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The evidence is clear. If we teach in the way that human brains learn, children will learn more and are more likely to remember what they have learned. The data suggest that children learn best when they are actively engaged, when the information they learn is meaningful to them, when they are socially interacting with the teacher, and with each other, and when the process is joyful. Guided play is based on these characteristics and adds a clear learning goal be it in reading, math, social studies, or science.

Numerous studies using guided play instruction in laboratory tasks, demonstrate that guided play outperforms both direct instruction and free play (Skeen et al., 2022). Most of this research was conducted with younger children in pre-K and into formal schooling. The principles on which the research is based, however, hold for learning in general and in some anecdotal research, even applies through college age instruction.

Because these characteristics mandate a pedagogical approach rather than a curricular one, they can be applied to any curricular requirements of districts or states. Further, early data from research in New Hampshire, demonstrated that teachers are happier teaching when they use guided play, and classrooms are more engaging (Blinkoff et al., 2024; Nesbitt et al., 2023). These findings might lead to better teacher retention and to less absenteeism, though the data on these issues has yet to be collected.

The guided play methodology is more rigorous than many progressive educational pedagogical approaches (but see Montessori programs that use a guided play approach, Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006). Because the guided play approach was constructed with input from teachers, administrators, and scientists, it also offers an evidence-based account that is also practical for teachers to implement (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2022).

Sincerely,



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