Activity: Critical Reading

Priority Standard(s):
- Reading to Understand
- Think Critically, decipher Author’s points

Week of June 1-5th

Grade: 7th and 8th
Class: AVID
Teacher: Mrs. Halvorson

Key Content/Modeling
Using the AVID article below on roughhouse play and school children, you will be practicing your reading skills. You are to read the article for understanding. What is the author saying about children/schools and roughhouse play? Understand the points being made about the topic. Suggestion: Read article one time through, just to read. Second time read article trying to find the points that are made about roughhouse play? This is an opinionated article, what is the author’s opinion?

You Try
Once the article is read and highlighted, answer the 4 questions at the bottom of the article. Each question should be answered in IQIA with a full detailed response, particularly the last question asking about your opinion. Practice answering completely and with proper English and conventions.

Show me what you know (Proof of learning)
Send document or picture of work to me through email or teams

Self-Assessment scale 1-3
1- I agree with author’s points
2- I agree with most of what is stated
3- I don’t agree with most of what is stated

Extra Learning Opportunities
READ FOR ENJOYMENT
Schools are hurting kids by banning rough play

Bloomberg By Virginia Postrel

No roughhousing. No superhero games. No turning your fingers -- or your Pop-Tart -- into a make-believe gun. No tag. And certainly no dodgeball.

Stories of zero-tolerance play-policing by schools are a well-established news genre. Most recently, parents in Washington state mounted a successful campaign to force the Mercer Island School District to reverse its ban on playing tag during “unstructured playtime,” or what used to be called recess. In his backpedaling press release, district superintendent Gary Plano puzzlingly insisted that “asking students to keep their hands and feet to themselves at all times, including recess” wasn’t a ban on tag. Perhaps he envisions tag by telepathy.

At any rate, Mercer Island isn’t the first school district to prohibit tag and it won’t be the last. Bans on physical contact and pretend violence are the norm on U.S. school playgrounds. “The majority of school districts in the U.S. have ‘zero-tolerance’ policies on ‘any form of violence,’” says Jennifer Hart, who teaches early childhood education at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia and has published research on “playful aggression” among children. Kids who wrestle, pretend to fight, or play superheroes face punishment, as do teachers who tolerate such old-fashioned antics.

Behind these policies is the superstitious belief that vigorous physical contact and make-believe violence will beget immediate and future real physical harms -- magical thinking that fundamentally misunderstands how children play and learn. Prohibiting rough-and-tumble play doesn’t make recess safer or kids less apt to hurt others. To the contrary, the bans deprive children of the very experiences they need to master peaceful social interactions.

Roughhousing is more than good exercise. Psychological research shows that it’s essential to childhood development. Rowdy, physical play teaches kids to communicate verbally and nonverbally; to take turns; to negotiate rules; and to understand when they can use their full strength and when they need to hold back. It may sometimes look like fighting but it isn’t. Kids smile and laugh, return voluntarily to the game, take turns in dominant roles, and wear distinctive “play faces.”

In a chasing game like tag, children “learn how their bodies move, how their playmates will respond when a change to the game is made, how to negotiate these changes to games, what to do when one of the children falls, and how to express their thoughts to the others involved in the game,” writes Michelle Tannock in the Journal of Early Childhood Education, summarizing the developmental psychology literature. When she interviewed kids at two child care centers in British Columbia, Tannock found that they all said rough-and-tumble play was prohibited -- yet they engaged in it anyway.

“. . . ‘To simply forbid it is like telling children, ‘We’re not going to let you eat today, because the food might be contaminated,’ ” says Frances Carlson, author of Big Body Play, a guide published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. “Children can’t live without it, so they do it in hiding.”

Over the past three decades, as the research into its importance has mounted, the NAECY has gone from tune to tolerance policies on ‘any form of violence,’ “says Jennifer Hart, who teaches early childhood education at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Australia and has published research on “playful aggression” among children. Kids who wrestle, pretend to fight, or play superheroes face punishment, as do teachers who tolerate such old-fashioned antics.

Contrary to what squeamish authorities seem to think, it’s the kids who don’t engage in rough-and-tumble play who actually tend to be more violent later on in life. So, says Carlson, forbidding playful physical contact “stokes the fire as opposed to diminishing it.” Some kids are indeed prone to hurt others. “If you’ve ever watched a group of 4- or 5-year-olds play Duck, Duck, Goose,” says Carlson, “there’s always one child who, when it’s his turn or her turn, will not tag. They’ll slap.” Socially and developmentally behind their peers, the offending children are those who most need the lessons big-body play can teach. Keeping them from playing tag, says Carlson, “is not the way they learn how to tag more gently. Continuing to tag is the way they learn to tag more gently.” Good teachers will coach rather than punish kids who play rough. That may sometimes mean physically standing in for playmates to show a child when a tag is too hard or a wrestling grip too tight.

The law in Carlson’s home state of Georgia prohibits such good pedagogy, at least in child care centers. (School districts set their own policies.) It dictates that “staff shall not engage in, or allow children or other adults to engage in, activities that could be detrimental to a child’s health or well-being, such as, but not limited to, horse play, rough play, wrestling.” This provision assumes ill effects contradicted by psychological research. And it often puts Carlson in the peculiar position of giving training seminars that start with this warning: “What I’m about to teach you to do today is illegal in the state of Georgia.

However, I was asked by the state of Georgia to present this training to you.”

Educating teachers doesn’t do any good, of course, if they can’t use what they learn. The zero-tolerance approach not only hampers children’s education. It treats teachers not as educational professionals but as
passive bystanders unable -- or forbidden -- to make judgment calls, even in ridiculous cases. Take what happened to Drew Johnson, now a high school freshman, when he was a child at Cumberland Elementary School in Fishers, Indiana. One fall recess he bent over and picked some dandelions. For that offense, he served several days of lunchtime detention. When his shocked parents asked the principal what was wrong with such innocuous behavior, she explained that some kids had been throwing rocks at recess. To make things easy on recess monitors, the school had simply banned picking anything up from the ground -- flowers included.

Virginia Postrel, a Bloomberg View columnist, writes about commerce and culture, innovation, economics, and public policy.

Questions to respond to after reading:

1. What is the author’s stance on kids and playing “rough”? Are they for it or against it?

2. State one reason the author makes as to why rough house play is good. You can paraphrase your answer or pull quote directly from text.

3. Pull one word from the article that is a new word for you and define it.

4. In a few sentences, write your opinion on this article and roughhouse play and children. Do you agree with the author or not? What are your reasons whether Yes or no? Can you recall a time where you engaged in (or saw) rough house play and got in trouble or learned something from it?