

CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND PLAY

Masterclass at the World EduLead 2019
SINGAPORE

15th April 2019

 [pasi_sahlberg](https://twitter.com/pasi_sahlberg)

Masterclass plan

9.00 Session 1: The state of play

11.00 Session 2: Should children play more?

13.30 Session 3: Curiosity, creativity and Deep Play

15.30 Session 4: What to do next?

17.00 The end

What do you want to learn today?

What do you have to offer today?

Session 1: The state of play

*Executive
function*

Imagination

Curiosity

Collaboration

PLAY

Risk-taking

Joy

Creativity

Problem-solving

Executive functions

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graph LR; A[Executive functions] --- B[Working memory]; A --- C[Cognitive flexibility]; A --- D[Inhibitory control];
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Working memory

Cognitive flexibility

Inhibitory control

Executive function is responsible for these skills:

1. Paying attention
2. Organising and planning
3. Initiating ideas and staying focused
4. Regulating emotions
5. Self-monitoring

Play is not doing well – why?

1. Education policies

Time spent in school around the world

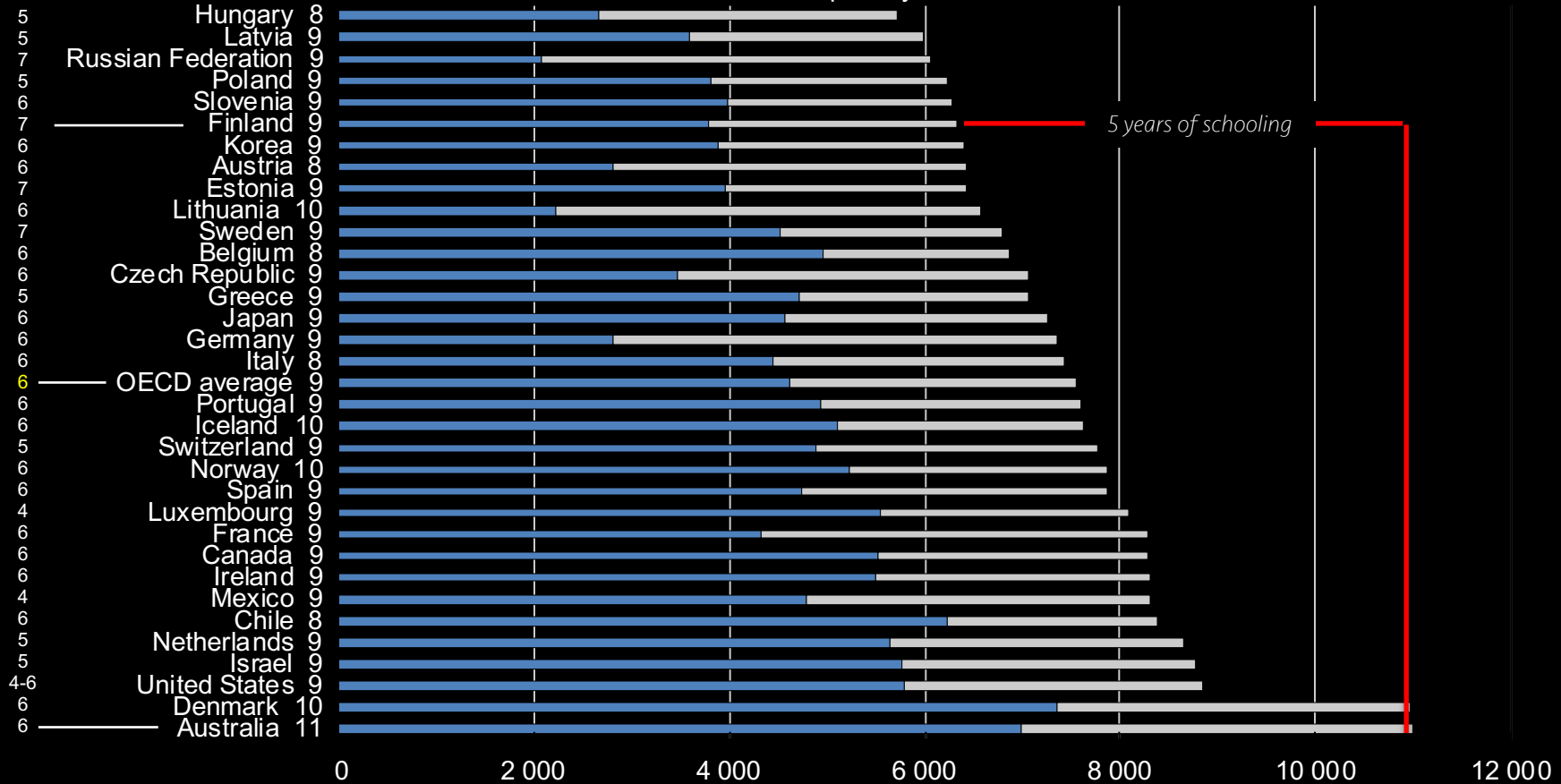
Starting age of compulsory education

Duration of primary and lower secondary education, in years

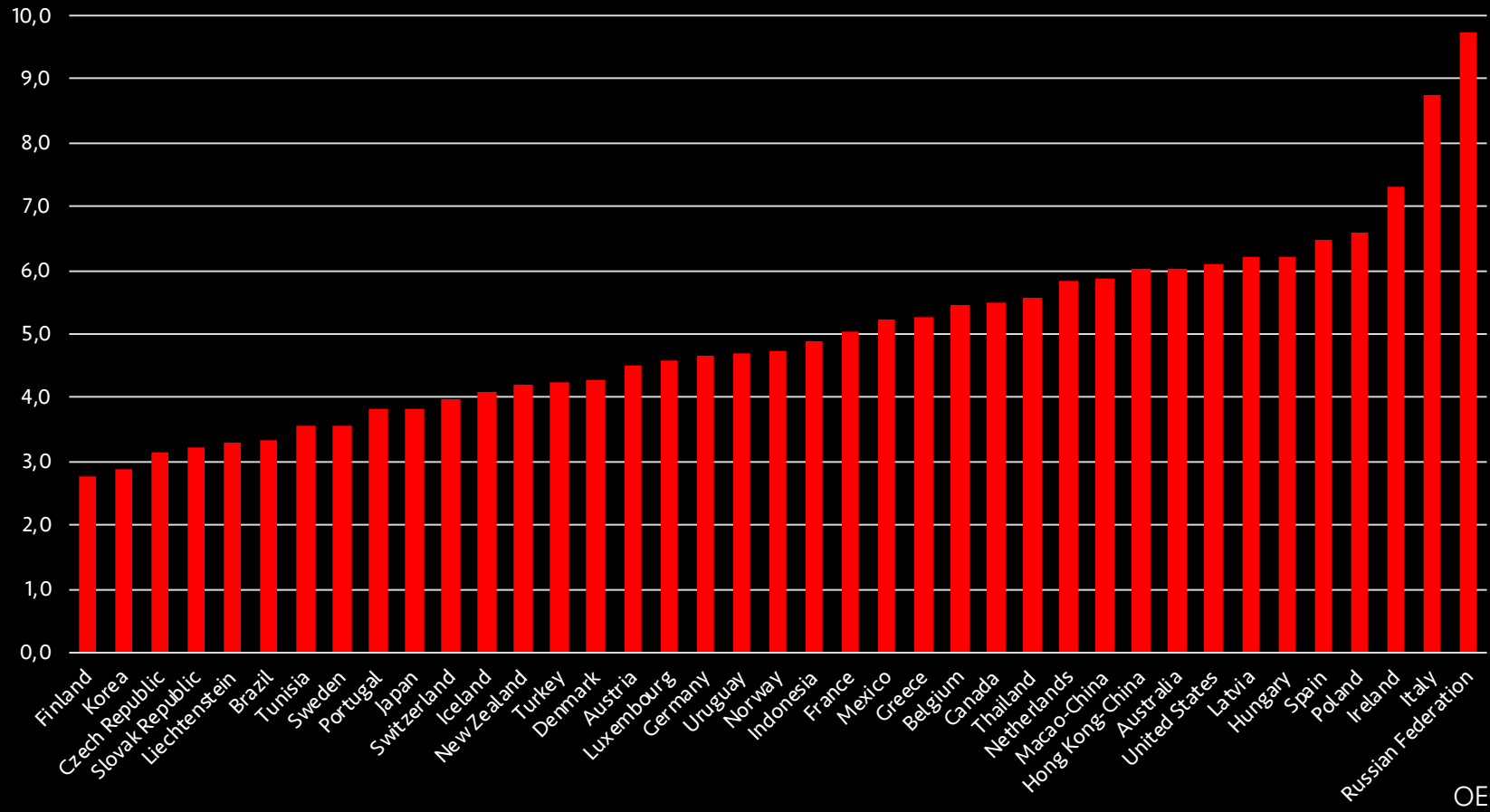
■ Primary

■ Lower secondary

Total number of compulsory instruction hours



Homework or other study set by teachers per week (hours)



Competition

Standardisation

Test-based accountability

↳ Play suffers!

2. Parents' views

What parents think?

A majority of parents (88%) believe that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly.

Fewer parents are playing outdoors with their children.

Parenting paradigms are shifting to overprotecting children from risk-taking.

Parents believe that their children will benefit more from structured activities as opposed to unstructured free play.

3. Media and tech use

Teens who have access to a smartphone

} 95%

Teens who are online almost constantly

} 45%

Kids under 8 who have access to a mobile device at home

} 98%

Emerging evidence...

More hours of screen time are associated with lower well-being in ages 2 to 17.

- Twenge and Campbell, 2018

High users show less curiosity, self-control, and emotional stability.

- Twenge and Campbell, 2018

There is directional association between screen time and poor performance on development screening tests among very young children.

- Madigan, Browne, Racine, Mori, & Tough, 2019

The New Digital Divide

Teenagers' daily screen time:

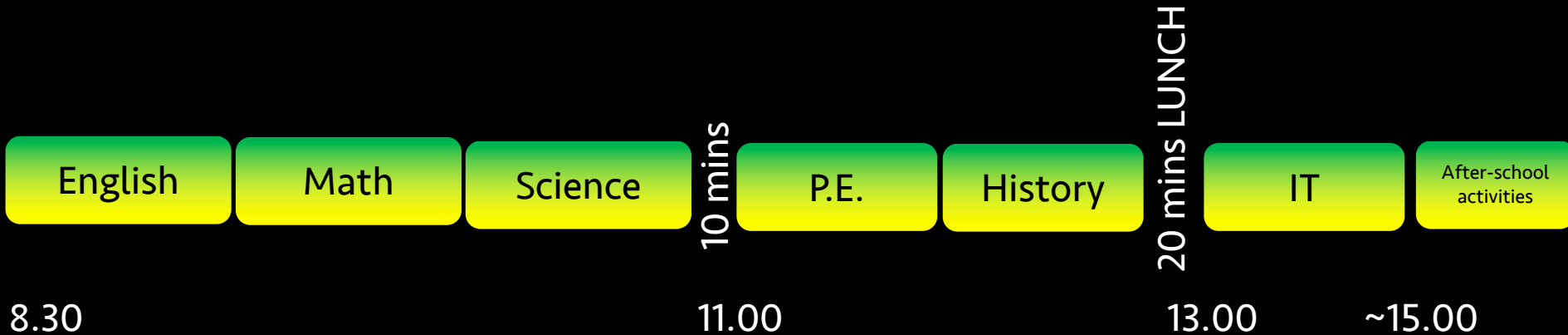
- Lower-income teens: Over 8 hours
- Higher-income teens: Less than 6 hours

It may be that the kids of poorer parents will be raised by digital screens, while the children of elite will be returning back to wooden toys and the luxury of human interaction.

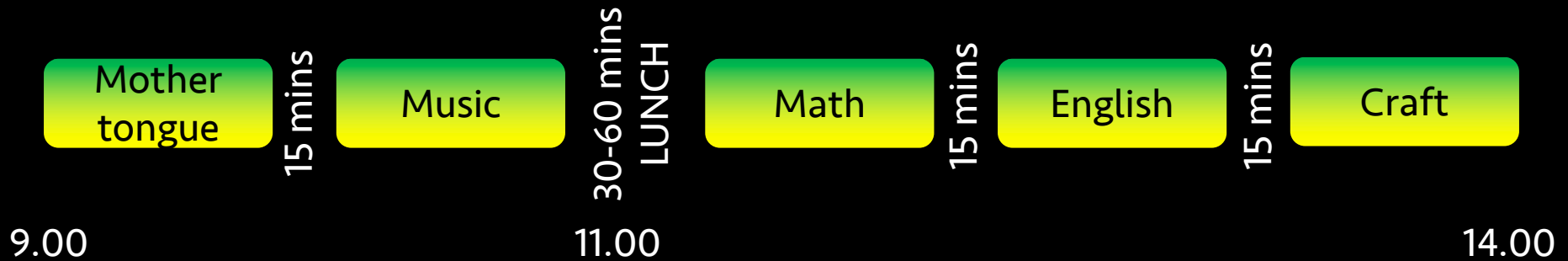
- Adapted from Nellie Bowles (NYT), 26 Oct 2018

Session 2: Should children play more?

A typical 5th grade school day



A typical 5th grade school day



Should kids play more?

Imagine that you have been invited to a meeting where the key discussion topic is to find out what would benefit all children most in school education. Everybody agrees that quality of education is critically important for the future of the individuals and for the entire nation. There are those who argue for more time for formal instruction and focus on basic knowledge and skills would be the way forward. Then there are those who doubt that instead of emphasizing formal instruction earlier and investing on literacy and numeracy, more learning through play would benefit children and the society better. With colleagues around you, prepare your strongest professional argument to suggest that:

EVEN TABLE: More time to play in school would benefit all students.

ODD TABLE: More time to play in school would not benefit all students.

Doctor's Orders: The Children Must Play



Let the Children Play

HOW MORE PLAY WILL
SAVE OUR SCHOOLS AND
HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

PASI SAHLBERG & WILLIAM DOYLE

foreword by **SIR KEN ROBINSON**

“Play is integral to a child’s education. The importance of playtime for children cannot be overemphasized to parents, schools, and community organizations.”

Doctor's Orders: The Children Must Play



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“The most effective way of developing children’s academic preparedness may be low-cost time spent reading with parents.”

Doctor's Orders: The Children Must Play



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HOW MORE PLAY WILL
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PASI SAHLBERG & WILLIAM DOYLE

foreword by **SIR KEN ROBINSON**

“Recess is fundamental to the school experience and develops lifelong skills of communication, negotiation, cooperation, sharing, and problem-solving.”

LUNCH

Session 3:

Curiosity, creativity & **Deeper Play**

What do we mean by play?

Physical play

Language play

Exploratory play

Constructive play

Fantasy play

Social play

Leikkiä

Pelata

Soittaa

Näytellä

Learning through play

Deeper Play

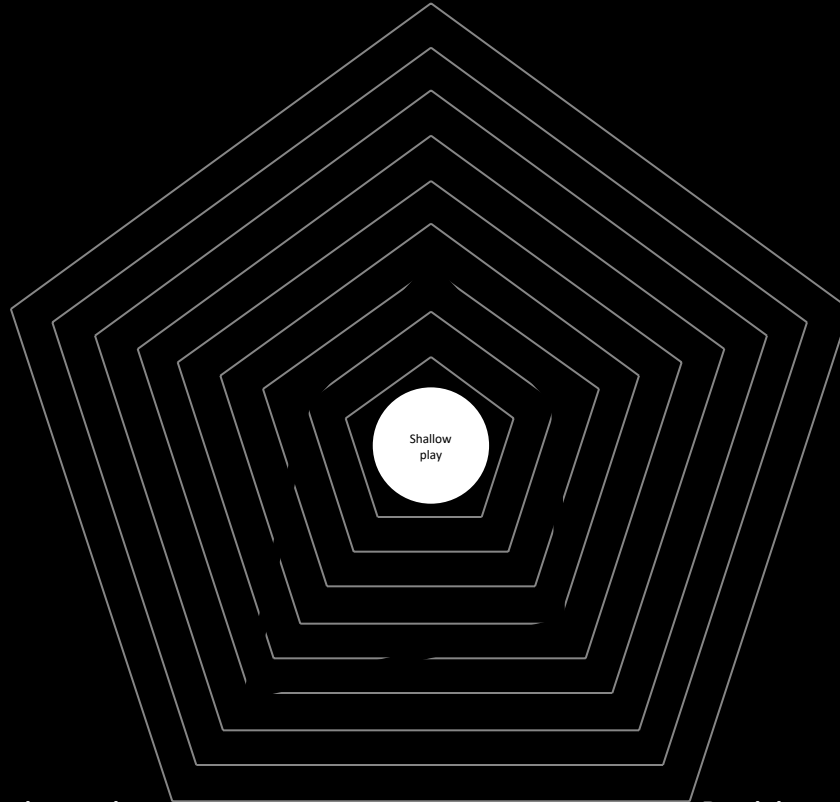
Self-directedness

Use of imagination

Intrinsic motivation

Process orientation

Positive emotions



Deeper Play

Self-directedness

Self-directed play means that we let children to decide their own play in a safe and rich environment where they are comfortable to explore their own mind and potential through play. Children should have the opportunity, often, to choose, manage, and reflect on their play activities. The key condition of self-directed play is that child is free to choose what to do, how to do it, and what are the rules of play. Self-directed play is also self-organizing. It means that it is a spontaneous process where some form of order emerges from interactions of the parts of a disordered system. Spontaneous play means that it doesn't require external control and it is often initiated by random events and then reinforced with internal positive feedback.

Play should be pleasurable. When children play, they should have a deep sense of enjoyment and fun, and may also feel joy, gratitude, inspiration, hope, love, and a sense of flow, or the full absorption in the process. Play is an important part of children's emotional development. Therefore, parents and teachers should do everything they can to make sure that children's play environment is psychologically, physically, and socially safe enough for positive emotions to flourish.

Intrinsic motivation

In *intrinsically motivated play*, children behave or perform an action because they enjoy it and find inspiration in the action itself. Intrinsically motivated children play because they love it. Intrinsic motivation is rooted in three fundamental psychological needs in children's development: autonomy, or having the ability to initiate and direct one's own behaviours and actions; competence, or having the sense of ability to accomplish tasks; and relatedness, or the ability to create stable relationships with other people in play situations.

Creativity, problem-solving, and being able to come up with new ideas that have value are among the most important qualities of well-educated people. They have become equally as important as the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics. We are frequently encouraged to think outside of the box and come up with solutions to real life problems. Creative problem-solving becomes easier when we use our imagination and see beyond reality. Advanced schools that are committed to teach children these skills use play, arts, and physical activity to help students to realize the power of their minds. Imagination is closely attached to learning and can greatly enhance cognitive development.

Use of imagination

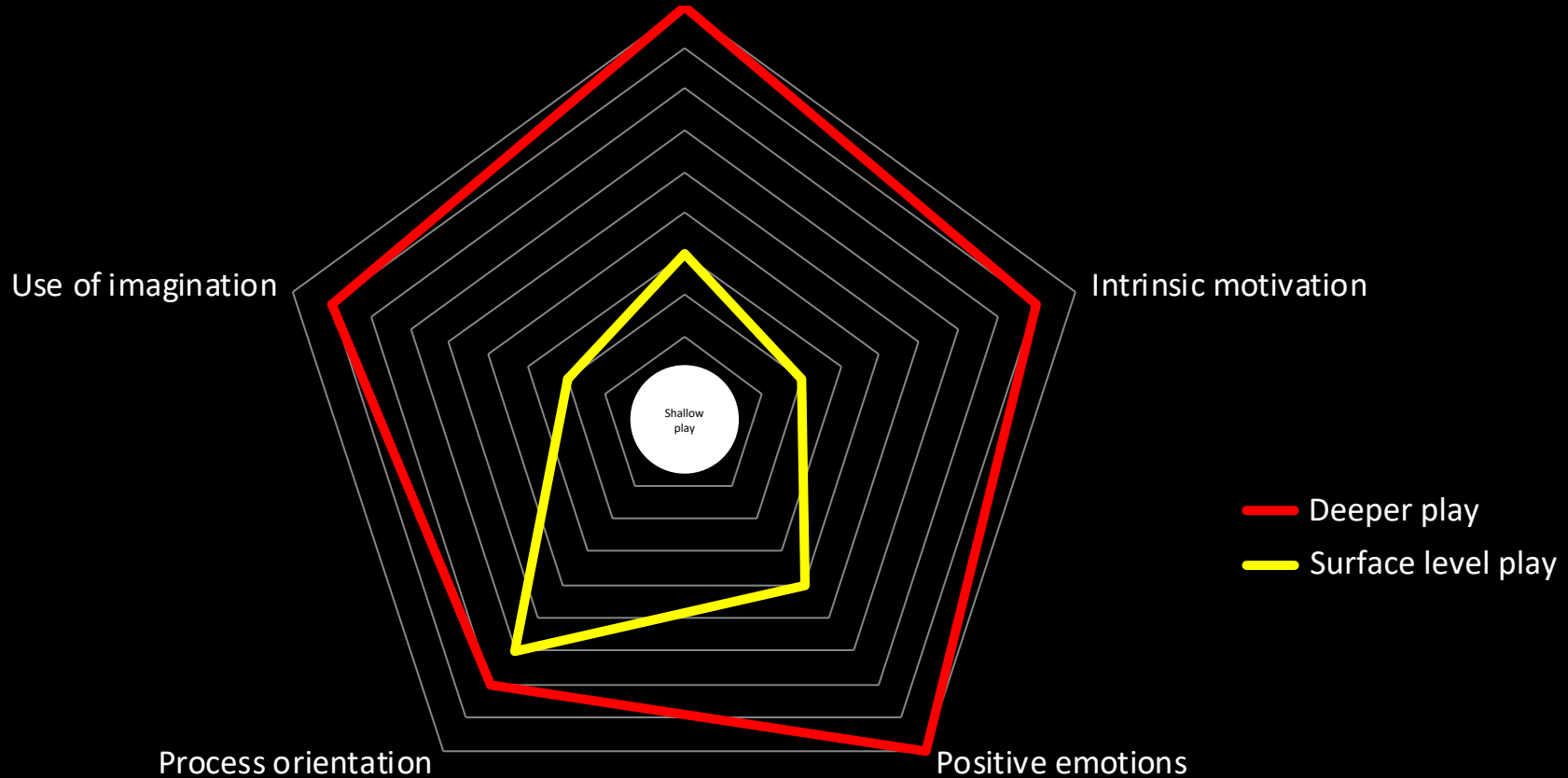
Process-oriented play is enjoyable for the sake of the activity itself and is not concerned with an end result or product. It is important that adults don't over-direct children in play. The purpose of play is for children to enjoy the process, and not be judged on the outcomes. Process orientation as one of the key elements of play is the glue that binds together all other dimensions of play.

Process orientation

Positive emotions

Deeper Play

Self-directedness



Strong support

The Children's Charter (1930): Every child, wherever he may live under the protection of the American flag, has the right of comradeship, of play, and of joy.

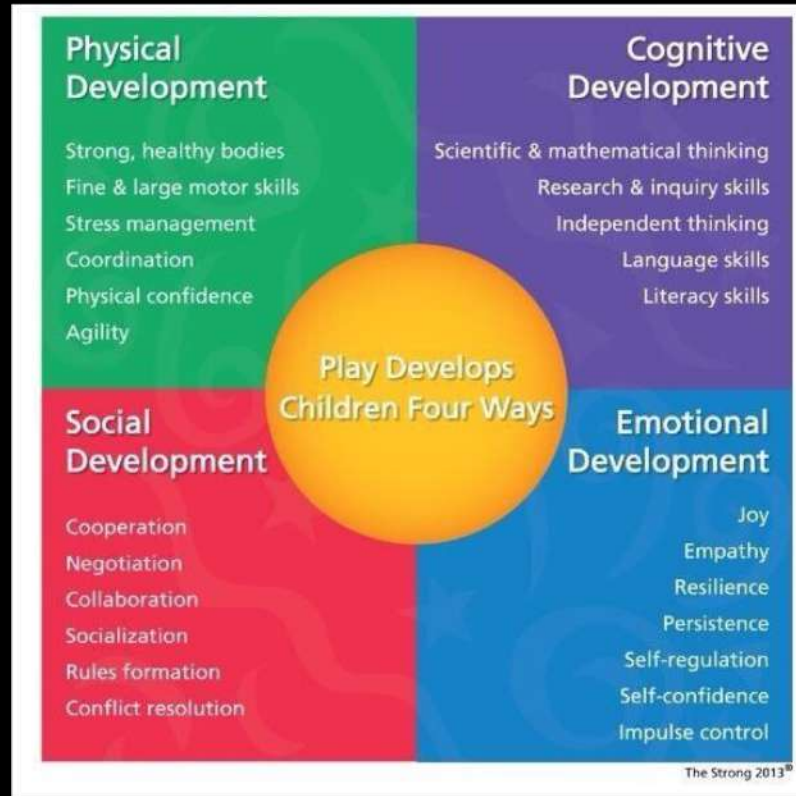
United Nations (1989): Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

European Union (2011): All children have the right to rest, leisure and play that is crucial to learning in the early years.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017): Physical activity and recess are essential parts of students' school experience and can improve academic achievement.

American Academy of Pediatrics (2018): "Play helps to build the skills required for our changing world; and play provides a singular opportunity to build the executive functioning that underlies adaptive behaviors at home; improve language and math skills in school; build the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships that buffer against toxic stress; and build social-emotional resilience."

Solid research evidence



Case study: Scotland

1. **Active Play** developed by Inspiring Scotland with University of Strathclyde:
 - Play-based intervention to support Health & Wellbeing in the Primary Years
 - 3rd year running now in Glasgow
 - Research proves it works
2. **Active Play** is also being tested in Dundee, Highlands, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire
3. **National Position Statement on Outdoor Play and Learning:** *“Playing and learning outdoors is essential for our children and young people to understand, value, enjoy and protect our natural world. It connects them to their environment, enhancing their appreciation and understanding of its physical properties and diversity.”*

Session 4: What to do next?

Play can make a big difference in students' learning, wellbeing and happiness. Work in your group on the following issues:

- What is the state of play in your own school (or work)?
- What would be three concrete things to strengthen the role of play in your school?
- What could you do to take a lead?

Thank you!



pasi_sahlberg