




Having Fun Isn't Hard: A Quick Fix Designed to Promote Independent Reading

Lauren Mims  and Brea L. Whitefield

Ball State University

In one of my favorite episodes of *Arthur*, Arthur and his friends excitedly sing about the magic of owning a library card (Fallon 1998). Their joyous declaration that “having fun isn’t hard when you’ve got a library card” (Fallon 1998) inspired me to devise a way to make reading a textbook and taking notes before class fun, rather than time consuming or overwhelming. In teaching an active learning class for preservice teachers on child development in collaboration with my graduate teaching assistant, I wanted to ensure that students read, reflected on, and engaged with the material prior to every class.

As a Quick Fix, I developed a novel approach to reading and discussing the assigned text: Child Development SketchNotes! Child Development SketchNotes utilize SketchNotes (Rohde 2013), visual maps that combine written words and images to create a visual hierarchy (Paepcke-Hjeltness, Mina, and Cyamani 2017; Rohde 2013), and the jigsaw method (Aronson 2002; Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1991) to foster critical reflection and engagement with the textbook, build relationships among students, and make reading and learning fun. Recent research (e.g. Altieri 2017; Fernandes, Wammes, and Meade 2018) has found that pairing images and words can improve memory retention of key concepts. The Jigsaw method, a cooperative learning strategy, has a long history of promoting collaboration, students’ self-efficacy, and knowledge retention (e.g. Aronson 2002; Crone and Portillo 2013; Nolan et al. 2018; Zhao, Ailiya, and Shen 2012). This Quick Fix can be adapted to any assigned text in order to increase engagement with the readings, maximize student learning and memory, and build relationships among students.

Assigning the SketchNotes

During the first week, students read “The Surprisingly Powerful Influence of Drawing on Memory”

(Fernandes, Wammes& Meade 2018) and watch “How to draw to remember more” (TEDx Talks 2016). Students are split into even jigsaw groups (nicknamed Homerooms) of no more than five students (Aronson 2002). Each Homeroom is assigned a different question that can be answered by reading the textbook (See Figure 1). For example, in the chapter on theories of child development, each Homeroom transforms a different developmental theory into images, words, and relevant examples prior to class.

Reviewing the SketchNotes

At the start of class, students meet in their Homeroom. They answer an icebreaker (e.g. who was your favorite teacher in elementary school and why), share what they sketched, provide each other with feedback, and make any changes needed to strengthen their sketches. Then, they move to groups made up of students who responded to a different question. In these groups, students teach their peers using their sketch while their classmates actively listen and ask questions. At the end of the activity, students submit their Child Development SketchNotes for instructor review to ensure that every student can understand and apply the material.

Feedback

At the conclusion of each semester, the weekly Child Development SketchNotes are always highlighted as one of the most enjoyable and exciting components of the class. Students write that they learned and remembered more by sketching because it encouraged them to extract, summarize and apply what they learned from the assigned reading. For example, one student wrote, “The Child Development Sketches were a fun way to show what we learned and made it easier to explain to our classmates what we wanted them to

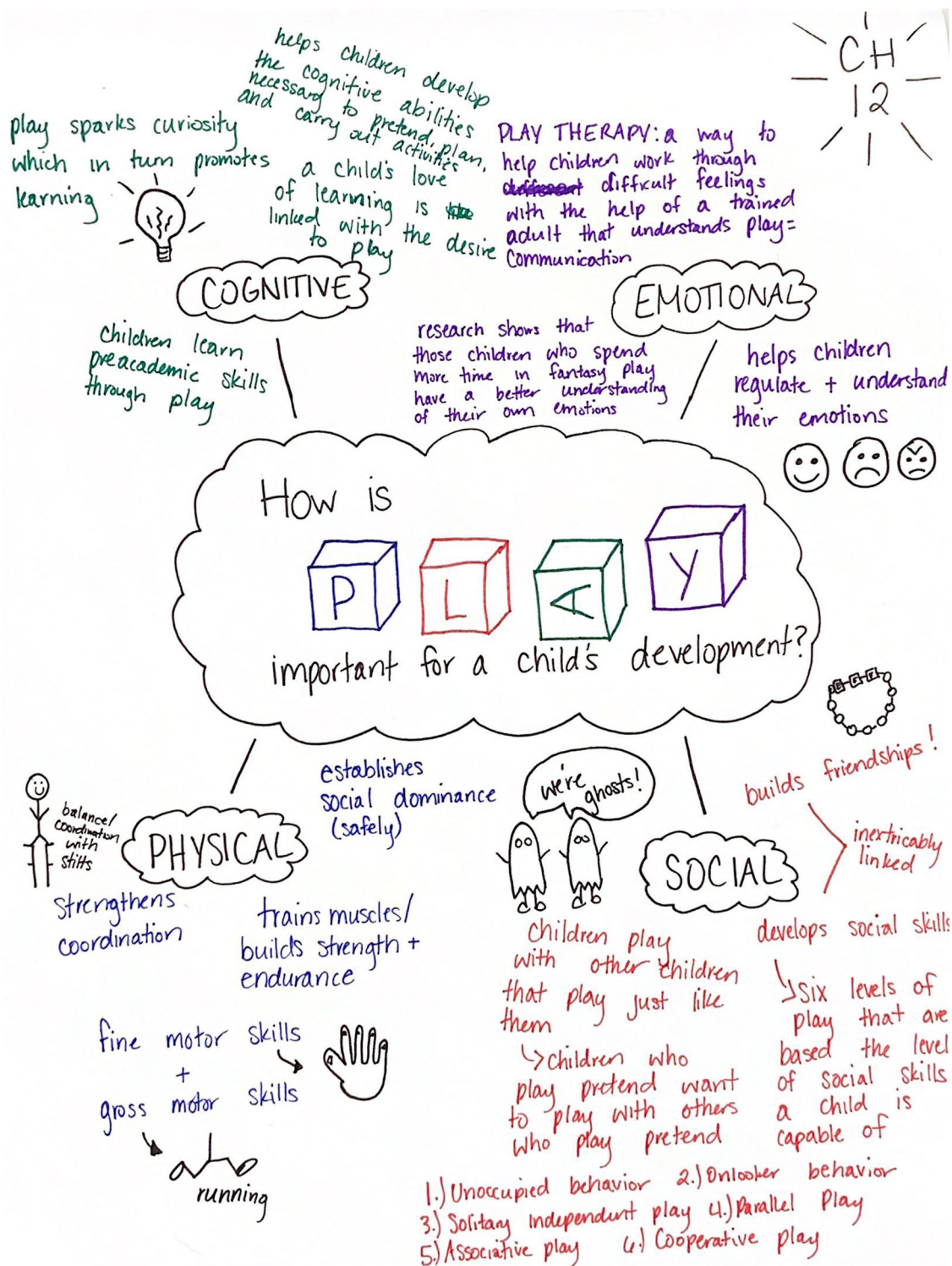


Figure 1. A sample child development SketchNote.

know!" In reviewing the Child Development SketchNotes, my graduate teaching assistant and I found that the SketchNotes consistently demonstrated excellent mastery of the content, thoughtful applications to the elementary school classroom, and correct implications for child development. While further quantitative and thematic analysis of feedback is

needed, the responses from students suggest that Child Development SketchNotes support students' ability to master, remember, and enjoy the theoretical and empirical literatures of developmental psychology. This Quick Fix may be a great way to engage students with the course material before they even enter the classroom as well as re-ignite a love of reading.

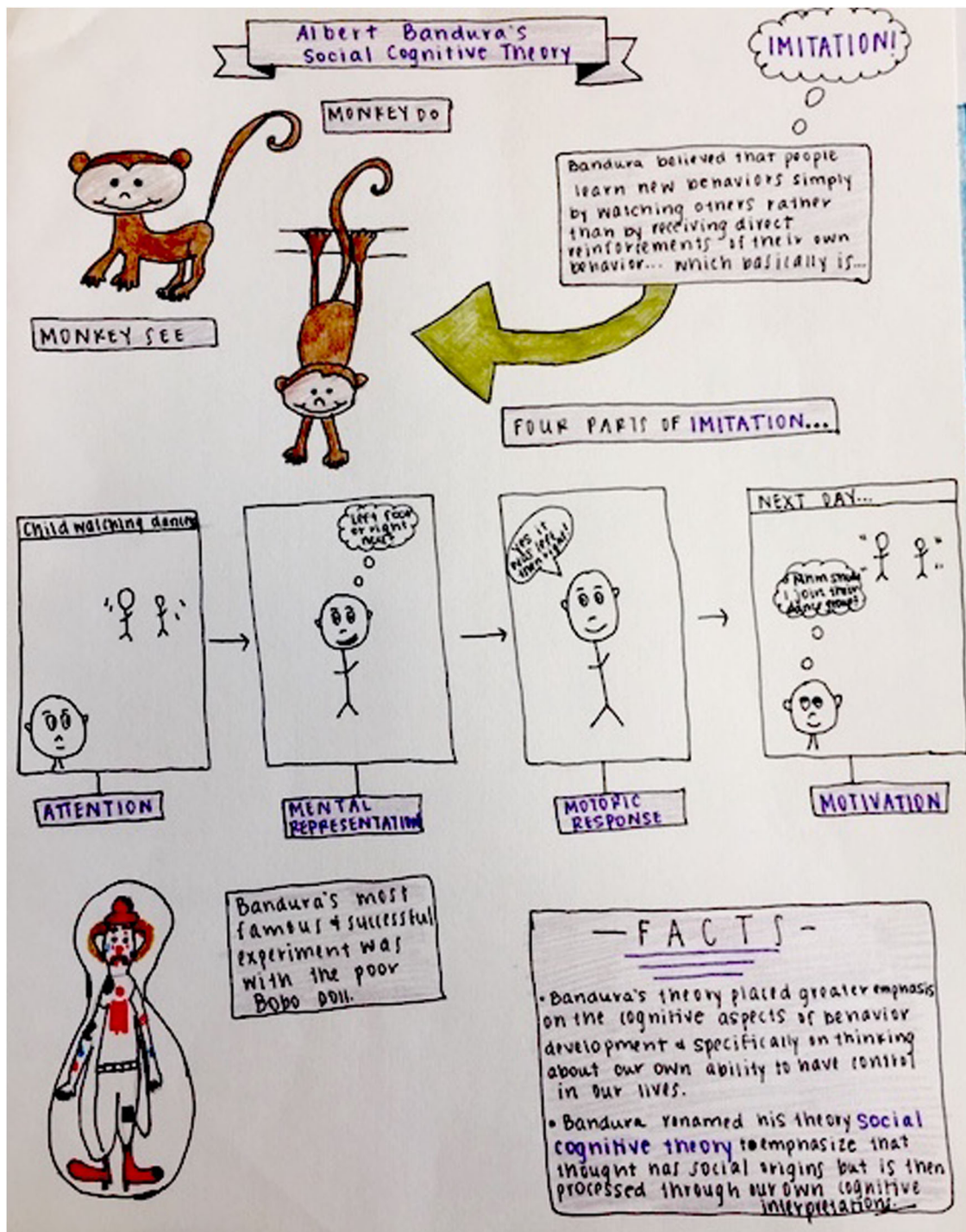


Figure 1. Continued.

ORCID

Lauren Mims  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4801-5311>

References

- Altieri, J. L. 2017. "From Sketchnotes to Think-Alouds: Addressing the Challenges of Social Studies Text." *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 30 (1):8-12.
- Aronson, E. 2002. "Building Empathy, Compassion, and Achievement in the Jigsaw Classroom." In *Improving Academic Achievement*, edited by J. Aronson, 209-225. San Diego: Academic Press. doi: 10.1016/b978-012064455-1/50013-0.
- Crone, T. S., and M. C. Portillo. 2013. "Jigsaw Variations and Attitudes about Learning and the Self in Cognitive Psychology." *Teaching of Psychology* 40 (3):246-51. doi: 10.1177/0098628313487451.

- Fallon, J. [December 28] 1998. *Arthur's Almost Live Not Real Music Festival [Television Series Episode]* In J. Fallon & K. Scarborough (Writers), *Arthur*. WGBH Educational Foundation.
- Fernandes, M., J. Wammes, and M. Meade. 2018. "The Surprisingly Powerful Influence of Drawing on Memory." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27 (5):302–8. doi: [10.1177/0963721418755385](https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721418755385).
- Johnson, D. W., R. T. Johnson, and K. A. Smith. 1991. *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction.
- Nolan, J. M., B. G. Hanley, T. P. DiVietri, and N. A. Harvey. 2018. "She Who Teaches Learns: Performance Benefits of a Jigsaw Activity in a College Classroom." *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology* 4 (2): 93–104. doi: [10.1037/stl0000110](https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000110).
- Paepcke-Hjeltness, V., M. Mina, and A. Cyamani. 2017. "Sketchnoting: A New Approach to Developing Visual Communication Ability, Improving Critical Thinking and Creative Confidence for Engineering and Design Students." Paper Presented at the 1–5. doi: [10.1109/FIE.2017.8190659](https://doi.org/10.1109/FIE.2017.8190659).
- Rohde, M. 2013. *The Sketchnote Handbook: The Illustrated Guide to Visual Note Taking*. Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press.
- TEDx Talks. [November 29]. 2016. Graham Shaw: How to Draw to Remember More [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gj3ZnKlHqxI&v=1=en>
- Zhao, G., B. Ailiya, and Z. Shen. 2012. "Learning-by-Teaching: Designing Teachable Agents with Intrinsic Motivation." *Journal of Educational Technology & Society* 15 (4):62–74.