PLAY INVITATIONS

A play invitation is an intentional arrangement of space, materials or possibilities that sparks curiosity without prescribing what learners must make, do or discover.

WHAT MAKES AN INVITATION WORTH EXPLORING?

CURIOSITY	Does it invite questions, investigation or an idea worth pursuing?
AGENCY	Can learners choose whether and how to engage, and change direction?
OPEN POSSIBILITIES	Can the same materials be used in different ways, with varied outcomes?
ACCESS & BELONGING	Can learners participate in different ways, with appropriate supports?
TIME TO DEVELOP	Can ideas be revisited, extended or left unfinished for another day?

AN INVITATION IS NOT A SET OF INSTRUCTIONS

An attractive setup can still be adult-directed if the expected product or process is fixed. Notice what learners actually do with an invitation, rather than judging its success by whether they follow the plan.

Ask yourself: What is genuinely open to the learner here — the materials, the question, the process, the outcome, or all four?

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PLAY INVITATIONS

REFLECTING ON OUR INVITATIONS

Use these prompts to review an invitation you have offered recently, or one you are planning. Observe learner responses before deciding what to change.

NOTICE THE LEARNERS

What drew learners in?

What did they change, combine or revisit?

Who participated — and who did not?

REFLECT ON THE DESIGN

What choices were genuinely available?

Did we expect a particular result?

What barriers might we remove?

THE INVITATION CHECK

Consider each element. Mark where your current invitation sits, then identify what you might adjust.

Learner choice

Adult decides everything — Learners shape the direction

Possible outcomes

One expected result — Multiple worthwhile possibilities

Access

One way to participate — Different ways to engage

Time

Brief, fixed activity — Ideas can continue or return

ONE SMALL CHANGE I WILL TRY

I will change or remove...

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