

Wonder of Wonders!
Harnessing the Wonder of Play through Provocations

With Sally Haughey
Founder of Fairy Dust Teaching




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Sally Haughey
Founder of Fairy Dust Teaching
Serve over 101 Countries
180,000 educators

National Board Certified
25 years of classroom experience



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My original dream was to be an artist. I went to art school and spent a decade painting.

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My passion for education began with my son. He was in kindergarten and sometime in the winter time - I received a call from his teacher. *Mrs. Haughey, we need to talk.*

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I was working at my church's office and the Preschool teacher in the Mother's Day Out Program was leaving.



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My goal today is to help you master play provocations that invoke *wonder.*

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Today we will be covering in our conversation:

- Wonder & Play
- What is a provocation?
- How can we observe potential possibilities for provocations?
- What are the fundamental conditions of a highly effective provocation?
- The reflective process underneath provocations
- Next steps!



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Today is about you and your *authentic* teaching practice.

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Listen from the place of:

How can this support my authentic teaching practice?

How can this support the needs of the children in my care?

What I am presenting are my observations and understandings. It is not the "BIG TRUTH." It is my truth at this point in my journey.



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What is the **foundation** of understanding we must have for creating highly effective invitations and provocations?

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PLAY

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All children are *wired* for play.

It's one of the universal drives inherent in human nature.



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Children are born knowing how to play and
WONDER drives it.

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A three-month-old baby sees an object moving and *WONDERS* where it is going.

The baby tracks the object with her eyes .



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A six month old baby sees an a shiny red object and *WONDERS* what it feels like.

The baby reaches for it.



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A nine month old
sees an object and
WONDERS what
it does.

She crawls to the
object to inspect it.



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Wonder, interest, curiosity - *whatever you
name it* - is sparking play and. . .

DRIVING development.



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We intuitively know and understand that *babies'*
playful interests (wonder) are driving the development
of important fine and gross motor skills.

We delight in their delight.



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What I find so fascinating is that we abandon this notion as young children become more articulate.

Why is a four year-old's interest in play no longer important as a *developmental driver*?



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Where in the heck did we get the idea that worksheets are better for a budding mind than play?

The truth is that *PLAY is what develops* a child's physical, emotional and mental growth.



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I have coined it - *Play-Activated Learning*®

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What is play?

Play is a set of behaviors that freely chosen, self-directed, and intrinsically motivated.

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Our **ROLE** is to support those set of behaviors!



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Children in play are in control of the content and intent of their play.



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Play that we structure is not real play.

It is structured play.




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Play that we guide is not real play.

It is guided play.



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Structured and Guided Play are play opportunities that are grounded in the ideas of the educator, not the children.

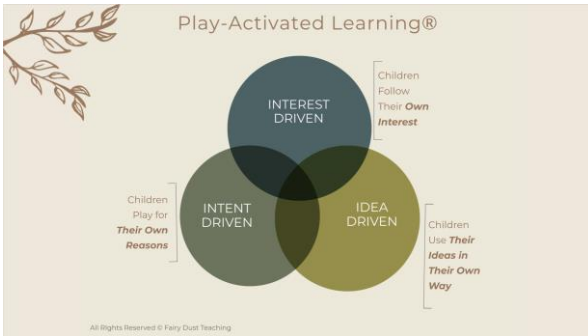
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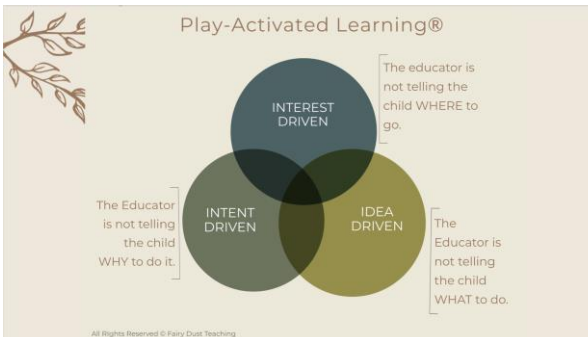
What we do is FACILITATE play.

We get up underneath the children's *play urges and big ideas* and **SUPPORT their** motivations.

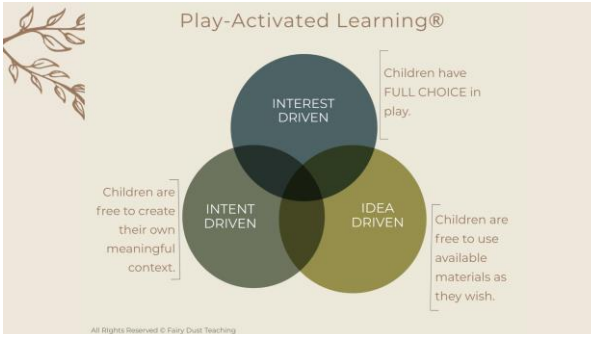
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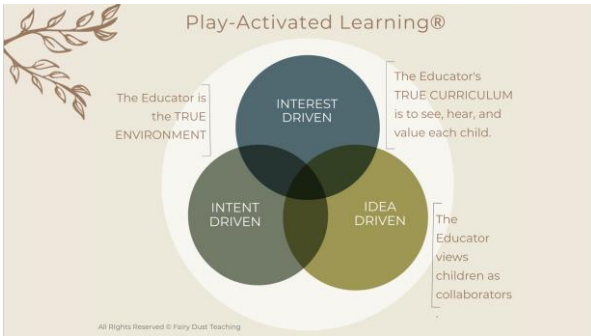
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PLAY is the driver of development.

WONDER is what sparks play.



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Let's define what I mean by *Invitation* and *Provocation*.



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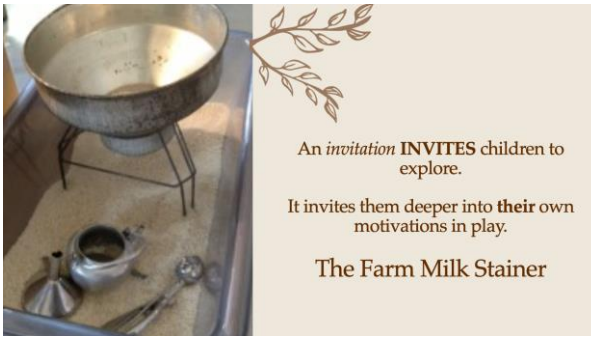
DEFINITION

Invitation

__ a request for someone to do something;
__ a situation or action that tempts someone to do something



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The INTEREST in this play invitation was so strong - I knew a provocation was the next step.



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As an educator RESEARCHER,
I am observing and wondering about the children's *play urges and big ideas* and testing my theories about THEIR play.

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DEFINITION

Provocation

- stimulate or give rise to a reaction;
- stimulate or incite someone to do or feel something



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A provocation **PROVOKES** children's ideas and theories on new level.

The play patterns and urges pointed to movement of the material.

I presented the boxes as a provoking idea for creating something that could provide lots of possibilities and hold more potential for narratives.

We started with one big box cradled on top of two sensory tables.

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The children had lots of ideas and thoughts about what to add to their "machine."

Boxes and tubes were brought from home and the hallways of the school. This grew to cover 1/3 of my classroom.

One day it was a pizza shop, another day a garbage sorter, and even a power rocket.

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A provocation **PROVOKES** children's thoughts, ideas and actions that extend an existing thought, idea, or theory.

A provocation invites children deeper into *their* motivations.

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The GOLDEN KEY to *Wonder Filled* Provocations is the observation of play.

I consider observation a form of loving attention. Observing play in a mindset of interest and love provides the space for MAGIC!



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We are on a RELATIONSHIP path.

The heart of a *provocation* is the deep listening we bring as we co-travel with children.



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The process of provocations begins with us becoming *curious perceivers* as we travel beside the children.

It is the state of being moved by the work of play.

We are *witnesses* to this incredible process innate in being human



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We observe children's play with a deep respect and honor.

They can feel our attitudes.

When we hold their play as the highest form of development and growth - they will BLOOM.

*Think about - can you feel it when someone does not respect your work?
It is palpable.*

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Children bring their *full selves* to play.

Play is the *sacred space* of young children.

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Educator Researcher

A Journey of *Wondering*

How can I facilitate this deepening *relationship* to a play urge or big idea?

How can I *cultivate* social relationships around this deeper dive into play?



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Our role is NOT to shape play but to support it.

The children have already given it form.



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Our work is to keep what is **ALREADY** *unfolding* in the children's play supported and facilitated with resources and materials.

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The Turtle Family

One day my four-year old class found a family of turtles on the playground.

Claire declared they needed a home. Before long, I was carrying a box of three turtles into my classroom.

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Turtle Poop

The next day we arrived to an aquarium filled with turtle poop.

I told the children that it was not healthy for the turtles as there was not enough space. We had to release them.

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The Turtle Release

We put the turtles in a box and went to the edge of the school yard and released them.

Claire began crying.

“They will think we don’t love them.”

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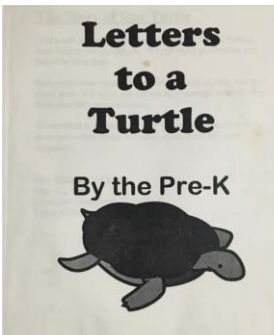


Letters to a Turtle

A large group of the class followed Claire (some joining in her tears) and began writing letters to the turtles.

Claire asked to deliver her letters to the turtles at the edge of the school yard.

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The Story of Our Turtle

This week we had the excitement of three turtles finding their way to our classroom. We put them in a habitat and hoped to keep them.

Bad news came when we learned they had too big and too much poo. We knew we did not have enough room to keep them and their excessive poo.

We decided to let them go. We wrote these letters to let them know how much we cared about them and their happiness.

Mrs. Haughey's Class
May 11, 2007
Chouteau Elementary School
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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Why was the letter writing a window for provocation?

The children were emotionally attached and engaged.
It was a REAL moment of wondering.

How do the Turtles feel about their release?

This moment had a rich potential for the children's theories
and ideas about what the turtles were feeling.

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A highly effective provocation is built upon
existing motivations from the children.

The best condition is the children's emotional
investment in the interest.

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Provocation Unpacked

Built Upon Current Interest:
A deep interest present in the community:
Turtle family.

I leaned into that interest: *Agreed to bring
turtles into classroom.*

1. A huge **wondering** arose upon the release
of the turtles: *Will they feel unloved?*
3. A group of children have an idea: *Claire,
Sara, and Maggie decide to write letters.*
5. I get up underneath their ideas and
wonderings and provide support and
scaffolding.



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I could have dismissed their ideas and moved on. Instead, I listened deeply and acted on their theories.

I provided them the resources and materials to *provoke their ideas into motion* and even further.



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WARNING:

What I am providing you in regards to provocations is just the tip of the iceberg. It is just one point of view of a multi-faceted way of being with children.

It is more a *way of being* than a technique.

The journey of provocations is more like the path of an artist. It helps to look at the different skills involved but ultimately, it is an expression of being an educator.



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Truth

There is not cut and dry formula for provocations. It arises in the moment, *the now*, with children.

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Invitation Forward Planning

OBSERVATIONS
What types of play did you observe?
What did the children do? (Play patterns)
What did the children say? (Play conversations)

QUESTIONS
What are you wondering?
What are your curiosities?

SUPPORT
What supports can you add to investigate your wondering?

REFLECTION
What did you discover about the children's play regarding ideas?
What is your next step?

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Provocation Forward Planning

OBSERVATIONS
What did children play before or big? How often are you observing that have captured the children's attention and interest?
What idea and theories are they expressing?

QUESTIONS
What supports do you want to extend and stimulate?
Is there additional conversation?
Is there a strong drive to share ideas and thoughts?


REFLECTION
What can you do to facilitate the movement of the children's play engagement?
What is missing that would help the children expand their expression of their ideas and thoughts?
What are resources that you use? How contrary for exploring their ideas?

REFLECTION
What surprised you?
What did you learn about the children and their play?

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The Secret


Reflection of your process of providing invitations and provocations is essential.

This is where we see our blindspots.

This is where we work to uncover our limitations and constraints in supporting children.

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- What really worked? What created deeper engagement?
- What did not work? What got in the way of the children's momentum?
- Which of the 100 languages did the children use to express their ideas and thoughts?
- What opportunity might I have missed?
- Did I bring my sincere interest? Did the children's ideas move and inspire me?



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Provocation Reflective Practice
 This is a process not a formula. Reflection is the path to understanding.


THE PROCESS
 What really worked?
 What supported children's play engagement?
 What did not work?
 What got in the way of the children's play momentum?
 Where did you miss the mark?
 What medium of expression (the 100 Languages) did the children use to express their ideas?
 What opportunities might you have missed?

SELF REFLECTION
 Where did you feel at ease in the process?
 Where did you feel uncertain or questioned your next steps?
 What stands out about this provocation for you?
 Where do you feel you have blind spots or do not understand how to move with the process?
 What stirred your heart?
 What sparked your interest to know more?
 If you choose one word for this experience, what would it be?

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Thank-you!

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