

Lively Minds: Distinctions between academic versus intellectual goals for young children ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in PDF ^[2]

Video ^[3]

Introduction:

The extent to which academic instruction should be a major goal of the curriculum for preschool and kindergarten children is a constant topic of debate among the many parties concerned with early childhood education. The introduction of local, state and national standards has exacerbated the complexities involved in resolving these issues. I am suggesting that perhaps one approach to resolving some of the dissention concerning curriculum focus in the early years and about the potential risks of premature formal academic instruction is to examine the distinctions between academic and intellectual goals - perhaps during all the years of education.

Some participants in these debates assume that we confront a choice between a traditional preschool curriculum that emphasizes spontaneous play plus many simple activities, (e.g. creating objects with clay, building with blocks, listening to amusing stories, and other pleasant experiences) versus introducing and emphasizing formal instruction on basic academic skills and knowledge (e.g. the alphabet, days of the week, names of the months, the calendar, counting, etc.).

The main argument presented here is that the traditional debates in the field about whether to emphasize so-called free play or formal beginning academic instruction are not the only two options for the early childhood curriculum. Certainly some proportions of time can be given to both of those kinds of curriculum components. But in the early years, another major component of education - (indeed for all age groups) must be to provide a wide range of experiences, opportunities, resources and contexts that will provoke, stimulate, and support children's innate intellectual dispositions.

Region: United States ^[4]

Tags: child development ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/15/04/lively-minds-distinctions-between-academic-versus>

Links

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