

THE EDUCATOR GUIDE TO **GLOBAL SCHOOL PLAY DAY**



Table of Contents

Introduction

- 1 Acknowledgements
- 2 Purpose

History of Global School Play Day

- 3 How It All Began

Steps to Implement

- 4 Step One: Register
- 4 Step Two: Educate Faculty, Staff and Parents
- 4 Step Three: Obtain Parent Permission
- 5 Step Four: Educate the Students
- 5 Step Five: Share with Everyone
- 6 Step Six: PLAY!
- 6 Step Seven: Reflect

Appendices

- 7 Appendix A: Research Based Articles Supporting Play
- 9 Appendix B: Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators
- 14 Appendix C: Unstructured Play Expectations
- 15 Appendix D: Example of an Educational Benefit of Playing Cards
- 16 Appendix E: Sample Parent Permission Slip Letter

Introduction

Over the last several decades, the United States has seen a gradual decline in children's authentic freedom to play, without adult direction or structure. Over this same period, there has been an increase in anxiety, depression, feelings of helplessness, suicide, and narcissism in children and adolescents.¹

Research dictates that play is where children learn they are in control of their life, to solve their own problems, to get along with peers, to see another's point of view, to practice empathy, to innovate, to create and very importantly, to experience pure joy.¹

Global School Play Day (GSPD) restores unstructured play to a generation of kids fostering independence, creative thinking and perseverance.

Global School Play Day is celebrated the first Wednesday of February every year. It is a world event not to be missed!



Acknowledgements

Global School Play Day (GSPD)
Marin County Office of Education

¹ TED. (2014, June 13). The decline of play [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Bg-GEzM7iTk>

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide administrators and educators best practices, resources and research on engaging students and schools' positive participation in Global School Play Day.

Moreover, this document serves as a guide to heighten awareness that unstructured play is vital to our children's emotional, social, physical and cognitive growth.

As Dr. Peter Gray points out, "Global School Play Day is more than just a day of play. It's a day of acknowledgment that play matters, and that kids need play."



History of Global School Play Day

Global School Play Day (GSPD) was founded in 2015 by a small group of educators who created this annual day of play because of their concern that adults and technology were encroaching on playtime for children which was having an affect on students' mental health and wellness.

After hearing Dr. Peter Gray's TEDx talk, the GSPD team were compelled to take action. In this talk, Gray argues the case that today's kids are losing much more than play time, they are losing control over their own life.

On February 4, 2015, over 65,000 children participated in the first ever GSPD after only four weeks of social media promotion from six educators. In 2019, just the 5th year of the event, 535,690 children from 72 nations played.

On this day, schools from around the world stand together to say, "Unstructured play is a vital part of proper child development!"

GSPD is for every school-age child from kindergarten to 12th grade. Even adults and businesses are starting to join in the movement. Many are helping to spread the word about the benefits of play.

Steps to Implement GSPD



Implementing GSPD in your classroom or school is simple with these few steps. Here are our recommendations to follow. Please adapt/modify knowing the unique needs of your school.

STEP ONE REGISTER

Sign up your class/school!
Register [HERE](#) or with this link:

- <https://www.globalschoolplayday.com/>

Global School Play Day
2024 - Celebrating
UNSTRUCTURED Play
- February 7, 2024

Register your class/school to show

STEP TWO EDUCATE FACULTY, STAFF & PARENTS

Teach your educators, administration and parents about the benefits and necessity of play:

- Share Peter Gray's TEDx video on the decline of play in our culture;
- See Appendix A for Research Based Articles Supporting Play (pages 7-8); and
- See Appendix B for Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators (pages 9-13).

STEP THREE OBTAIN PARENT PERMISSION

Send home the GSPD Parent Information/Permission Slip. Please note: the organizers of GSPD are not liable for your school's activities.

- See Appendix E for Parent Information/Permission Slip (pages 16-17).

Steps to Implement GSPD

(continued)



STEP FOUR EDUCATE THE STUDENTS

- See Appendix B for Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators: Prepare Before the Event (pages 10-11)

STEP FIVE SHARE

Invite your colleagues to participate in Global School Play Day 2024 (February 7). Light the fire so others will catch the vision of returning the gift of unstructured play to this generation by talking about it on social media and in the teachers' lounge.

- Contact your local media and invite them to cover your event. The more word gets out about the benefits of unstructured play, the better;
- Hashtag your social media posts with GSPD_ _ _ _ (year i.e. #GSPD2024); and
- Like or post on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter (see below for e-address).



gspdayday



globalschoolplayday



GSPdayDay

Steps to Implement GSPD

(continued)



STEP SIX

PLAY!

See Appendix B for Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators: Play Day Of the Event (page 12).

On Global School Play Day, allow your students to spread their toys out around the room or take the kids outside and just **PLAY!**

- o Don't organize anything for your students.
- o Don't tell them how to play with the toys/games.
- o Don't interfere with your students unless you see something that could get you fired or would physically hurt a child (this does not include something that may be physically uncomfortable for a child.)
- o Don't Leave Them Unsupervised as the day is unstructured by adults, but not unsupervised.

Other than taking a few pictures/videos, try to be invisible and let the kids play. This is a day of unstructured play, not playful teacher-led lessons. You will be amazed at what your kids come up with!

STEP SEVEN

REFLECT

See Appendix B for Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators: Reflect After the Event (Page 13)

Your students will appreciate time to reflect on the day: the fun, the learning, what worked, what didn't work, what would they change...

Appendix A

Research Based Articles Supporting Play

The evidence and researched based articles that follow validates the foundation that unstructured play benefits all children of any age. Please use them as needed for educators, administrators and/or families.

“Childhood As ‘Resume Building’: Why Play Needs A Comeback”

<https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/54326/childhood-as-resume-building-why-play-needs-a-comeback>

"The Power of Play"

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20182058>

This article is a clinical report for pediatric providers detailing information of the benefits of play. The research indicates that developmentally appropriate play is an opportunity to enhance self-regulation thereby building executive function

"Five Proven Benefits of Play"

<https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/52136/five-proven-benefits-of-play>

This article details the five proven benefits that play is:

1. Essential for healthy brain development;
2. Reduces obesity and associated diseases;
3. Helps children manage stress and overcome trauma;
4. Helps families bond; and
5. Contributes to academic skills.

Appendix A

Research Based Articles Supporting Play (continued)

"Dr. Gray's Announcement in Psychology Today"

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/201501/spread-the-word-feb-4-is-global-school-play-day>

Dr. Gray announces the first annual Global School Play Day (2015) and describes why play is important for our students.

"The Five Essentials to Meaningful Play"

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/five-essentials-meaningful-play>

This article details the five essentials to meaningful play:

1. Children make their own decisions;
 2. Children are intrinsically motivated;
 3. Children become immersed in the moment;
 4. Play is spontaneous, not scripted; and
 5. Play is enjoyable.
-

"Finding the Balance Between Working Hard and Playing Hard"

<https://www.baronnews.com/2017/02/07/finding-the-balance-between-working-hard-and-playing-hard/>

High School students go back to their roots for an unstructured day of play.

Appendix B

Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators

What follows are steps educators can take with their students to prepare everyone for Global School Play Day. Please modify/adapt steps to meet classroom's unique needs. Steps include:

- Part I: Prepare Before the Event
- Part II: Play On the Day of the Event
- Part III: Reflect After the Event

Please visit also Appendix A for researched-based articles supporting unstructured play.



Appendix B

Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators

(continued)

Part I: PREPARE BEFORE THE EVENT

- **Hold a classroom conversation on what Global School Play Day (GSPD) is and the difference between structured and unstructured play:**
 - **Structured play is mostly adult led while unstructured play is student-driven;**
 - **Discuss the background of GSPD;**
 - **Why GSPD exists; and**
 - **identify and discuss the research and why unstructured play is positive for emotional, social, physical and cognitive growth!**
- **Teach your students some childish games. What did you do to play as a child?**
- **Hold a class discussion on student expectations for GSPD (see Appendix C for an example of a collaboration of unstructured play expectations between students and teacher):**
 - **What do you plan to do on GSPD?**
 - **What will you bring to school?**
 - **What do you expect from the other students?**
 - **Why are you looking forward to GSPD?**
 - **Do you have any worries for GSPD?**
 - **What should the students do if they need something from you, the teacher?**
 - **How will we share our toys?**
- **Explain your role as an adult in GSPD. When will you intervene? When will you let the children work out their own issues?;**
- **Talk about the schedule of the day. How long will the students have to play? Will they be indoors or out?;**

Appendix B

Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators

(continued)

Part I: PREPARE BEFORE THE EVENT (continued)

- **Remind the students the night before GSPD to bring toys, games, and puzzles to school. Perhaps you will use email, Remind App, or phone messaging;**
- **Call for toys! Tell your class to bring anything they wish to play with to school on GSPD (See Appendix E for sample letters to parents):**
 - **The only restrictions: they must bring toys and these toys may NOT require batteries or electricity;**
 - **No devices;**
 - **Give them some ideas, since today's kids rarely play and often own very few toys: board games, dolls, Legos, blocks, trucks, cars, racetracks, playing cards, empty cardboard boxes, markers, jigsaw puzzles, blankets (for forts), social games (charades, Pictionary, etc.)**

The only exception on the electronics rule would be a board game that has an electronic timer, an electronics play kit, or similar.

- **You may want to show your students photos of past GSPD events to open their eyes to unfamiliar types of unstructured play. See GSPD's website for pictures: <https://www.globalschoolplayday.com/>**
- **Reminder to send Parent Permission Slips. See Appendix E for two Samples of a Parent Permission Slip Letter.**

Appendix B

Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators

(continued)

Part II: PLAY ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- Review the student expectations. See Appendix C for an example of Unstructured Expectations created by a collaboration between teacher and students;
- Let the students play freely. This is a day of UNSTRUCTURED play, not playful learning directed by the teacher. Resist the temptation to intervene and use the event as a teaching opportunity. The students will be learning by playing;
- Take pictures. Post them on social media. Of course, make sure this is allowed by your parents, administration, and district policies. Tag your pictures #GSPD20__ (year i.e. #GSPD2024);
- Tweet about the experience giving your observations to your peers. Use the hashtags #GSPD20__ (year i.e. #GSPD2024);
- Write a blog post to share about the event.
- Some teachers may wish to break up the free play with class meetings where students reflect on their experiences. Some possible discussion questions include:
 - How are is GSPD going for you so far?
 - Is there anything that is bothering you?
 - Do you feel the other kids are playing nicely with you?
 - Have you learned anything new?
 - Do you want anything to change?

Appendix B

Classroom Implementation Tips for Educators

(continued)

Part III: REFLECT AFTER THE EVENT

After the event, be sure to share your pictures, ideas, and reactions on social media (with parent consent) and hashtag them #GSPD20__. Perhaps you could add a post to your blog sharing about the experience. Ask your students to reflect on GSPD as well! Be sure to talk to your students and if possible, their parents, about the necessity of daily unstructured play. Your students will most surely ask if they can have play days more often. A great answer is, "Of course! Every day can be 'play day' with your friends in your neighborhood after school. Keep playing as you did at school today, but just do it after school."

- Discuss the event with your class:
 - How did it go?
 - What went well?
 - What learning did you gain when something didn't go well?
 - How can you spend more time playing at home?
 - Did our event change how you view free play?
 - See Appendix D for an example of a class reflection on the benefits of playing cards.
- Share the excitement of the event with your families. Encourage them to help their children spend more time playing at home;
- Share your thoughts and photos on social media or blogs;
- Tell other teachers about the event and the impact that you expect it will have on your students and their families;
- Send a note home to encourage the continuation of unstructured play beyond school hours;
- Perhaps you will ask your students to write/blog about their day of play. Share your students' writing with the GSPD organizers: globalschoolplayday@gmail.com

Appendix C

Unstructured Play Expectations

An Example of a Collaboration between Students & Teacher

TEACHER to STUDENTS

- **No blood**
 - **No broken bones**
 - **No destroying/ruining stuff**
 - **Keep indoor play appropriate for indoors**
 - **Put everything away**
 - **No electronics/devices**
 - **Stay where I can see you**
- 

STUDENTS to TEACHERS

- **Play with kids, equally**
 - **Have fun**
 - **Don't tell us what to play**
 - **Help set up toys**
 - **Let us use stuff/toys/games from class**
- 

STUDENTS to STUDENTS

- **Be a good sport/demonstrate positive sportsmanship**
- **Keep toys safe (and find-able);**
- **Celebrate and be happy for what what others are making and doing;**
- **Gratify other people's toys;**
- **Treat others how you want to be treated**
- **Pay it Forward (Don't steal)**
- **Empower others (Don't overpower others)**

Appendix D

Educational Benefits

Example of Educational Benefits of Playing Cards

This is a list of the benefits students came up with when asked: what are the benefits of playing cards?

1. Fair play
2. Play cards better
3. Organizational skills (cards by number and suit)
4. Strategy
5. Hand coordination (holding the cards)
6. Responsibility (taking care of the cards)
7. Self control (can't play with cards, control self when lose)
8. Think fast so you can finish the game
9. Take turns
10. Teaching others how to play the game (communication skills)
11. Collaboration
12. Cooperation
13. Good sportsmanship
14. Paying attention (to the card game)
15. Following directions

SOURCE: Mr. Tim Bedley's Class

Appendix E

Sample Parent Permission Slip Letter Example Letter Template I of II

- **Modify/adapt date and letter to meet the school's unique needs.**



Dear Parents,

On Wednesday, February 5th, our class will be participating in Global School Play Day 2020 (GSPD.) GSPD has been promoted by Psychology Today and is being celebrated at schools around the world. You can learn more about the benefits of unstructured play by visiting the official GSPD website: www.globalschoolplayday.com. I am inviting all of our students to bring in things to play with on this very special day. Here are some examples of things your child may bring in (be sure your child's name is clearly marked on all items):

- **Non-Violent Toys (no weapons)**
- **Legos, blocks, cardboard boxes, etc.**
- **Dress-Up**
- **Puppets**
- **Stuffed Animals**
- **Board Games**
- **Puzzles**
- **Sports equipment**
no electronic devices

Though our play day will be unstructured, it will still be supervised by teachers. It is my hope that this one day of play will inspire families to plan for more unstructured play time during non-school hours.

Please return this permission form prior to February 6th, Global School Play Day.

Sincerely,

My child, _____, has my permission to bring
in the following item(s) to school on Global School Play Day (**name on all items**):

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E

Sample Parent Permission Slip Letter Example Letter Template II of II

- **Modify/adapt date and letter to meet the school's unique needs.**

Global School Play Day

February 1, 2020

Dear Families,

On February 5, 2020, first grade students will be participating in the first annual [Global School Play Day](#).

Our Play = Games Day

The students are allowed to bring any game they wish to play to school on Wednesday, February 5th. The only restriction is that the games may NOT require batteries or electricity. We will not use any devices on games day.



Types of Games

- Card games
- Board games
- Dice games
- Social games (charades, Pictionary, etc.)

The only exception on the electronics rule would be a board game that has an electronic timer.

We are so excited about this great learning opportunity for our students to learn social skills, innovation and creativity through play in a fun atmosphere.

Thanks for your support!

Cavazos 1st Grade Team