

The importance of play

August 2014

Child Side School and Playgroup in Boyanup played host to Marc Armitage, an internationally recognised specialist in the role of children's play in learning and children's social worlds. Marc is currently on the road providing presentations during his third tour of Australia.

Rachel Wyder (educator) from Child Side School explained "while I was booked into one of Marc's workshops, I wanted him to see for himself how Child Side School actively made use of the proven theories of learning through play. So I wrote to Marc to explain the philosophies and approaches used at our school, and was delighted to hear that he wanted to visit the school".

As a result of Rachel's initiative Marc along with co-presenter Donna Ridley took time out of their heavy schedule, to visit the school on Tuesday 26th August. Donna is a founding member of a popular Australian early childhood blog called 'Irresistible Ideas for Play Based Learning'.

The importance of play cannot be overstated. It has been recognised for generations and much longer. The famous Greek philosopher Plato summed it up beautifully with his quote '*you can discover more about a person in an hour of play than a year of conversation*'.

The need for play is intrinsically recognised and as Dr Charles Schaefer, an American psychologist considered by many to be the father of play therapy, says '*we are never more fully alive, more completely ourselves, or more deeply engrossed in anything, than when we are at play*'.

Marc has over 30 years of experience in the role of children's play in learning and children's social worlds. He explains how "if we want to understand children and their wider social lives we need to know and understand what they actually 'do' and actively observing them during play is one of the best ways to achieve this".

Leonie O'Connell (principal) outlined how at Child Side School "educators are strongly encouraged to support children in finding authentic, meaningful and appropriate play based learning ideas". The *Educators' guide to the early years learning framework for Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 2010)* clearly recognises play as a valued process for children's learning stating '*play provides opportunities for children to learn, as they discover, create, improvise and imagine*'.

Leonie went on to explain how "adults need to be highly tuned into children's play, as it is a window into how they think, perceive and interact with the real and imagined world around them. Play across the ages serves many purposes, including innovative and resourceful thinking with or without constraints and boundaries. Play is a complex discovery process and is an authentic way to explore, consolidate, express, create, and reorganise social, emotional, literacy, numeracy and cognitive thinking and reasoning skills. Play is curiosity about the world and how it works and often drives individuals and groups far beyond any premeditated outcome".

As stated by 'Irresistible Ideas for Play Based Learning: '*no play, no learning – know play, know learning*' or as Leonie put it "we need to avoid is separating play from learning, as they are one in the same".

Contacts:

- Leonie O'Connell (Child Side School - Principal)
0419 511 133, childside@bigpond.com
www.childdeschool.wa.edu.au
- Marc Armitage and Donna Ridley
admin@malarkeyon.com.au
www.marc-armitage.eu
www.playbasedlearning.com.au

More Information:

- Section 8 of the [Educators guide to the early years learning framework for Australia](#)



Donna Ridley, Marc Armitage, Leonie O'Connell and Lilly Timmers



Elijah Hehir busy making in the kitchen