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The Fun Imperative: Activating the Child's Own Natural Desire to Learn

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Abstract

Educators are on a constant quest for the prime environment that is conducive to learning. This search draws on different domains of research. One area of study that could provide fresh and relevant knowledge is neuroscience. This area of research provides insights into the operations of the brain and, in turn, into the mechanics of the learning process. Neuroscience research has revealed that the brain is highly adaptable and that learning changes the structure and function of the brain. The design and configuration of the brain commence early in life and therefore the intersection of neuroscience and education will provide educators with a better understanding of how children learn. This means that the learning opportunities offered in the early years of a child's life could have profound and far-reaching effects on the architecture of the brain and its learning facility. This paper conflates two perspectives when exploring and comprehending the child's natural desire to learn: desk research offering an understanding of brain plasticity and the biochemical interactions which connect learning and fun, and a narrative inquiry focused on delineating the connection between educational neuroscience and the development of purposeful and effective learning experiences for young students. A kindergarten educator and two key professionals in Early Years Education share their expertise and their experiences, merging theory with practice, linking educational neuroscience to flexible learning environments, the Universal Design for Learning, the Emergent Curriculum, and learning contexts that promote fun to activate a child's own natural desire to learn, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes.

Keywords: Educational Neuroscience, Emergent Curriculum, Fun and Learning, Narrative Inquiry, Universal Design for Learning