



# The Wilkie Way

## Newsletter August 2019

[www.thewilkie.co.nz](http://www.thewilkie.co.nz)

### Thinking about Play Based Learning

In the course of my work I have been doing a lot of background reading and talking to experts in the field of play based learning and my thanks goes to Longworth Education for permission in using one of their articles for the basis of this newsletter and for pointing me in the direction of further reading. (<https://educationcentral.co.nz/play-misunderstood-the-divide-between-primary-classroom/>)

Play based learning, discovery learning, and inquiry learning are not new in the field of education. They are philosophies of learning that stem from a constructivist approach that has been around for at least the last 60 years. (Bruner's research comes from 1961).

Like all philosophies they are on a continuum and the pendulum swings wildly from one extreme to the other throughout the years of education - everyone looking for the magic bullet.



When you consider assessment to be the driver of education you end up with a simple picture of play based learning that completely misses the pedagogical practices underlying a constructivist approach.

### What are the pedagogical practices required for achieving successful learning through play?

"Key to successful learning-through-play pedagogy is the balance a teacher provides between child-led play and the deliberate acts of teaching during the school day - knowing when to gift knowledge to students at the point of meaningful absorption and understanding and when to stay silent for fear of interrupting the magic of the play (Hirsh-Pasek & Galinkoff, 2011). The 'spray-and-walk-away' technique requires a high level of skill by teachers." (Sarah Aiono Longworth Education)

The strategic use of direct teaching is one key feature of a play-based learning environment and yet it is often abandoned first as teachers new to the pedagogy explore the concepts around child-directed play. Typically, teachers tend to swing to the opposite end of the pendulum, abandoning all routines and rules, and direct teaching. This 'unassisted' play amounts to the types of 'free play' many think of when the use of play in schools is described to them. Children engaged in play in this format do not typically make significant progress in their learning, as their exposure to new knowledge and skills is only limited to opportunities presented to them in their play by their peers, who often do not have a different knowledge set of their own. (Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich, & Tenenbaum, 2011).

A second misunderstood strategy used within play-based settings is the art of provocation. Many teachers, when coming to terms with play being student-directed and student-chosen will then step back from any teacher-initiated activities whatsoever. The use of provocation allows a new set of eyes on an event, resource or phenomenon. It is also a useful tool to encourage children to explore areas of the curriculum they would not otherwise do so within their play (Johnson, 2015).

The conclusions drawn from a major piece of research by Alfieri, Brooks, Aldrich and Tenenbaum 2011

***Overall, the effects of unassisted-discovery tasks seem limited, whereas enhanced-discovery tasks requiring learners to be actively engaged and constructive seem optimal. On the basis of the current analyses, optimal approaches should include at least one of the following:***

- ***guided tasks that have scaffolding in place to assist learners,***
- ***tasks requiring learners to explain their own ideas and ensuring that these ideas are accurate by providing timely feed-back, or***
- ***tasks that provide worked examples of how to succeed in the task.***

***Opportunities for constructive learning might not present themselves when learners are left unassisted.***

The New Zealand Curriculum provides a freedom for teachers to be able to connect the learning occurring in front of them with not only the learning areas but the key competencies, values and principles of this document.

The challenge for teachers is to know what learning they are looking at within the play; to be able to correctly document this, analyse their observations against the curriculum document, and articulate the learning clearly and concisely to both parents and management alike.

This approach to the planning and assessment of play against the wider school curriculum becomes a significant barrier between teachers wishing to implement the pedagogy and senior managers meeting their responsibilities of targets and documentation.

The process of embedding effective learning-through-play pedagogy within a primary school environment is challenging for both the classroom teacher and their senior managers.

It requires:

- An understanding of play based learning philosophy by senior managers and teachers;
- Access to professional learning opportunities to build the necessary knowledge and skills of all areas of the curriculum;
- Access to networking with others on a similar journey;
- School wide rethinking around planning and assessment practices;
- And more things to consider will crop up along the journey.

Like all philosophies - quality teaching will always come back to the teachers knowledge of the students, the curriculum, the learning progressions, the variety of teaching approaches and their skill in picking the right moment for the right action. The decision being made most often in a milli second as they work with the students.

Accept that you will get it completely wrong some of the time and celebrate when you get it right and you see that "light bulb moment". Most often we are just doing our best.

**If you want some professional support in developing a play based environment where your students can be successful learners and users of mathematics then talk to me. (Accredited facilitator 654 charlotte@ncwilkinsons.com 0273443963)**

I can help you with:

- Developing your curriculum knowledge (integrating learning area of mathematics, key competencies, values & principles)
- Suggestions for documenting observations
- Planning for mathematics in a more holistic environment (cross curricular)

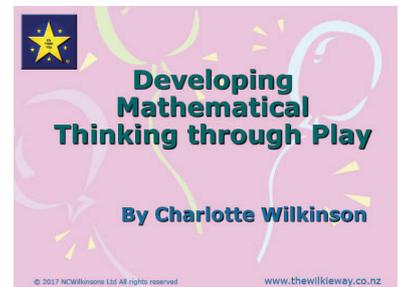
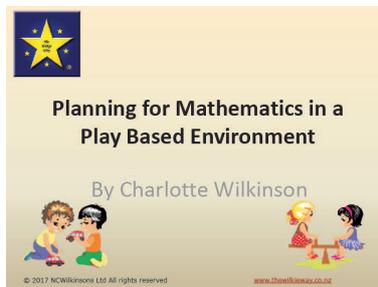
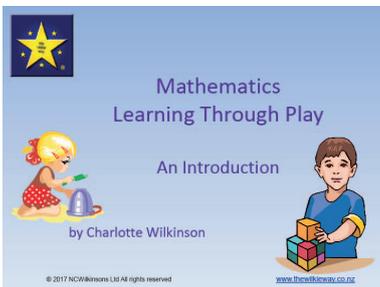


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**Maths Gym for multiplication and division is now complete:**

A series of lessons and follow up activities for teaching multiplication and division (Learning Progression Set 4) While these are intended for older students who have missed this significant step in their learning, they are also useful for students who have just reached this step in their learning.



These powerpoints have been updated and can be found on both the play based learning dedicated page and with the other professional learning powerpoints on the professional learning page.

**Pre-orders for assessment screens are being taken now for delivery during term 4 (order form available [www.thewilkieway.co.nz](http://www.thewilkieway.co.nz) home page)**

**Screens available for: (Year groups are for guidance only)**

<b>Level 1 Screen</b> (50 questions)	<b>Level 2 Screen</b> (100 questions)	<b>Level 3 Screen</b> (100 questions)	<b>Level 4 Screen</b> (100 questions)
Whole numbers (counting) Addition/Subtraction Multiplication/Division (counting and equal grouping)	Whole numbers (PV grouping & sequencing) Addition & Subtraction Multiplication & Division (Equal grouping & array thinking) Fractions	Whole numbers (large numbers, PV grouping & sequencing) Addition & Subtraction (mental, efficient additive methods & estimation) Multiplication & Division (Basic facts, efficient multiplicative methods) Fractions Decimals & Simple percentages	Whole numbers (PV x10 std form) Addition & Subtraction (mental, efficient additive methods & estimation) Multiplication & Division (Primes, factors, multiples, mental, efficient multiplicative methods, estimation, exponents) Fractions Decimals & Percentages
<b>Beginning Year 3</b>	<b>Beginning Year 4</b> <b>Beginning Year 5</b>	<b>Beginning Year 5</b> <b>Beginning Year 6</b> <b>Beginning Year 7</b>	<b>Beginning Year 7</b> <b>Beginning Year 8</b> <b>Beginning Year 9</b>



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## Problems with Playing



Ben had 8 cars and Sam had 4 cars.  
How can they make it fair so they have the same number of cars each?

Annie used her small bucket to fill up the big buckets.

If the big bucket is four times bigger than the small bucket, how many times does she need to fill her small bucket to fill up 8 big buckets?



Ratu used 2cm cubes to build a larger cube.

If he used 64 cubes what are the dimensions of his large cube?



Ken spent too much time on his computer.

His mum said he could have an allowance of 1000 minutes each week.

How much time could he have on his computer each day?

Write a schedule for Ken's computer time for a week.

