Piaget and Play Based Learning

Piaget's theories of cognitive development have influenced our modern play pedagogies. Piaget and play based learning seem to go together quite well because Piagetian theories **reinforce the idea that children learn through play**.

PIAGET and play based learning

This blog post will examine ways you can apply Piaget's stages of cognitive

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You will discover some **practical play-based learning ideas** for children in each of Piaget's four stages of cognitive development.

If you would like to learn more about Jean Piaget and his theories on cognitive development in children, check out this Blog Post: Stages of Development-Piaget

Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive

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Piaget's theory of cognitive development proposes 4 stages of development.

- Sensorimotor stage: birth to 2 years
- Preoperational stage: ages 2 to 7
- Concrete operational stage: ages 7 to 11
- Formal operational stage: ages 12 and up

Piaget suggested these stages occur in this order and as children develop, they will not skip a stage but progressively move through each one. He observed visible changes in children as they pass through each stage. We can see the stages as a staircase because each stage builds on the stage before it.

If you are interested in learning more about Piaget's four stages of **cognitive development** and how they relate to his

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this Blog Post: Developmental Stages of Play - Piaget. Piaget devised a series of developmental stages of play. You can observe them throughout his four stages of cognitive development.

Overall, when applying Piaget's stages in your early childhood pedagogy, keep in mind that the children in your class can work in **any** of the stages **regardless of their age**. Teachers need to be offering learning opportunities which cater

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developmental level and **not their age**.

For young children starting preschool or kindergarten, Piaget's theories align more with a play-based pedagogy. According to Piaget, children need learning environments, curriculum, materials, and lessons which provide opportunities for **hands-on exploration, and authentic interactions with the actual world.**

Ideas for Educators with Children in the Sensorimotor Stage

- Provide exploratory

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authentic, real-world objects.

- Provide play provocations which stimulate the five senses.
- Implement age-appropriate routines. Predictable routines will help to develop communication skills.

Ideas for Educators with Children in the Preoperational Stage

- Piaget observed children in this stage learn best through hands-on activities. Encourage children to

resources within it actively.

- Give short instructions, using actions and words.
- Children in this stage are egocentric so do not expect them to consistently see the world from another's point of view.
- Encourage children to move beyond their egocentric thinking by playing with dress-up costumes and encouraging the children to take on the roles of other characters.
- Provide plenty of dramatic play experiences.
- Remember, children might have different meanings for the same word or different words for the same meaning. It is important to take time to clarify confusing

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- Explicitly teach new vocabulary and word meanings. Children in the preoperational stage often expect others to understand words they have invented.
- Ask questions to provoke thought and encourage them to come up with their own ideas.
- Point out new things in the world around them and encourage the children to pose questions about those things.
- Create learning provocations which invite children to manipulate shape changing resources like playdough, sand, or water. These types of resources can help children move towards the concept of conservation.
- Relate lessons and

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personal experiences and interests of the children in your class.

- Avoid using worksheets or paper and pencil activities to introduce or consolidate new knowledge. Children in this stage primarily learn by doing.
- Use concrete props and visual aids whenever possible.

Ideas for Educators with Children in the Concrete Operational Stage

- Children in this stage appreciate rules as they are moving from

a more analytical, rule-regulated types of thinking. Procedural activities like cooking are excellent for encouraging their cognitive development.

- Encourage children to create timelines, 3D models and science experiments for them to experience and manipulate abstract concepts.
- Provide a variety of measuring cups (in different shapes) for children to explore measuring the same quantities but with different utensils.
- Use familiar experiences (like word problems in maths) to represent complex ideas.
- Use brain teasers and riddles to foster analytical thinking.
- Use analogies to show

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relationship between new ideas and their already acquired knowledge.

- Provide reading books with only a few characters.
- Provide opportunities for children to manipulate concrete objects when they are learning about and testing new ideas.
- Give children opportunities to practice classifying objects with only three of four variables at a time.
- Focus on asking the children open-ended questions to provoke thought and higher order thinking.

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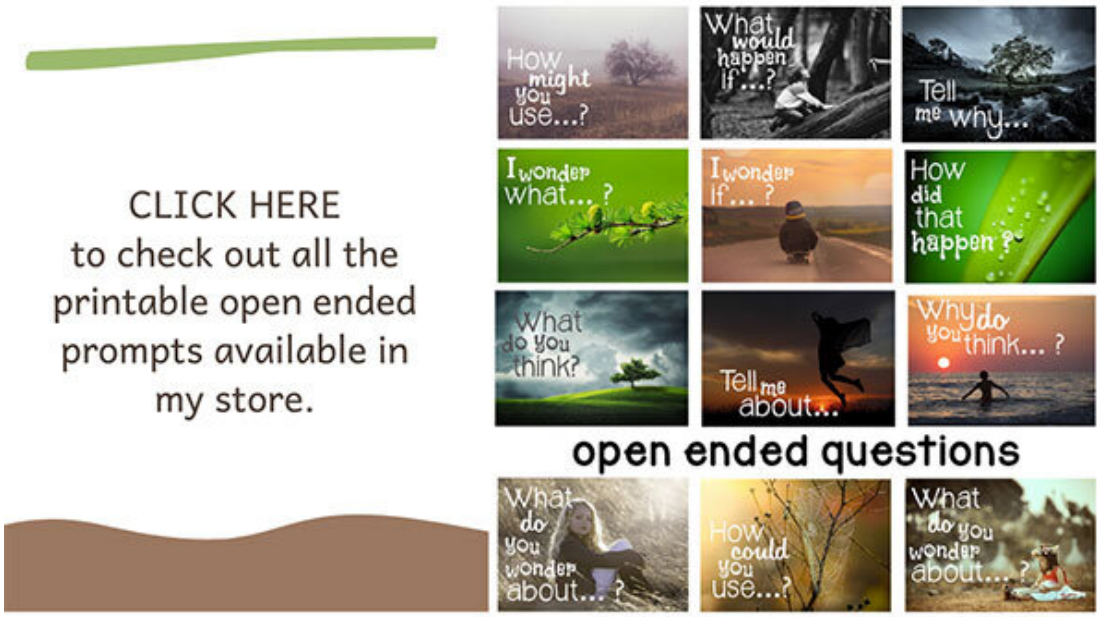

Ideas for Educators with Children in the Formal Operational Stage

- Offer step-by-step explanations of concepts and use charts and other visual aids to demonstrate desired learning.
- Classify and group information using graphic organisers so children can assimilate new information with their prior knowledge.
- Explore hypothetical

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current events or social issues.

- Broaden children's conceptual knowledge whenever possible. If you are discussing recycling, for example, discuss the other strategies we can use to care for the environment.

4 Teaching Takeaways from Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

1. **Focus on the process of children's thinking, not just its products**. So often we just check for the

exploring the thinking processes a child has used to get that answer. Piaget suggests **relevant learning experiences** will build on a child's current level of cognitive functioning. If you want to provide relevant and effective learning experiences, you must focus on the child's thinking processes. When you understand a child's thinking processes, you can see how and why the child came up with their answers. Then you will be able to provide relevant learning experiences.

2. **Recognise the crucial role active, self-initiated interaction plays in learning.** In a Piagetian classroom, children are given opportunities to discover themselves through hands-on interactions with the environment. You will not see an emphasis on didactic teaching and the presentation of ready-

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Piagetian teachers **provide a rich variety of activities that encourage children to interact directly with their physical world.**

3. **Stop using strategies aimed at making children adult like in their thinking.**

This takeaway refers to the common educational goal of speeding up child

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accelerate children's growth through the developmental stages could be **worse than no teaching at all**. He warned educators against strategies designed to advance children because they would lead to superficial acceptance of adult formulas rather than true cognitive understanding.

4. **Accept the individual differences in children's developmental progress.** Piaget believed all children go through the same developmental sequence, but they very often do so at different rates. Because of this, teachers should design learning experiences for **individuals and groups** of children rather than for the whole class group. This also has implications for assessment and grading. If we are to expect individual differences, we should not relate assessments to the

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peers. Instead, we should design our assessments in relation to each child's own previous level of development.

One of the most important takeaways of Piaget's theory is that creating knowledge and intelligence is an inherently **active process**. The children in

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and experimenting as they build their understanding of how the world works.

"I find myself opposed to the view of knowledge as a passive copy of reality. I believe that knowing an object means acting upon it, constructing systems of transformations that can be

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or with this object. Knowing reality means constructing systems of transformations that correspond, more or less adequately, to reality."

— JEAN PIAGET

You can easily apply Piaget's stages of cognitive development in a play-based learning environment. If you liked this post on Piaget and Play Based Learning, you might like to check out my

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ALL about play based learning!!

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Preview POST COMMENT...

John Sawyer 2 months ago

This is why younger kids are so screwed up today. Just let your kids be kids first. I grew up in a middle-class loving family. My father and mother would take me places that I still cherish today. They taught me to use common sense in the real world. Today, I supervise police officers in a large city and have seen firsthand why and how juveniles can't deal with normal problems and are perplexed in solving issues. I blame the parents who raised them.

Iris Esber 2 months ago

I enjoyed reading it, thanks!!!

Sander Langerak A year ago

Absolutely wonderful, thank you very much!

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I'm Janelle and I'm here to help you implement an engaging, play based curriculum

that **STILL** has your children meeting academic standards and benchmarks!

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