



Engineering the Perfect Goal

Ordinary objects have the potential to come to life in the hands of extraordinary minds. I witnessed this in action today as James and Mason teamed up to engineer the perfect goal. All it took was a plank, a ball, a goalpost and a stand. Oh, and not to forget.... TWO AMAZING INVESTIGATIVE MINDS! As I stood on the sidelines watching, I could hear the boys debating and trialling different ideas in an attempt to shoot the most spectacular goal by making the ball fly high and land in the middle of the goal post. So what did they try? Well, amongst other things they experimented with different plank gradients, kicked the ball from different distances and adjusted the speed of the kick. It was so fun watching them...They giggled out loud when some of their 'what ifs' proved a bit goofy. So they should because learning ought to be fun, engaging and playful. Their experiment was all that and so much more...

My thoughts on the learning....

Whenever I witness children engrossed in such complex learning, I am left speechless. Dear whānau, it is rather astonishing the rich learning unfolding in this episode. Mason and James, two minds alike, collaborated, communicated, brainstormed and evaluated ideas to ultimately ascertain the best way to shoot a spectacular goal. In their own space and time, they orchestrated a versatile science experiment which they reflected on and adjusted along the way. "Nice one", "you did it," and "it didn't go up" are only a few of the careful observations they made. Any decision made, left both boys feeling empowered because it was the result of shared leadership and power. So...what feeds this kind of learning? According to Peter Gray, a world renown American psychologist and anthropologist, it is the **freedom to play**. "Free play is the primary means by which children practice and acquire the physical and intellectual skills essential for success and learn to make friends, overcome their fears, solve their own problems and, generally, take control of their lives."⁽¹⁾ Undoubtedly, Mason and James will get together again. The question is, what would their free exploration uncover? Greatness, for sure!





(1) Gray, P., (2013, p.5) - Free to Play, Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant and Better Students for Life, Perseus Book Group, New York