

Elliott, Liz (2009) Book review: Learning through play – a work based approach for the early years. *Education 3-13*, 37 (2). pp. 195-196.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/4927/>

*Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.*

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

**provided that**

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
  - a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

**You may not**

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing [insight@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:insight@cumbria.ac.uk).

Language Learners opportunity to develop language proficiency as well as gaining academic and conceptual understanding in curriculum areas.

The information these chapters give on children's development, in particularly of writing, is very helpful. The writers provide examples of each developmental stage (stages identified by Read, Henderson, Beer and Barone) and analyse each one in terms of how the child is developing. This then follows logically into practical examples of how the teacher can facilitate this development.

Amidst this feast of language development is a very useful chapter on materials that support children's learning. The authors provide a mine of information about text structures of different genres including content factors that support or reduce ease of writing. They also provide a very helpful list of prompts to think through what makes a good text with lists of extensive examples. However the authors do not let the reader bask contentedly in the knowledge that they have a great resource list, they ask what you will now do differently, again encouraging critical reflectiveness.

The case studies that conclude the book could be seen at first sight as something they felt they had to do to prove their strategies work. However, they are written in a way that has children's learning at their very heart. The chapter follows several teachers who work with English language learners and follows their journey through some of the ideas in the book. The ideas do meet with success, but you know it is real, not just proving a point.

Overall, this book is an immense digest of practical ideas, information and theoretical perspectives and it hits a variety of readers on a variety of levels. However, I do think the title could lead it to be cast aside by those who don't teach English language learners and this would be a shame. The ideas offered are useful for any teacher as is all the information on development in speaking, writing and reading. During a session on working with children with English as an additional language (EAL), we were discussing strategies one might use to support EAL learners. As the ideas flowed, one of my students responded with 'But that's what good teaching is anyway'. This is an excellent book that does so much more to support all teachers and teaching than the title suggests.

Adrian Copping  
University of Cumbria, UK  
*adrian.copping@cumbria.ac.uk*  
© 2009, Adrian Copping

**Learning through play – a work based approach for the early years**, by Jaqueline Duncan and Madelaine Lockwood, London, Continuum, 2008, 251 pp., £19.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-84706-168-3

This is an excellent book for those working with and caring for young children in a variety of early years settings. It provides accessible information and practical ideas for those in training but is also particularly useful for those who are interested in leading and managing change in the area of play-based learning. The introduction provides useful advice and guidance for readers on how to make effective use of the book to develop their own understanding.

The book is very well structured and can be read as a comprehensive guide both to theory and to practice in play based learning, or each chapter can be read as a unit

on its own. The authors provide a clear outline of each chapter's contents, a variety of practical activities, a summary and a section explaining relevant jargon.

The book begins with the importance of observation of children in order to understand their individual learning needs. The reader can access information about the theoretical background of children as learners and how this relates to play based learning. The role of the adult is considered alongside the importance of the learning environment. Further chapters build on this approach, providing many practical activities which link observation, theory and effective practice. Included are plenty of activities that allow early years professionals to develop their own individual knowledge and skills as well as team-based approaches to the development of play based learning.

The final section of the book provides advice and systems to support those who are involved in developing staff understanding of play-based learning. It also effectively explores managing change to promote effective practice in developing and improving play based provision.

This is a book that provides a very good practical guide to learning through play.

Liz Elliott  
*Senior Lecturer in Early Years Education*  
*University of Cumbria, UK*  
*[liz.elliott@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:liz.elliott@cumbria.ac.uk)*  
© 2009, Liz Elliott