**[Karen]:** Thinking about the significance that play holds in the VEYLDF, its role in the VEYLDF and the importance of play-based approaches in planning, teaching, and assessing, how highlighted that is, it can sometimes, I think, be a challenge for educators to understand the relationship between play and learning. And I think you've touched on this a little. But are you able to connect this relationship for us, because there is a relationship, isn't there?

**[Sarah]:** Yeah, absolutely. Yes, I think being in that play with children is helpful to see that relationship. Of course, early childhood teachers are excellent at observations and observing and talking to children and all of the wonderful ways they do that. But that idea of being with children in play, understanding that creative space in their play is really, what you're doing is, you're seeing their imagination act out. So, imagination as Ken Robinson talks about, is creativity applied. So, in play, children are showing you their imagination.

**[Sarah]:**  And so, being in that play, you are understanding that learning, how they're using their imagination, yeah? If you think about what they're doing there, as Ken Robinson talks about, their creativity involves putting your imagination to work. So, play is showing you their imagination. What their imaginings are, what their curiosities are, how they solve problems in that play, how they're talking to each other about these certain things. And so, when you look at play and learning, you can see their imagination enacted.

**[Sarah]:** And also, if you think about it, what they're doing, it's highly complex. They're solving problems in the moment. They're blocking out all of what's going on here, because we've got to work this issue out here. They're also taking on other perspectives. "Okay, it's your idea. You think the dragon should do that. We're going to go over there. You're this, I'm that person." So, they're taking on ideas and fusing them together and then they've got to work out how to cross the bridge to get to the cave they're going to or whatever. So, seeing that problem solving in play that they're just doing sometimes on their own, sometimes in collaboration. And we know as adults, how hard collaboration is to work with others, where children are exploring this in their play, and these are skills that really are linked to our executive function.

**[Sarah]:** That great document that came out that was also Hirsh-Pasek and Michael Yogman, *The Power of Play*, and they talk about how the executive function is the process of learning. It's not the content or the outcome. So, in play, you're seeing their process of learning, that idea of my working memory. "How am I getting... I'm focusing on this right away. We've got to make this to go and bury this over here." Inhibitory control, I'm able to block out other ideas, which is sometimes... They're so engaged in their play, but they're blocking out all the distraction and you think of all the distractions that occur in an early learning centre.

**[Sarah]:** And their cognitive flexibility, able to take on multiple ideas. You use them with your ideas, and this is what they call play. It's not frivolous. Children's learning in this kind of play, just for an example, this social dramatic play, is highly detailed and it requires high levels of self-regulation. "I will wait here. I want to go, but I'm going to wait. I'm going to wait because I'm going to go over there and if I don't wait here, the dragons are going to come and get me. So, I wait because I want to be in this play. I wait because this is cooperative." And it occurs as children are melding ideas, expressing their own, creating something new that exists between people, object and place, and at times, the adults can be part of this.

**[Karen]:** You make me want to go and play with some children, Sarah, when you explain it like that, and the joy and the privilege, I suppose, of being...

**[Sarah]:** Yeah, that's a great point. Yeah.

**[Karen]:** When you talk about children's playing, that's what I think of mostly, is the privilege of watching this, no pun intended, play out, their thinking. I just want to draw you back to the reference you made to Ken Robinson and his idea that imagination is creativity. Was it in play?

**[Sarah]:** Well, no, he's talking about creativity is applied imagination.

**[Karen]:** That's right. Applied imagination.

**[Sarah]:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**[Karen]:** So, I'm thinking as an educator, if I was going into a space tomorrow and I saw this amazing... Or play, I would think, "Huh, that's what he was talking about." That it's applied and they're sharing something with you.

**[Sarah]:** Yeah, yeah. They're sharing it with each other, sometimes by themselves, of course. Some children may be doing this by themselves, but when they're sharing it with each other or they might be sharing it with you and when we're a co-contributor, so when we enter in this space and we operate in that dual subjectivity, we're in the heart of their learning in play.

**[Karen]:** It's the engine room, isn't it?

**[Sarah]:** Yeah. That's a great way of putting it. And it can open up opportunities of really understanding the child's current learning, yeah? Because if we think about how it offers us opportunities to learn with children, and then that can be used to inform our next step as a teacher in their learning journeys, in the planning cycle.

**[Karen]:** Well, we talk a lot about making children's learning visible and we spend lots of time talking about documentation and how to document and that could be a whole other webinar, but the way you explain play and the deep theory that sits behind it and the thinking and the creativity, they're making learning and development visible for you on a daily basis, aren't they?

**[Sarah]:** Yeah, that's really nice. Yeah. Yeah. And if you think about formative assessment, it's informing what I'm doing now. When you're in play with children, you are in that formative assessment. You're giving feedback, they're giving feedback to you. You're planning together where you're going to go next. Could be in this narrative journey that you're in this imagined world. You're really getting that learning from the heart of the play.

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