

Nurture

Issue No.V December, 2008

Pakistan's Pioneer Publication on Early Childhood Development



Understanding Children's Play

**Outdoor Play:
A Stimulating & Nurturing
Childhood Experience**

Play vs Technology

PLUS Resources for Parents & Teachers

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Editorial

It is my great pleasure to present to you the latest issue of NURTURE. The theme of this issue once again demonstrates a vital element in children's all-round development that is 'play'. Simply defined play is a freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated behavior that children and young people determine by following their own instincts, ideas and interests. Playing in some form or another helps children to develop holistically, that is mentally, socially, physically and emotionally. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides a powerful endorsement to the significance of recreation and play for healthy development of children and young people.

Play is one of the most powerful vehicles children have for trying out and mastering new skills, concepts, and experiences. Whether it is a planned activity set up for the child or 'freeflow' play where there is no plan and the child plays at his or her own pace, play remains one of the best ways for children to learn. Different modes of play such as object play, pretend play, socio-dramatic play, language play and physical play allow young children to develop skills in creativity, flexibility, role-taking, organizing, building, taking responsibility and exploring to learn about the environment.

During the early childhood years (0-8), it is important for children to have access to space and freedom to play out their fantasies. In contrast busy and hurried lifestyles of the modern society, changing family set-ups and increased academic pressures have dramatically reduced opportunities for play for children. Elaborate toys and regimented activities structuring every minute of a child's time have further made play stressful and expensive with damaging consequences for balanced and healthy development of children. Moreover for many adults play seems as waste of time and an impediment to children's academic success and constructive time at home. Hence many of us as concerned parents and teachers commonly find ourselves limiting children's indulgence in play, leading to negative consequences for children's overall learning and development.

Our contributors for this issue of NURTURE stress that play is vital to children's development and well-being and that the role of supportive adults is actually to ensure that play is at the heart of children's everyday lives and experiences throughout childhood. The contributions highlight the kinds of play experiences that work best for children and accentuate the continuing need for providing time, resources, space and companions across the years of early childhood. The writers suggest how as a society, we can support children's play through provision of outdoor play spaces, reviving traditional games, promoting learning through play and teaching children that cooperation is better than competition.

On behalf of the Editorial Advisory Board and myself, I would like to acknowledge our writers for their significant and insightful contributions for this issue. The feedback of our readers will be invaluable as we endeavor to highlight subjects to meet the needs of our most valuable ECD stakeholder i.e. children. In closing, it is my sincerest hope as the new editor of this publication that NURTURE will continue to be a key resource enabling healthy ECD practices from caregivers to practitioners across the country.

I wish you happy reading!

Sadaf Junaid Zuberi

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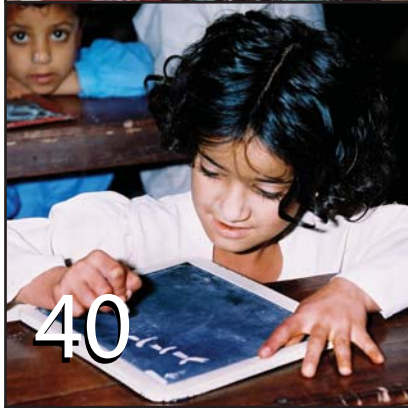
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You can read the articles in this issue
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Letters to the EDITOR

Nurture is Pakistan's pioneer magazine on Early Childhood Development. The magazine is published bi-annually and captures different themes on Early Childhood Development.

If you have a message, suggestion or any comment contact us directly by sending an e-mail at: nurture@ecd pak.com



Nurture magazine provides high quality informational resources on a variety of subjects dealing with children's early years which are crucial to their development. We find the content as well as the graphics equally appealing and wish you success for continued good work in the future.

Rashid Javed, Acting Country Director, Plan Pakistan

I have recently read your magazine Nurture, and was extremely impressed by it. I particularly appreciate your efforts in compiling so much of useful information and making it readily available in print as well as online for public use.

Miss Naheed, Islamabad



We are extremely pleased and impressed to read the Nurture Magazine, and find it closely relevant and informative to the profession of the practitioners of ECD. The magazine content is both informative and interesting and can definitely contribute to promoting healthy ECD practices within classrooms.

Nasreen Nisar, Mountain Institute for Educational Development

Nurture has provided a unique opportunity to deliver information on Early Childhood Development in a compelling and interesting manner. The themes highlighted each time are quite pertinent and significant for raising healthy children be it to do with their health and nutrition or the way children learn. Needless to say, the magazine is coming up better and better each time and I cannot wait for the next issue.

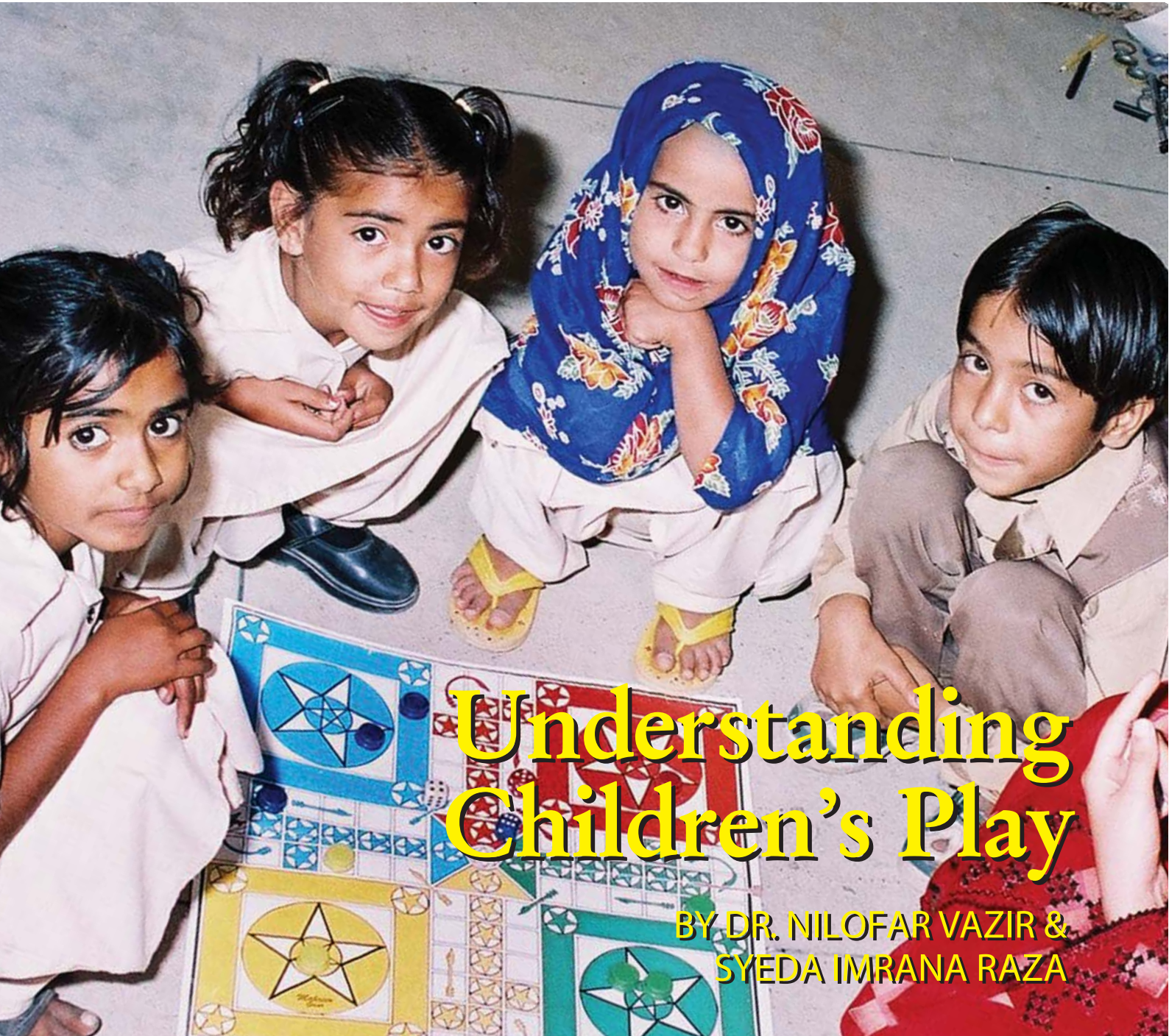
Dr. Zahoor Ahmed Chachav, Islamia Public Higher Secondary School, Ghokti

Nurture magazine is no doubt a pioneer Pakistani publication on Early Childhood Development. I find it to be an effective tool for both teachers and caregivers who are concerned about the healthy development of their children in the early years. I think it is a great advocacy tool towards nurturing healthier and happier children. Keep up the good work!

Mrs. Gulshan Ara, Principal, Children Credo College

I enjoy reading all sections of Nurture magazine but especially the resources for parents and caregivers. The interesting family activities and useful tips which the magazine provides has not only helped me to educate myself but also equipped me to advocate for healthy practices in the upbringing of my own children, their cousins and friends.

Mrs. Khalid, Karachi



Understanding Children's Play

BY DR. NILOFAR VAZIR &
SYEDA IMRANA RAZA

Play is a critical activity in every child's life which serves as a way for children to develop an understanding about themselves, their world and their experiences; personal and that of peers. Every child instinctively needs to play as play gives children the freedom to imagine, promotes concept formation, associations and classifications, and encourages them to explore and to be creative. Moreover play enhances their social and intellectual competencies through providing opportunities for exploration, experimentation and manipulation of the environment.

Play is a dynamic process that develops and changes as it becomes increasingly varied and complex. It is a key facilitator for learning and development across various domains and reflects the social and cultural context in which children live. Play enhances multiple areas of children's development such as cognition, language, socialization and control over their emotions. Through play, children expand their understanding of themselves and others, their knowledge of the physical world, and

their ability to communicate with peers and adults. Moreover, play promotes personal and social values such as empathy, trust, respect, love and care and admiration leading the child towards self-awareness and other human inter-relations.

Children are mentally very active and while playing they are constantly trying to make sense from the information they are processing. This provides children an outlet to express their emotions, feelings and ideas as well as a sense of accomplishment through achieving tasks in any given play situation. Play has therefore been given fundamental importance in the early childhood learning methods and teaching since learning through play and activities tends to maintain the interest and concentration of young learners.

Play and Child Development

Play is both a process and a product; as a process, play facilitates individual understanding of skills, concepts

and dispositions; as a product, it provides a vehicle for children to demonstrate their understanding, skills and dispositions. Play continues in one form or the other from childhood into adulthood.

As children play, they learn all about themselves and what they can do. Play occurs throughout life but its form varies as children grow older. It directly offers opportunities to children to learn about their own selves, others and the environment in which they are living and growing. Children's play also has a significant impact on their developmental growth and contributes to their social adaptation from infancy to middle childhood. Play helps them make friends, enjoy company and discover the world around them. Play also facilitates personality integration and inner growth and enables children to understand and accept individual differences and multicultural issues in their interactions with others.

Play at Different Developmental Stages

Play is not only children's unique way of learning about their world, but also their way of learning about themselves and how they fit into the world. To best understand the relationship of children's play to learning and development one must be conversant with the characteristics that describe how play enhances all children's learning and development at different ages:

Infants and toddlers engage in activities that stimulate their senses and develop motor skills. This stage is the sensory motor stage, which involves senses and movement. Babies and toddlers actively explore objects and their own capabilities through simple, non goal-oriented and repetitive play. Even within speaking distance of others, toddlers make little or no effort to

communicate and when playing with similar toys may pursue unrelated activities.

At this stage children concentrate on their own needs, reflecting egocentric behaviour, and have no concept of rules. Such play contributes to infants' and toddlers' growing ability to pay attention and to the development of physical skills, social competence, and intellectual growth.

Young preschoolers play with other children, talk about common activities, and borrow or share toys. At this stage play is more pretend and imaginative with no explicit goals, nor do children make an effort to establish rules. Moreover young preschoolers do not find it easy to sever thought from an object and can barely separate the meaning of words from what they represent. They independently act and represent what they see through their imaginative play, hence, linking imagination with language development. Older preschoolers on the other hand play together and help each other in activities that produce some material or product or pursue some goal. They playfully re-enact events and change details to match personal needs and desires; this kind of play is with object and people.

Through play, preschoolers develop and refine motor skills, experience the joy of mastery, and develop and use basic academic skills such as counting, reading, and writing. Although they may imitate codified rules, their concepts of rules are individual and they make no attempt to win.

In the **primary grades**, children play formal and informal games with their peers (e.g., hopscotch; jump rope; board, card, and computer games). This kind of play enhances their coordination and physical competence, refines their



social skills, and builds concepts such as cooperation and competition, and enables them to demonstrate to themselves and to others their skills, talents, and abilities. At this stage, children like to explore and to create their own games, through riddles; number games, and secret codes. They also practice and demonstrate their growing understanding of word meanings, letter meanings, and numbers.

In **later childhood and early adolescence**, children's play is more organized and structured as their passion for orderly thinking manifests itself through games with

rules and in organized sports. Winning becomes important for them as they begin to internalize that winning means following the rules. This is the age when team sports become important. Children grow in social awareness, their focus moves from the family and school to the peer group; and they want to be accepted in a social group. They can channelize their energies by joining various social groups, volunteer activities, and team sports. Through role taking and play in such organizations, they better understand how they will fit into the significance and structure of their social, political, and economic systems.

Supportive Role of Adults in Children's Play



Caregivers occupy a key role in providing successful play opportunities for children in their early years. As supportive adults they need to understand those aspects of learning-rich play that do not change across the years of early childhood including the continuing need for time, resources, space and companions. Ensuring a developmentally appropriate play experience therefore remains a key for helping children to socialise and acquire vital coping skills as well as enhance their creativity and critical thinking.

For meaningful play to happen, adults must ensure the provision of play materials, adequate time, equal opportunity, on-going support, and freedom for children to explore and make independent choices. These experiences help children to grow and develop as healthy individuals.

For adults having opportunities to play with children, it is important to understand the right balance by intervening in play at the right moments as needless meddling can potentially become interference in the child's learning. An experienced person will usually be able to sense when to stand back and observe the play and when to become involved. Generally play is instinctive and children express a desire as to what they want to play with or at, and their interest is driven by choice and motivation. The nature, time duration and type of play thus needs to be sensitive to the individual needs or differences amongst young children.

Parental involvement and early childhood programmes that are play oriented are hence critical in the field of early years learning because they support children's growth and development, and encourage them to learn in a variety of ways.



Different Forms of Play

Some consider play to be trivial and simple, and even a waste of time. On the contrary play is not wasted time but rather time spent building new knowledge from previous experience. Children may engage in play, because the activity is freely chosen, pleasurable and process-oriented. [Perhaps] goals are flexible, self-imposed, and may change during the course of the play; children are not bound by rules in their play, which may take many directions. This establishes that children are constructing their learning during play whether play is functional, constructive, symbolic, parallel, solitary, cooperative, socio-dramatic or pretend, play by self or with other children.

Play enhances children's freedom of imagination, promotes concept formation, associations and classifications, and encourages them to explore and to be creative as well as contributes to their brain development. It has also been widely emphasized that play helps in the development of a child's personality; as children play they deal with competition, fear, power, loneliness, acceptance, rejection and many other feelings. Children thus tend to shift their role easily from being social to anti-social and may use one or many forms of play simultaneously, for example, shifting from solitary to cooperative play.

Play can be divided into two different categories: (a) free play and (b) structured play

a Free play takes place when the child is leading the play experience, sets out the rules and boundaries. This type of play will often hold the child's interest longer and she/ he can become engrossed in the activity because she/ he developed it her/ himself.

b Structured play is adult led, guided and planned. Structured play tends to be more limiting and minimizes the child opportunities to be inventive.

Play is therefore one of the best ways for children to learn, whether it's a planned activity or free play (where there's no plan) and each child plays at his/ her own pace. A cornerstone of good early years practice is that children be encouraged through a balance of free and structured play routines.

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How PLAY MOTIVATES & enhances children's COGNITIVE, SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL growth experience

BY SADIYA AZEEM

Six-month old Rehan giggles as his mother plays a game of 'taaa' (peek aboo) with him. Three-years old Emaan thinks its funny when her father puts on a silly hat. Five-years old Hassan throws a cape around his shoulders, runs across the room and pretends to be Superman.

Play has a crucial role in the optimal growth, learning, and development of children from infancy through adolescence. From babies, to toddlers to pre-schoolers, children's drive to play is instinctive. There is substantial evidence that play provides benefits for cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and moral development of children from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. However despite the benefits derived from play for both children and parents, time for free play has noticeably reduced for children. This can be attributed to a hurried lifestyle, changes in family structure, and increased attention to academics and enrichment activities at the expense of recess or free play.

In the rapidly changing world characterized by dramatic shifts in what all children are expected to know and be

able to do, academic standards are becoming higher and tougher and increasingly focusing on a narrow view of learning. Play is being replaced by lessons focused on cognitive development, particularly literacy and reading, to match the content of standardized testing.

"We want children to sit down and write their names at three years of age and do rote and regimented tasks that are extremely boring at a young age." (Adele Brodtkin, 2005). The lessons addressing cognitive development often involve "children sitting at tables engaged in whole-class activities", instead of activities such as making figures from play-dough, with the teacher engaging the children in conversations about their work. Alphabet drills and "quiet desk work" are also progressively used. Even though most realize the importance of play, parents of young children are increasingly demanding preschool content that they view as "academic", rather than play. Parents today are increasingly obsessive about standardized and regimented academic achievements which are marked by some tangible gain at school such as a certificate, an A grade or an appreciative star on a child's face. For

example, parents agree in theory that play is important, but they say, 'Could you just throw in the worksheets, so that I can see what they are learning?'

Play is spontaneous within children and offers an ideal opportunity for parents and caregivers to engage fully with their children. Educators have the responsibility to defend play-based preschool environments from attacks from individuals, including parents, who question their value; or else it is likely that early childhood programs will eventually succumb to parental pressure and change curricula to reflect parental preferences, even if these are ill-advised, such as devaluing play-considering it to be meaningless and unproductive and suggesting it to be replaced by closely monitored structured academic activities.

Consequently, children today have less time and opportunity to play than did children of previous generations. This in turn has repercussions on children's cognitive, social and emotional growth experience.

Cognitive Development: Evidence and long-term research suggests a strong relationship between play and cognitive development. Researchers also highlight a positive relationship between play and student learning such as improvements to attention, planning skills, and attitudes; creativity and divergent thinking; perspective-taking; memory; and language development.

Although play is often thought of in terms of "free play", dictated by the child, play can also be educationally focused, directed by the teacher or parent, to reach specific educational goals. Play provides opportunities for acquiring many cognitive skills such as vocabulary, language skills, problem solving, perspective taking, representational skills, memory, and creativity. Children learn specific competencies related to academic and social success through play.

Play has been found to contribute to early literacy development as well as to social development, including social skills such as turn taking, collaboration and following rules, empathy, self-regulation, self-confidence, impulse control, and motivation. These factors impact cognitive development and are just as important in learning as the ability to recognize letters or sounds.

Social and Emotional Development: As social organisms, humans have a basic need to belong to and feel part of a group and to learn how to live and work in groups with different compositions and for different purposes. Play serves several functions in satisfying these needs and developing these social and emotional life skills. For example, children of all ages need to socialize as contributing members of their respective cultures. Numerous studies indicate that play gives children the opportunity to match their behaviour with others and to take into account viewpoints that differ from their own. If, play is constructive and positive; children learn to accept, express and cope with their emotional pain and strain.

Thus, play provides the rich experience children need to learn social skills; become sensitive to others' needs and values; handle exclusion and dominance; manage their emotions; learn self-control; and share power, space, and ideas with others. At all levels of development, play enables children to feel comfortable and in control of their feelings by allowing the expression of unacceptable feelings in acceptable ways and providing the opportunity to work through conflicting feelings.

There is a large body of scientific literature that demonstrates the health-promoting effects in adults of various forms of social connection. However, little attention has been paid to those influences in early life that allow children to enter adulthood with the abilities to develop and to maintain social connections. These abilities arise through early influences on the developing brain that can be cultivated through unstructured free play. Although many abilities may contribute to achieving social connections, we maintain that empathy, an ability that emerges in early childhood, is the key to meaningful affiliation, and arises, in part, from the experience of free play.

Few would disagree that the primary goal of education is student learning and that all educators, families, and policymakers bear the responsibility of making learning accessible to all children. Numerous studies have shown that children with better social skills and emotional health succeed academically. Play has also shown to help children

Promoting play for healthy cognitive, emotional, and social well-being of children

- Listening, caring, guiding through effective and developmentally appropriate discipline and sharing pleasurable time together are the cornerstones of parenting and serve as a springboard toward a happy, successful adulthood.
- Free play is a healthy, essential part of childhood. Although parents should monitor play for safety, a large proportion of play should be child-driven, rather than adult-directed.
- Promoting the use of toys which foster imagination such as blocks and dolls, allows children to use their imagination fully, over passive toys that require limited imagination.
- Parents should share unscheduled spontaneous time with their children. Playing with children is a supportive, nurturing and productive experience.
- Parents should advocate for educational settings that promote optimal academic, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development for children and youth.



adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children's learning readiness, learning behavior, and problem-solving skills.

Play and unscheduled time that allow for peer interactions are important components of social-emotional learning.

Play therefore remains integral to the academic environment and child-initiated, teacher-supported play is an essential component of developmentally appropriate practice. It ensures that the school setting attends to the social and emotional development of children as well as their cognitive development.

In addition to supporting cognitive and social development, play also stimulates children's physical and linguistic development. Children express and represent their ideas, thoughts, and feelings when engaged in symbolic play. During play children can learn to deal with emotions, to interact with others, to resolve conflicts, and to gain a sense of competence, all in the safety that only play affords. Through play, children can also develop their imaginations and creativity.

Play is a cherished part of childhood that offers children important developmental benefits. Encouraging and supporting the implementation and integration of play as a daily practice is therefore important in order to create the optimal developmental milieu for children.

More Evidence on How Play Enhances Cognitive Development

The benefits of play are not easily apparent. Many are complex and indirect and may take years to be realized. Still, there is considerable support for the view that play contributes to the development of a diverse array of higher mental functions. Make-believe play has been granted special research attention.

Many studies indicate that play not only reflects, but contributes to general cognitive and social development. Preschoolers who spend more time at sociodramatic play are advanced in general intellectual development and are seen as more socially competent by their teachers. Young children who especially enjoy pretending also score higher on tests of imagination and creativity. When play objects are used in novel ways, they encourage the discovery of new relationships and may enhance children's ability to think flexibly and inventively (Singer & Singer, 1990).

Evidence indicates that fantasy play strengthens children's memory. Children's recall for both listlike and narrative information is promoted by make-believe. For example, Newman (1990) instructed one group of 4- and 5-year-olds to play with a When children embed an object in meaningful make-believe, they increase its memorableness. In this way, play may provide a vital foundation for more sophisticated memory strategies mastered over middle childhood that depend on establishing meaningful relationships among to-be-remembered information.

What does research say about the role of make-believe in children's literacy development? Time children devote to pretending at age 4 is positively related to emergent reading and writing skills after entering kindergarten and first grade-specifically, the extent to which children spontaneously read words on game cards and signs, understand print concepts, and write letters and simple words (Bergen & Mauer, 2000). The more children engage in literacy-relevant play (activities like the recycling center), the more advanced their emergent literacy skills are as well.

Source: <http://www.abacon.com/berk/lifespan/aid7.html>

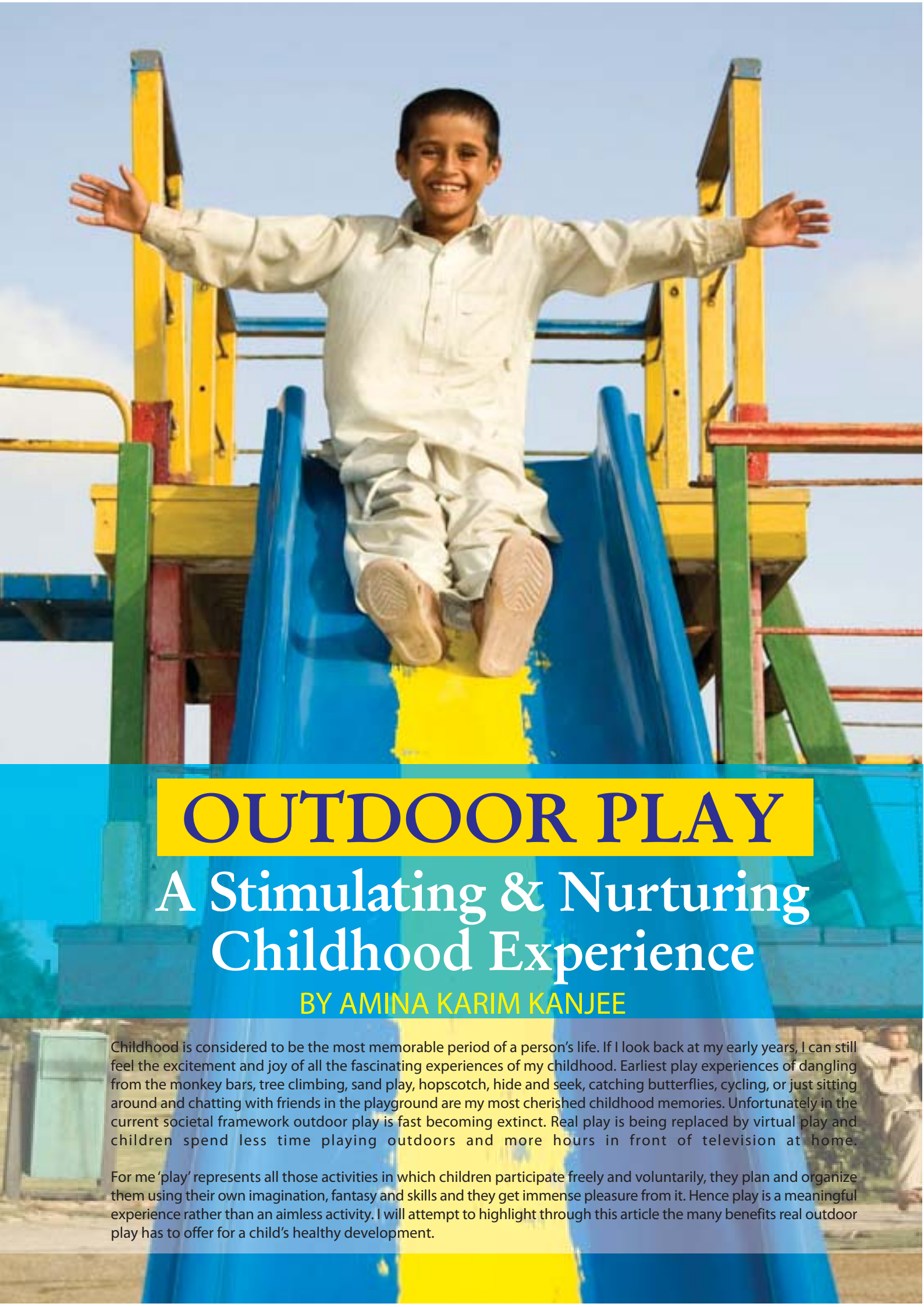
About the Writer:

Sadiya Azeem has been associated with the field of education for the past 10 years. At present she works at Teacher's Resource Centre as a teacher trainer.

Learning through Play: Multiple Intelligences Activities

Intelligence	Suggestion for Parents	Ideas for Teachers
Linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read with your child • Listen and respond carefully to your child's questions, concerns and experiences • Encourage your child to tell you about the story he/she reads or listens to • Provide books or picture books to your child for reading and paper for writing 	Storytelling, creative writing, alphabetising, poetry, jokes, nursery rhymes, class discussions
Logical/ Mathematical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child to help you set the table, sort clothes or organise the desk drawer • Involve your child in making family budget • Let your child experiment • Invite your child to help you in kitchen • Show your child how to use calculator 	Measuring, sequencing, estimating, classifying, sorting, counting, concentration, cooking, hide and seek, puzzles, some computer games and web sites
Visual/ Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your child design a play corner in his/her room • Involve your child in arranging items on a table or shelf • Allow your child to create various arts and crafts • Provide a variety of art materials such as paints, crayons and magic markers • Let your child use a camera to take pictures at home 	Drawing, bowling, painting, sculpting, finger plays, arranging furniture in a doll house, puzzles, easel painting, block play, cartoons, collages
Musical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your child to sing along or clap to the rhythm of music • Have sing-alongs (informal group singing of popular songs) • Allow your child to select a recording at the music shop • Provide opportunities to attend musical events 	Nursery rhymes, playing simple musical instruments, musical chairs, finger plays, listening to music, dancing, singing, making simple rhythm instruments, drawing to music, music in nature
Bodily/ Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve your child in dancing, acting or sport activities • Walk, jog, play a sport as a family • Involve child in household chores such as sweeping, setting the table and emptying dustbins 	Action stories, sports, ball games, climbing trees, finger plays, science experiments, physical exercise, simulations
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve your child in group activities • Play family games • Encourage your child for discussions and problem solving 	Group games, role playing, cooperative activities, establishing group rules, group story writing, class discussions, card games, creating cartoons, thematic play, peer teaching
Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your child work or play alone • Encourage your child to make something for the whole family • Provide her/him a time for reflection. 	Body tracing, role playing, "missing person", likes / dislikes, different occupations, body part games, yoga, family tree
Naturalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your child for a 'nature walk' • Arrange family trips to sea sites, lakes, mountains • Take your child to zoo, safari and national park 	Climbing trees, sand and water, hiking, planting seeds, taking care of pets, gardening

Source: www.todaysteacher.com/MILearningActivities.htm



OUTDOOR PLAY

A Stimulating & Nurturing Childhood Experience

BY AMINA KARIM KANJEE

Childhood is considered to be the most memorable period of a person's life. If I look back at my early years, I can still feel the excitement and joy of all the fascinating experiences of my childhood. Earliest play experiences of dangling from the monkey bars, tree climbing, sand play, hopscotch, hide and seek, catching butterflies, cycling, or just sitting around and chatting with friends in the playground are my most cherished childhood memories. Unfortunately in the current societal framework outdoor play is fast becoming extinct. Real play is being replaced by virtual play and children spend less time playing outdoors and more hours in front of television at home.

For me 'play' represents all those activities in which children participate freely and voluntarily, they plan and organize them using their own imagination, fantasy and skills and they get immense pleasure from it. Hence play is a meaningful experience rather than an aimless activity. I will attempt to highlight through this article the many benefits real outdoor play has to offer for a child's healthy development.

Before discussing the benefits, however, it is important to understand the factors contributing to reduced spontaneous, outdoor play. I interviewed several parents vis-à-vis the daily routines of their children and concluded the following causes:

- **Flawed Assumptions about Learning:**
The notion of innate and free learning experiences has been replaced by conditions and outcome based formal activities. Play that was considered as the expected tool to help children learn naturally is now being considered as a distraction from 'actual learning'.
- **High Academic and Achievement Pressure:**
Adult expectations from children are so demanding that it leaves children with little freedom to do what interests them, or what is fundamentally essential for them. In order to prepare children for academic success adults unintentionally sacrifice child's freedom to experience free play.
- **Lack of Parental Time to Accompany Children for Outdoor Play:**
Lives of children today are much more structured, controlled and supervised, with very few opportunities for free play. With increased safety issues in the society, limited play spaces, and decrease in time available to parents in their fast paced routines, children's outdoor play tends to suffer.
- **Societal Insensitivity towards Child Nurturing:**
Increasingly very limited thoughts and efforts are invested in creating places for children where they can be with nature and play freely. Moreover with fast growing population and pressures of urban lifestyle, living is overburdened and stressful thereby having negative effects on children's spontaneous outdoor play and consequently, their health.

Why Outdoor Play is Essential for Optimal Development

It has now been unequivocally established that children can benefit from play that is outside the home, in an unstructured environment, is loosely supervised and follows no real agenda apart from letting children get some amount of physical exercise and meeting children from their age group. The benefits are not just confined to physical development only; in fact they are far more outreaching in terms of cognitive development. Following are few of the many benefits of reclaiming outdoor play and why it is essential for a healthy development for children:

Essential for cognitive development

All children are born with a treasure of innate potential. This innate potential is the prerequisite for learning, curiosity, creativity, thinking, observation, imagination, relationship building etc. The more opportunities children get to use their instincts in a natural and non-restrictive environment, the more they develop their creative, imaginative and thinking capabilities and social relationships with others. In this context, free play and especially outdoor play provides excellent opportunities for children to nurture their talent in a natural way. Limitations and restrictions on play reduce the chances of nurturing innate potential. Various research studies have highlighted that regular physical activity contributes in generating new brain cells, enhances cognitive processes, increases attention span and catalyzes the overall cognitive processes.

A natural way to develop physical skills

The outdoors provide children with the space to move freely that supports the body in developing fundamental motor skills. Experiences such as walking, running, climbing, jumping, swinging, carrying blocks, carts, etc. strengthen gross muscles. Manipulative skills, on the

Types of outdoor play and their contribution to children's development

Leading a physically active lifestyle is important for everyone. Physical activity is particularly vital for children's health and development, and for establishing healthy behaviors that promote enjoyment of childhood and lifelong activity. Play exists in many shapes and forms and becomes increasingly varied and complex with age. The developmental progression that we observe in different types of play reinforces development in other areas of child growth.

Traditional sports for example such as football, cricket, badminton, tennis and other games that require physical activity for e.g. swimming, running, and hide and seek, carry huge potential to make the child more active, physically strong, mentally recharged and psychologically happy. For toddlers, climbing ladders, swinging, riding the cycle and running are games that should be encouraged. Sand play wherein children build objects, model play dough, make mud houses, all provide avenues to children for constructive play and fosters creativity and imagination. Social Play including hide and seek, making a sand castle together, and playing in groups imparts social skills to the child, encourages cooperation and eases out competition to make play fun.



other hand, are sharpened through games like filling and emptying sand and water containers and gardening, etc. Moreover, fine motor skills get more polished while squashing and squeezing sand or clay. Experiences like these and many more make children's bodies active and adaptable to outside weather and also enable them to develop strong mind and body coordination.

A catalyst for enhancing confidence and critical thinking

By playing in natural settings, children develop their own toys and play props, direct their actions and sometimes generate detailed skits using their imaginative and creative skills. While playing in open areas, children work out alternative ideas, take risks, experiment, make mistakes and ultimately solve their problems using alternative ways. Such experiences make children independent and bold and encourage them to become risk takers. These bold and fear free experiences during outdoor play sharpen children's confidence and independence that ultimately results in developing their problem solving skills. It is a common observation that children who play on streets or in open spaces, come out physically stronger and more confident when it comes to decision making as compared to children who have limited exposure to outdoor play.

Source of exploration and appreciating nature

Playing outside provides children with a variety of

opportunities to explore nature and build up their conceptual understanding about the world. While playing outdoors with sand, water, blocks, carts, etc. the ideas of volume as well as spatial senses start developing. While pouring and filling water or sand, comparing the weight of sand buckets, or measuring water in a rain gauge, estimating number or size of wooden rods or blocks, judging speed or distance quickly while running, climbing or hiding or analyzing relation in between bodies, sense the directions of wind and how it effects, etc, are just the few examples from the billions that supply children with huge experiences to learn using their senses. Such skills that children sharpen in their childhood are essential for further building their knowledge and understanding about the world in later years of their lives.

A means for emotional stability and social skills

Outdoor play encourages children to express their emotions freely in an open environment. They shout when excited, scared when taking risks, and cry when hurt. Moreover children also learn to care and empathize when somebody needs support. Such experiences are quite essential in strengthening emotional stability of a human's life and should be initiated from the very early childhood. Outdoor play provides opportunities for children to participate comfortably in diverse social groups as well. This facilitates in them in developing interpersonal skills and a sense of interdependence within society that ultimately make them socially dynamic beings.

Conclusion

Children and society as a whole can benefit significantly by maximizing the learning opportunities that natural outdoor play environments offer young children. The need is now to reverse the trend of diminishing outdoor play for children. Caregivers, educators as well as policy makers are all responsible for advocating and ensuring provision of play spaces and the need for free play in the early years. Parents need to schedule play time and accompany children to playgrounds and educational pressures need to be scaled down. Policy makers ought to recognize the many benefits of outdoor play and make provisions. All this however requires more than an attitudinal change. By the end of the day children are

going to be what they are developed for. All children have the right to face the sun, feel the fresh breeze, and see the world the way they want to see and explore. Now it is in our hands to realise whether we are subduing the innate potentials children are born with or opting for their natural growth.

About the Writer:

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Children Who Just Watch

While many young children, when given the opportunity, will immediately engage in play with others, families and early childhood teachers often encounter children who only want to watch from the side. These children will watch others playing around them - constructing a towering building; reenacting a battle of dinosaurs in the sandbox; putting on a puppet show - without actually getting involved.

Family members and teachers may be anxious when preschoolers do not engage in play with other children, but this "onlooker stage of play" can be an important step in the social development of young children. It is an opportunity for young children to learn and mentally practice interacting with others. With adult guidance, they'll benefit from this thoughtful time.

In the onlooker stage, children don't physically interact, but their minds and feelings are fully engaged in the play of others. You can see it in their faces and body language. Their eyes may open wide as they see a block building growing taller, then they may dart quickly to another corner to determine the location of the growling dinosaur sounds. Their faces may break into smiles at the antics of other children pretending to be monkeys and gorillas.

Each type of play has value: in solitary play, children acquire self-knowledge; other kinds of play help them build confidence, practice interacting, and learn how to cooperate with other children. Children who go through an onlooker (or "watcher") stage get to be mentally engaged without the potential intimidation of actually being in the thick of things.

This engagement offers children opportunities to mentally manipulate what they see and hear, organizing and integrating information and storing it away for future use. The children may actually be mentally placing themselves into a situation they are observing, and testing how they might respond if they were involved.

As "watchers," children have opportunities to manipulate their cognitive experience of the behaviors of others, gaining information which will later be used within the context of their physical, verbal, emotional, and social behaviors. The use of this information is not just imitation, but a true understanding of the causes, actions, and consequences of particular behaviors - similar to the way preschoolers might use self-talk or private speech to review what they have learned about words and language. The onlooker stage offers an opportunity to watch and learn before stepping into the action.

All young children do some watching; some young children do it a lot. We now know that this is a valuable experience for children. As family members and as early childhood teachers, we are often anxious when preschoolers are not willing to engage overtly in play with other children. Perhaps we should allow them more time to watch and learn. When the time is right, they will be more comfortable and successful moving into the world of full social interaction.

Source:

Excerpted from "He's Watching! The Importance of the Onlooker Stage of Play" by Sarah Jane Anderson - an article in the NAEYC Journal, Young Children.



TAMING TANTRUMS through PLAY

BY NIDA ALAVI

What is a tantrum?

Temper tantrums come in all kinds of sizes and shapes. They may take the face of crying, kicking, falling down, arched backs, screaming, stiffening limbs, stamping feet or simply running around wildly. In extreme cases, children may resort to damaging things around them, aggression, pounding their heads on the floor or holding their breath.

Children display two types of tantrums, each of which requires very different handling responses. During a 'Distress' tantrum, your child can't think or speak rationally because his upper brain functions are hijacked by primitive emotional systems in his/her lower brain. The little 'Nero' tantrum is very different from a distress tantrum as it is about the desire to control and manipulate. A child having a little Nero tantrum doesn't experience or show the anguish, desperation, and panic that characterises the distress tantrum, and he/she doesn't have stress chemicals flooding his/her brain and body.

Generally speaking though, every tantrum involves some degree of anger and frustration being exhibited through behaviour which is considered unusual, disorganized and mostly unacceptable.

Why do children throw tantrums?

Consider yourself. When you're in a situation which you're finding difficult to understand and subsequently respond to, don't you tend to become more reactive and edgy? Aren't we more likely to have a meltdown (adult term for 'tantrum'), when we are anxious, exhausted, highly strung or simply hungry? Children throw tantrums for similar reasons. Granted, some may be more likely to throw a tantrum due to temperament but overall, the likelihood of tantrums increases if children are tired, hungry, stressed, over stimulated or just placed in a situation they don't know how to respond to.

It is important to remember that tantrums may sometimes occur because children honestly don't understand what is expected of them in a given situation. A tantrum when the child knows what is expected versus a tantrum when the child does not know the expected behaviour should elicit different responses from adults.

Tantrums are a normal part of growing up. They can be minimized but probably not eliminated altogether from

childhood. Having said that, let's not underestimate children's ability to work a situation in their favour. While the above reasons can increase the likelihood of a tantrum, anger outbursts are very often the outcome of children learning that such outbursts will get them what they want. For example, every time a child goes with the mother to the grocery store, he/she starts screaming for candy and the mother buys it to get him/her to stop embarrassing her. The child learns that his/her screaming will get him/her candy. Of course the child is now more likely to throw a screaming tantrum every time he/she wants something at the grocery store! Let's not forget that children are evolving to become smarter with each generation.

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Ever wondered why tantrums are more common between the ages of one and four years as compared to later on? Simply because so many tantrums are the outcome of toddlers and preschoolers wanting to do something 'themselves' without an adult over prompting them. They can get very upset if a parent or teacher helps them a bit too much with dressing or writing or any other independent activity. It's also worth looking at our own culture and how we tend to do so much for children, often at the expense of promoting their self-reliance as individuals.

Consider an average school morning where a child had a delayed start, resulting in the parent practically brushing his/her teeth, buttoning the uniform, tying shoes and feeding him/her breakfast in the car on the way to school. At school, the teacher grabs the child's backpack and water bottle to put them away, quickly leads the child to a chair and rushes him/her through the morning's independent writing activity with full hand-on-hand support. Most adults have dealt with one or more of these morning episodes, often several times over. Interspersed between these routines are outbursts from the children who are already rattled by a disrupted schedule, but also hassled by adults completing tasks they can do themselves! Imagine how much easier these morning sessions would be if they were planned to give children enough time to ease into their day independently, without someone rushing them through the motions?

Responding to tantrums

While it can be said that tantrums are sometimes developmentally appropriate behaviour for young children, they should not be treated as acceptable behaviour, and should instead be managed using

strategies in prevention and resolution. If there was a magic wand for eliminating tantrums, someone would have patented it and made millions by now. Not only is there no 'one size fits all' approach to dealing with tantrums, but there is also no strategy that will work every single time and ensure a 'tantrum-free' existence. This brings up the all important issue of what to do in the moment when you're on the receiving end of a tantrum from your child.

Some important points to remember when faced with a tantrum (irrespective of what the cause is) include keeping one's calm, keeping the child safe, removing the child from the situation if possible, not letting others' reactions influence how you respond to the tantrum, waiting out the tantrum until it stops before addressing it and paying attention to 'any' good behaviour that occurs during the tantrum (e.g. stopping screaming, stamping feet). These 'do's' are generic to all tantrums, however, it is obviously important to consider how to respond based on specific situations.

When managing tantrums, it is crucial to make sure that there is no 'pay off' for the tantrum. Once you have figured out why the child is throwing a tantrum, choose the appropriate response to that situation. For e.g. if you feel the child is screaming to get your attention 'just because' (as opposed to because the child is hurt or unwell), ignore the tantrum and continue whatever you are doing as you don't want to reinforce the idea in the child's mind that screaming will get him/her attention. If the child is screaming because he/she doesn't want to stop playing and clean up, firmly insist that he/she does by saying "We are all done with toys now. Clean up please!" and physically help the child pick up one toy to communicate the instruction, if necessary. If a child is arching his/her back and refusing to move until you buy the action figure

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he/she wants, as a parent you should make sure you do not get the action figure, though you may be tempted to in order to evade embarrassment from the child's defiant behaviour. Such situations also suggest preparing children for potentially challenging situations ("We are going to the toy store to buy a birthday present for Ayesha. No toy shopping for you today.") and 'making pacts' for expected behaviour ("You will be helpful and pick out a present for Ayesha. You will not ask me to buy a toy for you.").

Punishing a child in the moment by hitting or yelling at him/her can actually worsen the tantrum in the short term and make it persist in the long term. This is especially

true in situations where children don't know the appropriate replacement behaviour and needless to say, will not learn it through beating or shouting.

Regularity forms the cornerstone of effective management of tantrums. While there is no blanket strategy for addressing tantrums, there 'can' be a plan of action for how you will deal with tantrums depending on what the situation is. Consistent implementation of these plans once you have thought them through is likely to produce better behavioural outcomes, as children will also learn how unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with.

Needless to say, tantrums are a form of communication for children as they seek to indicate a desire or want through what they have often seen other children do to get their way. It is, therefore, only logical to respond with effective counter-communication. At the onset of a tantrum, indicate to the child that his/her behaviour is not acceptable, make sure you do not reinforce it and wait for him/her to settle down. As mentioned before, reward any sign of positive behaviour with attention and positive body language.

Once the child has settled, effective communication has two additional purposes: firstly, to teach the child alternatives to tantrums and secondly, to assure the child that during the tantrum, his/her behaviour was bad, not the child.

Tantrums must be addressed immediately so that the child fully understands what is being discussed and why. In teaching alternative behaviours, first describe the behaviour to the child "You felt upset and you threw a tantrum. You were banging your head on the floor, stamping your feet and shouting". Then, explain that those behaviours were not acceptable "Tantrums are not acceptable behaviour. We don't bang our head, stamp our feet and shout. This is not appropriate." Such language is highly recommended because it indicates to the child that his/her behaviour was disliked as opposed to phrases like "You're a bad boy/girl!" which

communicate that the child is not liked. Following this is the most crucial step in this line of communication -- providing the child with alternatives "I know you felt upset. When you feel upset, use your words and say 'I am upset'. Review this alternative by asking the child what he/she will do the next time he/she is upset. While it may take several repetitions of this discussion to produce a shift in behaviour, it is a healthy alternative for adults to utilize when responding to tantrums. Consider how difficult it is for adults to control their temper, and as a result, how much harder children find it to regulate their emotions and temper tantrums.

Taming Tantrums through Play

As children learn more efficient ways of managing their negative emotions and appropriate methods for communicating their needs or wants, tantrums will naturally be on the decline. While the above strategies have all proven effective in preventing and responding effectively to tantrums, children are also responsive to another medium for learning how to handle their anger – play! What makes play so attractive for teaching children how to control their temper can be attributed to the scope play provides for the adults in children's lives to be creative! Children communicate their thoughts and feelings through play more naturally than they do through verbal communication. Using play as a remedy for controlling tantrum outbursts can thus prove highly effective.

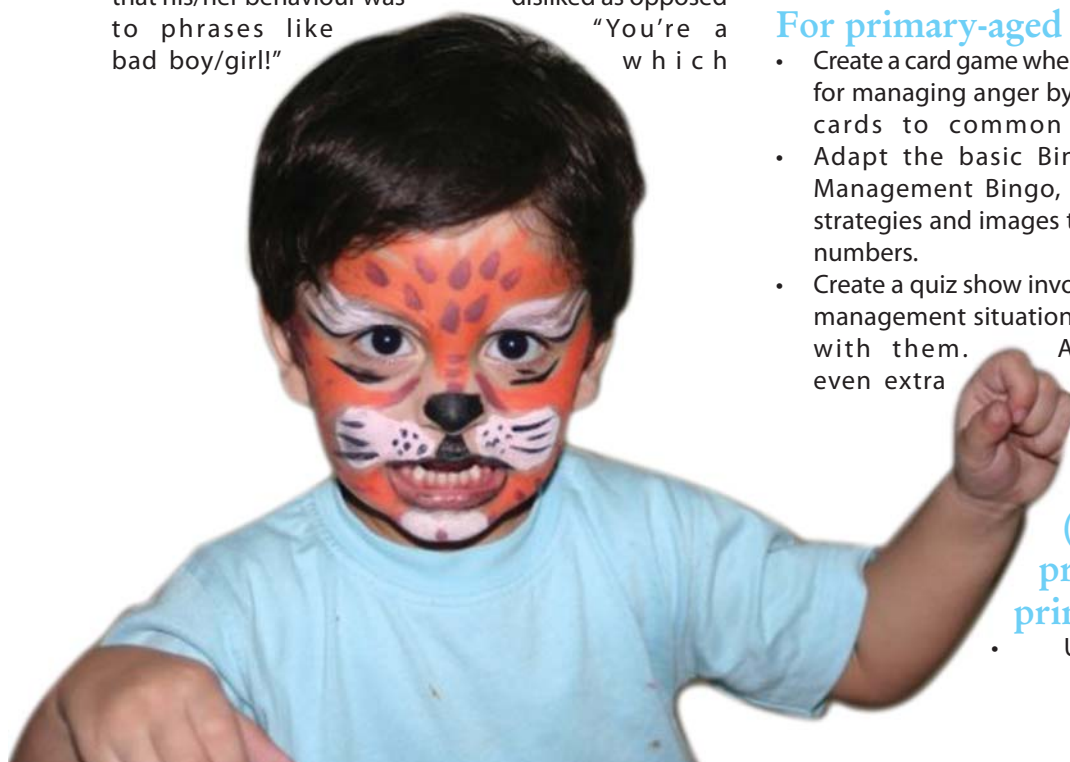
Some children enjoy rough and tumble play; some card games; some ball games and so on. Here are some basic ideas that can serve as an impetus for you to unleash your imagination and make learning anger management skills fun!

For primary-aged children

- Create a card game where children can learn strategies for managing anger by matching different solution cards to common anger situation cards.
- Adapt the basic Bingo game into an Anger Management Bingo, using different situations, strategies and images to fill in the blocks instead of numbers.
- Create a quiz show involving different anger management situations and the strategies to cope with them. Assign points for answers and even extra credit for 'extra' creative answers.

For all age groups (toddlers, preschoolers and primary-aged children)

- Use children's books in which



the central characters have to manage their anger as springboards for discussions with children. Encourage them to even create stories of their own about how to respond in situations which can make people feel angry.

- Engage in pretend play using action figures, stuffed toys, dolls or puppets to act out different scenarios that allow children to express appropriate responses through their favourite character puppet.
- Use dramatic play to get children to act out appropriate responses to angry situations by using their body movements and facial expressions to communicate how they feel. Have them even talk you through why they chose a certain movement or expression to show a form of anger and response to that anger.
- Using play to give children ownership over rules they are expected to follow is a good way to encourage them to actually adhere to those rules in times of crisis. Involve children in the creation and even implementation of rules around the house, in the classroom or in public. Engage them in adapting these rules by situation and creating visual reminders for themselves which they can refer to when they are feeling angry.

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Finally, what is most important to remember in understanding and responding to tantrums is "Don't panic!" The number and frequency of tantrums do not determine your effectiveness as a parent or teacher. While tantrums will often seem ridiculous, it is important to keep your cool and even put the situation into humorous perspective. There are several variables that contribute to tantrums. Take the time to understand why the tantrum is occurring and respond to that with a consistent behaviour. Trying to stop the tantrum by giving in to what the child wants is not recommended because it will teach the child that tantrums are a handy tool for manipulation. It is unreasonable to expect change to occur overnight and therefore patience is integral to the process. Understand that tantrums and their consequences are one of the many faces of the ongoing battle of wills between adults and children. Respect children as individuals and try to give them the benefit of doubt while accepting that you cannot control their emotions or behaviours. Retain control of how you will respond to a child's tantrums and do not let others govern how this process will unfold. Finally, play is a useful and enjoyable tantrum prevention and control technique through which you can discipline your child and actually improve child-caregiver relationships.

How to handle your child's tantrum?

Childhood and temper tantrums go hand-in-hand, but this doesn't mean that parents must suffer through unlimited tantrums with every child. Instead, there is much parents can do to avoid tantrums and limit them when they do occur. Following are some suggestions that parents might like to follow when their child is in the middle of his/her biggest tantrum:

- Many a times a tantrum is intended to indicate the very simple "Myself!" or "Khud se!" Understand how to find equilibrium between how much prompting the child is willing to accept and how many errors you're willing to allow the child to make in the spirit of independence.
- Reduce stress inducing circumstances for children like tiredness, hunger or simply too much activity which can over-stimulate them. For instance, parents can time the visit to a relative's house 'after' the child has eaten and taken rest.
- Tantrums that are triggered by frustration with an activity or object can be prevented by providing help before the onset of the frustration. So instead of saying "Please put the toys away so we can go outside and play before getting ready for lunch", limit your instruction to "Clean up time!" or "Please put the toys away". Once the child has cleaned up, you say, "Let's go outside" or "Time to play outside now!"
- Related to the notion of independence is the ability to make choices. Give children choices whenever possible. Giving choices is an effective strategy for preventing tantrums arising from being told 'no' and/or being asked or told to do something.
- One of the most highly recommended strategies for preventing tantrums is positive behaviour support i.e. appreciating children for exhibiting behaviours that 'are' desirable, especially in situations where the child manages his/her frustration well without throwing a tantrum.
- Using humour and play when appropriate serves to show the child that you don't take bullying seriously.

Source:
www.kidsdevelopment.co.uk

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Value of Traditional Games

BY SAIMA KHALID

Don't stay too long outside and waste your time playing. Come back home by 6 pm sharp. You need to finish your home work." "You only want to play all the time. When will you take time out for studies?" "There is no need to go outside to play. You can play games on your computer."

These are common phrases we hear in our surroundings where physical activity play is usually considered non-productive for children. Time spent playing is compared to time spent studying and more often than not, children are reprimanded for 'wasting time' playing outside. It is common observation that parents praise studious children and are ticked off by those indulging in sports and play. Parents are heard raising such concerns as, 'Why do kids always want to play? Do they realize how adversely it would affect their grades?' Owing to little awareness about the developmental benefits of play, it is often disregarded by parents and caregivers as aimless leisure.

Research endorses that play is the best form of physical activity for children and through traditional game playing children learn about the rules and values of their culture. Many early childhood practitioners also consider play as

an activity which promotes learning. Yet play is only considered relevant to some areas of the curriculum and still has not received a secure place in delivering the curriculum (Bruce, 2004).

With the gradual increase in awareness about the importance of play, early childhood practitioners started considering only those games that are either given in the reference books and teachers' guide for kindergarten schools. While talking about kinds of play, most literature depicts children's play with objects, pretend play and socio-dramatic play that are mainly focused by Piaget and Smilansky (Moyle, 2005). These kinds of play caught the interest of teachers and educators as well since they carry benefits and functions for learning different skills in classrooms. Physical activity play was evidently ignored. Through this article I wish to highlight some of the common traditional games and their developmental benefits in the hope that awareness may restore the legacy of physical games that I grew up playing and enjoying.

Traditional games including Pitto Garam, Aankh Macholi, Baraf Pani, Oonch Neech, Gilli Danda etc. carry immense benefits for healthy development of children such as

sharpened gross and fine motor skills, improved control and balance, enhanced hand-eye coordination, increased spatial awareness, and greater social skills.

Let us look at how some of the traditional games are played and their associated benefits.

Rassa Kashi

To play this game two teams of relatively equal weight are chosen. A rope is taken and a flag is tied midway along the length and a line is drawn in front of the team. Both the teams position at either end and upon signal of a referee. The teams start pulling the rope in their respective directions. The objective is to pull the flag over the neutral line and on the team's own side. Through participating in this game children learn the importance of team play as well as enhance their gross motor skills and improve balance and coordination.

Pitto Garam

This game is played between two teams. Player from one team uses a ball to hit a pile of stones and the other team members try and rebuild the pile while team two players try to tag by hitting the members of the first team with the ball. The next turn comes if the pile is rebuilt or the ball hits any of the team one players while rebuilding the pile. This is a very popular local game. It helps children to work as a team, support each other and at the same time, take steps for their defence. While hitting the pile, children learn better hand and eye coordination, and the process of rebuilding the pile sharpens fine motor skills, sequencing and sizing skills.

Baraf Pani

Baraf pani is a variation of the basic game of pakran pakrai (tag) except that the chaser has to catch everyone in the game. The game only requires a bunch of friends and an



open space to run. As soon as the chaser touches any player, he or she becomes baraf (frozen) and cannot move until unfrozen by the other players who are still untagged. This game promotes development of children's gross motor skills and team play.

Oonch Neech

This game requires a bunch of children who run around for safe spots while trying to escape being caught by a chaser. Safe spots include anything that is higher than the ground level so one can be safe by climbing on top of stairs, or tree or a bench in the playground. The children cannot remain standing at one spot for too long. The game helps children refine their gross motor skills as well as sharpens decision making and improves spatial sense i.e. measuring time and distance together.

Gittey

This game is played with small stones that are thrown on the floor. The player is supposed to pick the stones one

after the other while throwing one stone or a ball simultaneously in the air and catching it back. This game helps in developing excellent hand eye coordination and fine motor skills.

Kho Kho

Kho Kho is played between two teams each with odd number of players. Members of the chasing team stand equidistance in a line with each alternate player facing opposite direction. One player who is the chaser tries to catch the players of the other team. While the dodger team can pass in between standing players to save them from being tagged, the chaser cannot cut across the line of standing players and has to run around the entire row. The chaser however can pass off the chasing to another member of his team by nudging from behind and taking that player's standing position. The game helps children to work in a team, learn decision making and develop their gross motor skills. This also helps in language development.

Langri Pala

This is yet another informal playground game that involves one player attempting to tag other players by hopping on one leg and touching them with his/her hands. The game develops physical balance of the children and also uses gross motor skills of the children.

Each of the aforementioned games and many others have been locally played in one form or another for decades in our culture. With regional and generational variations these games are played without adult supervision and with minimum equipment. The rules and names of these games are not written but are agreed upon by the participants. Unstructured play has a crucial role in developing various aspects of children's growth, behaviour and interpersonal learning, therefore accentuates the need to restore traditional games in children's lives.



Traditional games expose children to a number of invaluable life lessons and they also develop fond childhood memories that are essential for healthy and holistic development. Both individually and collectively, children exhibit and sharpen cognitive and physical abilities through play. These include:

- making choices
- generating decisions
- negotiating
- pursuing their own interests
- using their own ideas and imaginations
- showing independence in thought and action
- exhibiting intrinsic motivation and persistence
- being physically and intellectually active in a sustained way
- being confident and prepare for challenges
- being creative
- learning to resolve conflicts
- setting their own goals and objectives
- learning new behaviour and practicing and consolidating established ones
- acquiring new skills and interest
- using skills and knowledge already acquired for different purposes
- using a range of social and interpersonal skills
- understanding rules and structures
- creating new combinations out of experiences
- problem solving
- acquiring flexibility and empathy towards others &
- developing cooperative skills.

Adapted from Moyles. J. 2005

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Quotable Quotes

What Experts Say About Play

Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning....They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more, and then they can use what they learn in new forms of play.

--Fred Rogers of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*

It is becoming increasingly clear through research on the brain as well as in other area of study, that childhood needs play. Play acts as a forward feed mechanism into courageous, creative, rigorous thinking in adulthood.

--Tina Bruce, Professor, London Metropolitan University

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

--Plato, Greek philosopher

"When kids play, they remember. They may not be aware they are learning, but they sure are aware they are having fun. When you have a good belly laugh with your siblings or parents or friends, that stays with you. And the great thing is that it comes so naturally...if we only let it."

--Rebecca Krook, play facilitator for kids with disabilities

Play for young children is not recreation activity; it is not leisure-time activity nor escape activity. Play is thinking time for young children. It is language time. Problem-solving time. It is memory time, planning time, investigating time. It is organization-of-ideas time, when the young child uses his mind and body and his social skills and all his powers in response to the stimuli he has met.

--James L. Hymes, Jr., child development specialist, author

Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul.

--Friedrich Froebel, "father" of modern kindergarten

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.

-- George Bernard Shaw, playwright



Interview

with

Mahenaz Mahmud is currently working as the Director Programme Development at the Teachers Resource Center. Her multidimensional roles at various levels in TRC, as well as the TRC Institute of ECE (IECE) and her expertise in early childhood education reflect various layers of experience at both practice and policy levels. Her primary focus is initiating and leading innovative projects in the Government sector, urban slums, and rural Sindh through designing and leading capacity building for teachers and staff in areas of curriculum planning, teaching strategies, research initiatives and project management.

Mahenaz Mahmud

BY FAIZA KHAN &
SARAH HUSAIN



Q Please tell us a bit about your background and your association with the teaching profession and the Teachers Resource Center?

I did my early years schooling in Calcutta of which I have very vague but pleasant memories. However, memories of the formal secondary school in Dhaka are not very happy ones. I have very little recollection of what was taught in the class and it was more of the friendships that stayed with me. I preferred to learn on my own, rather than in the classroom, through reading, thinking things through, doing some hands-on activity if required to help me understand a new concept. Though at that time I didn't know what learning styles were. I got married at quite an early age by today's standards but continued with my university studies. A break from academics really came when I started expecting my daughter and I switched roles from a student to being a full time mother.

I come from a family where there were quite a few teachers. My aunt, my mother-in-law and my grandfather, were all in the teaching profession. My daughter began going to the Karachi Grammar School (KGS) that had a system where mothers were encouraged to come and help out. I started going in thrice a week as a mother helper. That was when my learning about education, teaching and classrooms really began. The experience was completely different from what I had imagined schools would be like. My psychology background helped me as well to understand the children I was working with in the classroom. I went on to teach at KGS for 10 years and it was during this time that the Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC) was established.

TRC was established in 1986. Being the first organization of its kind and therefore having no workshop leaders, I was one of the teachers who were asked to join the team and share their learning experiences. As a workshop leader at TRC, I conducted many workshops, within schools and for the Lyari Street Schools and I experienced the enchantment of changing teachers' lives and thereby influencing many more children than I could have if I was working in a single classroom. It was around 1992 that the 'Initiating Change through Professional Development' (ICPD) project came about, which was a watershed for TRC in terms of working successfully with public sector schools. This is when and where I observed the need for Early Childhood Education (ECE). Eventually in 1997, with due support from CIDA and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan, TRC went full time into Early Childhood Education.

Q Do you believe in a child-centered approach to teaching and learning? How difficult is this to implement within a classroom?

I think there is no other way than the child centered approach for teaching and learning. I am a product of a teacher directed approach and as I said, I do not have happy memories of my school years. Child centered learning is not new, but in this country and also in many parts of the world it is not practiced in its true spirit. I do believe that children need to be able to make their own choices and feel in control of what they are doing. By this I don't mean that they should lose respect for our norms and become individualistic to the extent that they can't think beyond me, myself and I. I don't advocate that at all.

Children learn in different ways, they have different learning styles. For example, all the children in any given class, may not be good

listeners, so the teacher will have to work around that and not expect that all the children will have understood just because she has 'told' them something. While some respond to verbal instructions, other may prefer visuals or hands-on activities. One of the most common methods of teaching children in the classroom these days, is by

"Children learn in different ways, they have different learning styles. For example, all the children in any given class, may not be good listeners, so the teacher will have to work around that and not expect that all the children will have understood just because she has 'told' them something."

showing them flash-cards with words that teachers want them to learn. Flash cards are not child centered or active learning at all. Depending on their ages you need to have different activities for children that are age appropriate and developmentally appropriate. At the end of workshops, we find that teachers often say there should have been more activities. The point I'm trying to make is that if adults feel that way, during a two or three day workshop, then how can one expect children, who have a relatively shorter attention span, to sit around and learn through teacher-centered learning.

Q *Please clarify the difference between activity based learning in the classroom and extra curricular activities in general.*

For example, some schools have their art rooms outside the classroom, or there is a separate play room, or 'activity' room. Children may go there every day, but it is still a separate set up. So what message are you giving to the children? This sends across the message that children are going to take off time from 'work' to perform activities in another room.

Activity based learning, on the other hand, gives you choices about how you can use materials to match your own learning style and pace of learning. Activity based learning has to be integrated into the lesson plan. So, for active learning to take place, the materials should be present in the classroom. Teacher talk, i.e. the manner in which teachers talk is extremely important as well and it can make or break a child's interest in learning. Instructional strategies that engage students in the learning process stimulate critical thinking and a greater awareness of other perspectives.

Q *Some schools of thought conclude that activity based learning that involves toys and materials, is a western concept that should not be imposed on indigenous communities that lack the resources to implement these approaches. What do you have to say about this?*

I don't agree. Ancient eastern civilizations have used toys for children. Children love to play and work with toys and it is a natural way for them to learn. But if it is the lack of resources that people are concerned about, I don't think

children need expensive toys. In fact, they do not need any specific kinds of toys for active learning. Indigenous toys are culturally appropriate and wonderful. We should have these in the active learning classroom. If you do not have a set of lego-blocks or other expensive toys that doesn't mean you cannot have Active Learning. You need to have materials that the children are familiar with (for example, everyday objects, boxes, safe bottles and tins) whether you are sitting in a school in rural Sindh or in one of the up-market schools in Karachi. You need to have materials that the children are interested in, that they can manipulate and discover from. Children don't take an interest in very expensive toys for very long unless they are open-ended. For example, blocks are something I really do endorse the use of and these don't have to be the special kind imported from abroad. You can make blocks yourself, like wooden blocks and for very young children you can have blocks made with soft cloth. Materials can also be made with throw-away stuff. So if people get into the habit of recycling, it would be great. Instead of throwing away what is generally considered as "junk" we should all re-use safe, non-toxic trash, to make materials that hold young children's interest and at the same time teach them different concepts. The objectives of activity based learning can thus be achieved in a cost-effective, eco-friendly manner.

Personally, in the Early Childhood Education Certificate Programme, I practice active learning in the courses that I teach. It is not that I give out toys, though, sometimes I do, but I give the students materials and I give them choices. They can work individually or in groups to solve a problem, do some research, find the answers to questions and understand concepts. It is minds on, something that engages the learner. You can implement active learning at whatever level you want.

Q *TRC initiated the policy dialogue with the Government regarding the National ECE Curriculum, and we understand that there was a dire need for a curriculum at the 'kachi' level. Please talk to us about some of the challenges you faced during the development of the curriculum, from policy dialogue, right up to teacher training.*

Initially when I began working in the public sector schools, (during 1992-1995) I noticed that there weren't any 'kachi' classes. I used to see these small children coming in with

"Children love to play and work with toys and it is a natural way for them to learn. But if it is the lack of resources that people are concerned about, I don't think children need expensive toys."

their siblings, and they used to keep sitting, waiting for their older brother or sister to finish class before going home. There were no classrooms for them and no resources and this broke my heart. In 1996, the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan approached us and we were asked what it is that we would like to do. That is when we designed the Early Childhood Education Project and this project initiated a change in the whole policy environment.

I always knew there had to be a curriculum, as there was no framework for ECE in the country. Talking to communities, parents, grandparents and caregivers, I had learned that they were more interested in the social emotional indicators of learning, contrary to our assumptions that they would want their children to learn reading and writing. Hence, a curriculum was developed and the government approved it. The process involved

"if people get into the habit of recycling, it would be great. Instead of throwing away what is generally considered as "junk" we should all re-use safe, non-toxic trash, to make materials that hold young children's interest and at the same time teach them different concepts."

many challenges including frequent transfers of decision-makers at the policy level, lack of clear guidance on how to acquire approval of curriculum drafts and procedural delays. So we plodded forward literally at a snail's pace before the curriculum was finally approved and launched in 2002.

Q *Do you think there has been an impact of the ECE Curriculum on public school classrooms? What researches have been carried out to assess this impact and what have been their findings?*

To be really honest, due to shortage of resources we have not carried out any elaborate impact studies. We did carry out one longitudinal study i.e. "Innovation in the Kachi" which is available on the TRC website. Moreover, as a technical assistance partner part in the RCC: ECD Programme we have conducted research and received very positive feedback from all the teachers we trained in Sindh and Balochistan. We have also conducted informal research to study the challenges that teachers faced in implementing the ECE curriculum once they went back into the classroom. These challenges related mainly to lack of interest and ongoing facilitation from the various decision-makers in schools on providing classroom based learning support following the initial TRC trainings. Initially, when the teachers were trained we did go into the classroom to give them support but given our limited resources that could only be done up to a certain time.

Q *Is activity based learning restricted to the school and classroom or does it need to be provided to children at home too? What would be your advice to parents about implementing this approach at home?*

I wouldn't quite put it that way, as the home is an activity based environment. Classrooms as we know them, are really "unnatural" learning environments where 25-30 children of the same age, but different interests, are put together to work with one or two teachers, they are expected to still sit for hours at end and learn concepts and skills within an unrealistic time frame. Does this make any sense?

The home environment is entirely different. There is ample, relaxed, time, space and materials for children to learn

actively and all that they need in addition to that is adult support from time to time. My advice to parents would be, not to buy expensive toys, but to involve children in whatever is happening around the home and whatever the mother or father is doing, for example if the mother is cooking in the kitchen, the children can help or be given pots and pans and spoons to play with on the kitchen floor, which can be kept clean. If fathers are working with some tools, children can be involved in that too. Young children learn by imitation and should be given opportunities to do just that. Giving them choices will minimize forced activity and therefore reduce confrontational situations. Parents need to understand that they have to work with the child's nature and this is not very difficult if one goes with their flow. As a parent one needs to put in a little more time and effort and just enjoy being with children. These days unfortunately, young urban parents are very confused about child rearing practices and what is right for their child. Obviously they want the best for their own child, but the concept of "best for the child" is what people are confused about. It is not very difficult to understand what children need if we really tune in and listen. Children don't really have to have each and everything their little hearts desire, or that their friends have. With a bit of honest reasoning they give in to more sensible choices of toys or leisure activities. Parents should not get "bullied" by their children ... their personalities won't be scarred forever if parents say "No" to them sometimes. Occasionally, children want to be on their own and have some quiet time, which they should be given. It is not necessary that children be taken for an outing everyday just so that they can be entertained. Give them choices with what is available at home. Encourage them to find their own entertainment.

"What children need and want is a lot of time, attention and of course unconditional love. If one has chosen to have children, then we owe them our care and attentiveness. There is no substitute for that."

The media (print and electronic) is having a huge influence on children and parents, enticing and compelling them to do, or buy or eat this that and the other. Parents tend to give in to children's demands to maintain a status quo and peace in the home. What children need and want is a lot of time, attention and of course unconditional love. If one has chosen to have children, then we owe them our care and attentiveness. There is no substitute for that. You can buy them the most expensive toys and as many as you can afford but there is still no substitute for our personal interactions with them. Make your home child friendly, don't have too many don'ts for the children; have some so that the child learns where the boundaries are. Talk to them about meaningful things, do interesting things with them, give them respect, play games with them, read to them and with them; don't expect them to pick up the habit of reading if they don't see you pick up a book once in a while. If you don't like to read, just pretend that you do in front of the child. Parents need to walk the talk!

Resources for PARENTS

- The right way to play!
- Play versus Technology
- Keep the music playing...







THE RIGHT WAY TO PLAY

BY MEHWISH MARIA

You are always playing and not studying. When I was young I gave so much importance to studies. "The world is full of competition. The sooner you understand the better it is for your future." "Go and study, you don't have to go out to play every day!" These are the routine statements one gets to hear from parents of young children.

Constant comparison with peers and resulting pressure on children to perform at school is increasingly taking the best efforts of parents these days. Many times intentionally or unintentionally these pressures greatly sabotage children's play or any available free time. One reason for this can be attributed to adults' lack of awareness that children learn a lot through play; and that play provides them with the opportunity to actively explore, manipulate, and interact with their environment.

However a graver point of concern is the changing shape and form of play. Factors that lead to lack of pure and undisturbed natural play include excessive TV viewing hours and children's obsession with video games. Then the fact that there is forever the need for

constant supervision of children in urban environments, parents find it easier to let children amuse themselves indoors rather than taking out the time to take them to nearby parks. These factors contribute towards decreasing the imagination power of a child to create his/her own playing activity and look towards parents to provide entertainment. Sometimes even a room full of toys is not enough for the children, and one often hears children whining "I'm bored. Please can we go out today to the shop and buy new toys?"

Creative play is believed, by many child researchers, to form the foundation of emotional, creative, and intellectual growth in later years. Recent studies show that young children who do not receive sufficient nurturing, nutrition, parental interaction, and stimulus during their crucial early years, may be left with a developmental deficit that hampers their success in life. Equally importantly parents need to understand the importance of pure play and creative playing activities. Creative play is believed, by many child researchers, to form the foundation of emotional, creative, and intellectual growth in later years. It should be considered a normal part of a child's development. It is important

therefore that parents know how to balance electronic, programmed "play" with free, physical, creative play. As parents you should be willing to be fully involved with your child's creative play. It will benefit them in many ways. The following are some ideas to encourage your children's creative play:

- Start them early; encourage them to play from the time they are young.
- Let them experience nature when possible. Let them play with the soil, the sand, or the water whenever you can.
- Let them climb trees, ride bikes, and play their own pretend games.
- Children often do best with simple toys, or even household items that are readily accessible (wooden spoons, pots and pans).
- Practical everyday objects of adults are always fascinating to children. They enjoy using the same things that the important people in their lives use – a lunch box like dad's, earrings like mom's, etc. So let them use the objects that are safe for them to use.
- Provide artistic opportunities for your child to express what he/she is feeling and value their effects. Don't pass judgment on them.
- When you are in the garden give them something to do to help, e.g. provide them with a watering can so they can water the plants.
- Spend time with them in playing outdoor games. But, most importantly, don't ever force them into doing anything; else they will develop a dislike for those activities.
- Once they join school, encourage them to participate in school sports. Be there to cheer them when they

are participating in any school sport activity and if they don't win any prizes, don't discourage them by criticizing them.

- Involve them in your household chores. Children relish being involved and love assisting in tasks such as sweeping, vacuuming, gardening, and cooking. Be patient with them and you'll often get them started in their own role-play.

When children engage in free and creative play they are using their imagination to act out how they are feeling. Using their imagination in this way helps children to:

- Explore their feelings as they learn to express themselves and provides the opportunity to let off steam;
- Develop empathy and consideration for others, as they experience being in someone else's shoes;
- Develop listening skills and verbal communication from social interaction with other children;
- Gain perspective and learn what is real and not real.

It is really up to us as parents and caregivers to give our children the chance to prepare themselves for life as an adult in the best way possible. Indeed it's the only chance that they're going to get.

About the Writer:

Mehwish Maria is currently working at the Sindh Education Foundation as Acting Program Manager, PPP. She has experience in education and community development with a focus on early childhood education and adult literacy.

Source: www.ChildLearningSupport.com

Home junk can be a lot of fun!

The price of toys these days is quite high and they can also be loud, obnoxious, cheaply-made and sometimes unsafe for children. But the good news for parents is that creative toys don't have to be expensive. Besides being incredibly inexpensive, using simple toys, or reusing basic items as playthings, is an environment friendly approach and a catalyst for creativity.

Here are a few ideas:

- Large and small cardboard boxes are excellent and can be used to make buses, cars and trains which encourage creativity, design and technology.
- Boxes containing old clothes, such as dresses, shoes, jackets, handbags, shirts, trousers etc. are always intriguing for children. Children love to dress-up which helps develop their social, communication and language skills.
- Filling a bottom drawer with safe kitchen utensils (obviously nothing sharp like knives etc) such as pots and pans and wooden and plastic spoons lets your children know that this is a special drawer for them to use.
- Old sheets and blankets inspire creativity. Children love to make cubby houses where they can hide and create their own little world.
- A sandpit is great fun for children. Any large container filled with sand and water lets them experience the beach at home. This is a good way to teach them about science and math because as they play, they are working out the weight of each item, what is heavy and light, and, for example, how many spades full of sand it takes to fill a bucket, etc.



PLAY VERSUS TECHNOLOGY

BY AYESHA NADEEM QURESHI

A mere generation before, children used to enjoy the outdoors provoked by its wonders to form imaginative play. This “era” has now come to an end replaced by children of all ages mesmerized mainly by the television and technical gadgets including video games, computers etc. The technology has become an indispensable part of peoples’ lives; children spend hours on end in front of the screens not realizing what they are in turn sacrificing: opportunities to explore the world around them through physical activity and play. Needless to say, as the primary caregiver and educator, parents have the greatest responsibility to educate their children and to engage them in healthy and productive habits.

The Idiot Box – An Unwelcome Companion

Television offers very limited benefits, but people have lost their balance and to the extent it is watched by today’s children that it is detrimental to their overall wellbeing. Excessive viewing can result in sleeping problems and behavior issues for children. Studies have verified that the more a child watches TV the more prone he/she

becomes to worsening his/her performance academically. Obesity has also been shown to have a very direct connection to the immoderate use of the TV. This is because watching TV is essentially an activity which prompts children to overeat and consume junk food. Children are continually barraged with many advertisements encouraging the eating of unhealthy foods which are directly targeted towards their age group and create a desire within them to buy and eat that food.

The effect of television viewing on infants is unknown, but what is for sure is that it takes a child’s time away from interacting with other children; whereas social interaction is actually much needed at this stage of a child’s development. Children are also less likely to interact with their friends and families as their time slips by in front of the TV. This means they are sacrificing their social life just for some time in front of the television. TV doesn’t allow to be creative rather children passively watch and register whatever is shown. Another major problem that television poses is the exposure to violence. Violence

portrayed on TV isn't depicted as something wrong; in fact it is glamorized and made an efficient and appealing way for the "good guys" to win through fighting. This idea is constantly reinforced and teaches children that it is acceptable to use violence as a means of getting their way, and consequently this is one of the root causes of violence amongst youth.

Addiction to video games

The biggest problem associated with video game obsession is not the game itself, but the fact that they draw children away from healthy, productive activities such as reading, chores, homework, play and other aspects of a well-rounded, happy childhood. So, in addition to taking steps to curb your child's video game appetite, it is important to infuse positive, joy affirming entertainment and activities into their lives. Play offers a healthy and equally fun substitute for screen time.

What Play offers that Technology doesn't?

The opportunity for children to go outside and play has many advantages at mental, emotional, and physical levels. Many a times parents get annoyed at their children returning home bruised, dirty, and exhausted, and use this as an excuse to keep them at home with television becoming the ideal babysitter.

Play is a healthy and equally fun substitute for screen time.

Children should not be confined within the four walls as they need the freedom to explore the world on their own and this can be granted to them while a parent supervises to ensure safety, which is another common concern amongst most parents. This liberty can enable children to experience the world firsthand and indulge in lighthearted acts like running, shouting, climbing all of which can stimulate brain development and function. Moreover social interaction through play helps develop vital skills in children such as sharing, compromising, leadership, negotiation, etc. Children are also given a chance to overcome their fears and discover new things by using their creativity, enhancing their imagination and dexterity. Physical activity is important in everyone's life regardless of their age. This is an important factor in keeping healthy and can counteract arising issues such as obesity and other diseases.

There are a number of ways in which more positive behaviors can be promoted for children that would also eliminate much of the time a child spends watching TV:

- The importance of television entertainment should be devalued. It should neither be presented as a privilege nor a basic right.
- Parents should always be aware of what their children watch and if they feel that something is unacceptable, they should discuss these topics with their children.
- The television should be banned during time for homework and meals; instead mealtimes should be shared within the family which encourages communication.

- Children need to be provided with other forms of entertainment such as outdoor play opportunities and indoor activities and resources including magazines, puzzles, board games, books etc.
- Parents need to take out time themselves to get involved in various activities with their children.
- Parents should spend time reading to their children which provides them valuable knowledge that lasts throughout their lives.
- Of course parents need to limit their own time in front of the television to be effective role-models!

In conclusion, many children spend more time in front of screen than in activities that are essential for their healthy development. Besides the more popular harmful effects of technology including stress, sedentary lifestyles and promotion of consumer culture, screen time tends to undermine children's play with serious implication on their growth. Free-time activities and child-created play are lost to unimaginative imitations of TV shows and video characters. Parents who are concerned about this issue need to be proactive and encourage and support children's interests beyond electronic media and provide play materials for creative and imaginative play.

TV Background Noise Disrupts Child Play

*A Research by Department of Psychology,
University of Massachusetts*

Many parents watch the news or other shows as children play nearby. But new research shows that even when the television is just background noise, it may be disruptive to a child's normal development. A recent study revealed that distraction of the background noise had a significant effect on how children at every age played.

The study observed that when the television was on and even though children weren't interested in the adult TV show, background TV disrupted their ability to sustain various types of play. The children played with each toy for significantly shorter periods of time, and focused attention during play was also shorter as compared to how they played when the TV was off. The research is suggestive that even though the effects of background television on play behavior may be small, they may still have a cumulative impact through large amounts of exposure at home. These may include poorer cognitive and language development and attention deficit symptoms.

Source: well.blogs.nytimes.com



Keep the music playing...

BY SADAF JUNAID ZUBERI

Music is one of life's greatest pleasures. Like many children, my son was drawn to music long before he learnt to talk. When he was 18 months he would sit mesmerized through instrumentals and classical recitals listening to live performances. Now as a toddler, tabla and harmonium continue to fascinate him and his typical pastime on any given day involves listening to his favorite music or playing an instrument in *sangat* i.e. accompanied on another instrument by his grandmother whom he lovingly calls "Dabee". For only being 3 he has an unbelievable memory and can remember lyrics and rhythm and oftentimes I find him singing words in tunes he made up on his own.

Any early exposure to music that our child got would be attributed purely to our love for the art form as a family. Insights into the Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory and the importance of beginning a child's musical experience at a young age came much later; and with it the realization that music has a huge untapped potential that can be exploited.

Reading into the music research, I learnt that playing music increases children's reasoning capacity as well as improves their time management skills, concentration span and self expression. The most surprising discovery for me was the well established relationship between children's learning and music. Literature endorsed further that the integration of music has shown that educational content in school or at home is learnt more effectively and children are seen to be happier and enjoying the learning and play environments that have a strong element of music.

Despite its many claims to fame, I find music to be by and large marginalized in home setting and by most schools as just one of the many activities to be not very productive. One argument says that music and generally play has become an expensive luxury. This really is just half the truth. Just like the toys that children typically like to play with are often the simplest things and the expensive and high-tech toys that parents impose upon their children are rarely picked up after the novelty wears off. In the early ages specially, orienting the children to music and instruments is not really a costly affair. My son plays a range of homemade percussion instruments including pots and pans, spoons, empty containers, and rattles and shakers which can be made by putting small stones or dry lentils in empty plastic bottles.

Truthfully there is nothing like a joyous relationship with music that can last a lifetime. As a parent or a grandparent, your active interest and support will not only encourage your child's love of music but will seek to nurture this natural tendency and mould it into a module for acquiring knowledge.

Ways to make your child's life musical

At every age, provide your child with regular opportunities to:

- 🎵 hear, sing or play music in relaxed family settings
- 🎵 enjoy simple rhythmic and melodic instruments and explore their sounds
- 🎵 take part in music events that relate directly to the child's own culture and that involve distinctly different cultures
- 🎵 play music for you and receive encouragement for his or her efforts and achievements

Parental Support for Play

Throughout the magazine we have spoken about the value of play and the importance it has in the overall development of the child. As a parent of a child, the following table is designed to help you understand about the different forms of play children engage themselves in during their early years and how you can support them by providing developmentally appropriate materials, time and space.

Kind of Play	Description	Age Range
Exploratory play/object play/sensory play	Very young children explore objects and environments – touching, mouthing, tossing, banging, squeezing. Sensory play appears in children's early attempts to feed themselves. As they get older, materials like play-dough, clay, and paint add to sensory-play experiences.	0–2.5 years
Dramatic play (solitary pretense)	Many young children spend a lot of time engaged in imaginative play by themselves throughout the early childhood years. They invent scripts and play many roles simultaneously. Toys or props, (e.g., dolls, cars, action figures) usually support this kind of play. As children get older, they create entire worlds in solitary pretense, often with large collections of small objects or miniature figures.	3–8 years
Construction play	Children begin to build and construct with commercial toys (blocks), with recycled materials (cardboard boxes, plastic tubing) and with a variety of modeling media (clay, play-dough, plasticine). Older children play for extended periods with complex commercial model sets. Children across the age range engage in this kind of play by themselves and in groups, often combining it with episodes of solitary pretense or socio-dramatic play.	3–8 years
Physical play	Sensory-motor play begins as young infants discover they can make objects move; e.g., kicking the figures on a crib mobile or crawling after a rolling ball. Physical play in the preschool years often involves rough-and-tumble play, a unique form of social play most popular amongst little boys. Rough and tumble play describes a series of behaviors used by children in play fighting. Adults often mistake it as aggression. Older preschoolers engage in vigorous physical activity, testing the boundaries of their strength by running, climbing, sliding, and jumping, individually and in groups. This kind of play often develops spontaneously into games with invented rules.	3–8 years
Socio-dramatic play	During pretend play with peers – children take on social roles and invent increasingly complex narrative scripts, which they enact with friends in small groups.	3–6 years
Games with rules	Children begin to play formal games in social groups. These games have fixed, predetermined rules; e.g., card games, board games, soccer, and hockey.	5 years and up
Games with invented rules	Children begin to invent their own games and/or modify the rules of traditional playground games in their self-organized playgroups; e.g. hide-and seek, hopscotch etc.	5–8 years

Source: Kalliala, M. (2006). *Play Culture in a Changing World*



Teaching Young Children through Work & Play

We have learned so much over the past pages about the importance of play which cannot be overstated for young children that many families may overlook how meaningful work can also nurture development.

Young children flourish when allowed to enter the real world that surrounds them – from picking up toys or feeding the cat to grating carrots for salad. In the company of family or other adults, children eagerly engage in work. They want to 'help' with the pursuits of adults, and this work can be a crucial part of their early learning.

If you shield young children from a whole category of activity simply because it is called 'work' and not 'play,' you may be limiting their developmental opportunities. On the other hand, if you invite children to participate in work and play, you give them many more ways to grow and learn. Through work that is meaningful and a real contribution to the family or group, even young children can gain a sense of purpose, and come to feel a part of the family.

With proper adult supervision, there are many types of chores that families can consider for young children, which can help them begin learning about responsibility, independence and caring for themselves. Here are a few examples

Gathering, preparing, and cooking food

Even when they are too young to help with lunch or dinner, children can play a role in preparing snacks. And by taking your children to the grocery market, you can help them better understand where food comes from and how we buy it.

Caring for younger children

Even simple tasks (like reading or singing to younger family members) help older children learn about responsibility and sharing.

Caring for animals

Pets and livestock require water, food and clean environments. Young children can learn valuable lessons by caring for animals.

Running errands

Letting young children run errands conveys your feelings of trust in them. When you need something – another family member or the phone or a sponge – ask one of your children to help.

Housekeeping

Children can help set the table and serve themselves at meals. If you are vacuuming the carpet, you can empower your child by letting him/her run this most-adult-of-all housekeeping tool by closely supervising it.

Gardening

Nurturing plants helps children learn about the wonders of nature. If you don't have space for a garden, a small window plant can bring opportunities to explore.

In all of these activities, it's important to remember several points:

- o Keep in mind what your children can accomplish, and how much you need to supervise to make sure the activity is safe.
- o Even young children can tell the difference between pretend work and real work.
- o Also, remember that many chores actually take longer with the help of young children, but a little patience and a few extra minutes let them reap real benefits from assisting the family.
- o By matching your expectations to their abilities, encouraging and approving their efforts, and allowing plenty of time for the performance of each task, you can give your young children many opportunities to learn and grow through work.
- o Don't measure their output on an adult scale and don't patronize them too much.

Source: www.naeyc.com

TOYS Tools for Learning



Through toys, children learn about their world, themselves, and others. Choosing toys that appeal to your children and foster their learning will help you make their early years count. Toys can teach children to:

- figure out how things work
- pick up new ideas
- build muscle control and strength
- use their imagination
- solve problems
- learn to cooperate with others

Remember that good toys are not necessarily expensive, and children do not need very many. The more a child can do with a toy, the more likely it is to be educational. Also all toys don't have to be educational. Here are some tips to help you choose toys wisely for your child:

- Hands-on toys build eye-hand coordination; encourage ideas about how things work, and foster cooperation and problem-solving.
- Books and recordings help children appreciate words, literature, and music.
- Art materials foster creativity and build skills that lead to reading, writing, and seeing beauty in life.
- Few toys are as durable as hardwood unit blocks, and they teach children about geometry and gravity, shapes and balance.

- Construction items contribute to muscle strength and help children learn about science and number ideas.
- Musical instruments and experimental materials such as sand, water, and clay offer children control while appealing to their senses.
- Active play equipment builds strong muscles and confidence to meet physical challenges.
- Pretend play objects such as dolls, stuffed animals and dramatic figures give children a chance to try new behaviors and use their imagination.

If your child attends child care or preschool, look at the types of toys available. Is there a variety of safe and interesting toys? For toddlers and young preschoolers, there should be multiple copies of toys – a great way to avoid conflicts.

Get involved in your child's play

Match toys to fit your child's thinking, language, physical skills, feelings, and friendships. Each child grows and develops at a different pace, so watching your child's play and playing together will enable you to choose appropriate toys and worthwhile activities for your child.

Parents who take part in pretend play with their one to three year old children, they help them to develop more varied and complex play patterns. These children, in turn, engage in more pretend play with other children and tend to be more advanced intellectually, better able to understand others' feelings, and considered more socially competent by their teachers.

Good toys are:

- appealing and interesting to the child
- proper for the child's physical capacities
- appropriate for the child's mental and social development
- suitable for use in groups of children; and
- well-constructed, durable, and safe for the ages of the children in the group.

Selecting the Right Toys for Grandchildren, Nieces and Nephews

A child's relatives may not face the degree of pressure that parents get from their kids to buy the latest, hottest toy. For grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives faced with a myriad of choices for picking toys, here are few suggestions:

- o Focus on the features of the play a toy encourages, rather than on the features of the toy. Think about what the child can do, rather than what the toy can do.
- o Let the child's abilities and interests guide your toy choices, not advertising or the popularity of the toy.
- o Look for toys that let the child "make up the story" such toys that leave room for children to use their imagination in how they play with the toy. Try to find open-ended products that offer lots of possibilities for different ways to play.
- o Offer an array of toys and activities that encourage your child to use and explore all developmental domains: physical; cognitive; sensory; speech and language; social and emotional.
- o Remember that kids learn and have fun with all kinds of play materials—as long as they are safe, many everyday objects can become the toy of the moment. Toys don't have to be expensive or even purchased at a store.

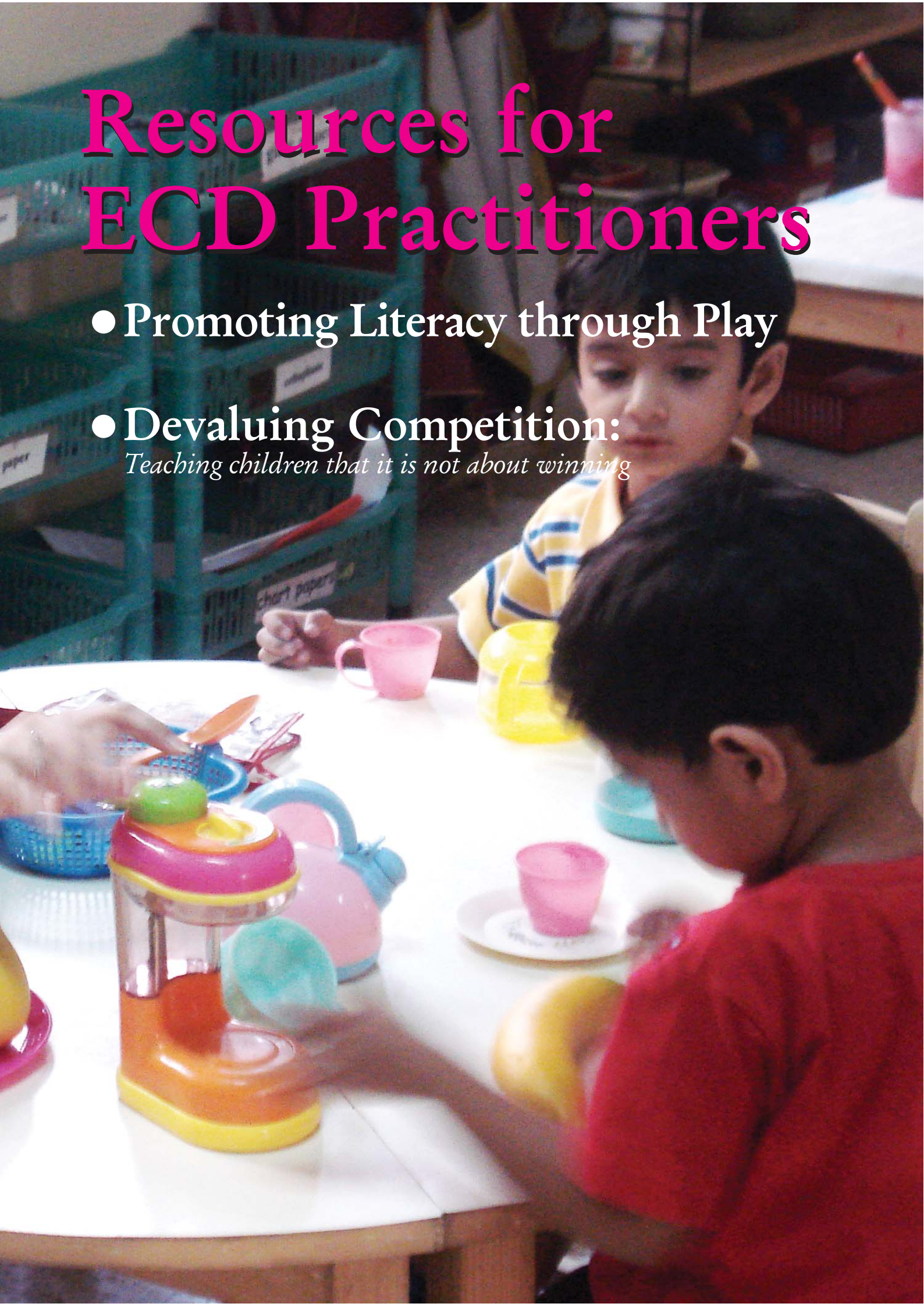
Source: www.playingforkeeps.org
National Association for the Education of Young Children



Resources for ECD Practitioners

- Promoting Literacy through Play

- Devaluing Competition:
Teaching children that it is not about winning



It is through play that children explore their environments, gather information, negotiate identities, and experiment with ideas and concepts. For young children who are not yet confident articulating verbally, play serves as a mode of expressing thoughts, feelings, and a particular reality of thinking exclusive to a child. Developmental psychologist Piaget advocated that play facilitates, enriches, and is essential for cognitive development, 'and helps a child cope with the world without risking defeat or jeopardizing feelings of independence.' Play is essential to promoting literacy development in young children. It is a vital part of young children's lives and provides many opportunities to make classroom learning fun and relatively easy. Creating an early childhood classroom that is rich and dripping with elements of literacy is crucial to promoting, fostering, and cultivating, successful, independent, and enthusiastic readers. Successful early childhood literacy programmes provide interesting, challenging, and engaging environments, in which children are inspired to think, question, reason, and become decision makers. In the early childhood classroom, children should engage in child-centered play in structured, large group settings such as circle time, read-alouds, and acting out plays. Children should also be given ample amounts of time to engage in self-initiated, independent play activities. This article considers some of the ways in which the early childhood classroom environment can be arranged to facilitate emerging literacy skills utilizing play as the instructional medium for literacy development.

Promoting LITERACY through PLAY

BY ELLEN MAYS

Morning Meeting /Circle Time



Morning meeting offers a routine time at the beginning of the day in which children and teachers gather to greet each other, share thoughts and feelings, sing songs, play games, read poetry and create a respectful learning environment that establishes a climate of trust and understanding. Morning meeting merges social, emotional, and intellectual growth motivating children by making them feel a sense of belonging and by the

common need of all children to have fun. Activities in morning meeting should promote literacy development through exploring the playful nature of language. Sharing and learning tongue twisters, riddles, poems, nursery rhymes, playing word games, and singing songs all promote literacy by developing strong oral language skills, print awareness, and by illustrating the various functions of words and sounds.

Establishing Learning Corners

The establishment of learning corners is an essential component of the early childhood classroom. Learning corners are areas/activities throughout your program that allow children to manipulate and play with various materials, explore ideas, discover consequences, build, create and express themselves through various hands-on mediums. Through participation and engagement in learning centers, children are empowered to make their own choices, solve problems, and extend their understanding to create new knowledge. Learning center activities should be organized so that children can independently function at the center and be open-ended enough to encourage children to extend the activity or create alternatives. If the activity chosen does not fulfill these expectations, rethink. (Example: A coloring book page does not help a child make choices, solve problems



or create. Giving children a pre-made page is not a good activity for a learning center.)

The possibilities for various literacy learning centers are practically endless and depend on the constant creativity, enthusiasm, and dedication that a teacher holds for her students and classroom. The following are a few examples to try in the classroom and to inspire teachers to research and create other possible literacy center activities.

WRITING CORNER:

The writing center offers children the opportunity to play with various writing tools and concepts and to gain an understanding of the conventions of print. In the preschool and kindergarten years children love to “write” long letters and make infinite cards for their friends and family. It may seem that they are just scribbling nonsense, but they are really practicing their emerging writing skills.

Those seemingly nonsense scribbles have complex stories and thoughts behind them, thus it is imperative that teachers and parents engage in conversations about what the child has written. As children continue to develop their writing skills throughout kindergarten the scribbles begin to take the form of recognizable words as children begin to utilize their surrounding environment to copy and create words. Some activities that children can do in the writing center are: writing their names in sand or shaving cream, creating a post office where children can send their friends letters and cards complete with stamps

and envelopes, or they can simply write with the various writing materials provided by the teacher (markers, different sizes of papers, pencils, pens, crayons, etc.)

LIBRARY CORNER:

The library is an extremely important center in the development of emerging literacy skills. The library provides children the opportunity to “play” reading. It is where they can manipulate books and “go through the motions” of reading a book by looking at the pictures and telling the story in their own words. During their time in the library children are developing a love of reading and creating important literacy habits. Children are also learning to recognize letters in words and increase their vocabulary. Ascetically it is important to make the library area comfortable and engaging. Simple home-made pillows, a small colorful carpet, and child-sized book shelves will make the library area an enjoyable place for children to settle down with a good book!

ALPHABET CORNER:

The alphabet center engages children in various games and activities which will help children to learn the difference between letters and words, capital and lowercase letters, identify and isolate the initial sound of a spoken word, name/identify each letter of the alphabet, and learn and apply letter-sound correspondences. Some games and activities that can be incorporated in the



alphabet center include the following:

- Letter find: Students highlight the "focus letter" or sight word in print using yellow crayon. (You can use pages out of an old book or newspaper.)
- Letter/sound match: Students match up various objects with the initial letter sound they begin with.
- Fishing for letters: Children use homemade fishing poles made out of a pencil or ruler with a magnet at the end of the string, to fish for magnet letters in the letter pond (a box that has been painted blue for water.) After children fish for the letter they match the fished letter to the corresponding letter on an alphabet mat.
- Magic letters: Students pull sandpaper letters out of a bag. They place the letter under a piece of paper, rub crayons over it, and the letter "magically" appears. Then they can illustrate words that begin (or end, for those who are ready) with that sound.

STORY TELLING CORNER:



Oral language is the foundation for all print. All children need is encouragement to move their oral language in new directions. A puppet center can be play oriented or "play performance" oriented. The story telling center gives students the opportunity to retell stories that have been read in class. Using various gathered props and materials, students retell or present dramatic interpretations of experiences, stories, poems, or plays. Students retell or act out the order of important events in stories and gain an understanding of simple story structures. Some props that should be kept in the story telling center are masks

(or materials for children to make their own masks of characters), puppets, flannel board and figures, and other gathered materials replaced weekly and related to the recent stories read in class. For example, if the class has just read the story Little Red Riding Hood, some possible props would be a red piece of fabric for the cape, cookies in a basket, a wolf mask (can be made by the children), an old dress and hat for the grandmother. These props are simply to spark the children's imagination and they should be encouraged to create props and scenery on their own.

LISTENING CORNER:

Listening to stories is vital for literacy development in young children. It helps build love of reading and increases vocabulary development. At this center children will have the opportunity to listen to stories while following along in the corresponding books. Books on tape can be purchased or can be homemade by recording your own voice reading the story. After children have listened to the story they may want to act out their story in the story telling center.

DRAMATIC PLAY CORNER:

Social pretend play is important in children's early literacy instruction because it helps develop a child's oral language skills. Teaching reading is about unlocking symbolic language. In play, children are using symbolic language. Once children understand symbols, they can start to understand that letters stand for a word and that a printed word stands for something they understand. From a developmental perspective, pretend play is an excellent and appropriate instructional medium for children in preschool and the early primary grades. In the dramatic play center children present dramatic interpretations of various life events, assume roles through imitation and creation, develop self-awareness, and use problem solving and decision-making skills. The dramatic play area themes should change every few weeks to allow children to create new and more intricate narratives which allow children to constantly develop new literacy skills. Some themes to consider for your dramatic play area are a doctor's office, beauty salon, post office, house, restaurant, under water sea adventure, grocery store, and a camping or safari theme. The possibilities for various themes are endless.





It is imperative to note that types of props children interact with affects their play. Generally the theme of the toy determines the theme of the play. For example, when children are given doctor props, their play will relate to doctor themes, housekeeping props elicit domestic themes. Unrelated and low structured props result in a lack of complexity in a child's play because of the constant need to explain the meaning of the prop to peers. The thematic support provided by theme-related props enables children to focus on weaving very involved play themes which support complex play narratives, in turn promoting oral language; the foundation of literacy development

“Play” with Literature


Read Aloud sessions are powerful learning techniques for several reasons. They build a sense of community as children create a common knowledge base together. In addition, storybook reading is a primary way to build new vocabulary, reading comprehension, and a way to cultivate a love of reading. Creative follow-up activities in which children reflect and respond to literacy are crucial for children to build an understanding of the story and to apply what they have learned. These activities can range from putting on plays, arts and crafts projects, cooking recipes, or perhaps creating and following treasure maps after reading a story about pirates and treasures. Puppetry is a wonderful play technique in which children can “become” part of the story. Children can

choose a character from the story and create puppets to reenact the story. Creating plays and scripts related to the read aloud is also a fun and engaging way for children to pretend to be different characters and reenact the story. After listening to the popular Chira aur Chirya story the class can actually follow the recipe narrated and create their version of kichri (a traditional rice and lentils dish) and enjoy eating it. These playful engaging activities make the stories read in class tangible and come to life, thus fostering an excitement and lasting love of reading literature.

As illustrated above, play as an instructional medium in the early childhood classroom creates a learning environment in which children actively interact with their environments in order to construct knowledge, make learning choices, and engage in hands-on activities. It is the teacher's role to set the stage by offering innovative experiences and materials that stimulate the children's senses and natural curiosity for learning. The examples discussed in this article are only a beginning to the infinite possibilities of fostering literacy development through play!

About the Writer:

Ellen Mays is a peace educationist who has experience in the field of early childhood education. She designs and undertakes projects with children on themes of envisioning peace, global citizenship, moral responsibility for humanity, developing an understanding of humanism and ultimately to empower children to find and value their own voice and role in creating a more peaceful world.



Devaluing Competition:

*Teaching Children
that it is NOT about
Winning*

BY SALIMA RAHIM RAJPUT

A simple definition of the term competition attributes it to be the rivalry of two or more parties over something. Competition occurs naturally between living organisms which coexist in the same environment. For example, animals compete over water supplies, food, and mates. In addition, humans compete for attention, wealth, prestige, and fame. The phenomenon may take different forms and patterns and depending on the nature of these patterns it can be either constructive or destructive.

Since very early on, parents, caregivers, peers and others around, instill in children the value of competing and winning. The child has to be the best in everything – be it his/her class, sports, the neighborhood or social networks; he/she must excel and beat others otherwise he/she will be deprived of rewards, affection and disturbingly so, credibility in the eyes of his/her most loved ones. The pressure to perform builds on and only increases progressively; with each passing year a new milestone to be achieved is added to the wish list. The

child must compete, must challenge his/her innate capacities, must do more than his/her potential allows, must do it whether it interests him/her or not or he/she will be a loner, a loser and an outcast. Throughout our growing up years, each one of us has experienced the highs and lows of competition and we have all struggled against benchmarks that were set a little too high for our liking by our own parents and teachers. We hardly got a pat on the back for making the effort and trying our best; only success and failure were duly acknowledged. There are exceptions of course; competition may have a different connotation for those who are naturally gifted but for most of us ordinary beings the term competition denotes perpetual pressure to win.

As stated earlier, the notion of competition starts to take roots from home and it carries on with overpowering manifestations to the school where the labeling starts. He is dull, she does not concentrate, he will always fail, she is brilliant, he is a duffer etc, the list of labels goes on and one is marked for life. These identities stay on even when one grows old; they leave lasting impressions and re-emerge periodically during the span of life depending on the extent of psychological damage or good they have done.

The pressure to perform

It is said that early years are critical in the formation of intelligence, personality and social behavior; a child who develops well during the early years will have greater opportunities in life, be more productive, and, very likely, to have a better life. Research in child development has also adequately revealed that the early years are very important not only because they lay the basis for development, but also because whatever experiences a child is exposed to during these years has life-long influence.

In a competitive culture, a child is told that it isn't enough to be good – he/she must triumph over others. Success comes to be defined as victory, even though these are really two very different things.

If our culture's idea of a fun game is competition, it may be because we haven't tried the alternative. Children can get plenty of exercise without struggling against each other. Cooperative games allow everyone to work together, without creating enemies and facilitates in improving skills and setting challenges.

Even when the child manages to win, the whole affair, psychologically speaking, becomes a vicious circle: The more the child competes, the more he/she needs to feel good about himself/herself. This is not to say that children shouldn't learn discipline and tenacity, that they shouldn't be encouraged to succeed or even have a nodding acquaintance with failure. But none of these requires winning and losing - that is, having to beat other children and worry about being beaten. When classrooms and playing fields are based on cooperation rather than competition, children feel better about themselves. They work with others instead of against them, and their self-esteem doesn't depend on winning a test or sports competition.

Cooperate and not compete – play as a tool for teaching values

The spirit against competition is cooperation. We need to inculcate the spirit of cooperation in our children rather than competition. Cooperation is better because children develop the sense of caring for other people and rely on other people for their success and don't always have the feeling of winning and losing. Since young children mostly learn by doing, play is one of the most effective techniques through which values of cooperation, giving and sharing can be promoted right from the start. Parents and teachers should acknowledge the multifaceted benefits of play and use it constructively in home and classroom settings for educational and recreational purposes and as a tool for inculcating values.

It should be the responsibility of the caregivers to make children understand that it is not about winning or losing the game rather what matters is how much they learnt

Reducing rivalry and competitive attitudes at home

BY ALFIE KOHN

- Avoid comparing a child's performance to that of a sibling, a classmate, or yourself as a child.
- Don't use contests ("Who can dry the dishes fastest?") around the house. Watch your use of language ("Who's the best little girl in the whole wide world?") that reinforces competitive attitudes.
- Never make your love or acceptance conditional on a child's performance. Some parents give subtle messages; they may say to their child, "As long as you did your best..." but the child knows that the parents really like him/ her better when she wins. Nothing is more psychologically destructive than making approval dependent on victory.
- Be aware of your power as a model. If you need to beat others, your child will learn that from you regardless of what you say. The lesson will be even stronger if you use your child to provide you with vicarious victories.

Source: www.alfiekohn.org/parenting/tcac.htm



and how much fun they had together with their peers while playing.

It's remarkable, when you stop thinking about it, that the way we teach our kids to have a good time is to play highly structured games in which one individual or team must defeat another. Consider one of the first games our children learn to play: musical chairs. Take away one chair and one child in each round until one smug winner is seated and everyone else has been excluded from play, transformed into losers and forced to sit out the rest of the game with the other unhappy kids on the side. That's how children learn to have fun. Terry Orlick, a Canadian expert on games, suggests changing the goal of musical chairs so children are asked to fit on a diminishing number of seats. At the end, seven or eight giggling, happy kids are trying to squish on a single chair. Everyone has fun and there are no winners or losers.

What's true of musical chairs is true of all recreation; with a little ingenuity, we can devise games in which the obstacle is something intrinsic to the task itself rather than another person or team.

Conclusion

Try to eliminate competition as much as possible. We need to do two things to create an environment in which our children can compete healthily. First, we need to examine the role of competition in our children's lives. Is their too much or too little? Are children being exposed to serious competition too early? Are the rewards too high? A balance of competitive and cooperative experiences may reduce the bad, and the ugly, side of competition. Too much too early will generally lead to difficult situations for children. Second, we need to increase our efforts to help specific children and families manage competition and its impact on their development. Individual children respond to competition differently. Children who lose interest in activities, report high anxiety

related to competition, or show signs of dishonesty when competing are likely to be having trouble coping with the demands of competition. Parents and professionals should collaborate to initiate strategies to help these children deal with the demands of competition. Competition is never all good or all bad; its value is contextually determined. Every effort must be made to evaluate competitive systems and specific competitive situations to determine their impact on the holistic development of children.

Cooperation, on the other hand, is marvelously successful at helping children to communicate effectively, to trust others and to accept those who are different from themselves. Competition interferes with these goals and often results in outright antisocial behavior. The choice is ours: We can blame the individual children who cheat, turn violent or withdraw, or we can face the fact that competition itself is responsible for such ugliness. Children can be taught about competition, prepared for the destructive forces they'll encounter, without being groomed to take part in it uncritically. You will have to decide how much compromise is appropriate so your child isn't left out or ridiculed in a competitive society. But at least you can make your decision based on knowledge about competition's destructiveness. You can work with other parents and with your child's teachers and coaches to help change the structures that set children against one another.

Raising healthy, happy, productive children goes hand in hand with creating a better society. The first step to achieving both is recognizing that our belief in the value of competition is built on myths. There are better ways for our children, and for us, to work, play and live.

Sources:

Competition: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. David W. Andrews, Ph.D, 4-H Youth Development, The Ohio State University.
The Case against Competition, by Alfie Kohn.

Lessons in Learning: Creating opportunities for play

BY SARAH MARYAM

Lessons for Everyone

Although children learn to play naturally, we all have a role in ensuring that they have enough time and opportunity to play. Children need access to play environments that support rich, spontaneous play. Learning occurs when they play in environments with hands-on, concrete materials that encourage exploration, discovery, manipulation, and active engagement. The quantity, quality, and selection of play materials influence the interactions that take place between children. Adults help by protecting the time needed for exploration and discovery in uninterrupted play, and by interacting with children in ways that enhance their learning in play without interrupting the flow and direction of play.

equally important to early learning. It should be a focus of educators' planning and interactions with children. Early childhood educators need specialized preparation to engage comfortably in child-initiated free play, as well as more structured play-based learning experiences.

Lessons for Parents

In studies of the use of play as a learning tool, teachers often report that they have a difficult time convincing parents of the importance of play. Parents, therefore, need good information about the benefits of unstructured free play in early childhood and regular opportunities to engage with their children in play.

Lessons for Early Childhood Educators

While children do need time to play without adult interruption, some active adult involvement can be beneficial, resulting in longer, more complex episodes of play. Early childhood educators support children's learning in play by becoming co-players, guiding and role modeling when the play becomes frustrating for the child or when it is about to be abandoned for lack of knowledge or skill. They provide new experiences for children to enrich and extend play, pose challenging questions, and encourage children to learn from one another.

In many early childhood programs, "free play" is used to fill time rather than to promote learning and development. While much learning does occur during centre time and circle time, spontaneous free play is



Learning Mathematics through Play in the Early Years

Everyday routines and play events offer rich opportunities for teaching young children about mathematics. Integrating math into all parts of the day multiplies the learning and gives young children an understanding that math is part of everyday life.

During the early years of life, children play with concepts of size, number, shape, and quantity. They discover that objects exist, can be moved, and can be fitted together. As they acquire language, children begin to make statements indicating their knowledge of mathematical concepts. Their play and language form the basis for learning about math in natural ways, and one great way to integrate math involves hands-on activities and problem-solving situations that intrigue children's curiosity.

Math activities for your early years classroom

1. Constructing a math puzzle with three empty glasses

In the first glass, pour milk up to the brim. Fill the second glass halfway, and leave the third glass empty. Then ask the children to identify which glass is empty, which is full, and which is one-half full.

Student Learning Outcome: Most preschool-aged children will understand the meaning of full, and will be able to identify the full glass of milk. Many young children will also understand the concepts of 'empty' and 'more', but several may have trouble with 'half' and 'less'.

2. Grocery shopping game

Give young children plastic cups and containers of dried beans. Ask them to take three cups and to fill one cup full of beans, leave one cup empty, and fill the third cup with fewer beans than the full cup but more than the empty one.

Student Learning Outcome: Through these repeated interactions and dialogue, young children can learn some of the vocabulary and concepts that underlie mathematics such as equations, fractions and the notion of zero.

3. Measuring tapes or other measuring tools

Whether in standard or nonstandard units, also create enjoyable learning activities. For example, young

children can use them to measure blocks. They may also measure blocks using smaller blocks and then compare the results to see which block is longer or which is thicker.

Student Learning Outcome: Through these activities children learn how to use measuring tapes and tools, besides learning how these tools are used and for what.

4. Stories and Poems

Math concepts also make an appearance in many children's books, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Young children love to count the apples or pears the caterpillar eats before getting an upset stomach.

Student Learning Outcome: Children again learn the concept of more and less.

5. Computers and software programs that facilitate math learning

Encourage young children to work on the computers individually or together, but an adult should always be nearby to help them if they have any questions.

Student Learning Outcome: Children learn concepts of measurement and numbers.

6. Cooking activities

Involve children in cooking simple foods during snack time that is not very complicated and can easily be managed during snack time.

Student Learning Outcome: With your help, young children can measure the number of spoons and the number of cups of ingredients indicated in the recipe.

Young children who learn number concepts and other mathematical knowledge through hands-on play activities and discussions gain a broad understanding of math skills. When you think of activities for young children; try and focus not just on having fun but also on creating a learning environment that stimulates and nurtures their inquisitive minds. These daily routines and play activities can give them a great start on thinking about and using mathematics.

All the activities provided above, teach children social skills as well as the Math concept you intend for them to learn.

Source:

Excerpted from "Integrating Mathematicians for Young Children through Play" by Smita Guha -- an article in the NAEYC journal, *Young Children*

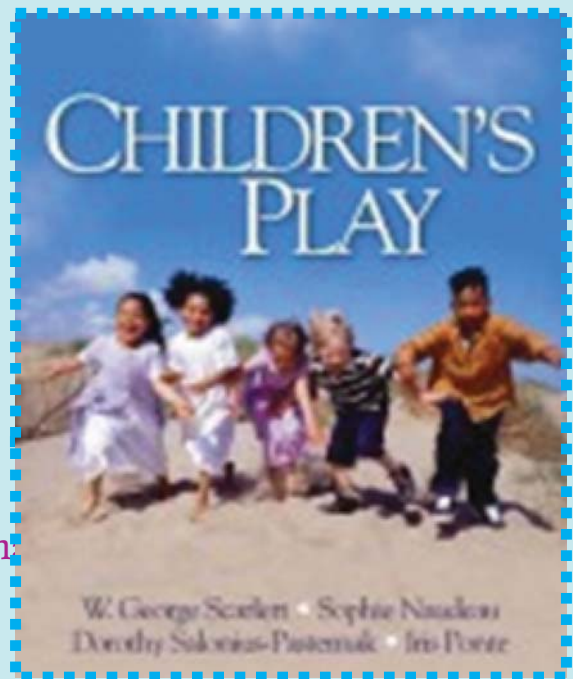
BOOK Review

Children's play

by W. George Scarlett, Lamis Al-Solaim,
Sophie Naudeau, Dorothy Salonijs-Pasternak

Published by Sage Publications, 2004

ISBN 0761929991, 9780761929994



REVIEWED BY: SARAH HUSAIN

Enlivened with illustrations and case studies, this book gives an exceptionally readable account of the development of children's play from infancy through to adolescence. It also branches out to include humor, sports, and modern developments in electronic games, as well as uses of play in therapy. It will be a great resource for practitioners and play workers, and indeed for parents who wish to be informed of current thinking and research.

It has the unique worth of being unusually comprehensive with respect to play stages, gender differences, private lives, neighborhoods, humour, collections, video games, responses to stress and the uses of recess and play therapy. We particularly liked the demonstration of the continuing role of make believe from early childhood on into the theatric, literary and electronic foci of adolescence. By looking at both the structure and content of play the authors help us understand the developmental significance of this complex way of being in the world. Each chapter contains exactly the topics we want to study and adds surprises that counter the folk-psychology of today.

This book looks at the many facets of play and how it develops from infancy through late childhood. Authors W George Scarlett, Sophie Naudeau, Dorothy Salonijs-Pasternak, and Iris Ponte take a broad approach to examining how children play by including a wide variety of types of play, play settings, and play media.

The book also discusses major revolutions in the way today's children play, including changes in organized youth sports, children's humour, and electronic play. Children's Play addresses diversity throughout the book and explores play on the topics of gender, disabilities, socioeconomic class, and culture. Rather than segregate culture into a single chapter, culture and diversity issues run throughout the book to give readers a deep understanding of how pervasively culture shapes children's play. Discussions include considerations of age changes in how children play, gender differences, socioeconomic class differences, differences based on disabilities, cultural differences, and typical versus atypical settings and environments.

WEBSITE Review

<http://www.playingforkeeps.org/>

Playing for Keeps!

REVIEWED BY:
SADAF JUNAID ZUBERI



Playing for Keeps represents a non-profit coalition of stakeholders dedicated to the optimal development of children by supporting, promoting, and protecting the role of play in children's lives. The web resource aims to bridge the gap between what researchers have learnt about play and what parents and professionals who impact kids' lives need to know to help nurture children to their full potential. The website has been simply yet elegantly designed and contains wide range of information for parents, educators and toy manufacturers, who impact development of children through the decisions they make and the products they produce.

'About Us' features history of Playing for Keeps, its vision, mission and the core beliefs which reinforce its critical role in linking policy and practice to research based knowledge. The website's 'Resources' include usable, helpful information translated from research work relating to play and available through easy downloads in 'pdf' format. The documents are sorted distinctly into five sections for the multiple stakeholders (parents, early childhood and elementary educators, toy and children's entertainment manufacturers and retailers, human service providers and the media). The sub-sections provide information on the importance of healthy, constructive play to children's development, research papers and reports, downloadable guides to toy selection and play and offer suggestions for those who want to take action to promote healthy values in toy design and marketing. Recommendations for toys that encourage constructive play and toys to avoid are also presented.

A vast range of link resources to websites and information on books about play are presented in the 'Library' section. The 'Play Store' highlights sources where *Playing for Keeps* resources are available for purchase including books and CDs. While majority of the online materials is *Playing for Keeps'* own production, the information through certain cross links represent values, opinion and research of external sources. These, as the website states, reflect *Playing for Keeps'* commitment to including all voices in the conversation about toys and play for children so as to promote mutual learning through exchange of inquiries, values and philosophies.

On the whole, the website is a comprehensive resource for everyone who is committed to doing his or her part in promoting healthy development outcomes for children. It's a must see for all caregivers!



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