



# PLAYFUL AND JOYFUL LEARNING SPACES



By: Madeline Powers

## Overview of Playful Learning

Playful learning is a central way that children learn. It refers to learning activities embedded with playful engagement and exploration when using novel tools and technologies in learning. It allows the use of the imagination and experimentation (Kangas et al, 2017).

Empowering, meaningful, and joyful experiences are all intertwined to encompass a playful learning environment (Solis et al, 2021). By making learning activities enjoyable and rewarding, children are more motivated to learn. The image to the right lists the indicators for each of these areas.

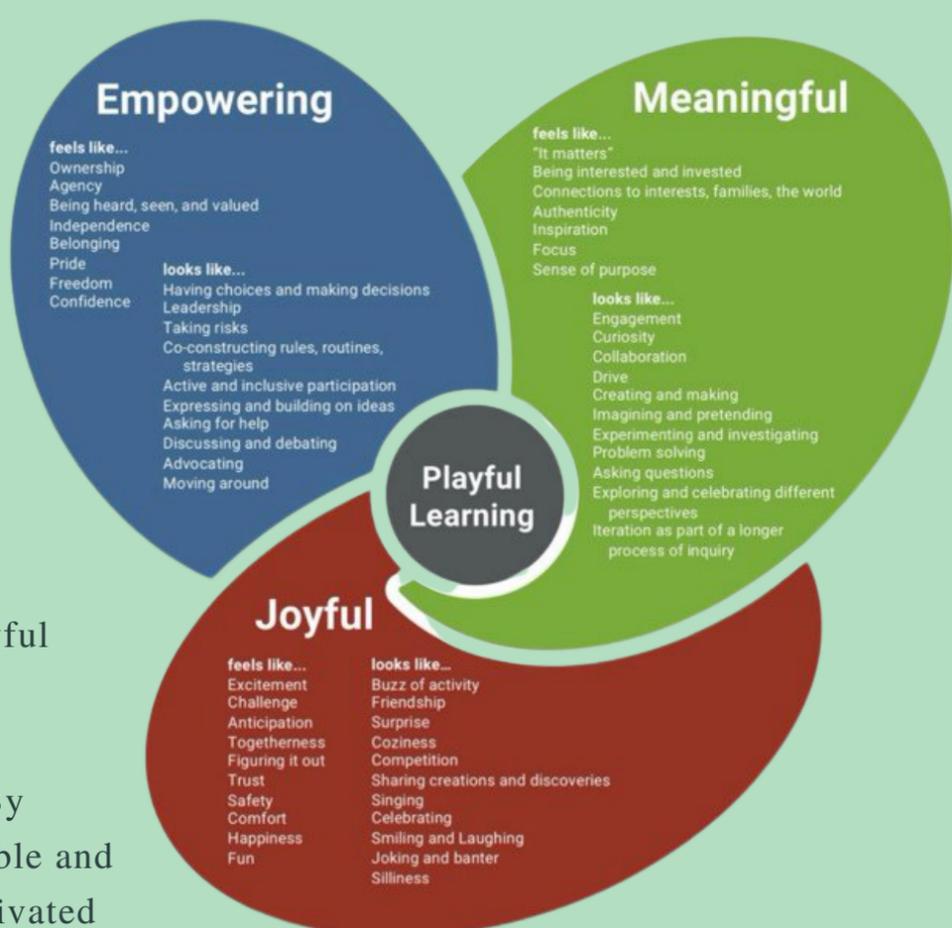


Image Credit:  
Solis et al, 2021

Joyful learning is an instrumental component of playful learning. These joyful experiences help learners feel excited about the topic and builds a sense of camaraderie among students. This is because learners are collaborating towards a common goal of figuring something out (Solis et al). In the playful learning process, the teacher's role is a mixture of serving as a leader, an allowee, and an afforder (Kangas et al, 2017).

## Dr. Elham Kazemi's Insights

Dr. Elham Kazemi, one of the scholars featured in the Spring 2021 Purdue Honors College Visiting Scholar series, is passionate about the creation of playful and joyful learning spaces. Dr. Kazemi emphasizes the importance of taking advantage of children's playfulness in the classroom. When children are kept from play, they are not able to learn as effectively, they focus too much on getting the correct answer, and they do not feel heard by their teacher -- all of which are detrimental to a child's learning experience (University of Washington, 2016).

In order to cultivate playful and joyful learning spaces, Dr. Kazemi explains that teachers need to be curious about what kids are thinking, get messy and play with ideas, and show children that they truly care by listening to their ideas (University of Washington, 2016). They also need to ask questions to children as they learn, as well as be creative about the different paths a lesson can take. Dr. Kazemi is just one of the many scholars conducting research on the importance of play in learning; she has paved the way for mathematics classrooms to become more joyful.

## Playful Learning Spaces in Action: Montessori Classrooms

A great example of a playful learning space is Montessori classrooms. The Montessori method utilizes objects to help students learn new concepts, while also teaching them reasoning skills. Lessons are enjoyable, interactive, and often involve small groups of children (Lilliard, 2013). Additionally, children are provided choices as to what tasks they would like to complete, and they are able to interact with their peers. In Montessori classrooms, learning is considered its own reward, allowing children to experience the joy in learning itself (Lilliard, 2013). This is just one of many possibilities for implementing playful and joyful learning in a classroom setting.



Image Credit: Montessori vs. Traditional Preschool, n.d.

# References

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