

WEST VIRGINIA

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVIDER

QUARTERLY

**No Child Left
*Inside***

*Adapting
Toys So All
Can Play*

Seven Characteristics of Play

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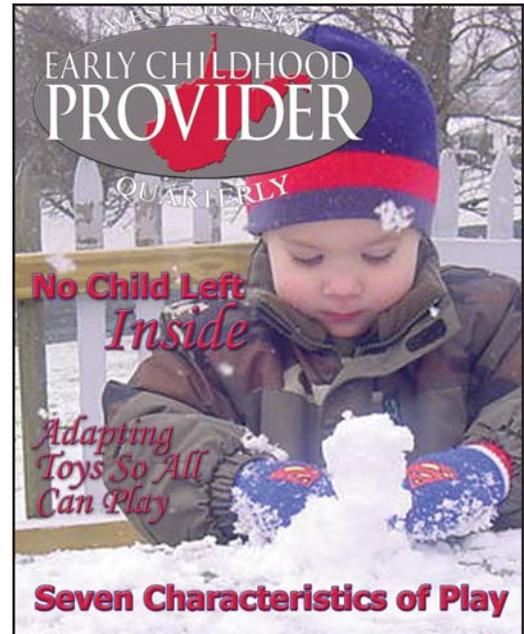
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Day Camp Provides Wonderful Experience

Submitted by Nikki Cavalier Rabel, Link Child Care Resource and Referral



I thought little towns like Mayberry didn't exist any longer, but I was wrong. Laura, my eight-year-old daughter, and I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a week in beautiful War, West Virginia.

War is just south of Coalwood, home of Homer Hickam and the Rocket Boys. It is the most southern town in the state and it is one of the most wonderful places I have ever been. There is one main street and there are always several people sitting in front of the service station, chatting throughout the day.

I went there to work with West Virginia Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) on a PBS Kids Raising Readers day camp for children ages four through six. The camp was a week long. The children were wonderful and so enthusiastic about learning. I think they all learned a lot, but I think I learned more than the children. The community support was unbelievable. Several businesses and individuals donated money and/or services to make this camp available to the young people of McDowell County. The outpouring of community support was absolutely overwhelming.

We traveled to War with two other ladies, Debbie Oleksa from WVPBS and Darnitta Elswick from

Americorps. We took an RV and a van. Debbie, Darnitta, Laura and I spent the week living in an RV on a campsite at beautiful Berwind Lake.

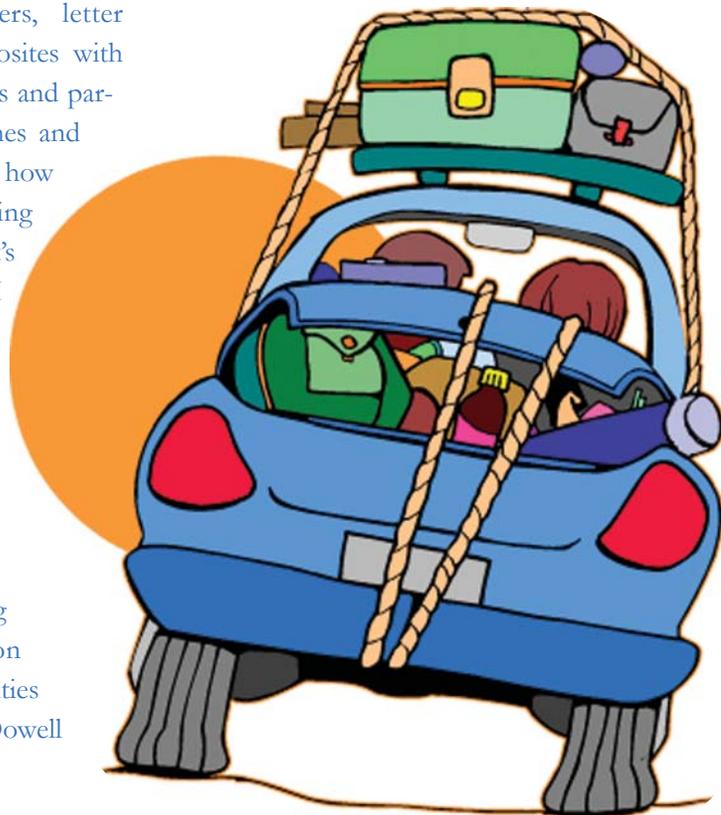
We had a great time cooking in the evenings (an adventure in itself either in the very tiny RV kitchen or on an open fire), making s'mores, going to the pool, taking long walks among the wild rhododendrons and the beautiful lake and laughing all along the way. Even without indoor plumbing, which added to our adventure, it was a fun and fabulous experience.

The WV PBS Kids Raising Readers day camp was based on a new PBS series called Super Why! The curriculum focused on early literacy skills and the children had a wonderful time learning letters, letter sounds, words, and opposites with the Super Why! characters and participating in the fun games and activities. I hadn't realized how much I missed working directly with children. It's been a long time, but I really enjoyed every minute of it.

The camp took place for 3½ hours every day at the Big Creek People in Action (BCPIA) building, which is an amazing place. This organization offers so many opportunities to the people of McDowell

County. The mission of BCPIA "is to foster a community in which people learn, work, play and grow together and prepare themselves for success in the 21st century." And they do just that! One of the programs is a Service Learning Initiative, in which students from all over the country come to offer their services to "reduce the effects of poverty and build sustainable communities."

Our week in War was a wonderful experience that none of us will ever forget. We had so much fun, and it was nice to be an honorary citizen of War. It was just like we were part of the community!





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ACDS: Providing Financial Sponsorship for Future Leaders

Submitted by Sherrie Barrett, ACDS Coordinator

The Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) program is now offering the Ann Nutt Scholarship. A scholarship is available to one apprentice in each of the six Child Care Resource and Referral regions. This scholarship has been created in honor of Ann Nutt, an exemplary model of an early care and education professional. People who worked with Ann feel honored to have spent time with her due to the knowledge she shared with others. Sadly, Ann lost her battle with breast cancer at the age of 52 on October 16, 2006.

Ann was an active member of the Governing Board of the West Virginia Association for Young Children (WVAYC), the Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist (ACDS) program and served as West Virginia's state representative on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Affiliate Council. She was an ACDS Instructor of Instructors



and assisted other states in establishing this training program, including the training of instructors in Alaska. She helped in the creation of numerous programs for superior child care including the development of West Virginia's Early Childhood Core Knowledge/Core Competencies and the West Virginia Early Learning Standards Framework. Ann assisted in creating the Charleston Area Medical Center's Lighthouse Child Development Center. She was a member of the state leadership team working to implement the Universal Pre-K Program. She was responsible for the planning and implementation of the new Infant/Toddler Training System.

Ann was a great leader in the field and it is with honor that the ACDS program is able to provide apprentices with this opportunity. If you would like more information concerning the Ann Nutt Scholarship, please contact Sherrie Barrett at 304-523-0433 or sbarrett@rvcds.org.

Calendar of Events

Mentor Update
December 6, 2008
9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Connect CCR&R
Chelyan, WV

Executive Council Meeting
February 5, 2009
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Schoenbaum Family
Enrichment Center
Charleston, WV

"One Step Ahead"
February 25, 2009
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Celebrating Connections
Conference
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston, WV

**"Starting Points: Exploring the
ACDS Curriculum"**
February 26, 2009
10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Celebrating Connections
Conference
Charleston Civic Center
Charleston, WV

The Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist program will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. Special recognition of the ACDS program will be shared at the Celebrating Connections Conference. If you have anything that you would like to share about your experiences with the program, please contact Sherrie Barrett at 304-523-0433 or sbarrett@rvcds.org.

Seven Characteristics of Play that Children Are Trying to Teach Me

Submitted by Dr. Janet Dozier, Marshall University

Over the past several years, I have had an enchanting opportunity to observe the play of literally hundreds of preschool children in West Virginia. Some of these children have been quite well-off financially, some have not. Some have had two parents, some one parent, while still others have had guardians and no parents. Most spoke English, but some did not. They came from various races and ethnicities. Despite demographic differences, these children have demonstrated some common themes regarding play. Yes, you might say that these children have begun to teach me some interesting things about play.

Play is an activity which a child initiates participation. Play engages the interest of the child who is playing. It is stimulating in and of itself. It regulates the child's behavior and encourages exploration. Play is pleasant. Play is not without effort. Play is emergent.

tle choice and is highly encouraged or even forced to participate. This is not play; this is work. While there are experiences teachers should initiate, there should be a clear distinction that teacher-initiated experiences are not always play, though adults consider them to be fun as do the children. Just because an experience is fun does not necessarily mean that it is play, even for children. Adults may introduce a "play" experience and when the child takes it over, it may become play, but until the child has control over the rules, the duration, and the course it is not play in the strictest sense.

Play engages the interest of the child who is playing. The young child usually begins by exploring his or her own body. The hand or foot is a built-in toy to play with. The interest of the child is captivated and the very young child begins to explore what the object or body part can do, what it feels like, or tastes like. Watching a very young child stick a toe in his mouth is an example

"Just because an experience is fun does not necessarily mean that it is play, even for children. Adults may introduce a "play" experience and when the child takes it over, it may become play, but until the child has control over the rules, the duration, and the course it is not play in the strictest sense."

Play is the initiation of activity by the player. There are many activities or experiences within our classrooms for young children that as teachers we label as play; however, by the previous definition these activities and experiences are probably not play at all, but work. We set up experiences in which the child has lit-

of this kind of exploratory play. It is generally self-stimulated, solitary and of a duration that the child determines as pleasant. This type of play begins early, some would say as early as three weeks. Some of the earliest social play (playing with others) begins when the child is first able to reach out to a caregiver. Vandell and

Mueller (1995) documented children as young as three to four months directing smiles and sounds to a peer. Children play in part because they are drawn to other individuals and are interested in socializing.

Play is self-stimulating. Young children who are playing and initiating the play are stimulating the environment around them, whether they are playing with someone or are in solitary play. The child initiates exploration. Role play, or symbolic play, is taking what the environment is offering and extending upon it. Take for example two children playing at a water table. The water is there but it is the interaction with the material that begins to shape the experience. When the child begins pouring water from one container to another or just splashing, the child is in control, making choices and thus self-stimulating the play. The play perpetuates more play as the child further explores the available materials.

Play regulates children's behavior. Play experiences allow the child safe zones for regulating her behavior. When Kristen pretends to be a dinosaur, she must act like a dinosaur or change the play. When a baby attempts to bounce the mobile over his crib, he must make certain movements in order to do so. When Jeremy moves his action figures to attack, he must use what he knows about attacking to make his play "real". Children often limit the permissible behaviors in play to make sense of the world around them. When one group of children heard about a robbery at one of the local businesses, they began to play out the scene. Teachers questioned whether this play should be allowed and were rewarded for their permission as children began to apply the limits they were learning to other scenarios in the classroom. One of these groups of children after this play remarked, "You can't take something that isn't yours because it hurts the person you take it from." They were learning empathy by playing a scenario that initially made little sense to them and later taught them to limit their own behavior.

Play is pleasant for the participants. If play is only play when the child chooses to participate, then it can be concluded that play is a pleasant experience, for seldom does a child self-select an unpleasant experience.



There are times, such as in playing games with rules, in which teachers or parents must insist that a child continue to participate in "play" until its logical conclusion for the benefit of the group. When play ceases to be pleasant, however, it is no longer play, but work. Work should be affirmed, while play has its own intrinsic rewards.

Play requires effort. Young children expend a great deal of energy, effort and intent in play. Play can be hard work for the participants both physically and cognitively. The baby who plays a game of imitation of the adult, who is making faces at them, expends effort. The child who designs a ramp to run toy cars across may have some difficult problem to solve and works hard at his or her play. The child who must negotiate roles, division of labor and play theme in cooperative dramatic play certainly expends effort in the social setting.

Play is emergent. Regardless of socio-economic status, intelligence, language, or culture, children's play emerges in roughly the same pattern, though at varying rates.

All children begin with what many authors have termed functional play. Functional play is most preva-

lent in the first two years of life and is characterized by repetitive movements for exploration (Piaget, 1952). This play typically becomes very noticeable around the age of six months, when baby is beginning to sit up and view the world around her. Over and over we, who work closely with young children, see children play and discover the parts of their bodies, their shadows and their immediate world as it presents itself to them. In response, children begin to play. In this solitary play the very young child explores. He may rub his feet with his hands, and then stick a toe into his mouth. He begins to move about in the crib to make the mobile above his head bounce as he explores the cause and effect relationship. Babies even play with sound, sometimes uttering a sound that seems pleasant and then attempting to recreate the same sound repeatedly with obvious pleasure.

Next to emerge is symbolic play. The young child maneuvers effortlessly between fact and fantasy. Ryan is building with blocks and needs a vehicle to transport the blocks. Away he goes piling smaller blocks on a larger one. Using private speech he mimics the sound of an engine as he delivers the blocks to the building site. Vygotsky believed that symbolic play was driven by private speech and as a result began to fall away around the time the child enters school (Vygotsky, 1986). Today many children are in collective educational settings as early as six weeks of age. I am seeing this stage last at least through elementary school. I am not sure why this is occurring, but I am seeing it with some frequency.

Finally, the child around the age of three begins to play cooperatively. Parten saw this level of play as the highest level (Parten, 1932) due to the emphasis on shared goal setting, negotiation, and division of labor. Today's child, beyond preschool, has little opportunity for cooperative play. Schedules for team sports and a tight curriculum lead children to give up most of cooperative play by kindergarten. Children are continuing to play beyond kindergarten, but they are playing team sports and video games that are not reminiscent of socio-cultural context that they will have to negotiate as adults. Children are trying to teach me that they want to

play in more traditional ways. The most unique characteristic of play that children have taught me is the commonality of play.

One may see children of varying races, ethnicities, socio-economic status, and family configuration and still share the common ground of these characteristics of play. The need for children's play is great. It is one of the natural resources parents and teachers must fight to preserve. We must give children time to be children before they are adults who long for the care-free days of play.

Resources:

- Inhelder, B. and Piaget, J. (1964). *The early growth of logic in the child*. Norton Library Press: New York, NY.
- Parten, M. (1932). *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. Social participation among pre-school children: 243-269.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children*. New York, NY: The W. W. Norton and Company.
- Vandell, D. and Mueller, E. (1995). Peer play and friendships during the first two years. In H. C. Foot, A. J. Chapman, & J. R. Smith (Eds.), New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and Language*. Translated, edited and newly revised by Alex Kozulin, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



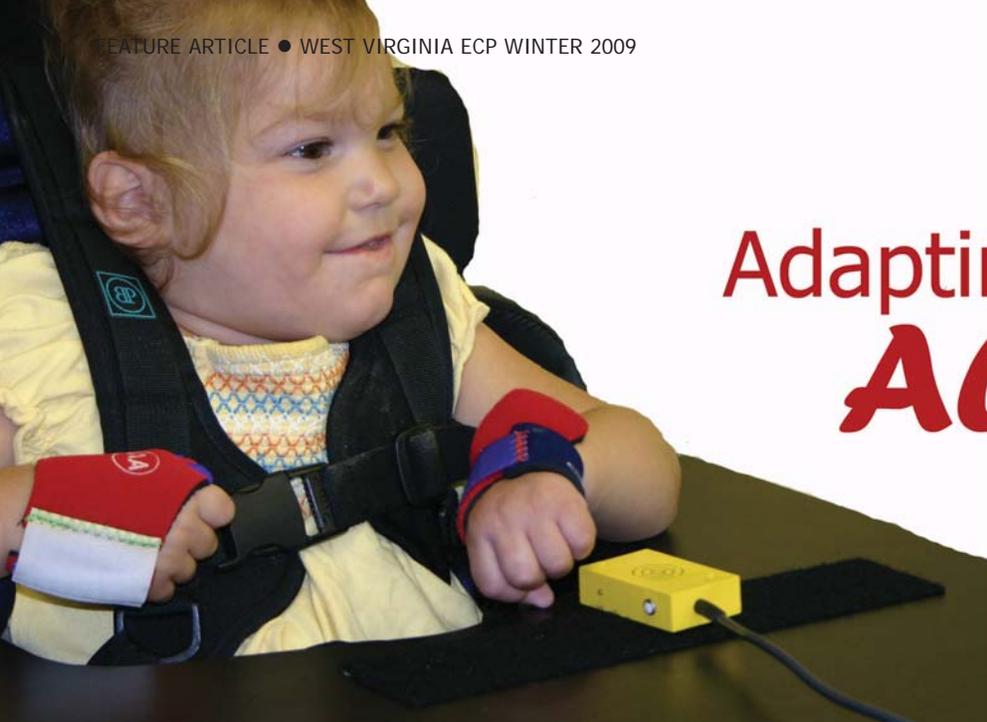
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Adapting Toys So *All Can Play*

Submitted by Ingrid M. Kanics, OTR/L,
Therapy Director, Hattie Larlham

Every child is driven to play with items around them. For some, playing with everyday toys can be hard, but there are some simple things that you can do to help them play.

Simple Choices!

Start by providing the child with simple choices when playing. This could be done by limiting the number of toys or pieces of a toy. Picking between two toys is less overwhelming than picking from four toys. Remove items from the play area that could be distracting to the child while he plays. This may include turning off the television and presenting the toys on a solid colored surface, which allows the child to see the toys more clearly.

Stabilize it!

It is often easier for a child to pick a toy that “stays in one place”. When you offer children a toy hold it steady in their line of sight and within their functional reach. Using Velcro, mug mat liners, and magnets on surfaces can help a toy stay steady so a child can play with it more successfully.

Build it up!

Often toys have small knobs or buttons which can be hard for children with limited grips to hold and manipulate. Adding or building up a handle can increase the child’s success of holding and playing with the toy. Any item from Model Magic Clay to sponge hair rollers can be used to build up a handle on a toy. Be creative and find an item that fits easily in a child’s grip, then hot glue it to the toy for easier access.

Highlight it!

Many toys have buttons that a child must push to start a toy. Often these buttons are hard to see. Use nail polish, colored tapes, and contrasting colors to highlight the button so the child can easily find it to activate the toy.

Confine it!

Often toys can get out of a child's reach during play. Consider using cookie trays, plastic planter bases or high chair trays to keep the toy from "escaping" from the child's reach.

Attach it!

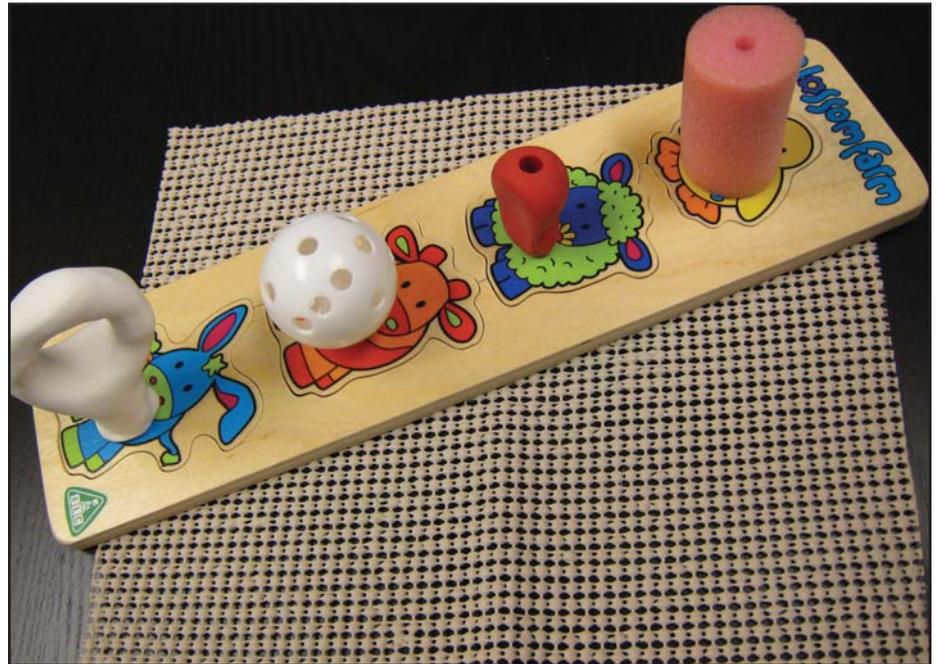
Another way to keep toys within a child's reach is to attach the toy to the child's play area. This can be done using elastic straps that spring back, toy links that can be added or subtracted to create more length, or Magic shoelaces. All of these will allow a child to retrieve that toy that fell out of his reach.

Interrupt it!

Many toys are battery operated but are not switch activated. The use of a "battery interrupter" can be used to turn a battery operated toy into a switch activated toy. This will allow a child to use the switch to turn the toy on/off or make a toy move forward.

Most of all play with children! It is an important part of their lives. You are the most important part of the game of play. Through play you help children learn to be successful in world they will meet every day, and you'll both have fun in the process!

“You are the most important part of the game of play. Through play you help children learn to be successful in a world they will meet every day...”



No Child Left Inside

Submitted by Eric Strickland, Grounds For Play, Inc.

We value the indoor time enough to plan it, while we leave the outdoor time to chance. Free play, we call it. Like most things in life free play isn't free. It involves the time, effort and energy of a child and he or she should get more in return.

If we apply the same thinking to the outside that we do to the inside, the solution seems self-evident. As teachers, we make decisions about curricular goals and outcomes and then we set up an environment to allow children to accomplish those goals in a self-directed manner. Children choose "freely", but they choose from carefully selected materials and learning activities. Whether a child is building with square blocks, pasting squares to form a mosaic or cutting square things out of magazines, the child is still squarely engaged (pun intended) in the learning outcomes as planned by the teacher.

Leaving no child inside means determining what experiences and materials are available and how they are to be provided outdoors.

Since the "center approach" works indoors and provides a good organizing principle, the same idea can be used outside. For example, the dramatic play center can be developed around the trike track. The "block center" becomes the "loose parts construction area" in the outdoor learning environment. Almost every indoor center has a counterpart in the outdoor learning environment. Like indoor centers, which are set up for a particular unit – for example, adding community helper clothing to the dress up center – the outdoor classroom can be set up by the teacher to help children experience curricular content in a playful manner.

Here's a quick true or false quiz:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| True or False | 1. Children would rather play outside assuming the weather is good and there is something worthwhile to do |
| True or False | 2. It is easier to manage children's behavior outside as there are fewer restrictions on behavior |
| True or False | 3. Anything children can learn inside, can be learned outside |
| True or False | 4. "Messing about" is less of an issue outside than inside |
| True or False | 5. We plan as much for the outside as for the inside. |

It seems that if the first 4 are true, shouldn't the last one be true as well?

The first step in moving learning outside is to develop a good space for transitioning table activities and art outside. A hard surface like concrete or asphalt is best to provide a stable surface for tables and chairs. The area should be accessible to children or teachers with physical or mobility challenges. A paved area might be available in a courtyard, in an existing games court or even an abandoned driveway. If a hard surface is not available, a local contractor can assist in building such an area to meet local codes.

A protective covering or shade is a critical part of moving learning activities outdoors. Again, the most economical approach is to find an existing covered area--a wide breezeway, covered porch or driveway. A weather-proof roof is best, but many child care centers use a sunshade canopy to shelter their outdoor classrooms from sun and light rain. Check with local building code enforcement to determine whether or not a canopy can be attached to the center itself.

Like any good classroom, the outdoor classroom must have adequate storage. Teachers and children will more readily and easily use the outdoor classroom if supplies are stored

conveniently for use. If teachers must take supplies and materials out each day, they will be less likely to use the outdoor classroom. If possible, avoid the “central storage building” for all supplies as it eventually becomes the dumping ground for broken items, seasonal supplies and other “stuff” making it unsuitable for daily use.

There should be many types of storage in the playground classroom; some accessible for children and some lockable and accessible only to teachers. Cabinets, small storage lockers, storage buildings and rolling carts are examples of appropriate outdoor classroom storage. Rolling carts or cabinets can be stored inside the building and wheeled outside when needed, if outdoor storage is not possible.

Outdoor classrooms also need a variety of places to sit and “work/play” with materials. Tables with smooth surfaces (not boards or wire tops) work better for art projects, blocks and snacks, and they are easier to clean. Flexible seating may be the best option as they are easily cleaned, provide seating for children of varying sizes and can be moved around easily to accommodate a variety of activities. Water play tables, art or media tables, and carpentry tables can also be included in the outdoor classroom.

Table blocks, puzzles and other fine-motor manipulative materials can be easily stored in the lockable cabinets. Open front cabinets or shelves can be used to exhibit children’s projects or items found on the playground. For example, leaves, flowers or rocks from a nature walk can be grouped and classified for display and children can compare, count and sort them as they explore them more closely.

An art easel large enough for two to four users at a time is an essential part of the outdoor classroom. Art supplies can be stored in the lockable cabinets and can be put out onto the tables for “free art”. Children can be more expressive and free with paint in the outdoor classroom because clean up is easier. Fly swatter painting and squirt-gun art work well outside, but are a disaster inside! Children can use an easel with a clear, see-through paint surface to do “face painting” – having a friend put his or her face against the opposite side of the easel surface to be painted onto the clear easel. Letters or shapes can be taped to the back side of the easel surface so children can trace them onto the easel with paint or dry erase markers.

Begin small; Rome was not built in a day. Start with small steps; gain some successes and then share the vision with others. Administrators and parents must be “on-board” for this approach to work. Spend some time explaining your goals and getting support from everyone involved – especially the children. The child who suddenly takes a bigger interest in learning because he (usually) can be more active in the process is a walking (or building, painting, creating) advertisement for your new, outdoor classroom.

Leaving no child behind is important – leaving no child inside to get behind is equally critical. The push for paper and pencil proficiency comes at a terrible cost to active, hands-on learners.



Learning to Play for Those With Developmental Delays

Submitted by Dr. Laura Boswell, Marshall University

“Research has shown that children learn best through play. We need to encourage children to ask questions, explore, and discover through play and rich experiences with engaging materials. If we want children to truly learn and understand concepts, we should provide hands-on experiences that allow them to see how things work and help them to construct knowledge about the concepts” (Jacobs & Crowley, 2007, p.1).

“As children play, investigate their world, and participate in language-rich environments with supportive adults, they build these connections and grow in all areas of development” (Jacob Crowley, 2007, p. 1).

Some examples of how play leads to development include:

- science concepts are built in the water table or with building blocks
- math concepts are built with blocks of different sizes, sorting and classifying toys
- literacy concepts are built with stories, puppets, and songs
- social skills are built in dramatic play areas, role-play, and sharing
- motor skills are built while running and playing outside, riding tricycles, playing with toy cars, beads, or play-dough

“Research has confirmed that the experiences children have during the first years of life help to form vital connections in the brain and establish the framework for future learning.” Theorists such as Piaget, believed children learn through play and interactions with the environment. Bruner thought of play as the way children learn to solve problems. Vygotsky described play as the main educational activity of children, allowing them to move forward in development.

Each child is unique, developing at individual rates, and having individual needs and characteristics. All children should have opportunities to achieve their full potential. “Children will reach standards best through experiences that invite them to play, while nurturing their sense of wonder and joy in learning” (Crowley 2007, p. 137). Because of the role of play in the building of brain cells, young children need sufficient play to encourage social maturation.

Research suggests that the creation of “play sanctuaries” where preschool children could play naturally with each other as part of a daily social diet, facilitating frontal lobe maturation, would decrease the need for medications for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (Panksepp, 2008).

“The play drive first appears as infants try to adapt the physical world to their needs...transforming each object into one that can be sucked” (Elkind, 2008). Through play, children create new learning experiences, enabling them to acquire social, emotional, and intellectual skills. Although children learn through play, “their capacity for learning is limited by their social situations, their emotional condition, and their physical and intellectual development” (Elkind, 2008).

“No one teaches a baby to babble... by babbling the infant creates all the sounds he or she will need to use a language” (Elkind, 2008). We can support that language development in ways similar to those for social development. An infant engages in play by dropping a toy, which a care-



giver lovingly returns. The infant is encouraged to repeat the process, while also showing affection. The child learns how to “engage the caregiver in social interaction; the caregiver, in turn, teaches the child how to play by encouraging curiosity and exploration” (Elkind, 2008).

Choosing three-dimensional toys (such as blocks) provides more valuable learning experiences than one-dimensional ones, because of the variety of ways young children can play with them. Materials that allow children to express themselves in their own ways, such as puppets, clay, and paints encourage interaction and communication. Providing children “time to explore the natural world at their own pace offers the opportunity for an invaluable, solid foundation for learning of all kinds. The richness, fullness, and mysteries of nature put many television and computer programs to shame...by encouraging their youngsters’ predispositions for fantasy, imagination and creativity, they are indeed providing the mental tools required in the long term for success in areas such as math and science” (Elkind,

2008).

Play is a way to promote spontaneous cognitive development, while providing developmentally appropriate opportunities to teach specific concepts to children with developmental disabilities. Through play, young children become interested in each other. One child may become interested in a toy that another child is playing with. There may be communication as they determine who gets to play with the toy. They may later begin to cooperate on a common project such as building a structure with blocks. Cooperative play leads to the next level of social skills, the forming of friendships.

Such may not be the case for children with developmental disabilities. Children with hearing impairments and visual impairments often play alone. Children with autism may have limited cognitive skills, and may be lacking in symbolic play skills, leading to inappropriate use of materials. Children with developmental disabilities may hesitate to join play, not knowing how to enter the play in an appropriate way. It may be necessary to teach children

Typically developing children usually learn sharing through negotiating during normal play. Children with developmental delays may require instruction in how to share.

who do not know how to play appropriate behaviors. Alan and Cauvery (2009) suggest:

- arranging the child to be near other children in a given activity, enabling the teacher to describe what the other children are doing to promote imitation
- physically guiding the child to a play activity and helping him or her to settle in
- handing material to the child to establish physical contact
- putting an object in the child's hand and moving the child toward the activity
- verbalizing to the child what he or she is doing
- rejoicing over the smallest accomplishments
- helping other children join in once the child has acquired a

semblance of play skills

- providing social reinforcement for the play
- moving the child slowly but steadily toward group play by building small groups of two, then three, nonthreatening children who participate with the child in simple, play activities

As the child with special needs begins to play, teachers withdraw their assistance in a scaffolding manner. Activities must be planned carefully so that children with developmental delays can experience maximum success. Teachers may sometimes need to help all children learn to be explicit about what they are doing in certain situations. A child with vision difficulties may need to have the other children explain exactly what they are doing, so that he or she can participate or so that he or she is not frightened by sudden movements in the space.

Sharing and taking turns are important to satisfying play between children. Yet, these are skills that are difficult to learn for some children. Young children typically are egocentric and want what they want. Conflict among children is avoided when the teacher plans for negotiation, monitors the situation, and helps children work through it.

Typically developing children usually learn sharing through negotiating during normal play. Children with developmental delays may require instruction in how to share. The teacher may verbalize what another child is doing. (e.g. "Sam is swinging three more swings and then it is



Bobby's turn" or, "You just had a long turn. Now it is Amy's time. When she is finished I will call you for another turn)."

A teacher may set up a situation in which an amount of playdough needs to be shared with children joining the group, with the teacher prompting, rather than getting out more playdough. A child may be encouraged to give things that the children need. For example, the teacher can give him a job of passing out tickets or distributing some other necessary items.

The teacher is responsible to encourage friendly interactions between children, prompting spontaneous sharing. When two children decide to work together on an activity, the teacher may join them for a few minutes to encourage and reinforce their interactions.

Some children may have difficulty recognizing that they have rights and can defend themselves. All children need to learn to stand up for their rights, regardless of disabilities. A teacher can help in this process by encouraging the child to tell a peer who has taken a toy that she was playing with that and wants it back. The teacher then asks the other child to listen to what the child says, reminding him that he took something she was playing with, and she wants it back. The teacher may tell the child to give the toy back when asked. By not taking the toy and returning it, the teacher helps both children, one with her rights of possession and the other experiences all children have rights that are to be respected.

Because children learn many skills by imitating others, it is important that children with developmental delays are included in classrooms with typically developing peers. Many of these children will still require intervention from teachers to promote appropriate interactions. The teachers may arrange the environment to facilitate those play skills. She may reinforce imitation of appropriate behavior.

Teachers may provide several interest centers for discovery learning, involving activities that encourage interactions, such as a water table or cooking experience. Children with special needs have on-going opportunities to practice skills together with typically developing peers, who may have been taught ways of engaging them in social interactions. A child with hearing impairments may be paired with a hearing peer during music to help him know when to join in with percussion instruments. Care must be taken in forming such pairs, that both the child with a disability and the other child benefit from the interaction. They should both enjoy the experience. The child with developmental delays will learn play skills from an expert at play. The peer models refine their own skills, gain self-esteem, sensitivity, nurturing, and positive attitude changes toward persons with disabilities.

Like all young children, children with developmental delays and disabilities need to learn how to get along with others. To do this they must learn appropriate social skills, which are dependent on every other area of development. Children of all devel-

opmental levels can and do master basic social skills, which are learned behaviors. Play is a major factor in early learning, especially in learning social skills. Not all children know how to play and may need to be taught using firm but gentle insistence. This ensures that all children have both the fun and the incidental learning opportunities that are available only through play.

One major argument for inclusive classrooms is for modeling to take place. Children with disabilities interact with those who are typically developing, with teachers promoting interactions among all types of children by arranging both the physical and social environment. Both the typically developing child and the child with developmental delays can benefit from various kinds of peer mediation. All children learn best through play.

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Encourage Self-Exploration and Play Among Children

Submitted by Deborah Somuano, Success By 6®, United Way of the River Cities

Medical research shows that adopting a physical active lifestyle early in life increases the likelihood that infants and young children will learn to move skillfully. By teaching children to enjoy moving and helping them develop motor skill confidence at an early age, you ensure a healthy development and later participation in physical activity. Infants and young children, who are confined to strollers, play pens, or car seats for hours at a time may have delayed development.



Guidelines for Infants

Part of each day should be spent with a parent or caregiver who provides many opportunities for planned physical activity. These experiences should include a variety of baby games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake. Additionally, each day should include time holding, rocking and introducing new environments.

Infants should be provided with physical activities that promote exploration of their environment.

- Provide safe environments that allow for physical activity, and do not restrict movement for prolonged periods of time.
- Provide an environment that meets or exceeds recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Be aware of the importance of physical activity.

Guidelines for Toddlers & Preschoolers

For toddlers, basic movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing and kicking do not just appear as the child grows older. These skills result from an interaction between hereditary potential and movement experience. These behaviors are also clearly influenced by the environment. For instance, a child who does not have access to stairs may experience a delay in climbing and a child who is discouraged from bouncing and chasing balls may experience a delay in hand-eye coordination.

Toddlers should accumulate at least 30 minutes of structured physical activity daily; preschoolers at least 60 minutes.

- Toddlers and preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of unstructured physical activity and should not

be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time unless sleeping.

- Toddlers should develop movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks; preschoolers should develop competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.
- Toddlers and preschoolers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Early childhood providers and teachers, who are responsible for the well-being of toddlers and preschoolers, should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Young Children Need to Play

It has been said that play is children's work. Children work hard at their play because they can make it up themselves. The best part about children's play is that it helps children learn a great deal while they have fun. Here are some things to keep in mind about play:

“Play” can be any spontaneous activity that is fun. If children organize a ball game, a dramatic play, or a game of hide-and-seek, they are meeting their needs for spontaneous play. Children benefit most from a balance of adult-initiated activities and activities that they initiate themselves.

Play can be an effective and enjoyable way for children to develop skills. Children practice language skills when they play name games, sing songs and recite jump rope rhymes.

- Thinking skills are developed when children construct a block tower, follow directions to a game and figure out pieces to a puzzle.
- Children develop small muscle skills when they string beads, make clay figures and cut with scissors.
- Large muscle skills are developed when children play ball, roller skate and run relay races.
- Creative skills are practiced when children make up stories, put on a puppet show and play with dress-up clothes.

- Children have the opportunity to practice social skills when they team up to play ball games, discuss rules for a card game and decide who will play what part in a role-play.

It is important to remove barriers to children's opportunities to play. This includes too many structured activities and too much television. When children watch too much television, their play often mimics what they see on television (or on video or computer screen). Television watching also robs children of valuable time to play.

Tips for Toys

- Puzzles help children learn how to move and place the things they see.
- Books help children become better readers.
- Music and instruments make brain connections.
- Art materials encourage imagination and build reading and writing skills.
- Blocks help children learn about science and math.
- Dolls and figures give children a chance to use their imagination.
- Wagons build strong muscles.
- Board games teach children about how things work, taking turns and counting.

- Riding toys help children learn how to move.

Providers should also be aware that the toys they have are safe. They should be well-made, unbreakable and non-toxic, which means they are safe to go in a child's mouth. There should not be any small parts on the toy that can come off. As infants and toddlers naturally use their mouths to learn about objects in their environment, creating a safe environment for them to explore is very important. Choking is the leading cause of accidental death in children under one year of age.

To reduce the risk of choking:

- Keep latex balloons, coins, marbles or small balls, damaged pacifiers, rocks, plastic bags, pen or marker caps, and buttons out of children's reach.
- Teach older children to put toys and other small things away so that younger children cannot reach them.
- Get down on the floor and look for possible choking hazards.
- Any object or toy that can fit through a paper towel roll is small enough to cause choking. Keep these out of reach.



Did You Know?

Playing is early learning!

Watch for these Developmental Milestones ...

By 3 Months -- when lying on her back, attempts to reach for a rattle held above her chest

By 6 Months -- reaches for a toy nearby while on her tummy

Play is more than fun -- Play (any enjoyable activity that involves people, objects, or movement) is baby's early learning. Everything from blowing bubbles, a cardboard box, peek-a-boo, singing songs, or splashing in the tub helps your baby learn more about their world.

For more information on developmental milestones, visit online at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/ActEarly/default.htm>



Self-Regulation: An Essential Transition Skill

Submitted by Barbara Tucker, West Virginia Early Childhood Transition Steering Committee

When a child moves from one program to another, it is natural for parents and children to view this rite of passage with both excitement and apprehension. Although not all parents and children feel stress and anxiety with pre-school transition, it is normal and to be expected.

Many of the articles in previous issues focused on activities to make early childhood transition go more smoothly for both parents and child. Preparation can help ensure the child receives the services needed to support his educational development. An effective way to lay a foundation for future academic success is to assure preschoolers receive the full benefits of imaginative play.

Dramatic play helps children pretend, play roles and negotiate among each other. Unfortunately, our present society is dominated with electronic toys, media, and a mistaken notion that academic learning needs to be pushed on children at younger years. This has resulted in children having less free play time. What happened to the fun of an appliance cardboard box that became the homes, grocery stores, and forts of our childhood – the possibilities and our freewheeling, imaginative play were endless.

Playing make-believe and acting out situations helps children develop executive-function skills—the conscious control of thought, action or emotion. These skills are the basis of decision-making, planning and self-

Make-believe is a powerful tool for building self-discipline because during dramatic play children engage in private speech.

regulation. Children with good self-regulation are able to control their emotions and behavior, resist impulses, and exert self-control and discipline. Good executive function is a better predictor of success in school than a child's IQ. Children who are able to manage their feelings and pay attention are better able to learn. The self-regulated child can make productive use of time when the teacher is busy with other students; he does not require the teacher's constant attention to learn.

Make-believe is a powerful tool for building self-discipline because during dramatic play children engage in private speech. They talk to themselves about what they are going to do and how they are going to do it. This "self-talk" helps the child control his behavior as the child "reminds" himself what to do. Playtime is a great opportunity to practice using words instead of actions before a situation becomes out of control.

Researchers have found that the more structured the play, the more children's private speech declines. When children's play is very focused on structured lessons and toys that inhibit imagination, children have lit-

tle opportunity to practice policing themselves. When they have that option, the results are clear--self-regulation improves.

Because a child has an innate desire to play, he is motivated to focus his attention and keep up positive behaviors that allow the play to continue. Extend the play by suggesting new roles or new uses for play materials. When a child role plays, he conforms his behavior to the character and that increases self-regulation skills.

Self-regulation is also promoted when a child follows the rules of a make-believe scenario. Preschoolers will often make up elaborate rules for you when you play with them. A way to help prepare a child for transition to a new program could be to role-play going to a new classroom or carrying a tray to the lunch table. Remember, the child needs to be in control of the play. Your job is to offer suggestions and follow his lead.

Playing simple board games or playground games presents many opportunities to help a child develop self-regulation. In the beginning, keep game rules simple to fit the child's self-regulatory skills. As you model following the rules, expect him to want to change the rules in his favor!

With caring adults as play partners, children will learn the self-control and attention to tasks needed as they transition from one environment to another.

WVCCU Working for West Virginia Children and Families

Submitted by Helen Post-Brown, WVAYC



Susan Miller, WVCCU
President & Bill Perry,
Lobbyist

West Virginia Childcare Centers United is a non-profit, professional, childcare provider's organization created from two former organizations, West Virginia Association of Child Care Centers and Directors on a Mission.

Child care in West Virginia has changed tremendously in the last few years and it is going to continue to change. Child care professionals, need to ensure that as West Virginia child care changes, resources and supports are in place to guarantee quality child care and also guarantee quality in child care centers.

Join us at the Celebrating Connections conference on Thursday, February 26, 2009, at 6 p.m. for our annual dinner "members" meeting at the Fifth Quarter and on Friday morning at our networking session with WVAYC and WVCCU. Bill Perry, WVCCU and WVAYC lobbyist, will inform the group of the happenings in the legislature. Bill is monitoring the state budget and legislative bills that affect early childhood care. He is our voice in Charleston. Through our listserve, Bill informs us weekly, and sometimes daily, of happenings in the legislature.

We are the "new" voice for children and for child care professionals throughout the state. Let us work together to unite our voices so that we may represent West Virginia with a strong and responsible voice.

Check out the resources available on the WVCCU web site (www.wvccu.info). It features information about legislation, conferences, and national and state links.

We need you to take an active role in WVCCU. It is very important that child care professionals speak as one unified voice. It is through a collective organization like this that we have the power to affect change and be advocates for children and families.



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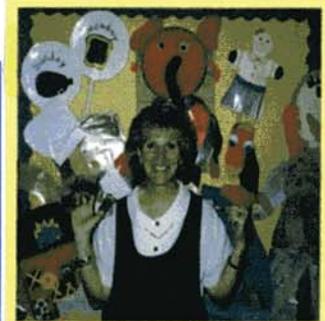
**Online registration and registration
brochures are available at
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WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Dr. Jean holds a Ph.D. from Georgia State University and is a nationally known early childhood presenter, author, recording artist, and teacher.



Dr. Jean & Friends

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You'll be ready to start your new school year with a song, a bag full of activities, and JOY in your heart! You'll leave with dozens of new rhymes, stories, games, and center ideas that will engage students and make learning more FUN!

You will need to bring your scissors, markers, crayons, hole punch, glue, and tape. You will also need to print a list of materials for the projects you want to make at the afternoon session of "Make & Take". Go to www.wvayc.com You will find a list of projects and materials needed to make over 14 projects. Team together with fellow teachers and share the projects list.

Registration:
8:00—9:00am
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Reservations must be postmarked by Friday, July 24, 2009
No Refunds after 8/1/09

Directions on web site:
www.wvayc.com

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Sharing Corner:

Question:
What should I do if a
child just wants to
watch others play
instead of
participating?

While many young children, when given the opportunity, will immediately engage in play with others, families and early childhood teachers often encounter children who want only 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 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 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. 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.

Excerpted from “He’s Watching!” The Importance of the Onlooker Stage of Play” by Sarah Jane Anderson, NAEYC Journal, Young Children.

Do you know a child who is not *moving *hearing *seeing * learning or *talking like others their age?

By 3 months,
Does your baby...

- grasp rattle or finger?
- hold up his/her head well?
- make cooing sounds?
- smile when talked to?

By 9 months,
Does your baby...

- sit alone or with minimal support?
- pick up small objects with thumb and fingers?
- move toy from hand to hand?

By 18 months,
Does your baby...

- cling to caretaker in new situations?
- try to talk and repeat words?
- walk without support?

By 6 months,
Does your baby...

- play with own hands/feet?
- roll over?
- turn his/her head towards sound?
- holds head up/looks around without support?

By 12 months,
Does your baby...

- wave goodbye?
- play with toys in different ways?
- feed self with finger foods?
- begin to pull up and stand?
- begin to take steps?

By 24 months,
Does your baby...

- point to body parts?
- walk, run, climb without help?
- get along with other children?
- use 2 or 3 word sentences?

If you are concerned about your child's development, get help early.

Every child deserves a great start.

WV Birth to Three supports families to help their children grow and learn.

To learn more about the
WV Birth to Three services
in your area, please call:

1-866-321-4728

Or visit www.wvdhhr.org/birth23



WV Birth to Three services and supports are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and administered through the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health.

Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER



"Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia"
Volume 6, Issue 1, Winter 2009

Teaching Young Children Through Work and Play

We have learned so much recently about the importance of play for young children that many families may overlook how meaningful work can also mature development.

Young children flourish when allowed to enter the world of real work 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.

WV Parent Blocks Newsletter is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources/Bureau for Children and Families/Division of Early Care and Education; WV Head Start State Collaboration Office; Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Birth to Three; and West Virginia Department of Education/Office of Special Education and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

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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

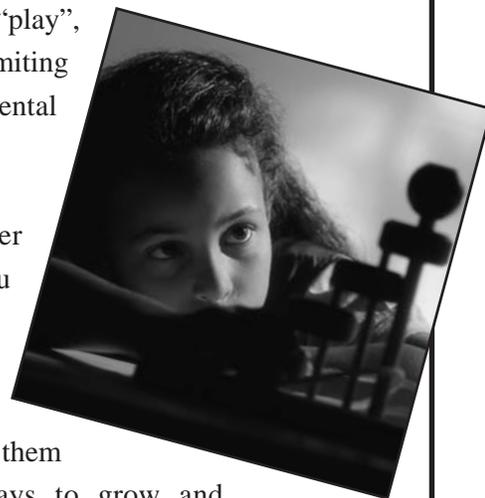
"work" and not "play", you may be limiting their developmental opportunities.

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 more 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

continued on the following page



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 store or market, you can help them better understand where food comes from and how we buy it.

Running errands

Letting young children run errands conveys your feelings of trust in them. When you need something--another family member or the phone--tell one of your children you need help.

Caring for younger children

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

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 run this most-adult-of-all housekeeping tool.

Caring for animals

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

Gardening

Nurturing plants helps children learn about the wonders of nature.

If you don't have space for a garden, a small window planter can bring opportunities to explore.

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

- Keep in mind what your children can accomplish, and how much you need to supervise to make sure the activity is safe.
- Even young children can tell the difference between busy work and real work.
- Also, remember that many chores actually take longer with the help of young children, but a little patience and a few extra minutes lets them reap real benefits from assisting the family.

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.

Excerpted from "More than Line Leader and Door Holder: Engaging Young Children in Real Work," by Christine A. Readdick and Kathy Douglas, an article in the NAEYC journal, *Young Children*.

Managing the Holiday Excitement

By Gary Direnfeld, MSW, RSW

There are few things as exciting in the eyes of young children as winter holidays. Stores come alive with displays, lights, and tinsel. There is music, cookies, treats, and dreams of toys.

When holidays approach, a parent's pace may change from fast to frantic, the stores become ever crowded and the sheer noise of the season can become deafening. The child moves from bewilderment and excitement to overwhelmed and scared. Rather than enjoying a child's play, parents may find themselves managing their child's behavior.

Parents can help keep the holiday season within tolerable limits for their young children by following these simple tips:

1. Keep your child's routine stable. Bedtime, nap time, mealtimes and all other regular activities should be maintained as best as possible.
2. Avoid extra snacks, cookies, and candies. The rush and fall of sugar in a child's diet can cause both bursts of energy and fatigue as the sugar wears off. These highs and lows can lead to behavior difficulties.
3. If you take your child on shopping trips, limit the amount of time you are out and consider taking the stroller or allowing for breaks. Also, consider going out early in the day, before the stores get busy and crowded.

Simple Gift Giving for the Early Years

NAEYC's Early Years Are Learning Years

During the holiday season, we are frequently bombarded with advertisements for children's toys that are often expensive or inappropriate, and many adults find themselves at a loss when trying to decide on the right gift for that special child in their lives. Selecting toys for young children is an important task that involves decisions about the kinds of interests, motivation, and skills we want children to develop. Any toy given to a child should match his or her developmental age and individual needs.



One to two years old

Toddlers are increasingly mobile and independent. Dressing, lacing, and stringing materials, picture and nursery rhyme books, nontoxic crayons for scribbling, and stacking materials will be enjoyed by one year olds, while role-playing toys, pegboards, and large balls to kick, throw, and catch are good choices for older toddlers.

Three to five years old

Three-to-five year olds often find enjoyment from materials that promote pretend play and

When choosing a toy, careful attention should be paid to safety and durability--materials should have lasting play value and help provide a foundation for future development.

Following are some ideas for inexpensive, and most importantly, fun play materials for the early years:

Birth through six months old

Toys for young infants should promote their interest in looking, listening, sucking, and grasping. Well-secured, unbreakable crib mirrors, rag dolls, stuffed toys and simple hand puppets moved by an adult are all age appropriate gifts that can either be made or purchased for a minimal amount of money.

Six to twelve months old

Infants from six to twelve months are able to enjoy a wider variety of toys which support their social, cognitive, and physical development. Floating objects for bath play, construction materials, simple puzzles, cloth and board books, and balls are durable options for young children at this age.

foster their language and social skills. A large variety of books suitable for this age are available, as well as an assortment of blocks, dress-up clothes and simple games, including dominoes, bingo boards, and card games.

Six to eight years old

Primary-school age children show interest in and benefit from a number of specific skill-development toys. They can spend hours with art and crafts materials, particularly washable paints, clay, collage equipment, and small beads for jewelry making. Books and more complex games with rules and turn-taking are also appropriate, and natural objects (stones and shells) can pique an interest in science and the environment.

Keep in mind that the holiday season can also be stressful for children. It isn't necessary to give a child a room full of toys in order for him or her to have fun. Sometimes the simplest pleasures are the most enjoyable.

Child's Play!

Your child is designed to move! Most kids like to climb, crawl, run, jump, swing, tumble, twist, stretch, and peddle. In fact, active play is the “work” of a childhood. By moving more and sitting less, your child also learns to live in a healthful way.

Active play can promote:

Cooperation and sharing as your child plays and learns to get along with others

Curiosity and creativity as your child explores his or her world

Confidence and independence as your child learns to make choices and control his or her actions

Learning as your child's body and brain develop a better ability to learn

Active play can develop body skills:

Strength, flexibility, and endurance to explore and experience the world safely

Coordination of small and large muscles, which helps with overall learning

Body awareness as your child learns what his or her changing body can do

Active play promotes:

Stress relief and good sleep as your child uses up extra energy and learns a healthful way to get rid of stress (good for you, too!)

Healthy weight since moving more and sitting less helps lower the chances of overweight

Lifelong health – Keeping your child active now helps protect your child from getting diabetes at a young age. Moving more helps lower the chances of diabetes and heart disease later in your child's life. Yours, too!

Active play is fun for your child and you!

When you move more, your child will, too.





The 2009 West Virginia Early Childhood Calendar has arrived! Copies are free while supplies last. For more information, contact WVECTCR at 304-529-7603.

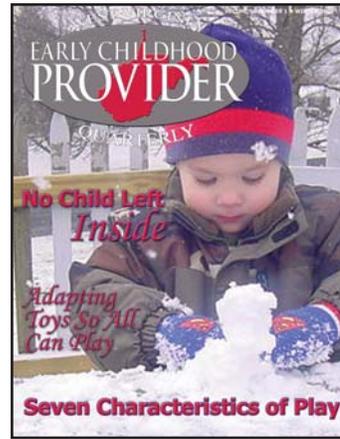


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