

PLAY IS THE WAY INFORMATION



Play Is The Way People



Wilson McCaskill

Email: wilson@playistheway.com.au

Founder/Director

Wilson McCaskill is the founder/director of Play Is The Way Pty Ltd (formerly The Game Factory) and the author of numerous resources in the use of physically interactive games for the development of positive social behaviour.

Wilson trained in London at East 15 Acting School. Back in Australia he started exploring play as a form of social and emotional learning in the early 1990's. His acting school and theatre company in Perth, served as the perfect laboratory for his work. It wasn't long before schools showed a keen interest in his approach.

Working with primary students for over a decade, in a great variety of school settings, resulted in the development of the PLAY IS THE WAY® program. With his wife Julie, Wilson conducts a hectic schedule of professional development workshops throughout Australia.

Wilson's firm belief in behaviour education and student self-management ensures the program remains relevant and meaningful to the educators, students and parents of today.



Julie McCaskill

Email: julie@playistheway.com.au

Director

As Director/Administrator, Julie McCaskill has steered the rapid and exciting growth of PLAY IS THE WAY® throughout Australia.

Working hand in hand with her husband Wilson, Julie's meticulous note taking and keen observations over countless workshops with teachers and games sessions with students, have been instrumental in the production of the PLAY IS THE WAY® program and resources.

Responsible for the daily running of Play Is The Way Pty Ltd as well as the planning of it's hectic and extensive schedule of workshops and seminars, Julie still finds the time to assist Wilson in the ongoing demands of resource and company development.

Her past life as an acting school administrator and stage performer, make Julie a firm advocate of the power of play to enhance, shape and change the lives of children.

PLAY IS THE WAY is an evaluated program of physically interactive, cooperative games easily implemented within a school setting.

The PLAY IS THE WAY® program is suitable for primary school children of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds. No particular sporting or athletic ability is required to successfully participate in the program.

The program is a cross curricular tool that promotes social and emotional learning. It is a regular part of every student's life for the duration of their attendance in primary school. Typically, students participate in 4 x 20 minute games sessions per week for every week of the school year.

Our objective

To help the staff, students and parents of a primary school create a safe learning environment in which students learn to be independent, self-managing, self-motivated learners in persistent pursuit of their personal best and able to get along with each other – to help develop students of strong character and decency with the social and emotional competencies to live and learn well.

About Play Is The Way

The PLAY IS THE WAY program:

- Has been formally evaluated and proven in primary schools throughout Australia.
- Is teacher and curriculum friendly.
- Is simple to establish, sustainable and affordable.
- Requires no expensive or extensive specialised training to be highly effective.

In facilitating the program, teachers learn the words and strategies that empower students to manage their own behaviour, improve their emotional intelligence and increase their chances of success in life.

The Unhealthy And Unrealistic Pursuit Of Endless Fun And Happiness.

We have been seduced by the idea that having endless fun and being constantly happy is not only desirable it's attainable.

I worry about the damage this idea is causing and I fear for our children as rapidly increasing numbers of adults become complicit in the countless ways and means used, each and every day, to convince them that if they're not constantly happy and having fun, then something is wrong.

'Fun'

"Have fun", is as frequent a parting salutation as, "see you later" or indeed, "bye." Nowhere is this more apparent than in primary schools where countless thousands of children slide from the seats of cars to head into classrooms supported by the warm tones of parents entreating them to, "have fun."

This request is reinforced at the end of the day when re-entry into the family car is met with the hopeful question, "did you have fun?"

Work

There was a time when the expectation was that you would go to school and work hard. Perhaps that expectation was a little harsh and implied that school was a cold and brittle place to which little children went to toil and mine for information.

Schools today are certainly not cold and harsh. They are warm, welcoming environments to which teachers and students commit much time and effort to reflect the colour, movement and spectacle of learning.

Yet, amidst this stimulating environment the requirement for work, effort and application remain as much a necessity for learning as they have always been.

So, would it help to ask children to go to school prepared to have fun working hard? I think it would and I think they should be occasionally reminded to work hard even if they are not having fun.

Teaching Pressures

The pressure to make learning fun on teachers, sporting coaches, music and dance tutors and anyone who seeks to educate, inform and develop children is relentless.

Vast volumes of research show that children learn best when they are having fun. I'm sure this current understanding was equally well understood by whomever taught Sir Isaac Newton when he was a boy. However, I doubt if his teacher spent as much time and commitment ensuring it was a constant of little Isaac's learning environment.

The ability of the majority of today's teachers to excite and engage children are both impressive and, with the assistance of technology and the benefits of research, always improving.

Teachers know that not only must their students learn and achieve required benchmarks; they must do so whilst having the time of their lives. Should their students fail to be obviously happy and decidedly having fun, then the teacher has in turn failed.

Worryingly, it doesn't stop there. Some parents are likewise measuring their effectiveness by both the degree and duration of their children's fun and happiness (their FH levels).

Unable to relax and feel that they are parenting effectively if their children's FH levels are in any way diminished, they quickly turn to teachers to do everything possible to get the levels up and keep them up.

This is a tangible and unhealthy pressure for many teachers. I believe it can be a significant contributing factor in the sometimes strained relationships between teachers and parents.

Life isn't always 'fun'

The incessant bombardment of our children with the notion that constant fun and happiness is their rightful expectation has markedly reduced their ability to deal with the everyday trials and tribulations of life. We have made fun the end point of all endeavours. Consequently, when fun ceases so does endeavour, and with it go all the associated benefits.

So convincing have we been in marketing this idea of perpetual fun to our children that too many react as though their rights have been violated when teachers fail to supply a constant stream of it.

We have told them it's necessary, they believe it to be so and they are refusing to participate if the fun's not there.

Surely, we insult our children by believing the only way we can motivate them is to make everything fun.

Gaining self-respect

Children can, and many do, labour in the pursuit of noble causes. They can toil to reach a higher goal. They can suffer for the sake of self-betterment. And when they do, they transcend the fleeting experience of fun and reach the promised land of self-respect. This addiction to fun, like all addictions, has made too many children slaves to their desires. To these children, something only has value if it feels good while they are doing it. Not only does fun determine worth, it also determines right and wrong.

A recent example

Countless Australians recently looked at the behaviour of the Victorian teenager, Corey Delaney, whose family home in Narre Warren was trashed by himself and those who attended his party, held in his parents absence, and were shocked by his lack of remorse. Corey saw no breach of responsibility or respect for property or person, and felt no wrong or harm had been done.

Should we have been so shocked by his reaction?

Since Corey was a little fella I'm sure everyone and anyone has been telling him that nothing is more important than his feelings and life is all about having fun and being happy. So, Corey pursued fun with endless commitment. He had lots of it and in every way imaginable.

Sadly, no one told him that fun wasn't the way you decided if something was right or wrong. Then his parents' house got trashed and people looked at him and said he'd done the wrong thing. But Corey didn't get it. He and his friends had fun; they had great fun – what was wrong with that? And if people were going to get upset, that was their problem. He was just going to keep doing what living was all about. He was just going to have fun.

‘But it’s boring!’

As teachers we face this thinking daily. Children asked to explain some inappropriate behaviour defend their actions by saying, “because it was fun.” When asked why they aren’t doing what they are meant to be doing these same children invariably reply, “because, it’s boring.” And by saying the work is boring the suggestion is that the teacher is likewise.

If trapped by the idea that fun is paramount, any teacher unable to make all learning fun immediately feels the terror and anxiety of stand-up comics when failing jokes raise the ire of patrons and expose them to the snide and cutting remarks of the experienced heckler. Teach time for many is akin to show time in front of demanding ticket holders who see it as their right to complain if the show doesn’t rock their socks. A season of four terms under this sort of pressure would tempt even the most experienced performer to calm their nerves with a tippie before bedtime.

Our drive and commitment to maintaining the high FH levels of our children has generated the mistaken idea, on their part, that if they are not happy they must be sad and if they aren’t having fun then obviously they’re bored. This polarising of emotional responses leaves little chance for contentment and the wonderful array of states that span the emotional spectrum.

Again, teachers are all too familiar with students whose daily lives are a roller coaster ride of ups and downs. The constant struggle to get them on a stable and productive plateau is both frustrating and fatiguing.

I believe it’s time for us to get off the fun and happiness bandwagon and realise that our effectiveness as adults, parents and teachers must not be measured by how well we make our children happy but how well we empower our children to make themselves happy.

Let me quote the Chinese philosopher, Lau Tzu

“Seek not happiness too greedily and be not fearful of unhappiness.”

Our children, caught in a world that exploits the commercial advantage of having children constantly hunger for fun and happiness, are developing an insatiable appetite for anything that will raise their FH levels.

What can we do about it?

Well, let’s first of all choose not to be unwitting partners in this unsustainable and destructive pursuit. And secondly, when our children complain that we are not supplying enough fun and happiness let’s stay calm, remain confident, ask and expect them to soldier on, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge that along with the many opportunities for fun and happiness we do offer, we also invite them to participate in the adversity that has, and always will, shape character.

Why Games

The PLAY IS THE WAY® program assists teachers to guide children beyond the simple pleasures of playing games to the character building benefits that can be achieved.

Guided by informed teachers/facilitators:

- Our games help children to develop and habituate patterns of behaviour that are personally advantageous and culturally appropriate.
- Our games teach children to respond appropriately to the thrill of success and the disappointment of failure. To enjoy competition with good grace and consideration for the other side.
- Our games assist children to control impulsive behaviour and control the need for immediate gratification as they strive for long term benefits and goals.
- Our games encourage children to use their skills to advantage others in the pursuit of common objectives. They strengthen the skills of teamwork and cooperation and help children to manage relationships.
- By playing our games children initiate a process of self awareness and discovery. They create a shared body of experience that is used to build up relationships within the group and to develop the group.
- Our games create a common awareness and language with which to discuss the processes of human action and interaction. They encourage empathy, respect and an appreciation of difference.
- Our games engage children's emotions and call for mastery and control of those emotions to achieve success. By being challenging, the games develop self motivation and perseverance. They help children to identify the reasons for failure and foster optimism and resilience.
- Because they require effort and application, our games help children to understand the value of process in the pursuit of success.
- Our games act as metaphors, similes and analogies for life and by playing these games children hone the skills that help them to live, learn, work and play well.
- Our games improve the social, emotional, physical and mental health of children.