

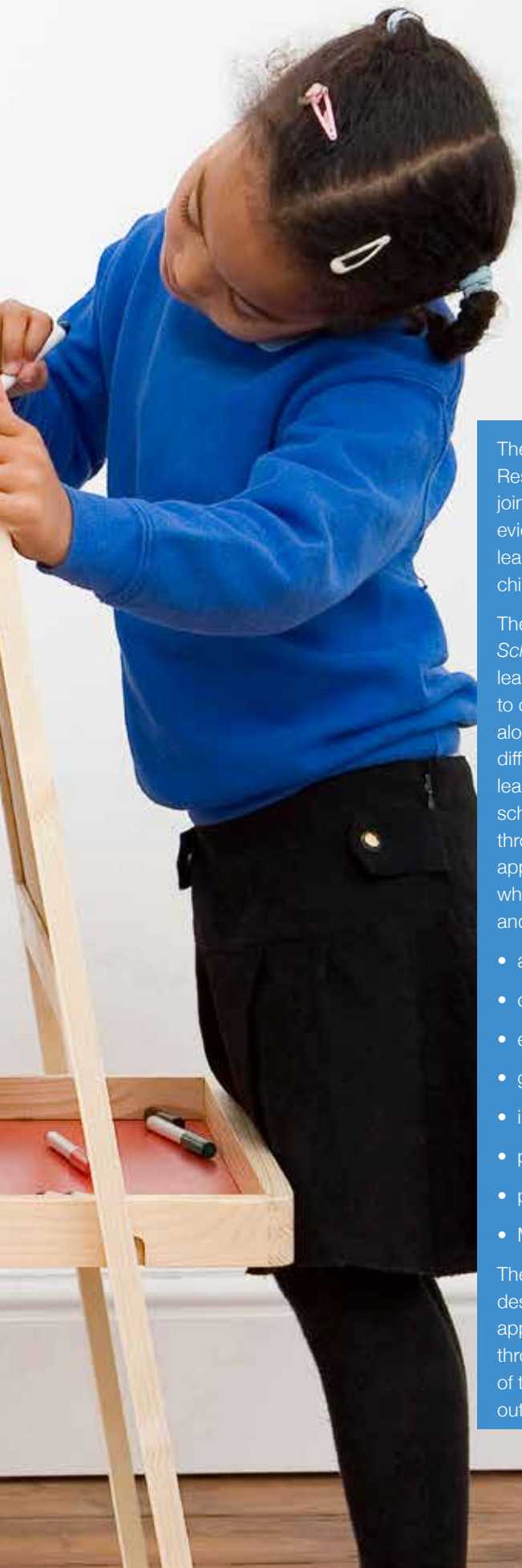


# Learning through play in primary school classrooms

New research offers a model for playful learning as an effective pedagogy for primary school-aged children. **Rachel Parker** discusses.



*Rachel Parker is a Senior Research Fellow in ACER's Education and Development Research Program.*



The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and LEGO Foundation jointly authored a report that provides evidence on the positive impacts of learning through play beyond early childhood.

The study *Learning through Play at School* investigates how play-based learning benefits primary school children to develop a holistic breadth of skills along with academic knowledge. Eight different approaches to teaching and learning commonly used in primary school years were compared to learning through play. Also known as 'integrated approaches', the study explored whether these approaches are playful and effective:

- active learning
- cooperative and collaborative learning
- experiential learning
- guided discovery learning
- inquiry-based learning
- problem-based learning
- project-based learning
- Montessori education

The report, released in March 2019, describes the eight pedagogical approaches as related to learning through play, and provides evidence of their positive impact on learning outcomes.

The study found that there are cross-cutting factors that enable the success of integrated teaching and learning approaches.

Such integrated approaches recognise student agency and support learners to make choices about the content and process of learning.

A range of extant research by LEGO Foundation suggests that play-based learning in early education is impactful when it is joyful, meaningful, actively engaging, iterative and socially interactive.

The study concluded that integrated approaches are effective in promoting learning across social, emotional, physical, creative and cognitive domains in primary school. It suggests that schools can employ integrated pedagogies and extend children's learning gains made from play-based pedagogies in early years.

The Sustainable Development Goals envision quality education as a driver of sustainable development and the key to achieving the Goals. This study on the role of play in education is particularly relevant and timely as a number of education systems around the globe are moving towards child-centric pedagogies to foster holistic learning and expanding learning outcomes to include social, emotional, physical and higher order thinking skills. ■

Read the full report:

*Learning through Play at School* <https://www.legofoundation.com/en/learn-how/knowledge-base/learning-through-play-at-school/>

#### LINKS

Read more about *Learning through Play at School*:

<https://www.teachermagazine.com.au/articles/how-can-children-learn-through-play-at-school>

<https://rd.acer.org/article/learning-through-play-beyond-the-early-years>