

IDENTIFYING & CREATING CHILD-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTS

Shared with you by Lisa Murphy
CEO & Founder, Ooey Gooey, Inc.

This is me!



I've been in the field for 25 years now, teaching in CA, AZ, IL and NY. I am an ultra runner & avid reader. I am currently on track to complete my M.Ed. in early childhood education this December and will graduate from Champlain College next May. I started doing trainings after a presenter didn't show up at the 1996 NAEYC (Dallas) Conference (it's a GREAT story!) and started my company in 1997. I am on the road 300 days a year domestically and internationally presenting seminars and trainings related to early childhood education. I play hard, work hard and love every minute of it! This is my 1st webinar so I'm extra excited to be with you here today!!

This is my company!



Our mission is to assist in the transformation of early childhood education by 1) giving the best workshops 2) linking people to the best resources and 3) using the power of social media so people feel connected in their transformation efforts.

Additionally we serve as change agents by advocating for consistency and ethical accountability in the early childhood profession.

Ooey Gooley, Inc.
a silly name, a serious message!

The 9-Point Framework



These 9 points guide my work with children and families and reinforces the importance of a play-based, hands-on, child-centered early childhood experience. Additionally, it allows me to establish a baseline of expectation when training staff.

Buzzword Bingo & Lingo D'jour!



Call it a framework, a lens, talking points,
theoretical components...

Whatever word or phrase resonates with you, call it
what you will!

JUST USE IT!

Rationale behind the 9 points



- Why did I develop this? Too much inconsistency in our profession! Too many definitions of “play-based” and of “child-centered” that causes us to have arguments about the wrong things. And with the wrong people!
- Reflection of my growth! It’s a living breathing document that has evolved from 4 to 6 to (now) 9
- Establishes a baseline when I am called on to mentor, observe, train or do full day seminars so we are all on the same page

Important (but oft forgotten) note:



Being child centered DOES NOT = chaos!

It is NOT kids getting to do whatever they want while adults clean up the mess

It is NOT lord of the flies in Room 5

It is NOT kids running around naked with paint flying through the air

Structure vs. Control

The 9 Points (quick!)



Time

Outside

Rules

The “secret”

Facilitating

Intentionality

Theorists

Keeping it real

The 7 things

TIME



Children are provided with long periods of uninterrupted free time for exploration and interaction within their learning environment.

Talking Points:



- ❑ Schedules! Are they helping or hindering?
- ❑ Are we taking the TIME to ask real questions?
- ❑ And to wait for real answers?
- ❑ Time is different for children and adults
- ❑ What could possibly be more important than what we are doing right now?
- ❑ This is a child's place...

Admin specific ponderings:



- Are your expectations clear to your staff in regard to schedules? How do you know?
- How flexible are you? How DO you respond if someone is “off schedule?”
- Are schedules reinforcing the false play/learning dichotomy?
- Have you ever noticed how often children are interrupted? Do you like to be interrupted?
- Who made the schedules in the classroom? How much autonomy do teachers have?

OUTSIDE



There is lots of outdoor play time. The outdoor environment is not considered a separate space, but instead is seen as an extension of the indoor space. It is understood that the outdoor environment is just as credible of a classroom as the one inside.

Talking Points:



- 35-40% of schools have eliminated recess
- Do we really have an ADD/ADHD problem? Or a policy and expectation problem?
- Everything IN should could would be OUT!
- What might happen if they stayed outside all day?
- Be mindful of chickens on fences and “I’m cold we’re going in” syndrome
- Get a hat!!!

Admin specific ponderings:



- What IS your outdoor play policy? How do your teachers know what is expected? Or do you also have a “we have to check the weather line” staff?
- Are we consistent in what we say and do? Are we leading by example? When was the last time you donned the hat, gloves and played in the snow or rain with them?
- How do we handle weather related issues?
- How do staff “know” what can/can’t go out? Or does poopy face’s preference rule the roost?

RULES



Children have the freedom to explore this environment with few restrictions. We have one overarching rule: “People are not for hurting.” We are able to provide this level of freedom because we have embraced the secret to good teaching (which is next – hold your horses!)

Talking Points:



- ❑ How many rules do you need? Poopy face had 49!
- ❑ Many rules try to eliminate behaviors that while socially unacceptable, are developmentally appropriate!
- ❑ Stop wasting energy!
- ❑ They can smell loop-holes!
- ❑ Telling children what they CAN do instead of what you DON'T WANT them to do.
- ❑ Stop watering your weeds

Admin specific ponderings



- We are circling back to *autonomy* – how much does your staff have?
- And we are forever returning to *consistency* – how does your staff know what is expected policy wise? If you don't have clear expectations you will have one roof and 29 programs!
- *How do we handle the poopy faces?*

THE “SECRET”



(calm down! Here it is!)

The secret to good teaching is
controlling the environment, not the
little people in it.

Talking Points:



- What does this mean?
- The “no-no’s” have been removed
- Consequently the child has freedom to explore within the environment that the adult has set up.

- Hey Lisa – take a minute and explain to the people how you used to describe for people what you really do in the classroom...

Admin specific ponderings:



- Can't really act on this one until you consider if in fact it is really what you believe or not... If it IS what you believe – (broken record alert!) how do the teachers know?
- How can we work to assist our teachers in becoming more (QUIZ: what's my favorite F word?!!!) FLEXIBLE!
- Know the difference between a poopy face and a NON-poopy face?
- Many self-imposed limitations! “I can't” “I'm not allowed” – where did all that come from?

FACILITATING



Teachers are serving as facilitators within this space, deepening the child's investigations and providing activities and materials that reflect the needs and interests of the children in the room.

Talking Points:



- The teacher's role must be deeper than “the keeper of keys to the cupboard”.
- Poopy face had a key around her neck!
- It's not PLAYDOUGH DAY!!!!
- What are the invitations of the space? Change the invitation, not the child!
- Are we using provocations?
- “Who needs something?” Using all of our senses to deepen our observation skills

Admin specific ponderings:



- We must cultivate their ability to see the difference between **INSTIGATING** and **FACILITATING**
- Are we reinforcing special treat syndrome? (And if you're good....)
- Are our teacher supplies under lock and key? Do we suffer from scarcity syndrome?
- This circles back to **TIME** and **SCHEDULE** expectations too - do staff know you "got their back" if an exploration goes longer than planned?

INTENTIONALITY



Teachers are aware of their language & actions and can articulate the intention behind what they are doing in the classroom. They ask 3 questions: **WHAT** am I doing? **WHY** am I doing it? And **WHO** am I doing it for?

Talking Points:



- The problem with buzz words...
- The 3 questions guide my program/lesson and curriculum planning ALWAYS! And my answers go beyond, “that’s how we’ve just always done it,” and deeper than, “because it’s so cute”.
- The HAM story
- I’ll have the philosophical debate with you down the road – I can wait! What is more urgent is to develop a talent pool that can articulate the rationale behind their choices and actions.

Admin specific ponderings



- How do we nurture and grow our teachers?
- How do I respond to questions and challenges that might emerge from a teacher's reflection on THE THREE QUESTIONS?
- When was the last time we ran the whole program through a THREE QUESTIONS filter?
- Why IS it bird week the third week in March?
- No snow in San Diego! No penguins in Phoenix!
- And if we are already here (sorry – here it comes again!) how do our teachers *know??*

THEORISTS



Teachers understand child development theory & know the history of their profession.

Talking Points:



- What's the big deal? Why do I need to know about them? Simply stated – because none of it's new!
- As practitioners we are able to pull strength and credibility from the fact that DAP and best practices are not just “personal preferences” but are based on the research based contributions of experts in our field. BUT NOT IF WE DON'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE!
- We must know who “paved the way”

Admin specific ponderings:



- Do WE know who those folks are? And if aligned with an existing “traditional” approach, are we familiar with more than the superficial characteristics of it?
- Overheard at a conference: “We aren’t allowed to be Reggio anymore because it violated a fire code...”
- Consider accepting the #binder challenge
- (shameless plug) Possibly consider attending my “Vygotsky, Montessori & Piaget OH MY!” workshop!

KEEPING IT REAL



(don't over think this one peeps!)

Children are provided with relevant, meaningful, engaging experiences that are (literally) *real*.

Talking Points:



- Rule of thumb? IT to them or THEM to it.
- If you want it in their head, it must first be in their hands.
- You will see children exploring real objects,
Not coloring dittos of them.
- Activities must engage all the senses!
- If it is apple week....

Apple Demo Overview



- Real apple
 - Plastic apple
 - Coloring picture of an apple
 - Flashcard of A-P-P-L-E
-
- (Final shameless plug!) The “Apple Demo” DVD is available on my website

Admin specific ponderings:



- How DO I handle process vs. product? What are my feelings about it? Does the program send mixed messages?
- Are we “allowing” many programs under one roof?
- If I claim to have process oriented expectations of my staff (I know, sorry – one more time!) HOW DO THEY KNOW?
- How do I remind staff of the literal-ness of this young age group? (Piaget!) We have to be specific when talking with them!!!

THE SEVEN THINGS



Children are provided time each day to: create, move, sing, discuss, observe, read and play.

Talking Points:



- It's a metaphor peeps!
- 6 of these things make up the *foundation* that supports the *house* of higher learning. Or, if you prefer, the house of *academics*. The 7th (PLAY) is not a separate thing, but rather the cement that is holding our foundation together
- Do we still trust the process of child development? Or do we cave in to the pressure to start building because **WE'RE GOING TO KINDERGARTEN IN THE FALL!!!!**

Admin specific ponderings:



- How do staff and families KNOW we value a play based early childhood experience? Is the program consistent in their message and support of play?
- Has time been set aside to even dialogue about what that means? And what it does NOT mean?
- How are we getting in our own way? (think back to the schedule issue)
- How are we serving as PLAY advocates both in and out of the program?
- You don't have to be an architect...

WANT MORE?



You can stalk Lisa via many social media outlets:

@ooeygoeeylady on the twitter

“like” her **Ooey Gooney, Inc.** Facebook page

@ooeygoeeylady on the instagram

Ooey Gooney Lady® on YouTube

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Ooey Gooney® = a silly name, a serious message