



## Lisa Murphy on.... Being Child Centered

Shared with you by Lisa Murphy, M.Ed.

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A few of the main ideas that guide my work:

- A child's right to play
- Caring connections & strong relationships
- Abraham Maslow
- Four domains of developmentally appropriate practice
- Five characteristics of play as identified by Peter Gray
- Seven things we do with children every day as identified in my PLAY book
- Nine indicators of being child-centered

### Principle 1: TIME

Children are provided with long periods of uninterrupted free time for exploration and interaction within the environment. Schedules are predictable, realistic, and flexible. Posted schedules do not unintentionally undermine the role of playful learning within the space.

**Questions to ponder: If you could change one thing about your schedule, what would it be? Do the children have enough time? Is there pressure to move like a herd all day together? How are we considering the PRE-play planning children require as well as the time necessary for children to bring their play to its organic ending... vs. the flicking of lights or ringing a bell. Are there "fake" questions you have gotten into the habit of asking children?**

### Principle 2: OUTDOORS

There is lots of outdoor play time. The outdoor environment is not considered a separate space, but instead is seen as an extension of the indoor space, and just as credible! Everything that is IN should and could be OUT. What would happen if you stayed outside all day? Be mindful of "I'm cold we're going in" syndrome!

**Questions to ponder: Do you have recess? If yes, how long do you have? If not, how has the elimination of recess impacted YOUR particular program? What WOULD happen if you stayed outside all day? Are there roadblocks to spending more time outside? Have personal preferences become rules?**

### Principle 3: RULES

Children have the freedom to explore this environment with few restrictions. Examine your RULE SHEET. Consider the fact that all of the no-no's are developmentally appropriate, yet socially unacceptable. We have one overarching rule: "People are not for hurting." We are able to provide this level of freedom because... (see #4)

**Questions to ponder: Who makes the rules in your room? How do the kids know what the rules are? Are there any that might be unnecessary as I shift my focus to controlling the SPACE? What loop-holes are your kids really good at finding?**

Principle 4: THE SECRET

The secret to good teaching is **controlling the environment**. If you don't want them touching, smelling, tasting, putting it in their pocket, fiddling with it – GET RID OF IT! What are the invitations within the space? Are there invitations you didn't realize you were sending? Get rid of the no-no's!

**Questions to ponder: What ARE the invitations in your space? What do you think about the idea of not making moral issues out of developmental ones? What part of this CAN I say "yes" to? Give an example of YOUR understanding of this concept of controlling the space vs. controlling the child.**

Principle 5: FACILITATING vs INSTIGATING

Consider the difference between being a facilitator vs. an instigator. How do we provide rich, deep, meaningful opportunities for investigation? We use observation, scaffolding, and provocations. This allows us to be more than, "the keeper of the keys." Be the guide on the side not the sage on the stage.

**Question to ponder: How comfortable am I with the thought of children directing their own learning? COULD I walk out of the room without worry that it's going to collapse into chaos?**

Principle 6: ARTICULATION & BEING INTENTIONAL

Teachers must be able to articulate the intention behind the choices they make in the classroom. They ask (and can answer!) three questions: WHAT am I doing? WHY am I doing it? And WHO am I doing it for? Their answers go beyond, "that's how we've just always done it," and deeper than, "because it's so cute!"

**Questions to ponder: What is one of your personal "HAMS"?? When thinking about all of the things you plan and perhaps purchase, is it relevant? Is it meaningful? How do you know the kids are even interested in it?? Remember Maxine Green's quote: you cannot teach anyone anything unless they want to be there!**

Principle 7: THEORISTS

Nothing I'm telling you is new! But we can't pull strength and credibility from that statement if we don't know who ELSE said it! Teachers understand child development theory & know the history of their profession. They are aware of those who "paved the way" in our continual support of child-centered environments and stay abreast of current research that supports play based, child centered environments.

**Question to ponder: Who else do you "hear" in Lisa Murphy's message? Did any other theorists (classic or modern) come to mind? Have you had an experience where a strategic name-drop assisted in a discussion with a colleague? Administrator? Parent?**

Principle 8: KEEPING IT REAL

If you want it in the HEAD it must first be in the HAND and it's not going to be in their HAND if it's not in their HEART. (Read: they have to be interested in the topic at hand, and, no one is learning anything about anything that is not in the room! We celebrate where children are, *developmentally*, right here and right now! Therefore, rooms are filled with relevant, meaningful experiences that engage all the senses. You will see children investigating real objects. Not coloring dittos of them. The activities provided will engage all the senses!

**A pondering: Please share a success or challenge in regard to "keeping it real" in your classroom. What modifications would be required (if any) to have curriculum be more "real" for the children?**

Principle 9: THE SEVEN THINGS

Children are provided time each day to: create, move, sing, discuss, observe, read and play. ***It is important to note that PLAY is not a separate 7<sup>th</sup> thing, but rather the cement holding the foundation together!*** Playful learning is the foundation that supports the *house* of academics.

**As an ELEMENTARY teacher – what would you say is the strongest? weakest? part of the foundation of the majority of children who transition to you? As a PRESCHOOL teacher, what are the parts you feel pressure to skip over or hurry through to get to the building of the house?**



## **STALKERS WELCOME!**

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