


Previewing 'The Power of Play in Education' Book

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WestEd 

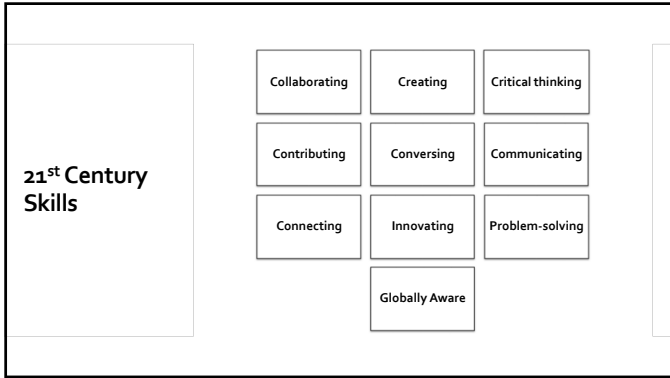
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Goals	Introduce	Introduce forthcoming publication: <i>The Powerful Role of Play in Education</i>
	Provide	Provide Brief Overview of Several Key Topics
	Share	Share Research/Evidence Base on the Importance of Play

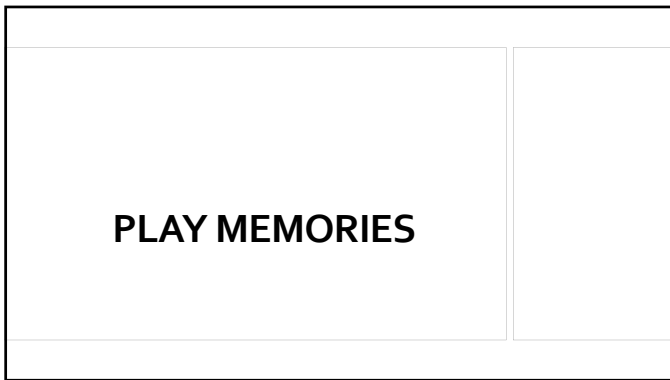
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Favorite Childhood Play Memories



- Chosen
- Outside
- Risk--challenge
- With a friend, family member or pet

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What do we mean when we say the word PLAY?

- Play is pleasurable.
- Play requires active engagement.
- Play is voluntary and intrinsically motivated.
- Play involves attention to means over ends.
- Play is flexible and changing.
- Play has a non-literal orientation.

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California's Infant/Toddler and Preschool Curriculum Frameworks (CDE, 2010-2013) are based on eight research-based principles that highlight the important role of play in children's learning and development:


Play is a primary context for learning.



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Why is Play Important for Young Children?

What are the Benefits of Play?



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Play is a Human Right for all Children

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that:


States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

In 2009, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child articulated in its General Comment No 12 'The Right of the Child to be Heard'

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Play Supports Children's Agency

Play and the Foundations of a Democratic Society



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Seth, age 5, enters the dramatic play center in his kindergarten classroom where Kate, age 5, is pretending to be mother to a set of several stuffed animals. Seth takes one of the stuffed animals and Kate protests. Seth explains that he and his friends need some animals for their block construction across the room. Kate states that the stuffed toys are only for the pretend play area. As they continue to argue over the toys, more children come around to join the discussion. Two children who like to play in the center with Kate, join her side of the argument. Two more children join Seth's side, suggesting that the stuffed animals could be used around the room. There is no agreement, so the children go to the teacher who suggests holding a class meeting to decide as a whole group what to do. Later, the children gather in a circle. With the teacher's guidance, each child takes turns sharing their opinion about how to solve the disagreement. The group decides that stuffed animals can be used in more than the dramatic play center. The children work together to decide where the toys are placed in their classroom.

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**Play is an Innate
Need and
Biological
Behavior for all
Humans and
Animals**



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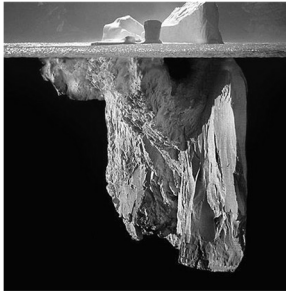
PLAY AND LEARNING

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What does research tell us about how children learn?

- Children are active learners.
- Children learn best when their social and emotional needs are met and they are surrounded by responsive and caring adults.
- Children learn best when new information is presented in a meaningful context.
- The process of learning is as important as the outcome of learning for young children.
- All children have diverse needs and different backgrounds that influence their learning.

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- Healthy brain development
- Imagination
- Perspective taking
- Share, negotiating, problem-solving
- Creativity
- Self-regulation
- Self-advocacy
- Mathematical and scientific thinking
- Language and vocabulary
- Fine motor control
- Physical development
- Identity development
- Healing trauma; managing anxiety



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What are Children Learning when they Play with Wooden Blocks?



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Block Play	Mathematical and Scientific Thinking
	Spatial Understandings, measurement, length, area and volume, shapes
	Quantity/Counting
	Weight (heavy and light)
	Number concept
	Sequence
	Pattern
	Classification
	Equivalency
	Cause and effect
	Inquiry and hypothesis generation (exploration, invention, discovery)
	Math/science language

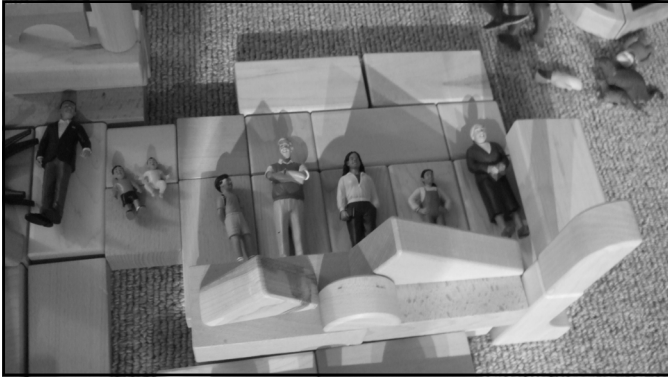
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Block Play	Language and Literacy
	Vocabulary and concept development
	Expressive and receptive language
	Emergent writing ("Do Not Disturb" "Airport")
	Social and Emotional Skills
	Communicating (listening and expressing oneself, exchanging ideas)
	Planning, problem-solving
	Cooperating with others, compromise
	Responsibility
	Self-regulation, relationship repair

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Play supports children to process and heal from stressful and traumatic experiences.	
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Play as the Window into Children's Feelings

- Through play children can express the full range of their feelings and emotions (in ways that they can't do verbally). An important form of self-expression.
- A window into children's concerns "*children don't talk out their concerns and feelings, they play them out*"
- Express feelings safely they would be reprimanded for doing so in real life
- Can express aspects of their inner life that they may be too frightened to do directly (children can distance themselves from real event by symbolically representing it in play)

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Despite the Benefits, Play is Disappearing

- Increased participation in child care and other settings with close adult supervision
- Increase in hurried and pressured lifestyles
- Increased emphasis on narrow definitions of kindergarten readiness and accountability
- Growth of technology and digital devices in young children's lives
- Parents' fears about safety in public outdoor spaces
- Fewer opportunities for children to focus on activities that promote community, democracy, and self-expression in schools
- Lack of training for ECE teachers and administrators

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Kindergarten: 2010 and 1998

80% believe children should learn to read in kindergarten (31%)

50% report not doing any theater activities during the school year

58% have a dramatic play area (89%)

24% have a water or sand table (49%)

40% spend one hour or more on child selected activities (54%)

45% use reading workbook or worksheets

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Common Myths about Play

- When children play, they are not learning.
- If I don't teach them, they won't learn.
- Some children who are 'behind' their peers academically, don't have time to play.
- Play is only for very young children. Elementary school children no longer need to play.

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There are hundreds of different **images of the child**. Each one of you has inside yourself an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to a child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child. It is very difficult for you to act contrary to this internal image." (Malaguzzi, 1994)



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Reflection Questions:

Image of the Child

- When you think about infants, what do you think they are capable of doing?
- What motivates them to learn?
- How much agency/autonomy in decision-making and actions do you believe they should have?
- How would you answer these questions for toddlers? Preschoolers?
- Does your image of the child assume that every child is strong and capable?

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Lev Vygotsky described play as a leading force in children's cognitive development.

Why?

- Pretend play (or what he called fantasy play) creates a zone of proximal development
- Pretend play frees a child's thinking from concrete experience creating a foundation for abstract thinking and symbolizing
- Pretend play supports children's ability to manage their own behavior and emotions

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Developmental Progression for Young Children in Learning to Symbolize with Pivots

- Young toddlers use only realistic objects in their pretend play.
- Around age 2 children will begin to use less realistic pivots
- Then around 3 years, children learn to imagine objects and events without any support or pivots from the real world.

Building the foundations for later abstract thinking.



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Vivian Paley

The Importance of Fantasy Play

"Our fantasy characters become our confidants, they help us to interpret and explain our feelings about reality"

"Help us to find control in something that is scary and unpredictable"

"Assuage [children's] fears by positioning them as powerful" (inversion of reality)

Express mature, adult-level concepts and themes in their play (friendship, safety, power, abandonment, recovery, explorations of identity, emotions like jealousy and pleasure).

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**Vivian Paley
Continued**

Identity construction (exploring alternative identities that aren't available to them in reality)

Developing an open mind "mind that has been freely associating with playful imagery is primed to tackle new ideas"

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**Different
Types of
Children's
Play**



- Attunement Play
- Body Play and Movement
- Object Play
- Social Play
- Imaginative and Pretend Play
- Storytelling/narrative Play
- Creative/expressive play
- Virtual/digital play
- Language play

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**Play is Where
Integrated
Learning
Happens**

Children from birth to five do not build or acquire their knowledge and skills in domain-specific categories one domain at a time. They relate to each learning experience as a whole experience. They naturally cross the boundaries of domains and simultaneously build concepts related to social-emotional development, science, mathematics, language, social science, the arts, physical development and health.

The Integrated Nature of Learning, p. 10

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2 Year Old Toddlers Nicole and Malik, Playing with Puzzles	
	Two-and-a-half year old Nicole has joined her new friend Malik at a small table with a rack of five puzzles. She selects the eight piece puzzle of an elephant. She picked up several pieces and methodically moves them about to see how they fit.

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Preschoolers, Teresa and Rafael, Playing Baby in the Dramatic Play Area	
	Teresa and Rafael are playing in the dramatic play area. Teresa has announced that she is the mom and Rafael will be the baby when Rafael declares that he wants a tamale. Teresa steps out of the play frame for a moment and makes her implicit rules of play explicit, explaining: "You're a little baby. You don't eat food. You have to have your bottle." Rafael responds: "Now I'm me. I'll have a bottle when I play 'baby.'"

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3 Year-Old Marco Building a Tower with Legos	
	Three-year-old Marco is building a tower of Legos, making a pattern as he carefully alternates red and yellow squares. Looking around for another red one, he spots small, plastic animal figures nearby. He goes over and picks up a giraffe and a monkey, and places them on top of the tower. "Be still ... get ready." he commands loudly, "Blast off in one minute." He rises dramatically and, with a swift jab, crashes the tower down.

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5 Year-Olds, Mia, Jorge, Bo and Tyler, Pretending to Play Store

Five-year-olds Mia, Jorge, Bo, and Tyler, have been playing market...The store opens this morning. After long negotiations, they've agreed that Bo will be the cashier and Mia, Tyler and Jorge will stock the shelves and help customers. They have a problem – no shoppers arrive. Jorge suggests a sign to tell people they're open. He goes to the art area and finds several long pieces of tag board and markers. Carefully, He writes OPN – ABIERTO, takes it back to the store, and explains what he's done. All four children gather round the sign and yell to their classmates, "Open! Abierto! Come to the store!"

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ROLE OF TEACHERS

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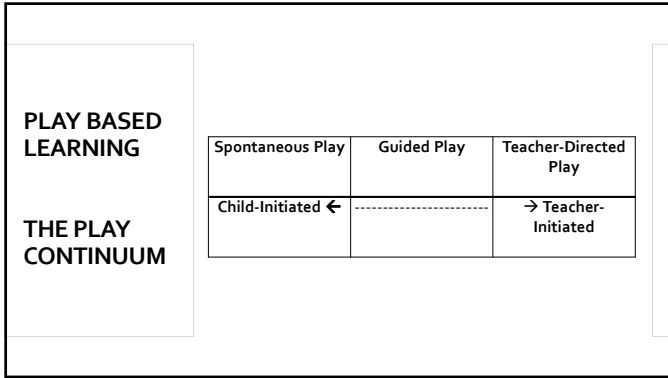
Designing play spaces as environments for learning:
Stage Managers

Designing care routines that invite children's active participation

Planning interactions and conversations with children that support learning




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Continuum of Teaching Strategies to Support Children's Learning through Play

- Setting the Stage
- Artist Apprentice
- Peacemaker
- Guardian of the Gate
- Parallel Player
- Spectator
- Participant
- Matchmaker
- Story player
- Play Tutor



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Teachers need significant skill and thought to determine which context, in combination with which child, calls for a given strategy

A useful guideline is to choose the most indirect strategy possible

Teachers should observe play before they decide whether to intervene with a play strategy

Choosing a Strategy

At all times, respect children's shared meaning-making. When teachers do join play, timing is crucial, as they should enter without disrupting the progress or integrity of the play. Always strive to support children to sustain and elaborate play on their own. When they exit children's play, they should ensure that control is returned to the child players.

If and when an indirect strategy is not effective for a particular child or play interaction, try more direct strategies along the continuum

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Reflection Questions

Talk with a partner:

- Which of the play orchestration strategies are teachers using and/or familiar with?
- Which of the play orchestration strategies are they less knowledgeable about?

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Adding surprise and complexity to play spaces

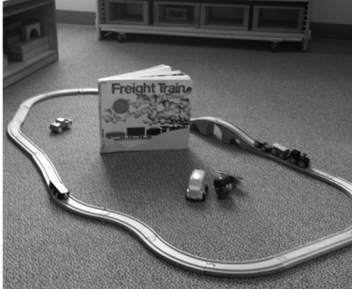
What is a Provocation?
 Goal is to provide an invitation for children to express themselves, to explore and discover new ideas, relationships and experiences. Intended to inspire children's thinking, conversations, questions, interests, creativity and ideas. Provocations can also expand on children's prior thinking, interests, ideas, learning and projects.

Should be simple, open-ended, and invite children's diverse expressions. They should also be intentionally connected to the children's interests and relevant topics of conversation and study in the classroom. Examples:

- Nature (found materials)
- A fascinating photo, picture, or book
- An interest that a child or group of children have
- An event (guest speaker, presentation, celebration)
- Art Materials (new creative materials to explore)
- Questions (from any source)
- Objects and artifacts

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What will the toddlers do when they find a book about trains near the wooden train set?



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What will the toddlers do when they given a chance to explore vegetables as they come from the garden, vegetables used in the soup from a favorite book?



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What will the children do when they discover a pencil hooked to a binder with pages printed with children's names?



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What will the infants do when they encounter round metal bowls and lids?



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What will the children do when they find a favorite doll, name cards with children's photos, a children's sign-in sheet, and books near the classroom entry?



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Loose Parts

When children interact with loose parts, they enter a world of 'what if' that promotes the type of thinking that leads to problem solving and theoretical reasoning. Loose parts enhance children's ability to think imaginatively and see solutions, and they bring a sense of adventure and excitement to children's play" (Daly & Beloglovsky, M., 2014)

Rope, wool, ribbon	Shells, leaves, pinecones	Sand, stone
Funnels, water, buckets	Plastic bottles and tops	Dirt (mud, sand, clay)
Wood (sticks, stumps, boards, coins, branches, wood chips, cinnamon stick, pegs, beads)	Seeds (acorns, nuts, dried beans, seed pods)	Grasses (hay, straw)
	Flowers, petals, corks	Textiles (hemp, cotton, wool, felt, silk)
		Newspaper, cardboard, paper tubes)

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<p>Accessories to Support Pretend Play</p>	<p>Realistic props for younger children whose symbolic development is less sophisticated.</p>
	<p>Very young children (2-3 years) appreciate having multiple sets of realistic props to use in their fantasy play.</p>
	<p>Older children prefer more open-ended materials that allow them to bring multiple and dynamic meanings to influence their use (e.g., scarves, blocks, pebbles, paper, hats etc.).</p>

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Naming the Learning in Play: Assessment



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Communicating with Families about Play-based Learning



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Using Play Memories to Talk with Families about Play



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You Wanted to Play when You Were a Child, Why Wouldn't You Allow Your Child to Play Now?

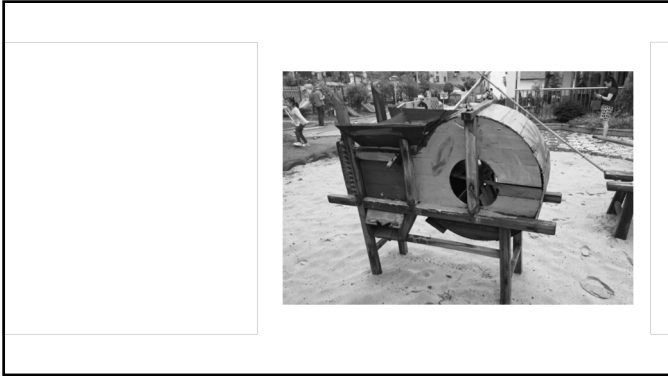


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Preserving Cultural Heritage



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	Build Self-Awareness and Address Bias
	Conscious and Unconscious Bias

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Nationally on average how many preschoolers are suspended or expelled daily?	A) 250
	B) 75
	C) 185

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Nationally on average how many preschoolers are suspended or expelled daily?

- A) 250
- B) 75
- C) 185

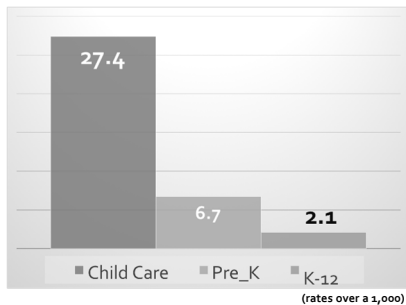
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250 preschoolers are suspended or expelled from school every day

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Preschoolers and children in child care centers are expelled at rates more than three times higher than any school-aged children.



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Who is suspended and expelled?

- Older**
 - 4-year-olds 50% more likely than 3-year olds (Gilliam, 2016)
- Boys**
 - Boys represent 54% of preschoolers, but 78% of out-of-school suspensions (OCR, 2016)
- Black**
 - Black preschoolers are 3.6 times as likely to be suspended as white preschoolers (OCR, 2016)
 - Black children represent 19% of preschoolers but 47% of out-of-school suspensions (OCR, 2016)

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In-School Suspension could look like...
Disciplining a child by sending the child out of the classroom, such as to the director's office.

Out-of-School Suspension could look like...
Asking a family to pick up their child early because of behavioral issues (e.g., biting, hitting, not following directions).

Expulsion could look like...
Telling a family that they will need to find another care arrangement/center because the child is not a "good fit" for the program or that the program can "no longer support" their toddler or preschooler.

'Soft' Expulsion could look like...
Asking the family repeatedly to pick their child up early because of behavior issues, requiring them to leave or miss work frequently.

What do exclusionary discipline practices look like in early childhood settings?

SRI Education
A DIVISION OF SRI INTERNATIONAL


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Deprives children of valuable early learning experiences

Developing sense of self

Predicts later suspension/expulsion

As much as 10x more likely to drop out, fail a grade, be incarcerated



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What increases the likelihood of expulsion?

- Lack of knowledge of child development
- Program factors
- Bias
- Teacher stress and feelings of hopelessness
- More common in PreK



**“Preschool expulsion is NOT a child behavior. It is an adult decision”
(Gilliam, 2016)**

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RISK TAKING IN PLAY

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Children must take risks to challenge themselves in order to grow, to test their limits, to learn how to overcome obstacles, to cope with frustrations, and to taste the joy and self-esteem-building experiences of success. Learning to take risks is a necessary developmental task. We develop confident, resilient learners by encouraging children to try new experiences, to engage in acceptable levels of risk and to learn from both their successes and their mistakes and failures.




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Challenging Activities/Low Risk

Moderate Risk

Advanced/Extreme Risk




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We want to create opportunities for children to learn to engage in self-assessment of their ability to take risks. When we offer children opportunities to engage in free play or child-directed play—especially outside—children not only learn about and discover their own strengths and abilities, they will practice new skills over and over until they achieve mastery. In this way, they continue to stretch themselves but not too far. It is rare to see a child take a risk beyond what they are ready or capable of doing.

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One of the most important and helpful choices parents and teachers to make is to “know when [their] help is needed and when it is not”.



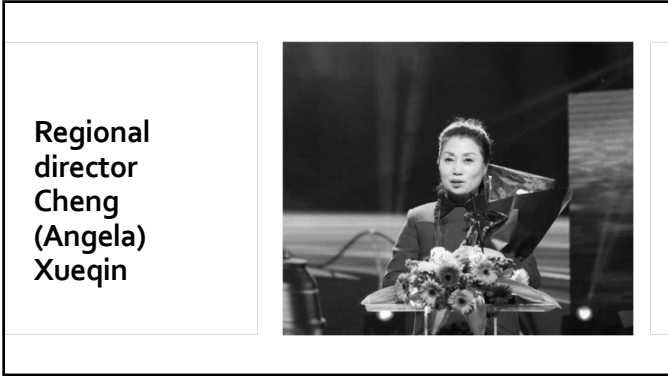
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Two practices go together when adults take responsibility for determining young children’s learning:

- 1) We prevent young children from doing what they are capable of doing and are motivated to do, and
- 2) We ask children to do what they are not ready to do

Magda Gerber

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But What about Parents and Families who Worry about Injury?

Many children are driven to experience risk as they learn. If they are not supported to do so in their early learning programs, they may seek challenges that stretch their skills in other, less well-managed or developmentally appropriate environments.

While adventurous play brings some bumps and bruises, the rate of serious injury is surprisingly low. (Almon, 2013)

Many play injuries are related to poorly designed or broken play materials or playground equipment. One of the most important things that teachers can do is to scan play environments on a regular basis to identify and remove hazards.

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Reflection Questions

What messages did you receive growing up about risk?

How comfortable/uncomfortable are you taking risks?

What messages are you communicating (through words and non-verbal behavior) to children about taking risks?

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Research on Young Children's Outdoor Play: Did You Know....

- Children engage in more creative forms of play in green areas (versus paved)
- Green areas encourage more fantasy and make-believe play.
- Nature also inspires children to display a greater sense of wonder
- When children play in an environment dominated by play structures rather than natural elements, they established their social hierarchy through physical competence. Whereas in green areas, children's social standing is based less on physical abilities and more on language skills, creativity, and inventiveness.
- In green areas, play is less interrupted, and children can focus for longer periods of time.

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Barriers that Prevent Teachers' Use of Outdoor Classrooms and Support for Children's Outdoor Play

- Teachers range of comfort with large motor play (e.g., running, jumping, swinging, rough and tumble)
- Teachers' concerns about "play fighting" and "play fighting turning into "fighting"
- Teachers' lack of positive experiences outside that lead to their discomfort
- Teachers' concerns about feeling less "control" when children are playing outside
- Liability and licensing restrictions
- Concerns about injury
- Teachers' concern about neighborhood safety

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Designing Inclusive Play: Ajay, 1st Grader with Sensory Challenges

- Ensure the play area was well organized and easy to understand.
- Clearly defined the space with shelving, neatly placed books on a shelf, organized toys in clearly labelled plastic bins placed on a shelf, added a neutral single shade carpet to define the space for gathering as a group.
- Created and began using a visual schedule with times to begin, play freely, clean up and say good bye.
- Included his favorite puppets and stuffed animals among the selection of toys.
- Meaningful and enjoyable for all the children, including Ajay.

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Designing Inclusive Play:

Waheeda: 1st Grader with a Visual Impairment who Recently Arrived in the U.S.

- Order was important to her and we had to ensure that things were always put back in the same place, so she knew where to find them.
- Incorporated many toys with unique textures that she could identify using her hands.
- Labelled all the tubs using braille, but in addition to that we also had certain texture coded icons that we used. This helped her identify what was in the tub (e.g., attached a large piece of furry material on the tub that contained her favorite books. These books had sensory materials that she could touch and feel, and she loved sharing these books with her favorite puppets in class.

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TRAUMA AND PLAY

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HEART PLAY FOR ADULTS

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Discovering Your Heart Play

What are your authentic forms of Heart Play?

Brannen, Barbara, (2012). The Gift of Play: Why Adult Women Stop Playing and How to Start Again

Total Abandonment	No Worry	Joy
Clear Thinking	Energy	Curiosity
Wonderment	Pride	Connection
Movement	Imagination	Relaxation Therapeutic



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Look closely at the present you are constructing; It should look like the future you are dreaming.

Alice Walker



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Thank you!

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