



KEEPING IN TOUCH

SUMMER 2014

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre, Child Care Consultation

Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough, Special Needs Services

The Etobicoke Children's Centre, Special Needs Consultation

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Community Outreach Service

Humber College, Child Care Consultation Services

Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services, Home Childcare

Toronto Early Learning and Child Care Services, Special Services Unit

WoodGreen Community Services

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“THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY AND INTERACTION”

WHAT IS PLAY?

Play is an important part of a child’s development. Through play, children explore and learn about their world as well as developing imagination, creativity, social skills, and problem solving skills. From birth through the ages of four or five, young children go through four main stages of play:

STAGES OF PLAY

Solitary Play starts in infancy. In this stage, infants are exploring their environment, constantly discovering new things, and learning from them. Solitary play continues into the toddler years. The children, playing alone, are completely absorbed in what they are doing and are not paying attention to others. They may be playing near others but they are playing alone with their own toys without notice of other children.



Parallel Play is common in toddlers but can occur in any age group. Children will be in the same room with other children, they will play with similar toys, but they do not play with each other. They are observant of others and may copy how others are playing but seldom interact with them. They are playing beside them rather than with them.

Associative Play occurs when children are about three and four years old. These preschoolers play together in loosely structured activities. Although they play together and talk with each other, they are not working together in an organised manner to create something.



Cooperative Play begins emerging in four and five years olds. As their social and emotional development matures, children play cooperatively with others. Their play has an organized structure and children will communicate with each other as they work together towards a common goal. In this play stage, children learn respect for others’ property, realize they may need permission to use others toys, and are more willing to share their toys.

Knowing the play stage a child is in is critical to the process of supporting their development. And understanding why children do some of the things they do!

*Nicole Livingstone, Intensive Resource Support Worker
Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre*

THE ROLE OF PLAY

Maria Montessori said that, “Play is the work of the child.” Play, and our support of play and exploration, is essential to the healthy development of children. Here is a description of some play choices children make and the concepts and skills they are mastering when we support these choices.

When a child is playing with play dough, they are:

- using creativity and imagination
- improving fine motor skills
- developing the sense of touch



When infants play with stacking and nesting toys, they are:

- learning about size and balance
- practicing and developing motor control
- experimenting with shape and colour

When toddlers play with sand and water, they are:

- learning about measuring and comparing
- feeling relaxed, safe and comfortable
- improving sensory awareness



When preschoolers dress up and pretend to cook in the housekeeping area, they are:

- learning to understand adult roles
- practicing math and language skills
- organizing and using ideas

When schoolagers play basketball with a small group of children, they are:

- learning to cooperate, share, plan, and negotiate with other children
- improving gross motor control and eye-hand coordination
- learning how to be a team member



Source: Child Care Careers Institute and The Adult Literacy Resource Institute, *The Learning Ladder - The Role of Play - Learning Through Play*. Retrieved July 10, 2014 from www.learningladder.org.

FOSTERING RECE /CHILD RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PLAY

This article is dedicated to all the wonderful Registered Early Childhood Educators I have had the privilege of observing over the past twenty five years who have taken the time to play with the children in their programs.

Every Early Childhood Educator is aware of the importance of using play as a tool to support children's cognitive, physical, and social emotional development. What is equally important is establishing healthy relationships between the teachers and the children in childcare programs. Why not use play as the vehicle to engage and allow the joint experience to strengthen the bonds between you and the children in your care. Here are some simple tips on how to accomplish this:

SET THE STAGE

- ✓ We all know about setting the stage when organizing a classroom to best meet the needs of the children but don't forget about setting the stage to engage.
- ✓ Ensure that play areas are large enough to allow for Early Childhood Educators to join in.
- ✓ Position pillows, bean bag chairs on floor areas to increase your comfort level.
- ✓ Ensure there is space at tables for an RECE to join in with the activity.

ORGANIZE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY

- ✓ We are all aware of the increasing daily demands on RECE's so engaging like any other task may take some creative planning.
- ✓ Establish a plan, a time frame, of how much time you would like to spend playing during the daily program.
- ✓ Determine with your team partner what play areas or activities each of you would like to focus on within the different routines.
- ✓ Remember quality time can have more of an impact than quantity of time. So if you can engage in play for 5-7 minutes in the block centre, make sure its 5-7 minutes of your full attention.

GATHER INFORMATION

- ✓ Be a detective and observe the classroom carefully.
- ✓ Watch what the children have been interested in lately.
- ✓ What toys and activities have they been actively seeking out lately?
- ✓ Listen to their conversations. What topics interest them?

GET INVOLVED

- ✓ Let your inner child free.
- ✓ Follow the children's lead.
- ✓ Assume a role in the play - a minor role.
- ✓ Ask questions.
- ✓ Comment on what is happening in the play.
- ✓ Add ideas; just be careful not to direct the outcomes of the play.
- ✓ Add information that will ignite their imagination.

REFLECT

- ✓ Take a few moments to enjoy your play experience.
- ✓ Make some quick notes if you can, about your playtime, e.g. who interacted well together, who struggled.
- ✓ Did you learn anything new about the children in the program?
- ✓ Use the interests and conversations you were a part of for future programming.

MOST IMPORTANTLY HAVE FUN!!!

*Denise Palermo, RECE, Special Needs Resource Consultant ~
The Etobicoke Children's Centre*



ENCOURAGING PARENTS TO PLAY WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Every day, children walk into your child care programs, and you as Registered Early Childhood Educators have an entire day with them. You work hard to create playful, stimulating, explorative learning environments. You observe and interact with them, seeing the learning that takes place throughout the day.

The end of the day comes. Sometimes we see parents entering our child care programs phone in hand or blue tooth in ear. Sometimes, talking on their phone the entire time their child gets dressed and ready to go home. Do they touch base with you on how their child's day was? Or do you hope to touch base with them in the morning, or at the end of the next day . . . hoping they're ready to connect during tomorrow's pick up?



The opportunity to connect with parents is a vital part of the job you do. It's a terrific way to find out what happens at home. It's also a nice time to discuss with parents the value of play and how to unplug from technology to spend quality time supporting their children's play at home.

So how can you encourage and support parents to incorporate times outside of child care for interactive, constructive, fun, developmentally appropriate play between themselves and their children?

First, it is important to share information and educate parents on the importance of play in child development and the learning opportunities that take place during play. With the move towards play-based learning in full-day kindergarten classrooms over the past few years, more emphasis is now given to the importance that play contributes to the developing child. However, academic success for many parents is still considered to be measured through school performance. Many parents have a hard time understanding (or accepting) that academic performance and skill development can in fact be measured through play, as opposed to the learning that takes place through paper and pencil alone.

Some parents do see the importance of play in a child's learning, but believe it has more of an impact on social development than on the development of intellectual and language skills. They may also tend to feel that play is more beneficial for older children than it is for infants. In your role as a trusted Registered Early Childhood Educator, many parents look to you for information about their child's development. You have the opportunity to have an impact on the decisions they make about their child's time at home and the role that play should have in it.

One of the messages you can provide to parents is that healthy play time for their child is one of the best ways they can support their child's overall development. Why? Play is a child's work. It's a natural way for them to explore, learn, try new skills, make mistakes, and problem solve. Play is easy to do. It's a way for parents to be involved in their child's learning because it doesn't require any special resources, tools, money, educational background or skills. Any parent can play with their child, and any parent can make play available to their child.

You can guide parents in finding their creative, playful selves – and show them how to understand the outcomes and milestones their children reach by playing. You can help parents of the children in your care become co-experts on the importance of play.



How can we encourage parents to make play time a part of their family's lifestyle? Here are a few ideas:

- ◆ Encourage parents to stop and think about their child's play.
- ◆ Ask them to reflect on when their child gets to play and under what circumstances.
- ◆ Have parents consider whether play is a part of the regular routine, or a special reward for accomplishments or "good" behaviour.
- ◆ Parents can think about whether their child's play is always facilitated or includes free play time.
- ◆ Parents should observe their child's play to determine whether it is always the same kind of play (e.g. outdoor play using their gross motor skills), or a range of play is in the child's repertoire.
- ◆ Parents need to be sure that the child has time to be just a kid.

Have resource about play available to parents. If you don't already do so, start a file of books, articles and websites that are informative about the value of play. There are a variety of ways to share information and deliver the message of the importance of play to parents. Such as:

- ◆ Quick discussions at drop off and pick up times
- ◆ Postings in the hallway, your classroom, and the parent board
- ◆ Place information in cubbies or backpacks
- ◆ Parent meetings
- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Centre website



Teach parents that there are many types of play. Children need all types of play to thrive and learn. This includes play that stimulates the development of gross motor skills, fine motor skills, cognitive skills, creativity, sensory perception, social and emotional skills, and speech and language skills. Parents have a wide range of possibilities for bringing play into their child's lives to impact all these areas of development. Help parents to consider the many avenues that can present play opportunities:

- ◆ Different play compositions (play as a family, play with siblings/friends, solitary play).
- ◆ Different play settings (outdoors, indoors, a friend's home, parks).
- ◆ Different types of activities (running, jumping, climbing, arts and crafts, make believe, exploring, experimenting).
- ◆ Play can happen in many environments and situations and does not need to be pre-planned; it can take place at the grocery store, in the car, and at the doctor's office.

Believing in the importance of play to their child's development will encourage parents to make play available to their child. And the more often parents play with their children the more likely it is that they will find that inner child in themselves. Even the busiest parents, or those less inclined to play, will find themselves opening up to the joys of play and creating fun activities for the entire family. And the more play experience parents have with their children the more their confidence will grow.

Helping parents embrace the value and importance of play and the impact it has on their child's overall development, extends the positive impact you have on children beyond the boundaries of your child care program.

Source: Oliver, Susan J. and Klugman, Edgar. *Taking Play Home - Encouraging Parents to Encourage Play*. Exchange, May/June 2003. Retrieved July 10, 2014 from www.ChildCareExchange.com.

FIND THE WORDS RELATED TO PLAY

PLAY IS ...

D	G	D	U	N	I	V	E	R	S	A	L	U
F	N	E	R	W	L	E	A	R	N	I	N	G
L	I	V	X	I	W	T	V	U	X	Q	V	Q
K	T	E	Q	E	X	P	L	O	R	I	N	G
O	A	L	C	Z	J	F	Z	P	W	U	Q	P
Q	I	O	E	J	Q	U	V	Q	F	J	I	W
X	T	P	R	Q	Z	T	R	O	X	Q	P	X
C	O	M	M	U	N	I	C	A	T	I	O	N
P	G	E	P	E	U	W	Q	L	X	O	X	R
E	E	N	M	O	A	D	V	O	C	A	C	Y
O	N	T	K	W	F	U	T	W	U	L	Q	Z

fun - communication - exploring - development - universal - negotiating - learning - advocacy

Janet Scott, Resource Consultant ~ WoodGreen Community Services

ASK AN RT!

Lately Registered Early Childhood Educators have been sharing they have a lot of children in their program exhibiting a great deal of anxiety. Parents as well are approaching them and sharing the same concerns. So in response to this here are two wonderful websites for parents and RECE's on anxiety. Investigate and enjoy!

1. AnxietyBC has a very detailed website that includes resources for both individuals struggling with anxiety and parents. The information is also valuable and easily adaptable for RECE's.
www.anxietybc.com
2. PlantLoveGrow is another website that provides free downloadable activities, books, and games for RECE's. Anxiety is only one topic they cover. Great ideas and easy to implement!
www.plantlovegrow.com

Something on your mind? Have a question or concern? Most likely lots of other RECE's are wondering the same thing. Please send any questions you would like answered, with the heading in the subject line, "Ask an RT" to denisepalermo@etobicokechildren.com.

The Keeping In Touch Newsletter Committee will review your questions and attempt to provide you with information and ideas. In order to respect the confidentiality of the sender, no names or child care centre names will be mentioned in the newsletter.

HIGHLIGHTING YOUR CENTRE

Looking for a new exciting, extendable program idea for your classroom? How about creating a book!?!

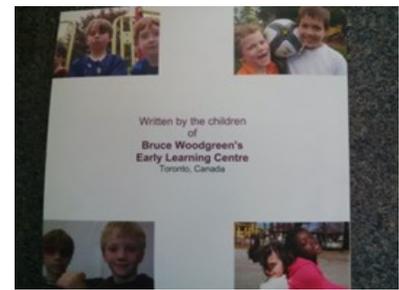
The "I'm Me Book" is a project that was completely led by the children of Bruce WoodGreen's Early Learning Centre. The book was initiated in an effort to help the children learn more about themselves and each other. The book evolved over a course of many months and was directed and personalized by the children in the program. Each child had two pages dedicated to just them, one page for interview questions and answers, the second for their photo. The children created the questions and were interviewed by a either a Registered Early Childhood Educator or a peer. The answers that appear in the book are exactly as the children stated them. As well, the child set up where and how the photo would be taken. All content and photos were published with parent/guardian consent.



Front Cover



Inside Story



Back Cover

The parents/guardians were required to pre-order and pre-pay for the book before it went to print.

To create your own books go to www.picaboo.com - prices vary depending on the number of books ordered.

The *I'm Me Book* is the created by the encouragement, leadership and photographic talents of Sarah Hennessy, Gillian Orton and Soo Kim Lem of Bruce WoodGreen's Early Learning Centre.

Contributed by Janet Scott, Resource Consultant ~ WoodGreen Community Services

*****The Keeping In Touch Newsletter Committee is always on the lookout for new and exciting programming ideas that we can share in the newsletter. Keep an eye on the next addition of the Keeping In Touch Newsletter; it may be your centre that is highlighted. *****

PLAY TODAY

You say you love your children,
And are concerned they learn today?
So am I; that's why I'm providing
A variety of kinds of play.

You're asking me the value
Of blocks and other such play?
Your children are solving problems.
They will use that skill every day.

You're asking what's the value
Of having your children play?
Your daughter's creating a tower.
She may be a builder someday.



You're saying you don't want your son
To play in that "sissy" way?
He's learning to cuddle a doll.
He may be a father someday.

You're questioning the learning centers;
They just look like useless play?
Your children are making choices;
They'll be on their own someday.

You're worried your children aren't learning,
and later they'll have to pay?
They're learning a pattern for learning,
For they will be learners always.

~ Leila P. Fagg ~

WEBSITES

The following websites have lots of interesting ideas and resources:

City Wide Training Calendar ~

www.citywidetraining.ca

Connectability ~

www.connectability.ca

College of ECE

www.college-ece.ca

ELECT Document ~

www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf

AECEO ~

www.aeceo.ca



The KIT Newsletter Committee members include:

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RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

WEBSITES

Play It Fair Toolkit ~

www.equitas.org

Let the Children Play ~

www.letthechildrenplay.net

Love, Play & Learn ~

www.loveplayandlearn.com

Raising Children Network ~

www.raisingchildren.net.au

The Power of Play ~

www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/earlychildhood/power.html

Child's Play Magazine ~

www.childsplaymagazine.com



BOOKS

Einstein Never Used Flashcards: How Children Really Learn and Why They Should Play More and Memorize Less by Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Diane Eyer (Rodale Books, 2004)

Play = Learning: How Play Motivates and Enhances Children's Cognitive and Social-Emotional Growth by Dorothy Singer, Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek (Oxford University Press, 2009)

Children's Play: The Roots of Reading by Edward Zigler, Dorothy G. Singer, Sandra J. Bishop-Josef (Zero to Three, 2004)

The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally by David Elkind (Da Capo Press, 2007)

Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul by Stewart Brown, Christopher Vaughan (Avery, 2009)

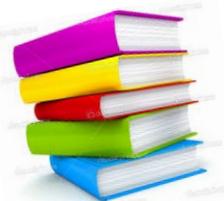
The Case for Make Believe: Saving Play in a Commercialized World by Susan Linn (New Press, 2009)

Parlour Games for Modern Families by Myfanwy Jones and Spiri Tsintziras (Scribe, 2011)

A Playful Path by Bernard De Koven (CreateSpace, 2013)

Children at Play: An American History by Howard Chudacoff (New York University Press, 2008)

Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation by Patrick Bateson, Paul Martin (Cambridge University Press, 2013)



Contributed by Lisa Iozzo, Resource Educator ~
South District Special Services Unit Children's Services