

Teacher's Guide

Supporting the wellbeing of primary school children

Play activities



Playing with a peer network can assist children to learn to self-regulate, express their emotions in appropriate ways and provide opportunities to improve social skills through interaction with others.

Play may also distract a student and can provide diversion from worries and provide repeated positive experiences that may lead them towards looking forward to the play activity rather than focusing on their worries.

A selected play activity may be predetermined by the student, or negotiated between the teacher and student, this interaction provides an additional positive focus for a student and encourages their cooperation.

Social learning

The teacher can organise a group of five to six students and encourage them to play age-appropriate table top games together, such as board games, cards, building blocks. During this process, social skills such as requests, sharing, appropriate comments and niceties are taught and developed.

Emotional learning

A teacher can develop learning about thoughts, feelings and behaviour through play, for example: feelings charade, acting out different feelings or creating feelings collages using pictures cut out from magazines.

Students learning to recognise emotions in themselves and others can lead to increased acceptance of their peers and improved self-regulation.

Cooperative learning

Support students to play with building materials (such as Lego, plasticine or cardboard) in a team of three. One student takes on the role of engineer (or designer), another a supplier and the third, a builder. Each team has to work together to build an object that the teacher has specified. The goal of the activity is to encourage turn taking, task focused and social communication with peers, team work, shared attention and problem solving in groups. This type of play can be useful for students who have difficulty with social communication, taking turns, problem solving or engaging with peers.

If the behaviour persists despite trying a number of interventions, discuss the student's situation with a supervisor or member of the learning and wellbeing support staff at your school.

<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-teachers-guide>