



Code: Pyle

APD 1210 RESEARCH PRACTICUM COURSE

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS 2023-24 FALL/WINTER

Name and Title: Angela Pyle, Associate Professor

Lab Website: www.playlearninglab.ca

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Play-based learning in kindergarten classrooms

NUMBER OF STUDENT PLACES AVAILABLE: 1-2

PRIMARY MODE OF RESEARCH PLACEMENT PARTICIPATION (circle one option and describe):

☐ IN PERSON

☐ REMOTE (ONLINE)

☒ HYBRID/FLEXIBLE

Please describe: Some work will be conducted in person (e.g., lab meetings), while other work can be completed online (e.g., data organization).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY: While there is general agreement that play is beneficial to children's learning and development, there is conflicting information concerning the implementation of play in kindergarten classrooms. One body of research espouses the developmental benefits of play, including play's role in the development of social skills and self-regulation. This research describes the importance of child directed free play with minimal teacher involvement. Conversely, a second body of research describes the potential academic benefits of play, including the development of foundational literacy skills. This research demonstrates the essential role of the teacher in play to support the integration of play and academic learning. These contradictory findings present a dilemma for kindergarten teachers who must negotiate a balance between the mandated academic standards communicated by the curriculum and the mandated developmentally appropriate use of play-based learning. Instead, we propose a continuum of play-based learning that encompasses various types of play including child-directed and teacher-directed opportunities. Our mandate is, in part, to support teachers in navigating this complex educational landscape by creating an openly accessible database of research-based play activities to support children's social-emotional development and academic learning. In addition, in our most recent research project involving over 30 kindergarten classrooms, we collected observational data, teacher interview data, and baseline and outcome data of student abilities in self-regulation and literacy to determine how best to use play to support student learning and development.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION: The student will work collaboratively to organize data for the described research project. In addition, over the past seven years, through three separate SSHRC-funded studies, we have collected video recorded observational data in over 50 kindergarten classrooms



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across Ontario. We are sharing these findings with educators on our website to support their implementation of empirically validated pedagogical approaches. The student will work in a team to analyze these videos to determine research supported play activities, and translate these findings into educator friendly summaries to be shared on our website. Other activities may include data analysis, writing conference proposals, and supporting the writing of manuscripts for publication.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED SKILLS/BACKGROUND (OPTIONAL):

- Ability to work collaboratively
- Experience working in a classroom setting with children
- Familiarity with qualitative research

DAY AND TIMES OF LAB MEETINGS: Lab meetings are every other week. The exact day and time is determined in the fall based on the schedules of students working in the lab.