

Play-based Learning: The What, Why and How

Birth to Three Continuity Project



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Introductions:

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Science of Learning

Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2015

- Learning occurs best when children are *mentally active* (not passive)
- *Engaged* (not distracted)
- *Socially interactive* (with peers or adults)
- Building *meaningful connections* to their lives

STATIONERY STORE





Research on Play-based Kindergarten

Children in play-based kindergartens have a double advantage over those who are denied play: they end up equally good or better at reading and other intellectual skills, and they are more likely to become well-adjusted healthy people.

Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School, 2009

Ideal Classroom

- Academic content is embedded in meaningful everyday experiences.
- Children are actively engaged, playing and working with materials and other children.
- Children have access to materials. They are not all doing the same thing at the same time.
- Teacher works with individuals, small group , and whole group at times. There is a balance of activities.
- Children's original artwork and writing is displayed.



Ideal Classroom

- Children work on projects and have time to play and explore for long periods of time.
- Children have time to play outside every day, weather permitting.
- Teachers read to children throughout the day.
- Curriculum is adapted to the needs of the students.
- Children and their parents look forward to school.

Take a break.

You deserve it!



Environment

- Note electrical outlets, windows, doors, sinks, storage space
- Moveable furnishings
- Traffic flow
- Quiet and noisy areas
- Floor coverings
- Decide which areas need table/chairs
- Safety: full view

Environment

- Whole Group area
- Areas for independent and small work
- Spaces defined and labeled
- Well organized and free of clutter
- Materials labeled, accessible to children
- Meaningful, purposeful print
 - Child's eye level
 - Updated regularly
 - Includes children's work

Whole Group Area

A Whole Group Meeting area for building community and conducting whole-group instruction.

Possible items in the whole group area:

- Large rug that fits all students
- Whiteboard easel
- Pocket chart(s)
- Schedule of the day
- Calendar
- CD player/ Mp3
- Chart stand
- Center chart rotations
- Class expectations

Whole Group Area



Small Group Teacher Center

Small Group Teacher Center: During literacy and math block times, the teacher works with small flexible groups based on the specific skills and interests of students. The teacher must clearly see all of the other centers and students from her area.

- Teacher works with the students on specific concepts and skills.
- Teacher facilitates oral language, guided reading, writing groups or math groups.
- Teacher and student materials are organized and easily accessible.

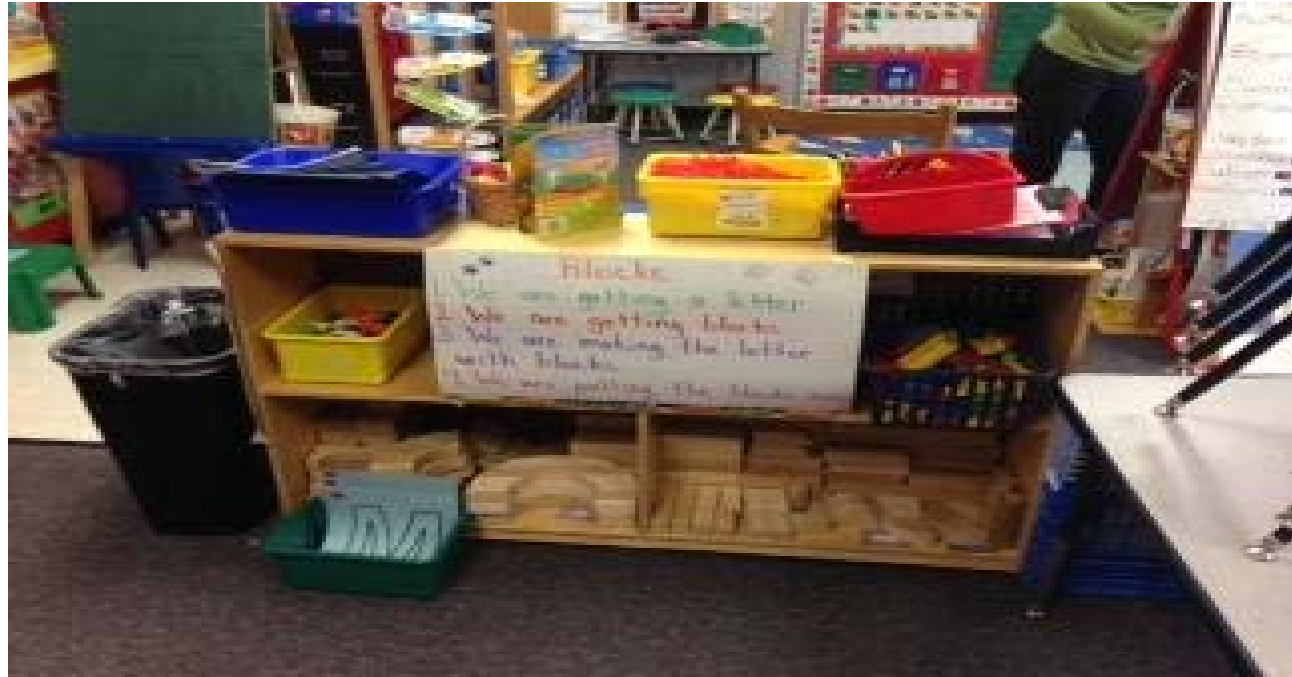
Learning Centers

Learning Centers provide opportunities for hands-on learning, inquiry and exploration, to reinforce or extend concepts and skills, and to practice language and social skills.

- Clearly defined with boundaries and labels
- Strategic placement of centers (noisy areas away from where quiet learning occurs).
- Manipulative materials have an open-ended purpose
- Materials organized and labeled for student access and replacement
- Materials and environmental print at student level
- Books and writing materials in each center

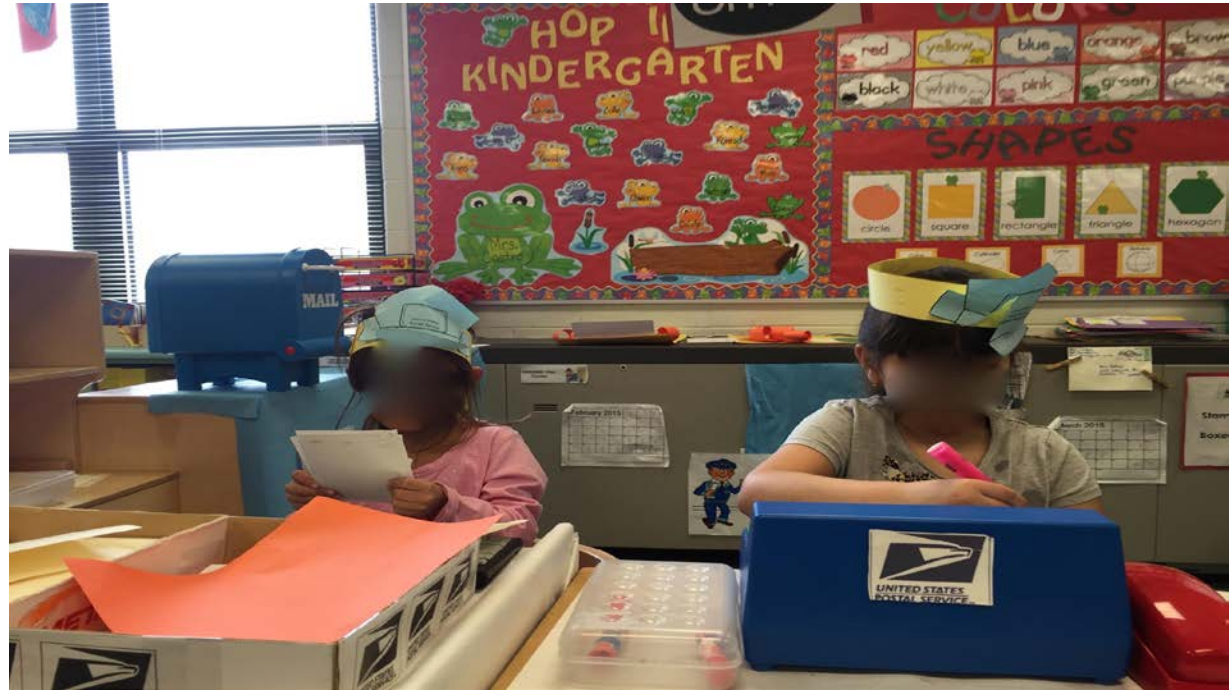
LEARNING CENTERS

Block Center



LEARNING CENTERS

Dramatic Play



LEARNING CENTERS

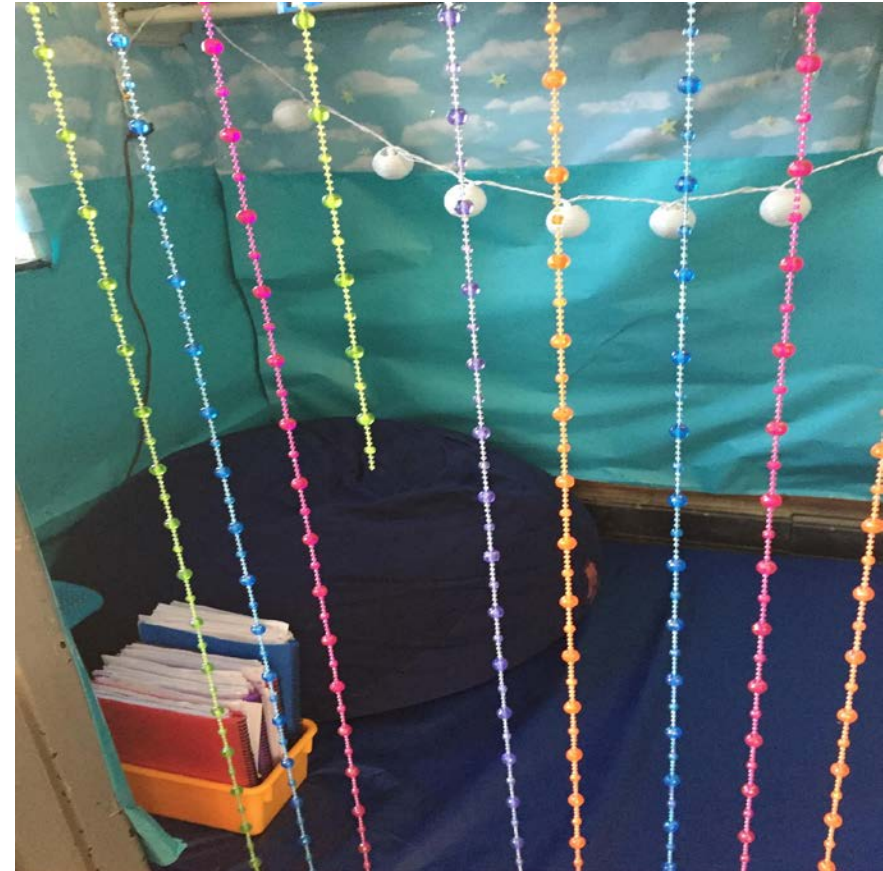
Book- making Center



Students reinforce important reading and writing foundational skills by creating a book related to a unit of study. High frequency words and a simple predictable pattern are used to help the child read the completed book.

LEARNING CENTERS

Library



Setting Up Effective Centers

Taking the time to think through and write down end-of-the-year reflections enables us to lay the groundwork for getting desired results the following school year. End-of-year rumination helps to outline and set goals on what we want to adjust and change in the year to follow. As we reflect, there will be some practices from the year we want to keep and replicate because they were successful. Other practices we will refine because the results were less than desirable.

Joan Moser, *Daily 5*

Classroom Design Reflection

Hot spots

- What areas in the room are collectors of junk, bottlenecks in traffic flow, or visually unappealing or just don't work?

Work areas

- Does the classroom setup provide for a variety of places for kids to work individually, in pairs, and in small groups?
- Are children successful in choosing their own spots to work?

Teacher area

- Is it a hot spot? Is my teacher area an eyesore or catchall?

Setting Up Effective Centers

Using the Physical Environment Document and your KIDS Instrument

Discuss with a partner:

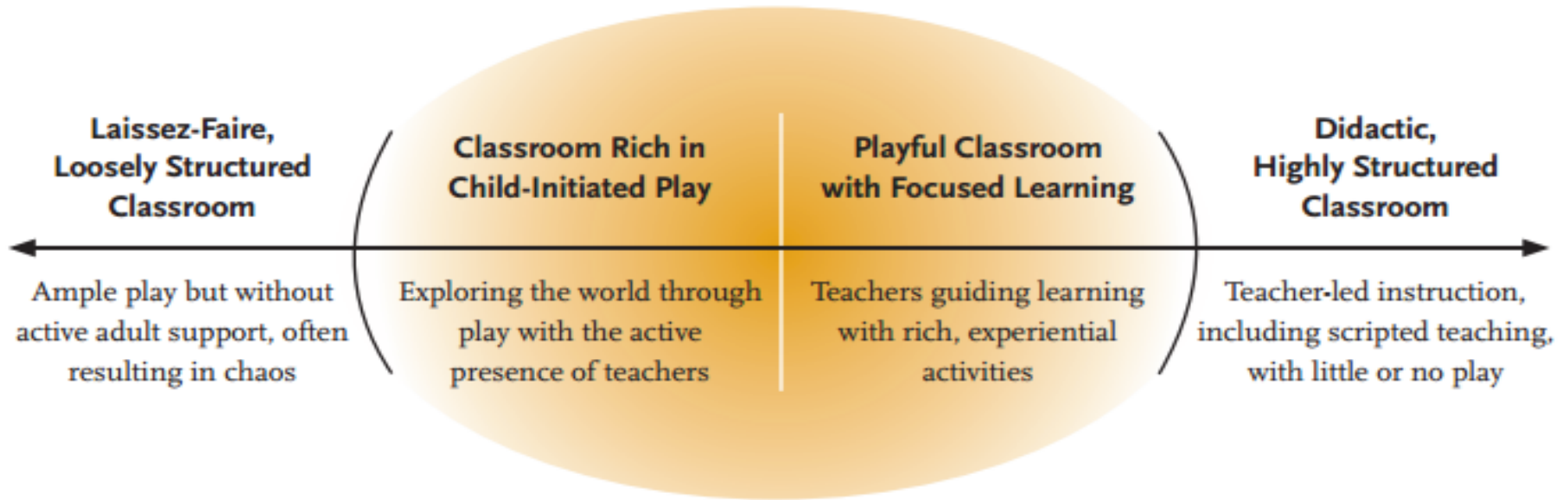
What activities will you model in the following centers:

- Library
- Dramatic Play
- Blocks
- Art/Makerspace
- Discovery
- Small toys/manipulatives

The Kindergarten Continuum

(Miller and Almon, 2009)

THE KINDERGARTEN CONTINUUM



Schedule

- A balanced daily schedule that accommodates play-based learning across all of the learning and development domains is an important element of a high-quality PK/kindergarten classroom.
- The way the schedule looks at the beginning of the year, middle of the year and end of the year will change to meet the needs and growing independence of the students.

Schedule

- In the beginning of the year, a great deal of time is spent building classroom community, establishing routines and procedures and explicitly modeling how to appropriately learn and play in the centers.
- Centers and materials are introduced slowly and there are clear on-going teacher demonstrations on how to appropriately use the materials.
- The goal is to ensure understanding and gradually release support so that the students can be as independent and successful as possible

Schedule

In a best-practices classroom the daily schedule includes:

Whole Group Times:

- Build community and common experiences
- Introduce and teach skills and concepts
- Practice and review skills not yet mastered
- Provide movement/music breaks
- Provide time to perform - sing, dance, play acting

Schedule

In a best-practices classroom the daily schedule includes:

Small Group Times:

- Provide differentiated instruction
- Reinforce skills
- Provide corrective feedback during guided practice

Schedule

In a best-practices classroom the daily schedule includes:

Learning Center Areas:

- Provide opportunity for self-selected activities and interest
- Provide practice of targeted skills
- Provide connecting and extending activities
- Build independence and self-reliance skills

Sample Half-day Schedule

Component	Possible Activities	Time in minutes
Arrival	Sign in, Reading, Table work, Powerful Interaction	15
Class Meeting	Community building, Message, Oral language (vocabulary, phonological awareness) Read aloud/Shared Reading	20
Centers	Small Group Guided Reading/Math Independent Centers: Literacy, Math, Play, Individual Modeled/Interactive Writing	60 includes clean up and snack
Sharing and Reflection	Oral language, creations at centers, SEL, ESL	20
Gross Motor	Outside or in gym	25
Dismissal	ALT-Reg, Powerful Interactions	10
	Total	150
	Time	

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Minutes	Activity	Description	Type of Instruction
5-10 mins.	Arrival	Question of the day: answer question in pocket chart	Individual, Small groups
15-20 mins.	Morning Meeting	Building Community Morning Message: scaffolded writing Calendar: days of the week, daily schedule	Whole group
10-15 mins.	Shared Reading	Focus is on large text to read together	Whole
60 mins.	Literacy Centers	Small group/Guided reading: Focus is book in hand, literacy skill building 5-6 centers: rotate over several days	Small
5 mins.	Reflection Back to carpet	Reflect on center activities May do a read aloud, Snack	Whole
10-15 mins.	Shared or Modeled Writing	Scaffolded writing Writing mini lesson	Whole
20-25 mins.	Independent/ Guided Writing	Students write independently/teacher conferencing Guided writing in small groups	Individual Small
5 mins.	Reflection	Reflect on writing, sharing writing, Pair/share May do a read-aloud	Whole
60 mins.	Lunch/Recess		
10 mins.	Independent Reading	Personal book trays	Individual
15-20 mins.	Math Mini lesson	Routines (i.e. counting), fluency Math mini lesson	Whole
45 mins.	ESL/Science/Social Studies	Mini lesson Inquiry learning	Whole Small
50 mins.	Choice Centers	Plan, do, reflect Learning plans	Independent Small
5-10 mins.	Wrap up/Dismissal		

Play

“Play is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being of children beginning in early childhood. It is a natural tool for children to develop resiliency as they learn to cooperate, overcome challenges, and negotiate with others. Play contributes to healthy brain development.”

Play

Play-based learning offers children the space to make choices that promote executive functioning and self-regulation. Mature play embodies negotiation, empathy, reciprocal conversation, and concepts in multiple learning domains.

Types of Play

- Large motor
- Small motor
- Mastery
- Rules-based
- Make-believe
- Symbolic
- Sensory
- Playing with the arts
- Language
- Construction





Playful Experiences are Learning Experiences

Most play involves exploration, which is an act of investigation.

= NGS STANDARDS

Play is a gateway to a state of flow.

= ENGAGEMENT

Evidence exists that play is a tutorial for coping with real life challenges.

= SOCIAL EMOTIONAL



Children from Poverty and from Racially Underrepresented Groups:

- Have lower quality playgrounds
- Have less time in the schedule for recess
- Have more structured instruction and less playful learning in school from an early age



Teacher's Role in Scaffolding Student Play

DAP Foundational Principles

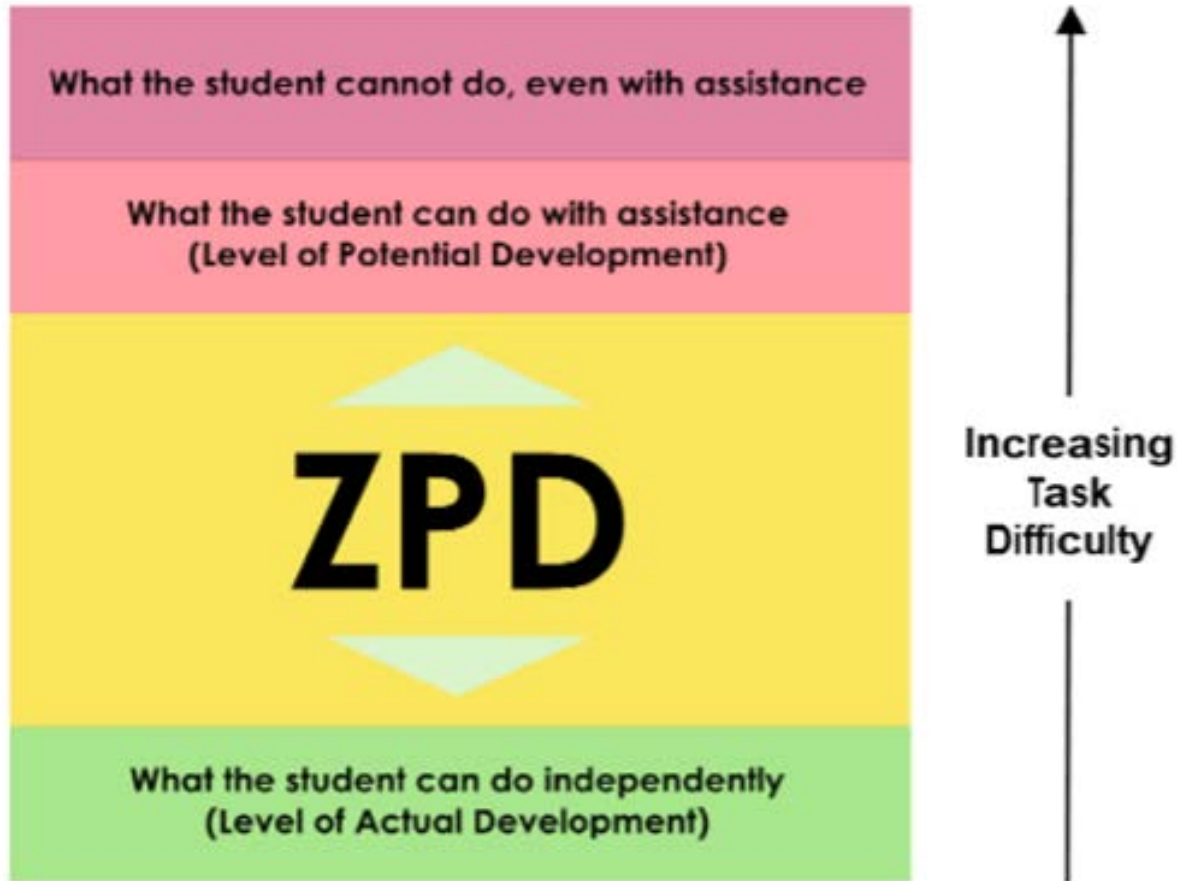
Meeting Children Where They Are

- ▶ Knowing child development
- ▶ Knowing the skills children bring to their classroom
 - Includes home language, English language, culture, family, interests

Helping Children Reach Challenging and Achievable goals

- ▶ Plan and adjust instruction for children of varying levels
- ▶ Includes rigor: opportunities and supports to achieve within their zone of proximal development

LOCATING THE ZPD



Powerful Interactions

- **Be Present**
 - Listen, Observe
- **Connect**
 - To their idea, interest
- **Extend**
 - Add one more thing: prop, role, plan, scenario, language, writing, etc.

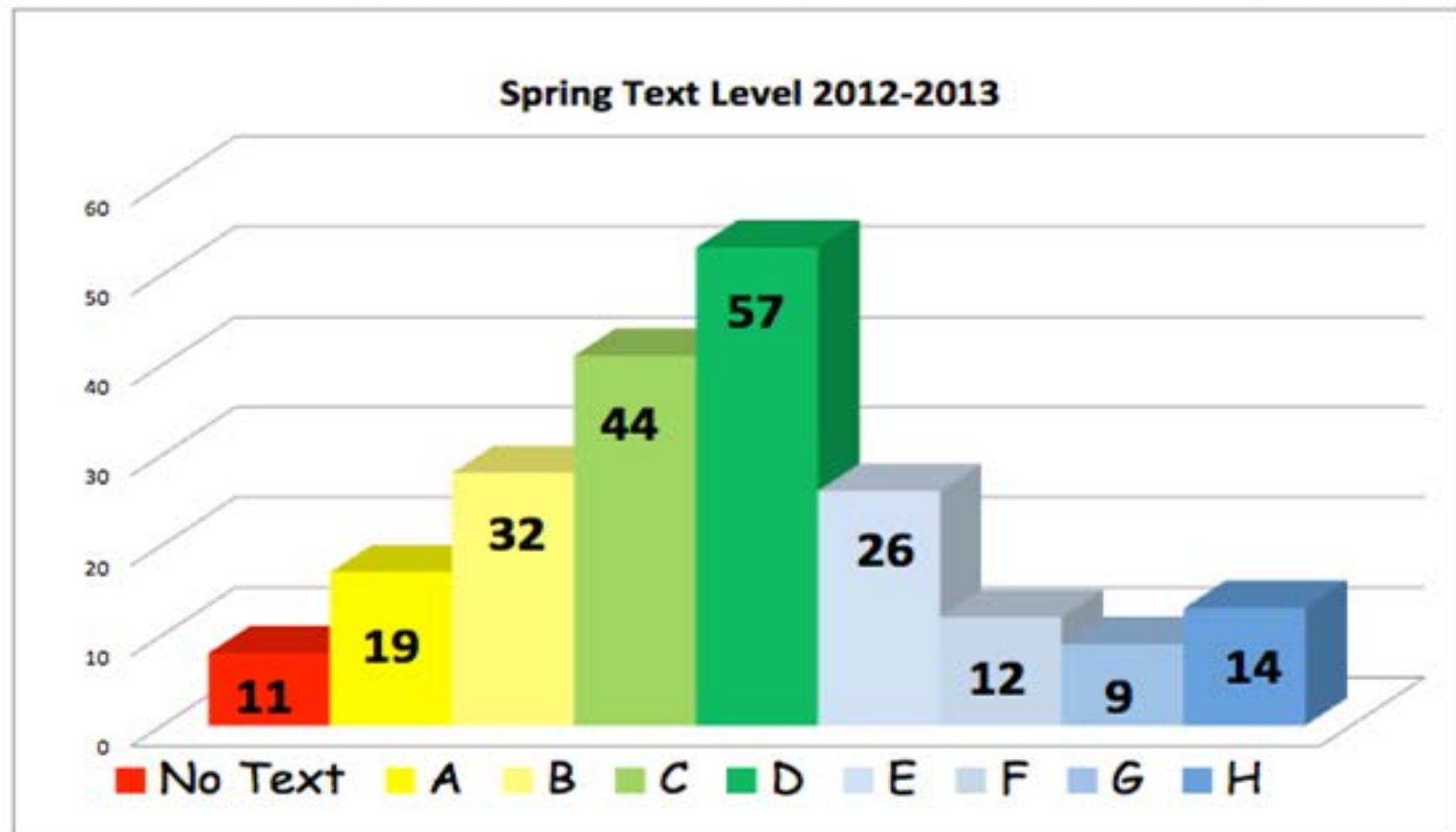
5 STAGES OF MATURE MAKE BELIEVE PLAY

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● First Scripts	No plan, no roles, limited language, plays with objects as objects, short time frame
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Roles with Actions	No plan, roles emerge from action, creates stereotypic scenarios, language describes action, plays with objects as props, plays for a few minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Roles with Rules and Beginning Scenarios	Plans roles and actions, uses language for roles and actions, needs props for roles, 10-15 minutes of play, plays familiar scripts fully
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Mature Roles	Plans scenarios and plans evolve, multiple roles interact, symbolic props &/or invents props, uses role speech, 60 minutes of play, series of coordinated scenarios with “problems” that evolve over time with emotional aspects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dramatization, Multiple Roles and Director’s Play	Plans elaborate scenarios, can play more than role at a time, can use pretend rather than actual prop, scenarios last over several days, book language as well as role speech, series of coordinated scenarios than can change based on player

Text Level Scores 2012-2013

9

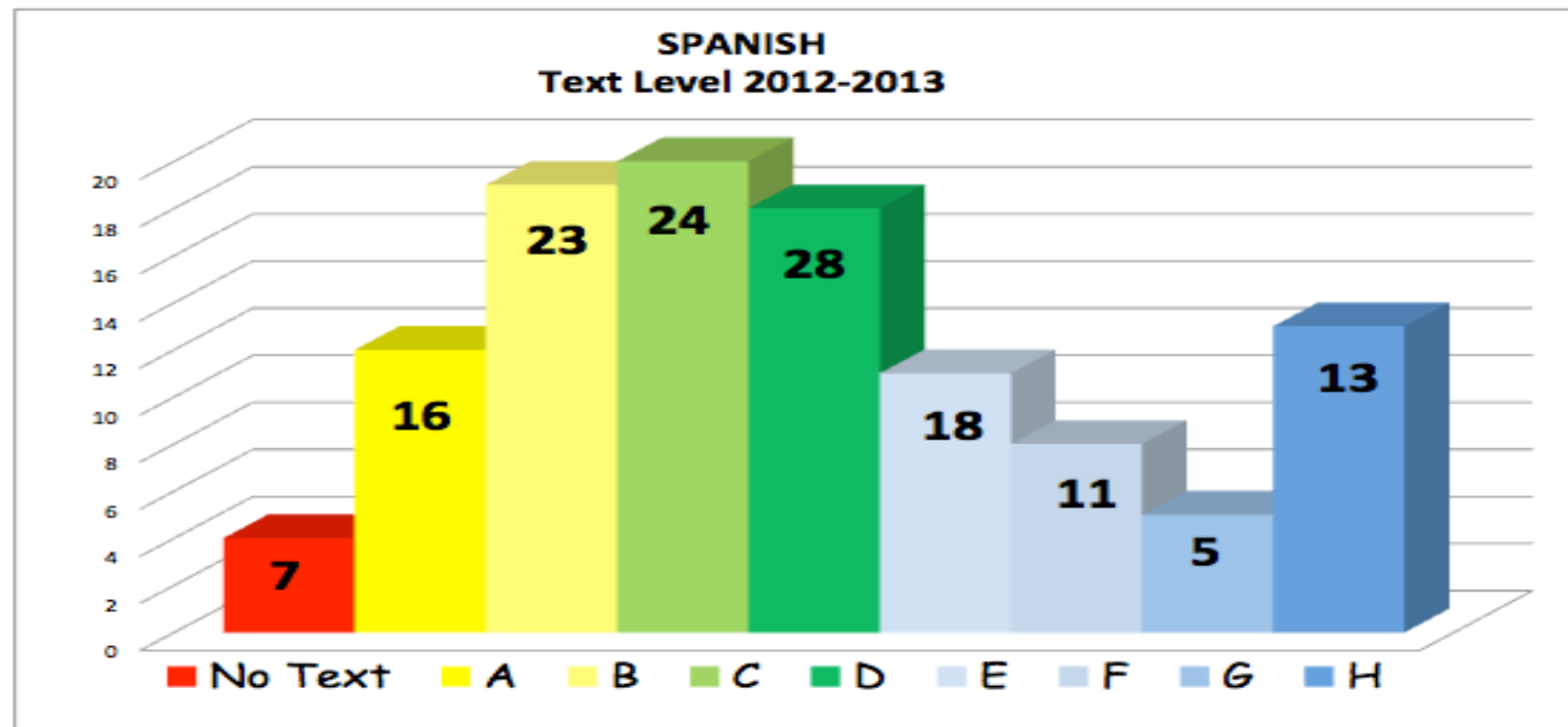
72% of FDK students reading at grade level for exiting kindergartners (C and above)9



Full Day Kindergarten Intervention (FDK)
Text Level Scores 2012-2013

8% of Dual Language FDK students reading at grade level for exiting kindergartners
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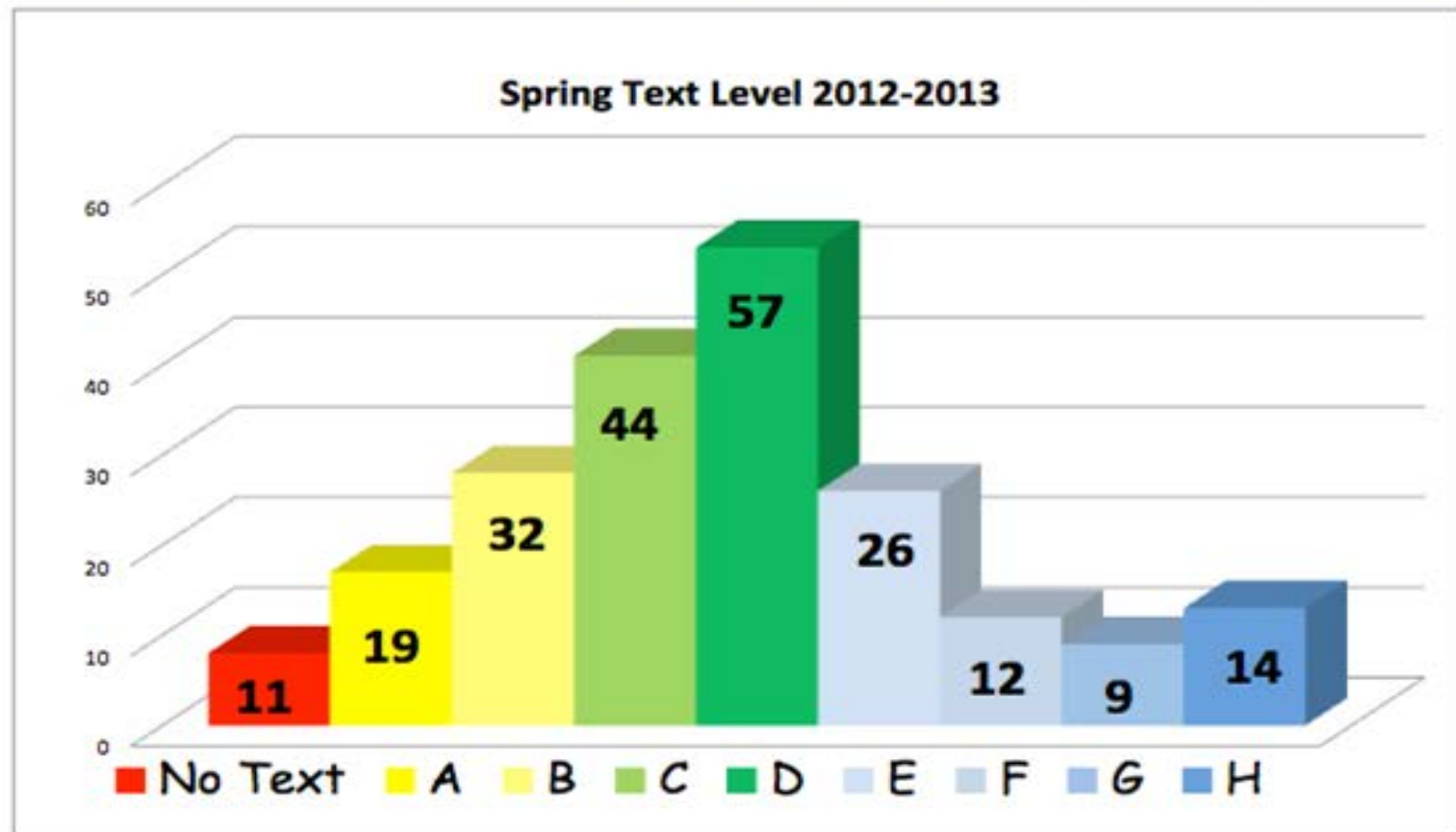
* FDK Dual Language students entered naming 0 letters



Text Level Scores 2012-2013

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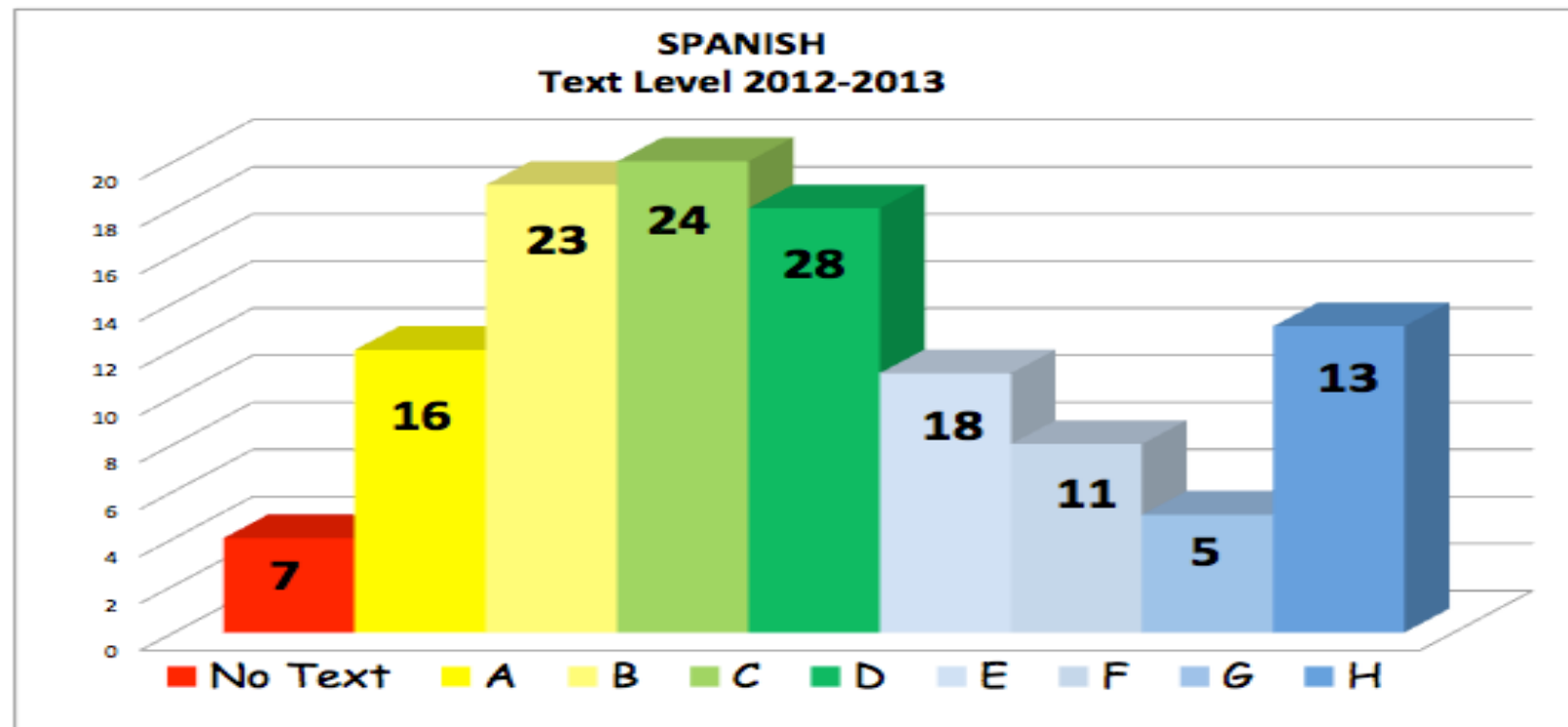
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**play
is the highest
kind of
research.**

Albert Einstein