers. "The supervisor-child ratio should ideally be around 1:10". The play schools have a lot to offer, and that the play schools should not be aimed at developing academic skills like reading and writing. There should be no set goals or any stress on performance; the focus should be on the sensory-motor development and the social development of the child. I am very much an advocate of play schools since they develop age-appropriate behavior at the right time.

A. Concept of play school

1. The Importance of Play Schools

This is the first exercise in which children are separated from the comfort and secure zone of their parents. Therefore, it has to be a place which is a second home to the child; a place, which has enough material to attract and make the child feel comfortable and secure.

This is the first place where the child builds his/her self-esteem. A child learns the importance of his own name, things and friends. Every child learns to communicate with his teachers and fellow students in the Pre School. It is the right place for the child's foundation for lifelong progress. The skills and knowledge that the child

develops in the Pre School have a great impact on the aptitude and attitude of the child later in life.

Researches on Pre School education have shown that children taught at an early age usually have improved social skills, fewer behavioral problems and better grades without special and attention. Self confidence gained by learning in a playful manner adds to the personality development of the child. The child's positive learning attitude, the basic foundation in language, comprehension and management, help the teacher facilitate the child's learning at kindergarten and higher levels of education.

Moreover childhood education specialists claim that young children learn best when they have an opportunity to interact with their peers, and their parents and instructors treat them kindly. They bloom well in a tension free environment. Besides they comprehend and learn things better if they are introduced to new things in small portions.

2. Salient features of a preschool

- A good head start for learning
- Teaching in a fun filled way play method
- Putting children on a path of lifelong learning
- Higher development in language and mathematical skills.

- A great opportunity to develop social skills.
- Exposure to enhance communication skills.

3. Learning goals in a Preschool

- Children learn a great deal in preschool. The emphasis is on the cognitive development of the child as learning is due to practice and interaction in a big group.
- Social interaction is the second most important feature of Preschool education. The kids learn to interact with children of their own age in a supervised environment.
- Playing with mud, holding crayons, practicing free coloring and writing on board helps in motor development of the children. Both fine motor & gross motor development takes place by the various activities performed in the classroom under the supervision of trained teachers.
- The child is prepared for the curriculum of the structured schools.
- They learn to identify their belongings like their own bag, tiffin, napkin and water bottle. These are the real treasures of the children of this age.
- The children are involved in oral activities like poem recitation, storytelling, role-playing, singing songs, hymns and prayers. All these activities help in improving their oratory skills.

They learn to speak in groups. They also develop the confidence of speaking in front of small groups. Repeated recitations of poems and story enactments on stage.

- Children get toilet trained.
- Time management is another important feature of preschool. Children learn assembly time, circle time, play time, tiffin time, story time and fun time.
- Phonological awareness – is the most important feature of preschool education. Children learn to identify the sounds of the alphabet. They learn to recognize the alphabet by listening to the sound.
- Pre writing skills developed by the use of coloring with crayons and writing on blackboard with chalk in free style manner.

4. Basic essential facilities provided by a preschool

- ❖ A neat and hygienic environment.
- ❖ Trained soft speaking teachers.
- ❖ Semi-skilled helpers.
- ❖ Colorful classrooms.
- ❖ Plenty of toys bicycles and block building games.
- ❖ A rest corner in the classroom.
- ❖ Drawing black or green boards.
- ❖ Sand pits.
- ❖ Play ground.
- ❖ Flash cards to identify letters, animals, vegetables and colours.

- ❖ Close proximity from home.
- ❖ Good and safe transport facility.
- ❖ Good and clean toilets.
- ❖ Clean and filtered drinking water.
- ❖ Restricted working hours (working not more than 5 days a week and not more than 3 to 4 hours in a day.)

One of the most important cognitive shifts in the preschool years that occur between three- to four-year-olds is the development of symbolic thought. Symbolic thought is the ability to mentally or symbolically represent concrete objects, actions, and event.

5. Operate the playschool

"Every child brought its potty to school and was trained by the supervisors to use it. At this stage, children learn best by observation. At home, this kind of learning is not at an optimum level. In a play school the supervisors focus on teaching children the age-appropriate behaviors through observation and imitation."

The school has a language and listening room, a motor skills room and a drama and theatre room. In the motor skills room for instance, children are made to pour water from one tumbler into another and then repeat this exercise using a funnel. Another activity is 'fishing'. Here, children are given magnetic rods using which they 'fish' for cardboard fish with metal tags. In the drama and theatre room, nursery rhymes are enacted and the children participate in role-play exercises."

6. Benefits of play school: Learning

Most parents give their children plenty of attention in terms of looking after their basic

needs and showering them with toys to entertain them. In play schools, however, children are provided with the 'right' toys, i.e. those appropriate to their stage of development. Also, their play is guided so that it becomes a learning experience. The idea is that children should transfer play behaviors such as feeding a doll, changing its clothes, etc. to themselves, and thus develop self-help skills. The thinking is that if a child can go through the motions of feeding a doll, it will soon learn to feed itself.

7. Benefits of play school: Free Play

The school as an open room full of toys and with two supervisors. "Initially, the mothers were allowed to sit inside, but we were advised that if we had a good maid, it would be good enough if she waited outside. The children are not forced to do anything. They can play with any of the toys as they wish. For instance, if they are playing with a train, the teachers will sing a song about a train with actions."

8. Benefits of play school: Reduces Separation Anxiety

Play schools prepare children for their entry into formal school. The first day of school can be quite traumatic for a child. Suddenly, he is thrust into a strange world from the warm cocoon that is home. At the age of three or four when the child goes to school for the first time, a lot is expected of him. Bawling children, clinging to their parents on the first day of school is a common sight. Play school helps minimize separation anxiety. Feels that play schools prepare children to face the world, as they are more self-confident and

independent; they have improved interpersonal skills and better vocabulary.

9. Benefits of play school: Meeting other Parents

Children are not the only ones who benefit from play schools. They provide parents with an external support system in terms of enhancing the child's developmental skills. In addition, parents get an opportunity to interact with other parents and keep in touch with different approaches to parenting. Parents also have a chance to observe other children and thus have a point of reference for judging their own child's behavior. Parents can approach the trained supervisors for advice if they are facing any problems with their child at home. In other words, play schools widen parenting horizons.

B. Impact of play school

[1]. Impact on child

➤ Preschool is an opportunity for growth

Preschool is their first experience in a structured setting with teachers and groups of children. It's an opportunity to learn to share, follow instructions, and begin the foundation for learning that will occur in elementary school.

➤ Preschool prepares children for kindergarten

A preschool, parents aren't forced to choose between protecting a child's play time and making sure she's ready for kindergarten. A high-quality early childhood education program will offer children both.

➤ Preschool promotes social and emotional development

Children thrive when there is consistency in care between home and school. In high-quality preschools, teachers value parents as the experts on their children. Parents get daily reports on their child's activities and regular meetings are scheduled for more in-depth conferences with staff. Teachers strive to understand and respect parents' child-rearing goals and values.

➤ The preschool environment is structured, although it may not appear that way

A highly structured environment helps young children learn to make friends and play well with others.

➤ Children get to make choices

Children have several choices of activities; a child who is wandering aimlessly is encouraged to choose one that interests him. Teachers are alert to a child who can't figure out how to enter other children's play and may offer him suggestions on ways to join the group.

➤ Children learn to take care of themselves and others

Children's sense of competence and self-worth grow as they learn to take care of themselves and help others. Teachers appeal to a young child's desire to engage in "real work" by offering him chances to help out in the classroom. Teachers also encourage a child to view herself as a resource for other children. Throughout their school years, much of

children's learning will take place in the company of their peers.

➤ **Preschool promotes language and cognitive skills**

Preschool-age children's language skills are nurtured in a "language-rich" environment. Between the ages of 3 and 5, a child's vocabulary grows from 900 to 2,500 words, and her sentences become longer and more complex. In a conversational manner, teachers help children stretch their language skills by asking thought-provoking questions and introducing new vocabulary during science, art, snack time, and other activities. Children have many opportunities to sing, talk about favorite read-aloud books, and act out stories.

➤ **Preschool teachers nurture a child's curiosity**

Teachers observe, ask questions and listen to children's ideas during these activities — "correct" answers are not the goal. To nurture their curiosity and motivation to learn, teachers use children's interests and ideas to create activities.

➤ **Preschool activities boost pre-math and literacy skills**

To prepare children for the academic demands of kindergarten, teachers offer a wide variety of games and activities that help children acquire the pre- math and literacy skills.

Singing an alphabet song while following along in a picture book builds a child's awareness of the connections between alphabet letters and word sounds. Learning rhymes and chants helps them to notice the distinct sounds within words.

Matching games, sorting games, counting games, and board games build children's understanding of number, categories and sequence, which supports later math learning. Putting together puzzles encourages children to notice patterns, plan ahead and problem-solve.

➤ **Preschool helps develop motor skills**

Physical coordination improves, allowing the child to explore her environment — and to challenge herself-in new ways. Young children are in motion for a good part of the day. Preschool programs provide several opportunities daily for children to run, climb, and play active games. Activities are offered to help children develop fine motor skills.

➤ **Child physical development**

While all children need active play for healthy physical development, the physical benefits are particularly valuable for children with joint or muscular illnesses, such as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis. These children cannot engage in repeated strenuous exercise. Side benefits of active play for these children include the development of social skills and an increasing ability to endure stressful situations.

➤ **Child creative development**

The play context is ideal for supporting children's creative and imaginative thought because it offers a risk-free environment. Research supports the notion that play and creative thought are related behaviors because they both rely on children's ability to use symbols. The ability to engage in make-believe is essential to children's developing the ability to create internal imagery, stimulate curiosity, and experiment with alternative

responses to different situations. This capacity, practiced in play settings, enhances children's ability to engage successfully in new situations.

[2]. Impact on play school on parenthood:

In the midst of so many conflicting messages about what parents should do to prepare their child for what is perceived to be an increasingly complicated, competitive world, pediatricians have a natural role to serve as caring, objective child professionals with whom parents can discuss their approach to child rearing and reflect on their own desires for their children. Because pediatricians have a unique and important role in promoting the physical, emotional, and social well-being of children and adolescents, it is important that they promote strategies that will support children to be resilient and to reduce excessive stressors in their lives.

- Pediatricians can promote free play as a healthy, essential part of childhood. They should recommend that all children are afforded ample, unscheduled, independent, onscreen time to be creative, to reflect, and to decompress. They should emphasize that although parents can certainly monitor play for safety, a large proportion of play should be child driven rather than adult directed.
- Pediatricians should emphasize the advantages of active play and discourage parents from the overuse of passive entertainment (e.g. television and computer games).
- Pediatricians should emphasize that active child-centered play is a time-tested way of producing healthy, fit young bodies.

- Pediatricians should emphasize the benefits of “true toys” such as blocks and dolls, with which children use their imagination fully, over passive toys that require limited imagination.
- Pediatricians can educate families regarding the protective assets and increased resiliency developed through free play and some unscheduled time.
- Pediatricians can reinforce that parents who share unscheduled spontaneous time with their children and who play with their children are being wonderfully supportive, nurturing, and productive.
- Pediatricians can discuss that, although very well intentioned, arranging the finest opportunities for their children may not be parents' best opportunity for influence and that shuttling their children between numerous activities may not be the best quality time. Children will be poised for success, basking in the knowledge that their parents absolutely and unconditionally love them. This love and attention is best demonstrated when parents serve as role models and family members make time to cherish one another: time to be together, to listen, and to talk, nothing more and nothing less. Pediatricians can remind parents that the most valuable and useful character traits that will prepare their children for success arise not from extracurricular or academic commitments but from a firm grounding in parental love, role modeling, and guidance.
- Pediatricians should be a stable force, reminding parents that the cornerstones of parenting—listening, caring, and guiding

through effective and developmentally appropriate discipline—and sharing pleasurable time together are the true predictors of childhood, and they serve as a springboard toward a happy, successful adulthood.

- Pediatricians should help parents evaluate the claims made by marketers and advertisers about the products or interventions designed to produce super-children.
- Pediatricians should emphasize the proven benefits of reading to their children, even at very early ages.
- Pediatricians can be available to parents as sounding boards to help parents evaluate the specific needs of their child in terms of promoting resiliency, developing confidence and competence, and ultimately enhancing that child's trajectory toward a successful future.
- Pediatricians can support parents to organize playgroups beginning at an early preschool age of approximately 2.5 to 3 years, when many children move from parallel play to cooperative play in the process of socialization.
- Pediatricians can advocate for developing "safe spaces" in under resourced neighborhoods, perhaps by opening school, library, or community facilities to be used by children and their parents after school hours and on weekends.
- Pediatricians can educate themselves about appropriate resources in their own community that foster play and healthy child development and have this information available to share with parents.
- Pediatricians should support children having an academic schedule that is appropriately challenging and extracurricular exposures that offer appropriate balance. What is appropriate has to be determined individually for each child on the basis of their unique needs, skills, and temperament, not on the basis of what may be overly pressurized or competitive community standards or a perceived need to gain college admissions.
- Pediatricians should encourage parents to allow children to explore a variety of interests in a balanced way without feeling pressured to excel in each area. Pediatricians should encourage parents to avoid conveying the unrealistic expectation that each young person needs to excel in multiple areas to be considered successful or prepared to compete in the world. In parallel, they should promote balance in those youth who are strongly encouraged to become expert in only 1 area (eg, a particular sport or musical instrument) to the detriment of having the opportunity to explore other areas of interest.
- As parents choose child care and early education programs for their children, pediatricians can reinforce the importance of choosing settings that offer more than "academic preparedness." They should be guided to also pay attention to whether the settings attend to the social and emotional developmental needs of the children.
- Pediatricians can join with other child professionals and parents to advocate for educational settings that promote optimal

academic, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development for children and youth.

- Pediatricians should assess their patients for the manifestations of stress, anxiety, and depression in family-centered interviews for children and privately conducted interviews with adolescents.
- Because stress often manifests with physical sensations, pediatricians should be highly sensitized to stress as an underlying cause of somatic illness.
- Pediatricians should refer to appropriate mental health professionals when children or their parents show signs of excessive stress, anxiety, or depression.

[3]. Impact on play school on society

A growing body of research literature finds that in addition to improved physical health, sport plays a primarily positive role in youth development, including improved academic achievement, higher self-esteem, fewer behavioral problems, and better psychosocial. Many studies focus on the effects of sport on the five competence, confidence, connections, character, and caring which are considered critical components of positive youth development. It has long been thought that the many facets of playing sport the discipline of training, learning teamwork, following the leadership of coaches and captains, learning to lose provide lifelong skills for athletes.

C. Significance of play schools

❖ Mode of preparation for school

Often children exhibit various fussy and demanding attitudes while going to school in the

initial days. Sending kids to playschools helps in overcoming such behaviors. The first step of a playschool is to train kids to face the outside world of development. Kids sent to playschool display better results in studies and other activities as against kids who have never been to a playschool.

❖ Development of social life

Attending a play school enables kids to mingle with other school mates, thereby improving their social life. As a result, kids are in a better position to cooperate and handle situations faced by them in future.

❖ Interaction with other kids

While being at a playschool, a child learns to interact and converse with other children. In due course, he/she learns to enjoy the company of other children of the same age group. Surrounded by children, kids will learn to be happier, thereby developing and improving their mental ability and growth.

❖ Learn while you play

Play schools do not emphasize on delivering knowledge to children and testing them through exams and tests. The very word 'playschool' implies 'playing at school'. They are taught nursery rhymes and other lessons through play and fun activities. Thus, with many involving activities around, kids are able to learn faster than during school days.

❖ Reduction of separation

While some kids easily mingle with other people and kids, some are too attached to their parents and refuse to leave their mommy's or daddy's arms even for a few minutes. This characteristic is gradually reduced at playschools by indulging such kids in various entertaining and creative activities. With this, they learn to stay away from their homes and parents, in particular.

❖ Meet other parents

Kids are not the only ones who benefit from playschools. Parents, too, are supported by receiving guidelines to enhance their kid's developmental skills. Sending kids to a playschool gives an opportunity to parents to interact with one another and find various innovative ways for parenting. Further, they can approach supervisors or trainers at playschools regarding problems faced by them with their kids. In short, play schools widen parenting horizons.

Reference

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