



Pam Langford (Psychologist)
The role of the Psychologist

I think that the psychologist's role if the child has gone through an assessment and diagnosis is about helping families develop skills and confidence and competence with their child. Assisting them with working out what is important for them in their lives; do they want their child to be able to play with other children? Do they want their child to be able to climb things when they are at the park? There are so many aspects of their development which might be different to typical children so we can look at what is going to be a way of developing those skills. We do a lot of drawings and a lot of play activities, we use dolls, we use a lot of social stories, and lots of picture information so that the children know exactly what they are expected to do and we use a lot of graphic discussions about what is going to happen, we have books and little videos, and we have a lot of play activities around those themes.

ABA Programs

They have been around in Australia now for a long time, probably at least 20 years, so we have had a lot of opportunities to implement programs with children of varying ages and stages and to see what their outcomes might be. With each child the program is individually set up, even though there is a process; we know that we are going to work on language and we know that we are going to work on play and we know that we are going to work on social involvement and we know that we are going to work on their motor skills and their fine motor abilities, and their pre-academic skills. But within that the children vary enormously so some of the children are non-verbal, some of them are extraordinarily articulate and some children are interesting but often challenging. One program won't necessarily look very much like another child's program.

The aim is for the children to have a lot of fun whilst they are learning so there is a lot of structure but at the same time they are being highly reinforced and we are playing, and we are chasing, and we are tickling, and we are creating as much movement and activity within a program as we can. We are asking sometimes three year olds to work for at least three hours at a time, so of course we don't sit them at a table to work for three hours at a time, we have play activities, and we climb monkey bars and all of the other things. And at the same time we are looking at their motor development. If we can we include other children in the process, we teach the child to play by teaching them to play with toys first and then play with an adult, and then play with another child with the adult facilitating, and then play with more children, and then to have the adult step back and for the child to start to create the play.

*** This is an approximate transcription only; minor modifications have been made to assist the reader.*