

The Salzburg Statement In Support Of The International Day of Play

WHY PLAY?

The importance of play in children's daily lives and healthy development has become increasingly recognized today.

A growing body of evidence supports the view that playing, throughout childhood, is not only a natural behavior but also contributes to children's quality of life, their well-being, and the development of a breadth of skills.

The type of environment for play is also important, having an impact on children's experience, choices, and relationships, both with other people and with the environment itself.

Much debate has taken place over the years about the precise role of play in children's development. In today's world, it is often suggested that children are practicing adult skills through play. It has now become more widely accepted that play is a behavior that exists for its own sake as well as having an important developmental role.

From the early stages of brain development and bonding with parents, to the independence and autonomy of the teenage years, to developing an entrepreneurial mindset - play makes an important contribution.

As children grow, play offers the opportunity to develop and hone a range of cognitive, creative, physical, emotional, and social skills, helping young people make sense of and relate to an increasingly complex physical, and social world.

This Statement was prepared by members of The Education Policymakers Network, a two year program that connected policymakers from different countries to support and sustain education reform around a breadth of skills. For more information, please visit salzburgglobal.org/go/epn

A RIGHT TO PLAY

The UN (United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms the right to play as a universal right for children. But it is often overlooked, and sometimes referred to as "the forgotten article" of the convention. Play is – however – invaluable in life, leisure, and enterprise. Play helps us explore, examine, learn, and empathize. Play helps us unify and unite across geography, generations, and culture.

June 11th 2024 will now be the world's first International Day of Play and will provide an opportunity to share expertise, focus resources and magnify communication and advocacy activity.

Play is about the infinite possibilities of the imagination. Imagine what else June 11th could achieve.

WHAT IF WE COULD USE AN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PLAY TO:

- re-define play and explain that while play is universal it has distinct cultural significance that links to all aspects and levels of community?
- raise awareness that play can be used to develop a range of holistic skills in children and young people such as social-emotional, physical, creative, and cognitive skills?
- make the link between; play and creativity; play and collaboration; play and critical thinking; and play and peace?
- improve collaboration between children; between parents and children; between teachers and students; and between children and the environment through playful interactions?
- show how play is an innate driver for people to find out how the world works?
- demonstrate that encouraging play in kindergarten and school can positively engage children, leading to improvements in attendance and achievement?
- remind people that play is timeless and associated with laughter, fulfilment, fun and happiness and – consequently - brings joy and human contentment for all ages?
- provide children with real life experiences in which they learn how to work collaboratively, to win and to lose, and to build resilience?
- promote play as a wellbeing therapy where it can be used to aid recovery and support both physical and mental health?
- strengthen the link between play and physical health and that if children are physically active when they are young, they are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyles as they grow up?
- remind governments that play is a right and that all children – regardless of background and support need – are entitled to safe places and spaces to play?

A CALL TO ACTION

This year and every year we invite you to make the UN International Day of Play truly special. Visit www.internationaldayofplay.org to find out more about how to spread the word, download the education toolkit and read the Youth Call to Action.