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**More Playtime**

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Should there be more playtime in the classroom?

**Find out why there are calls for more talk and playtime in the classroom**

A competitive atmosphere in class can be bad for children's education, according to research published today as part of the biggest review of primary schooling for 40 years.

**The Cambridge University study said...**

- Children should play and talk together more in lessons despite the traditional view that chatter can be disruptive.
- Teachers should praise pupils for their efforts rather than reward them for good results, the research said.

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Cambridge professors Christine Howe and Neil Mercer conducted the study for the Primary Review, a major two-year study into primary education.

The academics said "social interaction and collaborative activity" in class can provide "valuable opportunities" for learning.

"This challenges the traditional view that talk and social interaction among children are irrelevant, if not disruptive to learning," the report said.

"Generally speaking, tasks should be designed to encourage co-operation and group cohesion, rather than competitiveness," the study said.

**Competitive**

The report questioned the theory that encouraging pupils to compete increased their motivation to learn.

And it warned: "Disputational talk, which is highly competitive and full of disagreements, is not conducive to learning in the particular context of pupil-led group work".

Instead teachers should encourage "exploratory talk", which involves children "sharing, challenging and evaluating their views".

"Talk and social interaction among children play a key role in children's social development and learning," the study said.

"Research on collaborative learning across the arts, science and mathematics supports the view that joint activity among pupils should be an intrinsic and integrated aspect of classroom life."

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### Bringing in discussions

But the academics warned that pupils "seldom" have the chance to engage in co-operative discussions.

A linked study, also for the Primary Review, said children need to be able to learn through imaginative play.

"Pretend play and the imagination are important for cognitive development in the early years of education," the study said.

The research, from Cambridge's Professor Usha Goswami and Professor Peter Bryant at Oxford University, continued: "Teachers should praise effort rather than performance.

"Children who believe that their intelligence is fixed are less likely to make an effort to learn, whereas those who believe that their intelligence can grow will try harder."


Young children's early language skills are "crucial" to their educational development, the study said.


"Children who enter school with impoverished language skills require immediate support."

**Based at the University of Cambridge, supported by Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, the Primary Review was launched in October 2006 and will run for two years.**

**It is the biggest review of primary education since the Plowden Report of 1967.**

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